



AGP/GPA-11

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has the honour to invite the National Focal Points for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) and other relevant stakeholders to contribute to the review of the *Genebank Standards*.

The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, at its Twelfth Regular Session, agreed on the need for revising the *Genebank Standards* in order to ensure that plant genetic resources are conserved under conditions that meet recognized and appropriate standards, based on current and available technological and scientific knowledge. The Commission also requested FAO, in cooperation with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Treaty), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and other relevant international institutions, to undertake this review for consideration by the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources (Working Group), at its next session.

The *Genebank Standards*, published in 1994, were developed in response to the need for international standards for *ex situ* plant conservation. Since its publication, there have been considerable changes in the policy and technical landscape of conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. These include, among others, the adoption of the *Global Plan of Action for Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* in 1996 and the coming into force of the International Treaty in 2004. Technical advances have also been made in seed storage technology, information technology and documentation procedures that impact PGRFA conservation and underline the need for updating the genebank standards.

... The *Draft Updated Genebank Standards* (currently available in English only) has been developed by FAO in collaboration with Bioversity International, the Global Crop Diversity Trust and the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission and reviewed by a technical consultation organized jointly with Bioversity International.

In order to ensure a thorough review of the current draft, FAO invites the National Focal Points for PGRFA to provide inputs to the *Draft Updated Genebank Standards*, which may be downloaded from the FAO website at: <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/core-themes/theme/seeds-pgr/itwg/5th/en/>, by **16 February 2011 by email: ITWG-PGRFA@fao.org**, or by fax: (+39) 06570-56499. It also invites the National Focal Points to circulate widely this request to other relevant stakeholders for additional inputs and suggestions. The *Draft Updated Genebank Standards* will be presented for consideration by the Working Group at its Fifth Session to be held in Rome from 27-29 April 2011.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the National Focal Points for PGRFA the assurance of its high consideration.

Rome, 11 January 2011