

**FAO International Technical Conference
on Plant Genetic Resources**

**REPORT OF THE SUB-REGIONAL
PREPARATORY MEETING FOR
SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**Kadoma, Zimbabwe
19-21 September 1995**



**Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
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Nations**



Note by FAO

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INTRODUCTION

1. The sub-regional preparatory meeting of the FAO Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources for Southern Africa was held in Kadoma, Zimbabwe, from 19 to 21 September 1995. The meeting was organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in association with the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), the SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC) and the Department of Research and Specialist Services of the Ministry of Agriculture, Zimbabwe.
2. Participants from each of the following countries attended the meeting: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition, a number of observers were present including representatives of SPGRC, International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs), and non-governmental organizations.

OPENING CEREMONY

3. Dr. K. D. Opare, FAO Deputy Representative for Zimbabwe chaired the opening session. Dr. Regina Ntombi Gata, Director of Research in the Ministry of Agriculture welcomed participants on behalf of the host country. Dr. Opare delivered the welcome address on behalf of the FAO Representative for Eastern and Southern Africa, Mrs. Victoria Sekitoleko. Dr. Frank Attere, the IPGRI Regional Director for Sub-Saharan Africa and Dr. Godwin Mkamanga, Director of SPGRC, then delivered their addresses.
4. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Boniface Ndimande delivered the opening address. He welcomed participants to Zimbabwe and declared the meeting open.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

5. The meeting elected Dr. Joseph Gopo of Zimbabwe as Chairman. Prof. Jameson Seyani (Malawi) and Dr. Roger Ellis (South Africa) were elected as Vice-Chairmen.



6. The programme of work of the meeting was adopted.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES, ITS PREPARATORY PROCESS AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

7. The aims and background of the FAO Fourth International Technical Conference were introduced by Dr. H. David Cooper of the FAO Secretariat. The International Technical Conference was expected to adopt the first Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and a costed Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources. These documents were being prepared through a country-driven process with opportunities for country input at several stages. Firstly, countries had prepared Country Reports. Secondly, sub-regional meetings prepared sub-regional synthesis reports and made recommendations for the Global Plan of Action. The intergovernmental Commission on Plant Genetic Resources was providing guidance to the process. Finally, governments would consider final drafts of the two documents at the International Technical Conference itself in Leipzig, Germany, June 17 - 23, 1996.

8. FAO Conference had requested the preparation of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action in order to provide a scientifically sound basis for the international funding mechanism for the realization of Farmers' Rights. The two documents would be elements of the FAO Global System for the conservation and utilization of PGR. UNCED, through Agenda 21, Chapter 14, and the Diplomatic Conference for the adoption of the text of the Convention on Biological Diversity, through Resolution 3 of the Nairobi Final Act, had called for the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action to be developed through the International Technical Conference.

9. The objectives of the Global Plan of Action would be to promote the conservation and sustainable utilization of PGR and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use. The Plan was intended to provide the framework for future international collaboration in the field of plant genetic resources. Detailed projects and programmes would be developed during the implementation of the Plan, taking into consideration the particular needs of countries and regions. The Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources would provide assessments of the state of



diversity, the state of the art of relevant methodologies and technologies, and the state of capacity for conserving, utilizing and sharing benefits.

PRESENTATION OF COUNTRY REPORTS AND SUB-REGIONAL SYNTHESIS REPORTS

10. Country representatives presented brief overviews of their Country Reports highlighting major gaps and needs. Full Country Reports will be made available at the International Technical Conference in Leipzig.
11. The draft sub-regional synthesis report for Southern Africa was presented by Mr. Ehsan Dullo, FAO/IPGRI consultant. After appropriate amendments, the synthesis report was endorsed as a useful input for the preparation of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources (Annex).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

12. It was agreed that the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action should address plant genetic resources for food, agriculture and forestry including medicinal plants. The meeting proposed the following recommendations for the Global Plan of Action:

Policy and Institutional Aspects

Strengthening national programmes

- (i) Support from the Global Plan of Action should be provided to build and/or strengthen integrated national programmes for PGR conservation and use.
 - Since the ultimate purpose of PGR conservation and utilization is to maintain biodiversity, and to contribute to sustainable agriculture and national development, National Programmes should be able to assess -- and address -- national needs for PGR. Needs should be met from material conserved in-country either *in situ* (including on-farm) or *ex situ*, and through access to germplasm conserved elsewhere.



- Through National PGR Committees or similar bodies, National Programmes should support the development of appropriate national policies and strategies for PGR.
- National Programmes should also develop linkages between major players or users of PGR including, the private sector, NGOs, farmers' organizations and women's groups, and research and educational institutions.

Sub-regional and regional collaboration

(ii) Collaboration at the regional and/or sub-regional levels should be strengthened in order to rationalize PGR conservation and promote utilization. The aims of such collaboration should also include coordination of activities with the IARCs.

(iii) Model legal agreements should be developed, where necessary, to protect the rights of sovereign states over national collections located in regional or sub-regional, as well as international, genebanks.

(iv) The SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC) -- a programme of Southern Africa Centre for Cooperation in Agriculture, Natural Resources Research and Training (SACCAR) -- is as a useful functional model programme, linked to agricultural research networks, for sub-regional collaboration and the strengthening of national activities in PGR conservation and utilization.

