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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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Follow-up report to the Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture (cf. PC 119/5)

Guidance sought by the Programme Committee

The Programme Committee may wish to note progress in implementation of the recommendations accepted by the Management.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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PC124

1. This report has been prepared in follow-up to the Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture¹ which was considered by the Programme Committee in May 2016.
2. In line with FAO's policy on evaluations, this report provides an update on the status of implementation of the actions set out in the Management Response². As indicated in the Management Response, Management accepted both recommendations. Upon request by the Office of Evaluation (OED), the report introduces a Management Action Record Scoring (MAR Score) on a six-point scale, in which FAO Management self-assessed the level of adoption and implementation of recommendations.

Overall progress in the implementation of the accepted recommendations

3. FAO Management welcomed the findings and recommendations of the Evaluation. The 2016-2017 biennium has been very dynamic, both with regard to FAO's work on genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA) and to its work on biodiversity in the wider sense.
4. With regard to **recommendation 1**, Conference Resolution 4/2017 on The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and its Contribution to the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals recognized the Commission's strong normative role. This confirms the positive findings of the evaluation regarding the relevance, reputation and contribution of FAO's work on GRFA.
5. FAO, in December 2016, established a new Department on Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water. The Department encompasses several genetic resources and biodiversity related bodies and programmes, such as the Secretariats of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). It also coordinates FAO's biodiversity related work across offices.
6. The Commission Secretariat, in collaboration with all technical units, has made good progress in finalizing the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture that will be launched later in 2018. The Commission's Task Force for the Multi-Year Programme of Work has continued to bring together the ITWG Secretaries and colleagues from the genetic resources programmes of the technical units and plan the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.
7. Progress was made towards a more coordinated approach towards national focal points/coordinators; for example, the Circular State Letters issued by the Commission Secretariat are being copied to the national focal points of the Commission and of the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture, as well as to the secretariats of the sectoral intergovernmental working groups which then disseminate it to the sectoral national focal points. The updating of newly nominated National Focal Points on the website has become more immediate, and will further improve with the revamping of the Commission's website in 2018.
8. As requested by the Commission at its Sixteenth Session, a cross sectoral multi-donor trust fund for the Commission's Multi-year Programme of Work was established and has so far received funding from Norway and Switzerland. Extra-budgetary funding for sectorial continued to be attracted by some sectors.
9. The work of the Commission and of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Groups continues as Corporate Technical Activities in the Programme of Work and Budget. However, the technical work on GRFA, including the support to the implementation of the GPAs at country level, in some cases receives insufficient funding.

¹ PC 119/5

² PC 119/5 Supp 1

10. The Commission continued the development of normative guidelines, tools and standards that can be applied by its Members and other stakeholders: *The Voluntary Guidelines on the Conservation and Use of Crop Wild Relatives and Wild Food Plants* have been published in several languages, and the *Voluntary Guidelines on National Level Conservation and Use of Farmers' Varieties/Landraces* are under revision. The *Voluntary Guide for National Seed Policy Formulation* was instrumental for the development of the recently launched Costa Rican National Policy on Plant Genetic Resources 2017-2030. A modular practical guide to the Genebank Standards is being developed with the Crop Diversity Trust and experts. *Guidelines on Development of integrated multipurpose animal recording systems* were published and disseminated. The Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS) has been revised and serves for SDG indicator 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 monitoring.

11. The Commission has continued its crosscutting work on access and benefit sharing for GRFA (ABS), including the joint organization with the Treaty and the Convention on Biological Diversity of an international workshop on ABS, and established new work programmes on digital sequence information and on microorganisms and invertebrates. The cross-sectoral *State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* report that will be finalized in 2018 has benefitted from contributions of all technical units. With regard to strengthening the linkages between genetic resources for food and agriculture and climate change, the Commission Secretariat coordinated the preparation of a module on genetic resources of the Climate Smart Agriculture Sourcebook³ with inputs from all technical units.

12. With regard to strengthening partnerships, including with civil society and research and development organizations, to develop synergies and to spread FAO's good practice tools and normative products to a wider range of actors, FAO is currently undertaking a survey on community seed banks, jointly with Bioversity International. Genetic resources topics under the Commission's mandate were included in MoUs with organizations, such as CIRAD, INRA and IRD, and IUCN, while collaboration with traditional partners such as the CGIAR or the Global Crop Diversity Trust continued. In AnGR, partnership with a European consortium led to project GCP /GLO/680/EC IMAGE - Innovative Management of Animal Genetic Resources for ex situ conservation of animal genetic resources.

