

CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/REPORT

Commission on
Genetic Resources
for Food and Agriculture

**Rome, Italy
2-4 July 2001**

**Intergovernmental
Technical Working
Group on Plant
Genetic Resources
for Food and
Agriculture**

First Session



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/REPORT

**COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE**

REPORT OF THE FIRST SESSION

OF THE

INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON

**PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE**

Rome, Italy, 2-4 July 2001

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Rome, 2001**

The documents prepared for the First Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture are available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/AGRICULT/AGP/AGPS/PGR/ITWG/docsp1.htm>

They may also be obtained from:

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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

REPORT OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Rome, Italy, 2-4 July 2001

I. INTRODUCTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

1. The First Session of the Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture met in Rome, Italy, from 2 to 4 July 2001. The formal opening of the meeting was preceded by a tribute to the late Mr Umberto Menini, former Chief of the Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service, AGPS.
2. The meeting was opened by Ms Louise Fresco, Assistant Director-General, Agriculture Department, who welcomed delegates and observers. Noting that this was the First Session of the Intergovernmental Working Group, she recalled the statutes agreed by the Council. She highlighted the importance of the session, in ensuring follow-up to the Leipzig Conference, and in guiding FAO's work on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.
3. The Working Group elected Mr Eng Siang Lim (Malaysia) as Chair, Mr Brad Fraleigh (Canada) and Mr Abebe Demissie (Ethiopia) as Vice-Chairs, and Mr Åsmund Asdal (Norway) as *Rapporteur*.
4. The meeting Agenda as adopted is given in *Appendix A*.
5. The Chair reviewed the mandate of the Working Group, given to it by the Commission at its Eighth Regular Session: 'to guide the implementation and review of the *Global Plan of Action*, in particular: (i) defining the reporting format and indicators for monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*; (ii) guiding the development of the second *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (once the negotiations for the revised International Undertaking have been completed); and (iii) guiding the further development of the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources (WIEWS)".
6. Mr José Esquinas-Alcázar, Secretary of the Commission, noted that the Working Group was established as a technical subsidiary body of the Commission to provide guidance in the area of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. He further noted that the rolling *Global Plan of Action*, the periodic report on the *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*, the World Information and Early Warning System, and networks for technical cooperation and the exchange of information and genetic resources, were components of the FAO Global System on Plant Genetic Resources. He reported on the outcome of the negotiations in the Commission, in the preceding week, for the revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources. The text of the Undertaking, as prepared by the Commission, would be submitted to the Thirty-first Session of the Conference in November 2001. The text includes articles on the *Global Plan of Action*, International Plant Genetic Resources Networks and a Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. He noted the provision that Contracting Parties should promote the effective implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, through national actions and, as appropriate, international cooperation to provide a coherent framework, *inter alia*, for capacity-building.

7. A representative of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity noted that the Conference of the Parties of the Convention had welcomed the outcome of the Leipzig International Technical Conference, including the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*. The Conference of the Parties had also welcomed the contribution that the *Global Plan of Action* would make to the implementation of the Convention and endorsed its priorities and policy recommendations. He noted that the role of the *Global Plan of Action* and *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources* is recognized in the Convention's programme of work on agricultural biodiversity adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its Fifth Meeting in 2000. FAO had contributed to the development of the programme of work and was invited to support its implementation.¹

II. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

8. Mr Murthi Anishetty, Secretary of the Working Group, introduced the progress report on the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.² The report was based on 109 responses to a questionnaire received from National Focal Points. It was noted that the report was limited in length, and did not aim to provide details on all activities. It was observed that different countries had different priorities.

9. The Working Group agreed that the report indicated that there had been considerable progress in implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* – largely through national efforts – since the last report had been considered in 1999. About two-thirds of the activities reported had been financed from national budgets. This demonstrated the substantial level of commitment by countries for the *Plan*. It noted, however, that implementation of the *Plan* is constrained in many countries by lack of adequate financial resources. In this context, it was noted that the Global Environmental Facility had recently approved its new operational programme no. 13, on agricultural biodiversity.

10. The need to reinforce coordination between stakeholders within countries was emphasized. Recognizing that priorities varied among countries, the Working Group considered that the following areas might require greater emphasis in the future: support for seed production and distribution; assisting farmers in restoring genetic resources in situations of recurrent drought; regeneration of *ex situ* collections; *in situ* conservation (including understanding of on-farm management), and capacity-building.

11. It was recognized that implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* (in particular activities related to the *in situ* conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture), needed to take account of global change phenomena, including climate change, the increased use of genetically modified crops, and threats to *in situ* conservation from invasive species. Such issues might need to be analysed further in preparation of the second *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.

