



**REGIONAL MEETING TO PROMOTE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE  
OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN  
CENTRAL AND WEST ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA**

**Aleppo, Syrian Arab Republic**

**22nd to 25th June, 1998**

**REPORT**

**Note**

This document includes the main report of the meeting. At present, appendices and background presentations are not included.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The regional meeting to promote implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in Central and West Asia and North Africa was held in Aleppo, Syrian Arab Republic, from 22nd to 25th June, 1998. The meeting was convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the CGIAR's System wide Genetic Resources Programme (SGRP), hosted by the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), and organized with the assistance of the office for Central and West Asia and North Africa (CWANA) of the International Plant Genetic Resource Institute (IPGRI).

2. Representatives and observers from each of the following countries attended the meeting: Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Yemen. In addition a number of representatives of regional and international organization attended the meeting. A list of participants is attached (Appendix 1).

## **OPENING CEREMONY**

3. Opening remarks were made by Mr Mahmud Duwayri on behalf of FAO, Mr Geoff Hawtin on behalf of IPGRI and the CGIAR/SGRP, and Mr Adel El-Betalgy on behalf of ICARDA.

4. The Minister of Agriculture His Excellency, Mr Asaad Mustapha, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, delivered the opening address. He welcomed participants to the Syrian Arab Republic and highlighted the importance of the region where civilizations developed thanks to agriculture. He stressed the importance of plant genetic resources for food security and wished the meeting success in its critical task of promoting implementation of the Global Plan of Action (GPA). He declared the meeting opened.

## **PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

5. The following were elected by acclamation:

Chair: Mr Walid El-Tawel (Syrian Arab Republic)  
Vice Chair: Mr Abdulmunim Abu Zeid (Egypt)  
Rapporteur: Mr Mohamed Tazi (Morocco)

	Chair:	Rapporteur:
Theme I :	Mr Abdusattar Abdoukarimov (Uzbekistan)	Mr Rashid Anwar (Pakistan)
Theme II :	Mr Micheal Abi Antoun (Lebanon)	Mr Mohamed Neffati (Tunisia)
Theme III:	Ms Ayfer Tan (Turkey)	Mr Andreas Hadjichristodoulou (Cyprus)

6. The programme of work was then adopted (Appendix 2). There were background presentations on the GPA and a review of the status of GPA implementation, which was examined further in working groups. Three main topics, namely National Programmes, Community PGRFA management, and Regional and International collaboration were addressed in workshops. For each, a number of presentations were made. Following this, critical issues were identified and discussed in small working groups, which were then reported back to the Plenary. Additionally briefing sessions on funding and policy issues were held.

## **BACKGROUND TO THE GPA AND STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION**

7. Mr H David Cooper, International Conference and Programme for Plant Genetic Resources, FAO, outlined the Global Plan of Action for the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA which had been

adopted at the International Technical Conference Leipzig, June 1996. He emphasized that it was agreed at Leipzig that the implementation of the Plan is the responsibility of all stakeholders.

8. Mr Mohamed Tazi summarized the state of implementation of each of the 20 activities of the GPA in the region based upon the reports provided by countries and noted some of the major bottlenecks.

9. The state of implementation of the GPA, the major constraints, and how these may be overcome was then addressed in working groups, which reported back to the Plenary (annex 1).

10. Mr Aissa Abdelguerfi reported on the recent meeting held by IPGRI concerning priority setting for under-utilized crops in CWANA. He emphasized the importance of neglected and under utilized species and associated local knowledge for the conservation of biodiversity, and their contribution to food security.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### *Theme 1: Strengthening National Programmes, Strategies and Policies*

11. Mr Abi Antoun discussed the integration of PGRFA planning in the wider context of developing Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. He noted that 10 countries in the region had developed such plans, or were in the process of doing so, with the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

12. Mr Naceur Hamza described the experience of the Tunisian national programme. Following reflection on an earlier attempt to develop a centralized national genebank, Tunisia had successfully established a national committee, and developed a network of genebanks, linked to the breeders and other users. He emphasized the importance of this approach in securing funds from national sources.

13. Ms Ayfer Tan presented the Turkey national programme and described how the coordinating mechanisms of the *in situ* activities were linked to the national programme. She emphasized the importance of public awareness, and of involving all actors including NGOs and the private sector.