(v) Plant specific working groups should be established and/or strengthened to improve conservation and utilization, and to facilitate exchange of germplasm, information and technologies.

Global mechanisms and funding

(vi) The Global Plan of Action should promote agreements to facilitate access to genetic resources whilst ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits in line with the Convention on Biological Diversity. Pending a definitive agreement, the FAO Code of Conduct for Collection and Transfer of Germplasm should be promoted.

(vii) Germplasm held in trust by the IARCs must not be patented or subject to other forms of intellectual property rights, without the prior informed consent of the country of origin.

(viii) The Global Plan of Action should promote solutions to the outstanding issue of PGR collected prior to the entry into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity.



(ix) An international funding mechanism should be established to support the Global Plan of Action. The management and disbursement of funds should be determined by the parties to the Global Plan of Action.

(x) The need for national commitment to support sustainable PGR activities through specific funding allocations from governments is also recognized.

(xi) Farmers' Rights should be implemented through the international funding mechanism and through other mechanisms.

(xii) The Global Plan of Action should promote the development and transfer of technologies that promote the conservation and sustainable utilization of PGR.

Training

(xiii) The Global Plan of Action should support training and institutional capacity building within the context of integrated national and/or regional programmes. Opportunities for collaboration in training at the sub-regional and regional levels should be identified and promoted.

Public awareness

(xiv) The Global Plan of Action should promote activities to raise awareness on the value of PGR amongst the public, decision-makers, and educational institutions. This should be considered an integral activity of National Programmes, and should also be promoted at international levels.

Technical Aspects

Inventories, documentation and collection

(xv) The Global Plan of Action should provide support to National Programmes to carry out inventories of PGR conserved *in situ* and *ex situ*, and for the development of documentation systems, including database development. Collecting missions should focus on landraces of subsistence crops, and other threatened plant species of actual or potential use. A mechanism to support emergency collecting of such PGR should be put in place.

***In situ* conservation**

(xvi) The Global Plan of Action should promote *in situ* conservation and increased local PGR utilization, as part of an integrated conservation and utilization strategy. This should include on-farm conservation of landraces,



and the conservation of rangeland and forest resources. The role of NGOs should be promoted and the full involvement of farmers in the design and implementation of on-farm strategies should be ensured. Ecological research should be promoted to guide management of agricultural, rangeland and forest resources for sustainable utilization.

***Ex situ* conservation**

(xvii) The capacity for *ex situ* conservation should be strengthened, where appropriate, as part of an integrated conservation and utilization strategy, *inter alia* by:

- the rational organization of base, active and working collections;
- improvement of conservation technologies, including those appropriate for non-orthodox seeded and vegetatively propagated species;
- support for multiplication, characterization and regeneration of accessions;
- improvement or establishment of some new genebank facilities, including adequate seed testing facilities;
- strengthening of phytosanitary and biosafety activities; and
- appropriate collaboration between local community, national, sub-regional and/or regional, and international levels.

Utilization of landraces

(xviii) The Global Plan of Action should promote greater utilization of landraces, particularly in marginal environments where they appear to meet farmers needs. Genebanks should provide landrace germplasm to national programmes, NGOs and farmers' organizations for multiplication and distribution to farmers for their use. This might include the re-introduction of traditional varieties where they have been lost, and their transfer to new areas with similar agro-ecological conditions. Support should also be provided to promote the characterization, evaluation and use of landraces in national plant breeding programmes.

Plant breeding

(xix) Plant breeding activities should be strengthened at the regional, national and local levels as appropriate with particular emphasis on some strategic actions to promote greater use of genetic diversity in breeding programmes including:

- evaluation of conserved germplasm;
- pre-breeding activities;



- developing and implementing community-level participatory approaches to plant breeding;
- greater emphasis on underutilized species for the diversification of agriculture;
- greater collaboration between breeders and genebank managers.

The research agenda of the IARCs should be broadened to encompass a wider range of species.

Seed production and distribution

(xx) Promote on-farm, farmer-level seed production, and support informal seed exchange mechanisms, including through NGOs, as a complement to the formal seed system.

(xxi) The effects of seed certification regulations and legislation on PGR conservation and utilization should be reviewed, particularly as it concerns the informal sector.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFIC TO THE SADC REGION

13. The meeting made the following observations and recommendations:
- (a) The Southern Africa Development Community, provides a framework for political and economic cooperation among the 12 member States, and includes a number of programmes to promote technical cooperation. Emphasis should be on strengthening already established programmes in SADC.
 - (b) Countries of the SADC region should participate actively in the FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, through the attendance of technical experts and policy makers. FAO is urged to raise funds to support such participation.
 - (c) Countries should be encouraged to update their Country Reports, according to the FAO guidelines. Updated reports should be submitted to the FAO Secretariat before the end of November 1995.



CLOSING REMARKS

14. In their closing remarks, Drs. Cooper, Mkamanga and Attere, thanked the chairman, vice-chairmen and participants for their successful work, and the Ministry of Agriculture and the local organizing team for hosting the event. Dr. Regina Ntombi Gata, Director of Research in the Ministry of Agriculture, congratulated the participants of the meeting on their work, and officially closed the meeting.