12. It was suggested that future reports give more attention to the activities of stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations and farmers' organizations, and to linkages between activities, with greater use being made of charts and graphics. Questionnaires should also be sent to international organizations and other relevant stakeholders such as scientific societies, industry organizations and civil society organizations, that should be encouraged to report on relevant activities in coordination with National Focal Points. The Working Group requested that, subject

¹ Relevant decisions are described in CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/Inf.2.

² CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/2.

to confidentiality of information, where specified, the data deriving from the questionnaire be made available in the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

III. MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE *GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE*

13. The Secretariat introduced a paper on monitoring implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, which included a draft list of indicators and proposals for the reporting format.³

14. The Working Group emphasized that monitoring and evaluation should be built into all activities included in the *Global Plan of Action*, but be kept as simple as possible to avoid undue burdens on countries. The need to accommodate different national and regional priorities was also recognized. The global monitoring efforts should be based on monitoring by stakeholders at the national level. This could be facilitated through a clearing-house or similar mechanism (or a window in an existing clearing-house mechanism), to promote information exchange within countries and strengthen stakeholder cooperation and thereby contribute to enhancing the capacity of national programmes.

15. The Working Group considered that the proposals on indicators in the document were an excellent basis for further work and, with a view to their further improvement, made the following suggestions:

- A conceptual framework should be developed, such as the commonly used “driving force-status-response” model. Proposed indicators should be reviewed in the light of this framework.
- A core set of indicators (that would, as far as possible, be quantitative) should be identified: ideally one, or a few, for each activity. All countries would be encouraged to use this key set, supplemented by optional additional indicators. Where feasible, indicators should be developed in common with those required for other relevant processes, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Higher-order indicators (such as those for genetic diversity, genetic erosion and genetic vulnerability) should be developed, and if feasible be derived from existing indicators.
- There is a need to establish benchmark data (the information provided in Country Reports for the Leipzig process might be useful in this regard) and to assess trends.
- The survey questions should be directly related to information required for the indicators.

16. It was agreed that the indicators and reporting format should be further developed, in light of these comments, principally through an expert group representing the regions and stakeholder groups. The expert group should be formed as soon as possible, and preferably before the Ninth Regular Session of the Commission. In order to facilitate the development of common indicators, where feasible, experts involved in indicator development in other processes, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, should be included in the group.

³ CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/3, and CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/Inf.1.

17. The Working Group requested that a revised proposal for the indicators and reporting format, and for pilot projects, be presented to the Ninth Regular Session of the Commission for further guidance.

18. The Working Group agreed that pilot activities should be carried out by FAO, in collaboration with the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute, in selected, representative countries during 2002, to evaluate the proposed indicators and reporting format. Meanwhile, the survey conducted in 2002, for the Tenth Regular Session of the Commission, would use the approach used for the 2000 survey.⁴

19. The 2004 and subsequent surveys should take account of lessons learned from pilot activities in 2002 and 2003. If possible, the Commission should finalize the format for the extended survey, based on the results of the pilot studies at its Tenth Regular Session in 2003. The results of the 2004 survey would contribute to the preparation of the second *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*.

IV. UPDATING THE REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

20. The Secretariat introduced proposals and options for updating the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.⁵ The Working Group agreed that the second *Report* should be prepared for consideration for adoption by the Twelfth Regular Session of the Commission in 2007. A draft of the *Report* should accordingly be completed for consideration by the Working Group in the second half of 2006. It recalled that the *Report* should provide objective information and analysis, as a basis for updating the rolling *Global Plan of Action*.

21. The second *Report* should include a comparison of the status of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, its conservation and use, and related knowledge, with the status at the time of the first *Report*, allowing trends to be identified. The *Report* should cover the role of plant genetic resources in sustainable development, and should take into account the context of the framework provided by the revised International Undertaking.

22. It was agreed that the updated *Report* should be supplemented by thematic studies, to fill gaps, including topics not adequately addressed in the first *Report*, and important new topics that have arisen since its publication. The suggestions in paragraph 7 of CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/4 were considered to be a useful list. It was suggested that the following topics should also be considered: lesser known but potentially valuable crop plants, use of new methodologies and technologies for conservation and evaluation, and participatory plant breeding.

23. It was emphasized that the thematic studies should focus on specific areas of the Commission's mandate, and the extent to which they could be addressed would depend on resources available. Full use should be made of existing information and the work of other bodies. Preparation of new thematic reports should not take place at the expense of adequate attention to updating topics covered in the existing report, in particular *in situ* conservation; evaluation and regeneration of *ex situ* collections; genetic enhancement and pre-breeding, as well as linkages among topics.