### *Theme 2: Strengthening Community PGRFA management;*

14. Mr Shadi Hamadeh presented the experience in Lebanon of community management of PGRFA, describing the various categories of NGO involved: national NGOs, community NGOs, farmers' organizations and other users groups.

15. Mr Ahmed Amri and Mr Amor Yahyaoui described how the national programmes of Morocco and Tunisia were promoting farmer participation in variety improvement of cereals in North Africa, based on segregating material supplied by ICARDA.

16. Mr Mahmud Duwayri presented the FAO Farmer Field School approach which had been very successfully applied to integrated pest management, and which offered potential in strengthening farmer management of PGRFA.

17. Three presentations were made on examples of NGO activities to support community management of PGRFA. Mr Nawras Al Abrass described the activities of a community project at Deir Mar Musa Monastery, Nabk, Syria, which aims at rehabilitation of lands through the use of indigenous species, including local varieties of Almonds. Messrs Neffati and Zammouri described the collaboration between the Arid lands research institute, Medinine, Tunisia, and the *Association des Jeunes de Zammour*, to conserve, *in situ*, olive, figs and other fruit trees, as well as wild species. Mr Mohammed Yousef outlined the Dana project of Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature of Jordan where the local community benefit from the processing and marketing of biodiversity-based products, and from employment in socio-economic activities and ecotourism.

*Theme 3: Strengthening regional and international collaboration, with particular emphasis on promoting the use of PGRFA;*

18. Mr David Cooper of FAO presented the role of FAO in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action: in supporting the Commission on Genetic resources for food and agriculture; in facilitating implementation by all stakeholders; and in implementing specific actions where appropriate. He invited feedback from national programmes on how FAO's role can be most effective.

19. Mr Geoffrey Hawtin described the development of the CGIAR's System wide Genetic Resources Programme (SGRP), and its role in the implementation of the GPA. He encouraged participants to provide inputs to the ongoing review of the SGRP. Mr Samy Gaiji described the System wide information network on genetic resources (SINGER). He pointed out that in phase II emphasis would be on making the system more user friendly and on exploring ways in which it can link with other national and international information systems, in the context of the Clearing House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the FAO World Information and Early Warning System for PGRFA (WIEWS).

20. Mr George Ayad briefly described activities of IPGRI-CWANA, noting the increased resources devoted by IPGRI to the region. Mr Jan Valkoun described the activities of ICARDA's genetic resources unit. He announced that ICARDA was now using the common material transfer agreement recently developed by the CGIAR in line with the agreement between FAO and the Centres.

21. Mr Salvatore Ceccarelli presented ICARDA's decentralized barley breeding programme as an example of how the International Centres can support national programmes. Crosses are made at ICARDA, while selection is decentralized to national programmes, and in some cases to farmers, in order to exploit genotype x environment interactions.

22. Messrs Andreas Hadjichristodoulou and Abdusattar Abdoukarimov reported on the activities and recent meetings of the steering committees of the plant genetic resources Network for West Asia and North Africa (WANANET) and the PGR Network for Central Asia (CAN/PGR) respectively. CAN/PGR is a new network which still needs developing. Mr Hadjichristodoulou indicated that the forthcoming steering committee meeting would examine the possible restructuring of WANANET and its decision making bodies to improve its effectiveness, and strengthen the role of national programmes in implementing its recommendations.

23. Mr Yousif Al Shayji, Vice-president of the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research Institutes in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA) reported on the changes to the organization agreed at the recent general assembly in Tehran. The organization identified five regions (Maghreb, Nile valley/Red Sea, Mashreq, Arabian peninsular, Central and West Asia). He indicated AARINENA's willingness to develop stronger links with WANANET and CAN/PGR.

24. Mr Othman El Shawesh and Mr Adel Joudah described the activities of Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) and the Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) respectively. Both Arab League organizations indicated their willingness to contribute to the implementation of the GPA in the Arab countries.