13. Close collaboration between FAO and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture has continued⁴. More specifically, collaboration between the Commission and the Treaty is on ABS, the Treaty's programme of work on sustainable use; in promoting global networking on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA; GLIS – WIEWS for documenting *ex situ* collections and PGRFA on farm management in the monitoring system of the Global Plan of Action; global targets and indicators, as well as the harmonization of the Treaty's compliance reporting mechanism with the reporting of the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for PGRFA; and the preparation of the *Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.⁵

14. With regard to **recommendation 2**, there has been some, however variable progress. Progress was on the wider biodiversity perspective rather than on GRFA.

15. It was not feasible to include genetic resources topics in the terms of references when advertising posts particularly for decentralized offices, as posts for decentralized offices have been filled through mobility which resulted in posts not being advertised.

16. Key staff resources at the headquarters-based Secretariats supporting the global programmes were not maintained in all cases. In the 2016-17 biennium, one officer previously dealing with AnGR was seconded to the SP2 management team and supported corporate work planning and monitoring. The core staff resources at the headquarters-based Secretariats supporting the global programmes

³ <http://www.fao.org/climate-smart-agriculture-sourcebook/production-resources/en/>

⁴ CGRFA-16/17/25 Collaboration with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; IT/GB-7/17/Inf.23 Report from the Secretariat of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

⁵ IT/GB-7/17/Resolution 6

varied: they declined in AGA from 5 to 2 (secondment to SP2, transfer to CGRFA secretariat, assignment as Chief of the recently-combined AGAG and AGAS units) and remained stable in AGP (5), FOA (1) and FIA (1.15 staff). A post on aquatic genetic resources has been filled in FIA in 2018.

17. The portfolio of country projects addressing or touching on GRFA has grown in some sectors (e.g AnGR, PGR), details are available in Commission documents⁶. Many projects have a strong capacity development component. The majority of global GRFA projects continues to depend on technical capacity in headquarters.

18. There are some cases where GRFA aspects have been integrated in longer-term national projects or programmes, for example GCP /ECU/086/GFF *Mainstreaming of the use and conservation of agrobiodiversity in public policies through integrated strategies and in situ implementation in three provinces in the Andean highlands*; and GCP /MEX/306/GFF *Securing the future of global agriculture in the face of climate change by conserving the genetic diversity of the traditional agroecosystems of Mexico* (PPG). There are also projects at regional level, such as TCP/RER/3604 *Conservation and development of dual-purpose cattle breeds in Eastern Europe*, or national level, such as TCP/IRA/3602 *Genetic Improvement of Rainbow Trout in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, or TFD-17/TAJ/002 *Strengthening, breeding conservation and recovery of local production of "Common Carp" in Tajikistan*.

19. With regard to wider biodiversity, the cross-sectoral main area of work on ecosystem services and biodiversity (MAW-ESB) in the last biennium created an ESB website⁷ that has been developed jointly by all technical departments. The mailing list of the MAW-ESB has been growing over time and now contains nearly 150 staff at Headquarters and in decentralized offices, and is used for sharing information on technical matters and events. The MAW-ESB also prepared *Landscapes for life - Approaches to landscape management for sustainable food and agriculture*⁸ that was developed jointly by all technical units.

20. The FAO Conference, at its 40th Session, welcomed FAO's initiative to act as Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform, and requested FAO to facilitate in collaboration with its partners, such as the CBD and other UN organizations, the integration in a structured and coherent manner of actions for the conservation, sustainable use, management and restoration of biological diversity across agricultural sectors at national, regional and international levels.⁹ Strategic Priority two has prioritized a Global Knowledge Product on the biodiversity mainstreaming platform in the 2018-19 PWB that is coordinated by the CB department. A new position on biodiversity has been created in the office of the ADG-CB in the 2018-19 PWB with the view to reinforce the cross-sectoral coordination on biodiversity mainstreaming matters.

21. Suggestions for strengthening the impact of FAO's work on genetic resources include the need to maintain key headquarter staff in the ITWG secretariats and to establish regional genetic resources / biodiversity focal points.

22. Progress in the implementation of the recommendations is provided in the Matrix.

⁶ CGRFA-16/17/13, CGRFA-16/17/16, CGRFA-16/17/19,

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/ecosystem-services-biodiversity/en/>