24. The Working Group agreed that the preparation of the second *Report* should be integrated with monitoring activities, and the further development of WIEWS. As appropriate,

⁴ and reported in CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/2.

⁵ CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/4.

some of the issues related to the preparation of the second *Report* could be incorporated in the revised questionnaire on the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. Linkages with reporting mechanisms in the Convention of Biological Diversity and other processes should be ensured and efforts be made to develop and use common indicators. Case studies in selected representative countries could provide useful inputs, in particular to the thematic studies.

25. The Secretariat was requested to prepare a more detailed proposal for consideration by the Commission at its next regular session.

V. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WORLD INFORMATION AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (WIEWS)

26. The Secretariat introduced the Progress Report on the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.⁶ The Working Group appreciated the substantial progress made in the past biennium, concerning, in particular:

- (i) the inclusion of the documentation of activities resulting from monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* for the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;
- (ii) the integration of the Seed Information System; and
- (iii) the implementation of a multi-language function and a dynamic list of links to on-line searchable information systems.

27. The importance of the World Information and Early Warning System as a supportive tool for monitoring the implementation of the *Plan* and updating the report on the *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, was stressed.

28. The Working Group encouraged the WIEWS correspondents and National Focal Points to collaborate closely with the WIEWS system. It recommended that the World Information and Early Warning System continue to be developed in a simple and cost-effective way and be linked to national information systems on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Cooperation with existing national and international databases on seed and on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and the possibility of moving towards a distributed database model, should also be explored.

29. The Working Group recommended that the Secretariat continue assisting member countries in building capacity for the management of information related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. It recognized that early warning of plant genetic resources loss requires monitoring available information on genetic diversity and threats to it, including disasters. Early warning would be improved through the development and application of indicators, as well as through enhanced capacity at national and community levels.

⁶ CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/6.

VI. FACILITATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE *GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE*

30. The Secretariat introduced document CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/5, which contained four options for facilitating the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*: the Regular Programme Approach; the Project Model Approach; the Consultative Forum Approach; and the *Plan Facility* Approach. The Working Group noted that the Commission had requested that FAO play a proactive role in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the *Plan* and recognized that document CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/5 detailed several useful approaches in this regard.

31. Recalling the statements of the Leipzig Conference, and recommendations of the Commission, the Working Group highlighted the importance of the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* by all stakeholders and recognized the need for a dynamic and flexible approach to promote implementation of *Plan* activities as determined by countries' own priorities.

32. Members expressed diverse views about the four options. The International Plant Genetic Resources Institute stated that it found the *Plan Facility* option attractive, and would welcome its further elaboration in particular. The Global Forum on Agricultural Research supported this option, noting the importance of National Agricultural Research Systems in implementing the *Global Plan of Action*, as indicated for example in the Dresden Declaration on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The Facility option was envisaged as having many features in common with the Global IPM Facility. Therefore, a representative of the IPM Facility was invited to describe its main features to the Working Group.

33. It was noted that the analysis presented by the Secretariat had been developed before the Commission's Sixth Extraordinary Session. The options to promote implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* by all stakeholders might also ultimately contribute very usefully to the implementation of the agreed plans and programmes envisaged under the International Undertaking. The Working Group recommended that all options need to be considered. Therefore, it requested the Secretariat to elaborate further all the options presented for consideration by the Commission at its Ninth Regular Session. In doing so, the interface with the International Undertaking and the transparency of each option should be taken into account.

VII. MATTERS RELATED TO PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ARISING FROM THE FIFTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY: STUDY ON POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF GENETIC USE RESTRICTION TECHNOLOGIES (GURTs) ON AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

34. The Secretariat briefly introduced the Programme of Work on agricultural biodiversity of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and presented the document on the potential impacts of genetic use restriction technologies (GURTs) on agricultural biodiversity and agricultural production systems.⁷

35. The Working Group welcomed the existing cooperation between FAO and the Convention on Biological Diversity, particularly in the context of the Programme of Work on agricultural biodiversity. It acknowledged the overall accuracy of the technical section of the report on GURTs and that the analysis of potential impacts needs to be well balanced. Detailed comments on the document, stressing both potential advantages and disadvantages of GURTs,

⁷ CGRFA/WG-PGR/1/01/7, CGRFA/WG-PGR/1/01/Inf.2.

were provided by many delegates with the goal of improving the report's balance. Concerns were raised by some delegates on potential negative aspects. Discussion was held on the flow of material in further breeding and of seed-saving practices used by farmers in traditional low-seed replacement systems and the consequences of this for the diffusion of improved varieties by farmers. Some members highlighted the potential for encouraging innovation and increased investment by the private sector. The Working Group noted that food security aspects should also be introduced in the document. The Working Group also noted that the report should make it clear that definitive analyses and conclusions on possible impacts required more information and such information might become available if and when products incorporating GURTs are submitted to regulatory bodies prior to commercialization.