25. Mr David Cooper briefly outlined potential sources of funding for the implementation of the GPA, and introduced a discussion on the topic. Mr Mohamed Taeb briefed participants on the ongoing negotiations in the Commission on Genetic Resources for the revision of the International Undertaking.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the basis of discussions in plenary and in working groups, the meeting made the following recommendations:

*(1) Strengthening National Programmes, Strategies and Policies*

26. Noting the commitments made by governments in the Leipzig Declaration and Global Plan of Action, and in decision III/11 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, it was agreed that each country should formulate a national strategy and/or plan on PGRFA, particularly for the implementation of the GPA according to national needs, and that this plan should be part of or in harmony with national biodiversity strategy and action plans. FAO, in collaboration with IPGRI and other organizations, is requested to encourage and assist countries to develop GPA/PGRFA plans and strategies.

27. It was noted that according to the new operational criteria of GEF for enabling activities, countries could add consideration of agrobiodiversity issues, including PGRFA, to their new or ongoing biodiversity strategies and action plans, and seek additional funding for this component from GEF.

28. National PGRFA plans and strategies should also be integrated in national development and agricultural sector plans.

29. High priority should be given by all countries to establishing or strengthening national programmes on PGRFA. These should encompass all PGRFA activities including plant breeding and other forms of utilization, and not be limited to genebank operations.

30. The following additional points were noted concerning national programmes:

- coordination is very important, with a strong link with all concerned stakeholders, and mechanisms for coordination with national and international organizations;
- all countries should have National PGR Committees, or similar coordinating mechanisms, involving all concerned parties, and with high level participation including key decision makers. The committee should have clear terms of reference and regular meetings;
- PGR units or facilities should be improved where required to meet national needs. They should be located so that they can serve the whole country. They should have clear responsibilities and programmes, and be coordinated with other parts of the national programmes;
- appropriate legislation on PGR should be developed;
- emphasis should be given to improving public awareness and awareness of policy makers;
- human resources development should be strengthened, to improve the availability of qualified staff, through training programmes, use of experts from the region etc. Attention should be given to improving staff motivation to avoid attrition;
- national programmes require secure and sustainable finance, drawing upon local and international sources. There is also a need for an international funding mechanism.

## (2) *Strengthening Community PGRFA management*

31. The importance of PGRFA management by farmers and communities as a contribution to national efforts to implement the GPA was noted. This would contribute both to conservation and increased productivity by increasing the range of genetic diversity available to farmers, by facilitating the exchange of landraces, and through decentralized and participatory plant breeding. The importance of strengthening and developing markets for the products of landraces and underutilized species was stressed. The need to strengthen the scientific basis of *in situ* (including on farm) conservation was underlined. The complementarity of *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation efforts was emphasized.

32. Countries are encouraged to promote activities aimed at strengthening the management of PGRFA at the community level.

33. A concept note of a project for the promotion of sustainable conservation and use of landraces through community based systems has been developed by the conference participants (annex 2)

34. Immediate actions to boost work in this area include the following:

- a survey the current status of community based PGRFA conservation activities and preparation of a list of NGOs involved in PGRFA work and farmer associations present in the CWANA region. National Programs in each country should be requested to carry out this survey;

- on the basis of the survey's result, development a framework for the implementation of the work in this domain that reflects the institutional, economic and scientific diversity across the region. Existing Networks (e.g. WANANET and CAN/PGR) should be asked to carry out this task

### (3) *Strengthening Regional and International Collaboration*

35. In the CWANA region several regional and international organizations/centers have activities. These include FAO and other intergovernmental organizations, IPGRI, ICARDA and other IARCs, the regional research network AARINENA, regional organizations and research centres such as AOAD and ACSAD.

36. There is a need for coordination of the activities of organizations active in the region on PGR. It is proposed these organizations convene a meeting, in which representatives from selected national programs will be invited to participate, in order to focus the activities of organizations on selected priorities and avoid duplication of efforts. The result would lead to the identification of regional projects.

37. CAN/PGR and WANANET should play a major role in developing projects in cooperation with other organizations, and other networks including crop-specific networks, and networks of other regions. In particular, it was proposed that links between the crop working groups of CAN/PGR and WANANET and the crop-specific networks be strengthened. The activities of these networks, and of IPGRI-CWANA should be supported. The above mentioned organizations are encouraged to participate more fully in WANANET and CAN/PGR including by providing technical or financial assistance as appropriate.