⁸ <http://www.fao.org/3/i8324en/i8324en.pdf>

⁹ C 2017 Report, paragraph 57

Accepted evaluation recommendations (a)	Action agreed in the Management Response (b)	Description of actions actually taken, or reasons for actions not taken (c)	MAR score (d) ¹⁰	Impact of, or changes resulted from taken actions (e)
<p>Recommendation 1 FAO should maintain its core expertise to provide key normative products and activities at the global level, given their high relevance and proven usefulness. At the same time, the Organization needs to look into new ways of integrating GRFA work within FAO, and make renewed efforts to confirm FAO's presence as a global authority on GRFA. In parallel, FAO should more pro-actively pursue partnerships to utilize external resources, whether technical or financial.</p>	<p>A Working Group will be established with the participation of CGRFA Secretariat, the ITWG secretariats and Strategic Programme managers to look at ways on how the Organization can strengthen GRFA work when defining the work of the Strategic Programme teams, including their delivery mechanisms and milestones.</p> <p>Steps are being planned and carried out for the more effective integration across sectors, for example a coordinated approach towards national focal points/coordinators, or the development of cross-sectoral extrabudgetary projects serving the Commission's Multi-year Programme of Work. Focusing on the development of guidelines, tools and standards that can be applied by other stakeholders, and partnerships for implementation of FAO's GRFA instruments at country level will be the preferred way of operation. The recently published voluntary guidelines for mainstreaming biodiversity into climate change and nutrition policies and programmes are an indication for a more integrated approach. Another example are the Genebank Standards widely used by the CGIAR and the Crop Diversity Trust.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new Department on Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water created instead • Conference Resolution 4/2017 stressed the role of the Commission for the SDGs • Secondment of 1 staff from ITWG secretariat to SP2 management team • The MYPOW-Task Force continues. • Work on guidelines and tools continues. A modular Practical Guide to the Genebank Standards is being developed with the Crop Diversity Trust and experts. • A new multi-donor trust fund in support of the Commission's Multi-year Programme of Work has been established while extra-budgetary funding for sectorial was also sourced. 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Department has helped to consolidate and give greater visibility of GRFA in FAO's structure. Being a relatively new decision, it has however not yet been instrumental in mainstreaming GRFA work into all Strategic Programmes. • Commission's policies, guidelines, tools and standards continue to be relevant and valued by Members.

¹⁰ Management Action Record Scoring (MAR Score) **1 - None**: no action was taken to implement the recommendation; **2 - Poor**: plan and actions for implementation of the recommendation are at a very preliminary stage; **3 - Inadequate**: implementation of the recommendation is uneven and partial; **4 - Adequate**: implementation of the recommendation has progressed; there is no evidence yet of its results on the intended target; **5 - Good**: the recommendation has been fully implemented and there is some initial evidence of its impact on the intended target; **6 - Excellent**: there is solid evidence that the recommendation has had a positive impact on its intended target.

Accepted evaluation recommendations (a)	Action agreed in the Management Response (b)	Description of actions actually taken, or reasons for actions not taken (c)	MAR score (d) ¹⁰	Impact of, or changes resulted from taken actions (e)
	<p>The Working Group will also look into ways of expanding partnerships with relevant institutions, including civil society and research and development organizations, as well as the private sector, while ensuring that FAO's core functions continue to be served by FAO.</p> <p>The new strategic orientation will underline the crucial importance of maintaining and developing genetic resources as a basis for food security and climate change adaptation and mitigation work, and will pursue more effective integration and rationalization of GRFA work across sectors and offices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A module on genetic resources has been included in the Climate Smart Agriculture sourcebook¹¹ • Genetic resources are included in MoUs with CIRAD, INRA and IRD (France), and IUCN 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadened partnerships
<p>Recommendation 2 Regarding technical assistance and capacity development support on GRFA at the country level, FAO should refrain from one-off technical assistance provided mainly from headquarters. Instead, support should be integrated into country programmes to ensure long-term engagement and capacity development. To this end, effective collaboration and role-sharing between technical and operational units are critical, as well as capacity</p>	<p>The Organization's current structure offers an opportunity to develop the capacity of decentralized offices so as to enable them to identify opportunities and seek technical guidance and support on GRFA when needed while maintaining key staff resources at the headquarters-based Secretariats supporting the global programmes.</p> <p>FAO will strengthen the Organization's comparative advantage and seek support for capacity-development of FAO staff, as well as of government counterparts. For example, existing technical networks could be used for capacity development of decentralized offices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action taken, as a result, key staff resources at Secretariats in HQ and in ROs varied between sectors. • The MAW-ESB (2016-17) served as an information network on biodiversity and GRFA. • The SP2 Global Knowledge Product on Biodiversity Mainstreaming (2018-19) will facilitate collaboration and capacity building. 	3	

¹¹ <http://www.fao.org/climate-smart-agriculture-sourcebook/production-resources/module-b8-genetic-resources/b8-overview/en/>

Accepted evaluation recommendations (a)	Action agreed in the Management Response (b)	Description of actions actually taken, or reasons for actions not taken (c)	MAR score (d) ¹⁰	Impact of, or changes resulted from taken actions (e)
building of decentralized offices.	<p>GRFA topics could be included in the terms of references when advertising posts particularly for decentralized offices.</p> <p>As breeding and policy development are long-term activities, TCPs are often too short for GRFA projects to gain substantial results. In line with TCP criteria, TCPs should be linked to longer-term national projects or programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No posts were advertised • No changes made to TCP criteria and duration. • There are cases of TCPs linked to longer-term projects (usually funded by donors including GEF) 		