36. Some members of the Working Group supported the step-by-step and case-by-case approach, which is consistent with the regulatory frameworks in place in many countries. The need for capacity-building on biosafety at national level was highlighted by countries as essential in following this approach. Some also suggested that this approach be complemented by a more strategic assessment, taking into account the precautionary approach, in view of potential cumulative effects. Some members were of the opinion that the use of GURTs was not justified, whereas some others highlighted scenarios where the use of GURTs might be advantageous.

37. The Working Group agreed that this document would be modified by the Secretariat in light of the discussion held and information contained in written comments that may be submitted to the Secretariat by the end of July 2001. The revised version will be submitted to the Ninth Regular Session of the Commission for its consideration. The result of this will be submitted to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

APPENDIX A

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON
PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE****First Session**

Rome, Italy, 2-4 July 2001

AGENDA

1. Organizational matters
 - 1.1 Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair(s)
 - 1.2 Appointment of the *Rapporteur*
 - 1.3 Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable
2. Progress Report on the Implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*
3. Monitoring the Implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*
 - 3.1 Defining the Indicators and the Reporting Format for Monitoring the Implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*
 - 3.2 Updating the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*
4. Facilitating the Implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*
5. Progress Report on the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
6. Matters related to Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture arising from the Fifth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity: Study on Potential Impacts of Genetic Use Restriction Technologies (GURTs) on Agricultural Biodiversity and Agricultural Production Systems
7. Any other business
8. Adoption of the Report of the Working Group

APPENDIX B

LIST OF DOCUMENTS**WORKING DOCUMENTS**

CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/1	Provisional Agenda
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/1 Add.1	Provisional Annotated Agenda and Provisional Timetable
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/2	Progress Report on the Implementation of the <i>Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture</i>
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/3	Monitoring the Implementation of the <i>Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture</i>
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/4	Updating the <i>Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture</i>
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/5	Facilitating the Implementation of the <i>Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture</i>
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/6	Progress Report on the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS)
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/7	Potential Impacts of Genetic Use Restriction Technologies (GURTs) on Agricultural Biodiversity and Agricultural Production Systems

INFORMATION DOCUMENTS

CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/Inf.1	Reporting Format for Monitoring the Implementation of the <i>Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture</i>
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/Inf.2 (English)	Matters of relevance arising from the Fifth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/Inf.3 (English)	National Focal Points of the <i>Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture</i>
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/Inf.4 (English)	Correspondents to the Global Network of the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/Inf.5 (not available in Arabic)	List of Documents
CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/Inf.6	Statutes of the International Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture as established by the Seventh Session of the CGRFA

APPENDIX C

**MEMBERS OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ELECTED AT THE EIGHTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

Rome, Italy, 19-23 April 1999

<i>Composition (no. of countries per region)</i>	<i>Country</i>
Africa (5)	Angola Democratic Republic of Congo Ethiopia Morocco Senegal
Asia (5)	India Indonesia Japan Malaysia Philippines
Europe (5)	Germany Italy Malta Norway Portugal
Latin America and the Caribbean (5)	Chile Colombia Dominica Ecuador Mexico
Near East (3)	Egypt Iran, Islamic Republic of Libya
North America (2)	Canada United States of America
Southwest Pacific (2)	Australia Papua New Guinea

Arabic version - APPENDIX D – ANNEXE D – APÉNDICE D

Arabic version
LIST OF DELEGATES AND OBSERVERS
LISTE DES DELEGUES ET OBSERVATEURS
LISTA DE DELEGADOS Y OBSERVADORES

Chairman : Eng Siang LIM
Président : (Malaysia)
Presidente

Vice-Chairmen : Brad FRALEIGH
Vice-Présidents : (Canada)
Vicepresidentes
: Abebe DEMISSIE
: (Ethiopia)

Rapporteur : Åsmund ASDAL
: (Norway)

Arabic version

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**MEMBRES DU GROUPE DE TRAVAIL TECHNIQUE INTERGOUVERNEMENTAL SUR LES RESSOURCES
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