38. The major partners in the regional work in PGR are the national programmes. National plans should be active cooperators, efficiently implementing their programs on PGRFA and contributing information and material, through WANANET, to the other countries.

39. National programmes should make greater use of CAN/PGR and WANANET in the formulation of common projects in line with national priorities in order to facilitate implementation of the GPA and overcome the difficulties (funding, training, technology transfer) faced by national programmes.

40. There is potential for collaboration between countries in the region concerning the sharing of the burden of *ex situ* conservation, characterization and evaluation. The Islamic Republic of Iran offered to assist other countries in the region through the characterization and evaluation, in Iran, of samples of other countries in the Region. The meeting welcomed this offer and invited WANANET and CAN/PGR to follow up this proposal.

41. The meeting highlighted the importance of access to information on material available in collections, through SINGER, WIEWS and national PGR information systems. National and regional databases should be developed in the context of WIEWS and SINGER, with the assistance of FAO and SGRP.

42. Considerable effort has been made during the last decades on the collection and conservation of PGR. There is a need to formulate regional projects on the utilization of landraces and PGR. This effort will be implemented after carrying out a survey, in the CWANA region, on the utilization of PGR (e.g. as varieties or parents in the breeding programme, or for direct introduction). The publication of a report or proceedings of a workshop on the subject will facilitate the undertaking of further work, the formulation of project for future common work and also could encourage the attraction of funds by potential donors.

43. It was suggested that the ongoing external review of the SGRP should take into account the recommendations of this meeting. Participants were encourage to make further inputs to this review process, and specifically to how the SGRP can support the implementation of the GPA, via the FAO secretariat.

44. The steering committees of WANANET and CAN/PGR are invited to follow up the relevant recommendations of this meeting.

### *Funding issues*

45. Several existing funding sources can be identified:

- Multilateral donor (e.g. GEF, World Bank, UNDP etc.; Islamic Development Bank etc.)
- Bilateral donors and foundations
- National funding sources
- Private sector sources

It was noted that some multilateral intergovernmental and other technical institutions (e.g. FAO, IPGRI, ICARDA and other CGIAR centres, ACSAD, AOAD and COMSTECH) are not donor organizations, and that their resources are limited. However, they can be partners in facilitating funding.

46. In order to facilitate funding of countries' implementation of the GPA it was proposed that efforts should be made:

- to secure funding from environment-oriented funds (e.g. GEF) for GPA activities, including *ex situ* conservation and utilization. The increased opportunities provided following the consideration of agrobiodiversity by the CBD was noted.
- to ensure that GPA/PGR activities are recognized as a priority by national authorities (essential both for domestic funding, and for foreign funding). In this context the importance of (i) integrating PGR into development plans / national priorities, and (ii) of the need to raise awareness amongst decision makers, was recognized.
- to develop proposals that are competitive; and
- to develop appropriate partnerships with the private sector.

47. WANANET and CAN/PGR, through facilitating collaboration between countries, should play a greater role in convincing potential donors to provide funds for projects with clear objectives and applicable in many countries.

48. As part of the review of implementation of the GPA, and in line with the Leipzig Report, FAO is requested to monitor funding for implementation of the GPA through existing multilateral and bilateral channels, to cooperate with funding agencies, and to develop criteria and guidelines to facilitate funding through all channels. FAO was also requested to prepare an information document on the importance of PGRFA and the need for funding of PGRFA activities. This document should be made available to the funding agencies.

49. The approach proposed by FAO to develop a multi-donor Programme to facilitate implementation of the GPA was supported. Participants were requested to provide further feedback to FAO as part of the consultative process.

50. It was noted that the establishment of an international fund for PGRFA was one of the matters under negotiation in the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for food and agriculture as part of the revision of the International Undertaking. The participants recognized that the international fund would be an essential part of the final agreement, and urged the Commission to conclude the negotiations as soon as possible.

## **CLOSING CEREMONY**

51. Mr Geoff Hawtin, on behalf of the CGIAR/SGRP, welcomed the recommendations of the meeting and looked forward to their implementation and to seeing how the Steering Committee of WANANET addresses them in their forthcoming meeting. He thanked the Government of Syria, FAO, ICARDA and all participants for their support to the meeting. On behalf of FAO, Mr Mahmud Duwayri paid tribute to the Syrian Arab Republic for their contribution to food security. He thanked the host country and ICARDA for hosting the meeting, IPGRI's CWANA office for supporting its organization, and all the participants.

