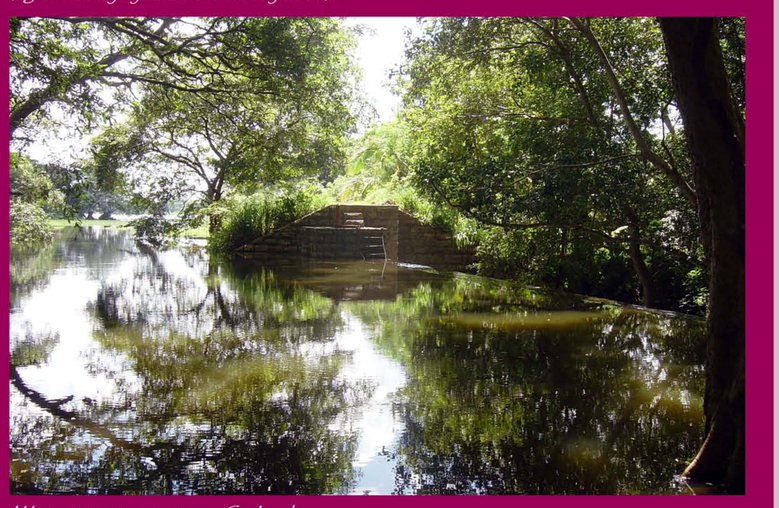
Conservation and Adaptive Management of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System

The programme aims to establish the basis for international recognition, dynamic conservation and adaptive management of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) and their agricultural biodiversity, knowledge systems, food and livelihood security and cultures throughout the world.

Heritage for the Future

Worldwide, myriads of agricultural systems and landscapes have been created, shaped and maintained by generations of farmers, herders and forest peoples, based on diverse natural resources, using locally adapted management practices. Building on practical knowledge, experience and culture, these ingenious *agri-cultural* systems reflect the evolution of humankind, the diversity of its knowledge, and its profound relationship with nature. These systems have *resulted not only in outstanding landscapes, maintenance and adaptation of globally significant agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems and valuable cultural inheritance, but, above all, in the sustained provision of multiple goods and services, food and livelihood security and quality of life.*

Mananara agriculture – Madagascar
Madagascar's long isolation from the neighboring continents has resulted in a unique mix of agricultural biodiversity, many found nowhere else in the world. Its unspoiled natural habitats and high biodiversity are maintained through their traditional practices (agroforestry systems and rice systems).



Wewe irrigation system – Sri Lanka
The ancient irrigation systems of Sri Lanka have been perfected through consistent improvements and construction over 1600 years. The tank irrigation system blends seamlessly to the nature, which has been maintained carefully through the conservation of a diverse array of plants and trees that occupy the surrounding land.

Ifugao Rice Terraces, Philippines
Rice terraces cascading down the slopes of Ifugao, present a dramatic vista. They represent the collective efforts of countless generations of farmers who have developed an ingenious irrigation system that has allowed them farming along the contours of the mountains and develop rice varieties that survive at over 1,000 meters.

Oasis of the Maghreb – Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia
The oases of the Maghreb region are green islands flourishing in a constraining and harsh environment. Home to a diversified and highly intensive and productive system managed through traditional local resource-management. These ancient systems produce a surprising variety of date palms, intertwined with trees and crops, fruits and vegetables, cereals and forages, medicinal and aromatic plants.

Programme Goal and Targets

The overall programme goal is to recognise the contribution of traditional and family agricultural systems in poverty reduction, food security and sustainable natural resources management and "protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements", specifically within agricultural systems. The programme shall promote "dynamic conservation" approach that:

- Allows farmers to nurture and adapt the systems and sustainably use the biodiversity they have developed, while improving their living condition;
- Recognises right to food and cultural diversity of local farmers, community members and indigenous peoples.
- Crystallizes the need for the approaches that integrate the *in situ* conservation of genetic resources with related traditional knowledge and adapted technologies, as a way to ensure continuous co-evolution with a changing environment and human pressure.

The programme is being implemented for a 5-year period in ten countries, and ultimately, will expand to a long- term open ended programme that could encompass 100 to 150 Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems worldwide.

Rice- Fish system, China
A Chinese clay plate dating to the Han Dynasty 2000 years ago shows a fish swimming from its pond into a rice field. Ecological symbiosis exists in the rice-fish agricultural system, fish not only provide food, fertilizer to rice, regulates micro-climatic conditions, eats larvae and weeds in the flooded fields, reducing the cost of labor needed for fertilizer and insect control.

Lemon Gardens, Italy
The renowned landscapes of Italy's costiera sorrentina are a remarkable example of human ingenuity. Lemon pergolas, chestnut windbreaks, stone walls and narrow footpaths have been built and preserved over centuries.

Chiloé agriculture, Chile
The Archipelago of Chiloé, in the south of Chile, is a rich land in mythology, native potatoes, forests and cultures. It is one of the few places of the planet where the virgin forest still exists, and it is distinguished by its exclusive agricultural biodiversity conserved and managed through indigenous agricultural system.

Waruwaru system, Peru
Farmers in the high Andes of Peru dig trenches around their fields. Water fills the trenches and is warmed by sunlight. When temperatures drop at night, the water gives off warm steam that serves as frost protection for several varieties of potato – all locally developed and conserved. A system perfected over centuries.

Programme Partners

GIAHS programme is a Partnership Initiative of World Summit On Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg 2002) with the support of Global Environment Facility (GEF) and in collaboration with country partners, UNDP, UNESCO, CBD, UNU, IFAD, IUCN, Bioversity International, bilateral donors, and many others.

Contacts

FAO welcome submissions of GIAHS sites/systems proposal and country/organisational interest.
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For more detailed information on GIAHS systems, please visit: http://www.fao.org/sd/giahs