

THE FOURTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

**REALIZING THE RIGHT TO FOOD:
SUSTAINABLE USE OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY**

Press Release 16th March 2011

A Multi-stakeholder side event on “Realizing The Right to Food: Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Nutrition Security” took place at the Bali International Convention Centre in Bali, Indonesia on 15 March 2011, during the Fourth Regular Session of Governing Body (GB4) of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA). The event was sponsored by the Spanish Government and organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in close collaboration with Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The meeting was convened jointly by the Partnerships with Civil Society and Private Sector Branch, the Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division and the Right to Food, Agricultural Development Economics Division of FAO. The meeting was chaired by Professor José Esquinas-Alcázar, Director of the Chair of Studies on Hunger and Poverty, University of Córdoba, Spain.

The side event has provided an opportunity to raise awareness and build consensus among the participants on the particular value and the contribution of plant genetic resources to dietary diversity, health and nutrition in the context of the realization of the right to food by sharing experiences and lessons learned for effective policy and programme planning as well as for evidence based research.

It brought around 80 participants attending GB4, experts from the fields of agricultural and rural development, environment, food and nutrition security. The Panel consisted of representatives from governments, regional inter-governmental bodies, research and academic institutions, civil society and non-governmental organizations and private sector.

From a national and regional perspective, representatives from the Governments of Bhutan and Bolivia and representatives from the Southern African Development Community and the European Union presented their policies, strategies, plans and programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of diversity of crops for food and nutrition security from a human rights based approach. Representatives from farmers’ organizations, private sector and research institutions presented their views, challenges and recommendations in achieving food and nutrition security in the context of the right to food.

The Chair provided the summary of the presentations and discussions by all participants of the event. The contribution of the PGRFA to food and nutrition security needs to be addressed through a process of genuine dialogue and participation among key stakeholders as exemplified in the reformed

Committee on World Food Security (CFS)¹. All stakeholders recognize the necessity of ensuring access to and consumption of adequate food both in quantity as well as in quality in terms of variety, diversity, nutritional value and safety through sustainable use and conservation of Plant Genetic Resources.

The implementation of all the Treaty Articles requires greater public awareness where the roles of civil society and private sector can be important to put more political pressure. The plant genetic resources should not be treated as an isolated agenda and therefore a need to bridge between the developed and developing countries, food security and climate change, and urban and rural areas, would require greater coherence among different sectors and stakeholders to work together. Representative from the Bhutanese government quite rightly pointed out their national policy on Gross National Happiness with indicators showing a balance between human development, environmental conservation and economic growth within our limited natural resources. Representative from Bolivia highlighted the importance of adopting a multi-sectoral approach involving the active participation of social organizations in the definition and implementation of policies and laws related to food and nutrition security, food sovereignty and right to food, and considering the PGRFA as a key issue. The Bioversity International highlighted the importance of knowledge of foods that are part of the traditional food systems is imperative. The representative from Asian farmers gave a recommendation for a specific funding window for in situ conservation in order to protect farmers' rights in an effective way. Civil society participants highlighted the role of genetic resources to enhance food sovereignty and pointed out that unsustainable models of development on monoculture cropping lead to the loss of biodiversity. The Private sector representative emphasized the importance of contracting parties to include their genetic resources from the public domain in the multilateral system and to support the development of crops that contribute to the diversification of the diet and better nutrition.

The overall emphasis on the sustainable utilization of PGRFA for food and nutrition security within the Right to Food perspective should be articulated in future advocacy messages such as during the World Food Day events.

¹ The CFS now has a structure that allows input from all stakeholders at global, regional and national levels. It is comprised of a Bureau and Advisory Group, Plenary, a High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) and the Secretariat, <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-home/cfs-about/en/>