52. Mr Walid El-Tawel, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, thanked FAO, IPGRI, ICARDA and all participants for their contributions to the meeting, and declared the meeting closed.

**WORKING GROUP 1: CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT\***

<b><i>GPA PRIORITY ACTIVITY</i></b>	<b>Action undertaken</b>	<b>Bottlenecks/Constraints</b>
<b>1. Surveying and inventorying plant genetic resources for food and agriculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On going activity in some countries</li> <li>• Yet to be launched in others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional problem</li> </ul>
<b>2. Supporting on-farm management and improvement of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to implement</li> <li>• Some sub- activities started</li> <li>• There is a potential for more successful work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Farmer income</li> <li>• Lack of strategy in place</li> </ul>
<b>3. Assisting farmers in disaster situations to restore agricultural systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On going sub-activities in many of the countries</li> <li>• More effort is needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of awareness</li> <li>• Lack of funds</li> <li>• Lack of legal framework</li> </ul>
<b>4. Promoting <i>in situ</i> conservation of wild crop relatives and wild plants for food production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress has been made in some countries</li> <li>• Most of the target species are not included</li> <li>• More effort is needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public awareness</li> <li>• Training of staff</li> <li>• Lack of funds</li> </ul>

\* The group did not have time to discuss activities 5-8. This does not imply that any less importance is given to these activities.

**WORKING GROUP 2: UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES**

<b><i>GPA PRIORITY ACTIVITY</i></b>	<b>Points made by the group on 22/06/98 to the plenary</b>

<p><b>9. Expanding the characterization, evaluation and number of core collections to facilitate use</b></p> <p><b>10. Increasing genetic enhancement and base-broadening efforts</b></p> <p><b>11. Promoting sustainable agriculture through diversification of crop production and broader diversity in crops</b></p> <p><b>12. Promoting development and commercialization of under-utilized crops and species</b></p> <p><b>13. Supporting seed production and distribution</b></p> <p><b>14. Developing new markets for local varieties and "diversity-rich" products</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise species (priority to those indigenous and those having highest market potentials)</li> <li>• Conduct a survey to assess users and core collections in the region</li> <li>• Greater involvement of private sector in the valorisation of the products</li> <li>• Closer participation of breeders in conservation activities</li> <li>• Enhance marketing by raising the profile of local agrobiodiversity (s.a. organising fairs to display diversity and products)</li> <li>• Emphasise added-value to local biodiversity</li> <li>• Survey/assess potentials of underutilised species to understand those that could best meet market opportunities/trends</li> <li>• Enhance national capabilities to take advantage of crop diversity</li> <li>• Strengthen the informal seed production and distribution system</li> </ul>
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**WORKING GROUP 3: INSTITUTIONS AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

GPA Priority Activity	Constraints	Needs
<p><b>15. Building strong national programmes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of sufficient human resources</li> <li>• Lack of access to effective technologies</li> <li>• Lack of awareness / initiatives</li> <li>• Lack of sectorial coordination (including Links to national biodiversity committees )</li> <li>• Status of national committees (Recognition by the Government)</li> <li>• Insufficient commitment (funds)</li> <li>• Appropriate legislation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical assistance (National/ Regional)</li> <li>• Research capacity building (including self – support)</li> <li>• Financial support/ core finance</li> </ul>
<p><b>16. Promoting networks for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub regional needs differ</li> <li>• Lack/weak crop–based groups</li> <li>• Ineffective priority setting process</li> <li>• Non-sustainable funding and cooperation</li> <li>• Lack of clear objectives</li> <li>• Weak national committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority setting process</li> <li>• Identification of objectives and needs</li> <li>• Strengthen / establish effective &amp; sustainable national committees</li> <li>• Developing mechanisms for seeking sustainable funding</li> </ul>
<p><b>17. Constructing comprehensive information systems for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of exchange of information</li> <li>• Lack of information on <i>ex situ</i> collections</li> <li>• Lack of training</li> <li>• Lack of information facilities</li> <li>• Harmonization of systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network (including electronic dissemination)</li> <li>• Assign priority to documentation</li> <li>• Specialized training</li> <li>• Documentation on indigenous knowledge</li> <li>• Standardization of descriptors</li> <li>• Technical/ Financial Assistant</li> </ul>
<p><b>18. Developing monitoring and early warning systems for loss of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same constraints as in activity 15, 16, 17; especially GIS &amp; Remote sensing.</li> <li>• Lack of expertise</li> <li>• Lack of effective information on genetic erosion at local level/ ecosystem level</li> <li>• Lack of Basic research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop biodiversity action plans</li> <li>• Establish basic research</li> <li>• Access to GIS/ RS systems</li> <li>• Technical/ financial assistance</li> </ul>
<p><b>19. Expanding and improving education and training</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of sufficient funds (for specialized training)</li> <li>• lack of specialized training including degree training (e. g. Taxonomy, Biotechnology, GIS/RS, etc)</li> <li>• Lack of appropriate media for training material</li> <li>• Lack of exchange of training experts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening networks</li> <li>• Broadening target groups</li> <li>• Strengthening inter-universities collaboration</li> <li>• Develop specialized training (including high degree education and training of trainers)</li> <li>• Combine training into research project</li> </ul>

<p><b>20. Promoting public awareness of the value of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture conservation and use</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of awareness of policy makers</li> <li>• Lack of public awareness strategies</li> <li>• Lack of appropriate training</li> <li>• Lack of collaboration/coordination with relevant public awareness organization (extension services)</li> <li>• Lack of public awareness technology and facilities</li> <li>• Lack of Farmer targeted public awareness program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of public awareness strategies, policies of different audiences</li> <li>• Establish mechanisms to strengthen NGOs</li> <li>• Technology transfer in public awareness</li> </ul>
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**Justification**

Landraces play an important role in the agricultural systems of the CWANA region. They are sources of sustainable income particularly in areas where improved varieties do not provide for adequate production. They have not received adequate attention from researchers and conservers. Landraces of under utilized and neglected species offer possibility of additional income to farmers in the region. The overall objective is to contribute to enhance food security, poverty alleviation and ecosystem conservation in the CWANA region, through a community-based approach and through the sustainable use of landraces of both major crops and underutilised and neglected species.

**Goal**

Sustainable conservation and use of landraces through community based systems

**Outputs**

- A greater exchange of germplasm of landraces among communities within each country
- The enhancement of the value of landraces and their greater competitiveness in the market
- A proper documentation on the performance of landraces in various areas/ecological niches, the status of their genetic diversity, threats of erosion and information on indigenous knowledge
- Greater public awareness on the importance of landraces within agricultural systems

**Activities****- Immediate activities**

- The most urgent action will consist in gathering information on the status of NGOs in the region and their involvement in activities on this domain. The list of these NGOs along with lists of farmer associations active in the region will be compiled by each country thorough the assistance of national programmes.
- On the basis of country assessments, a regional framework for the implementation of the project will be developed to reflect the socio-economic, institutional and cultural diversity across the region.
- Development of the regional project proposal and identification of stakeholders
- Strengthening of key partners (NGOs, farmer communities, institutions, networks) that will be playing a major role at the onset of the project.

**- Medium-long term activities**

- Compilation of a list of landraces used across the region. The list will contain information on their distribution, uses and economic potentials.
- Identification of “hot spots” in each country where to conduct initial community-driven activities
- Organization of fairs as means to promote greater exchange of germplasm among farmers within same communities or farmers among distant communities within each country.
- Establishment of close collaboration with *ex situ* gene banks to collect and preserve landraces under threat of erosion as a complementary measure to the on farm conservation activities.
- Follow up on exchanged material in order to monitor impact of uses in new areas and develop data base to collate this information across the region
- Carry out public awareness activities at various level to promote uses of landraces in sustainable way and encourage policy makers to support communities in safeguarding local genetic resources
- Undertake studies in collaboration with the formal sector in order to identify opportunities for transformation of products and find new markets for underutilized and neglected species
- Carry out decentralized breeding through participatory process on some selected underutilized species of high market potentials