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# THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

A legally-binding Treaty, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture came into force on 29 June, 2004. The International Treaty covers all plant genetic resources relevant for food and agriculture.

**Lao PDR acceded to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture on 14 March, 2006.**

## What are "plant genetic resources for food and agriculture" (PGRFA)?

The Treaty defines PGRFA as "any genetic material of plant origin of actual or potential value for food and agriculture".

## What are the Treaty's objectives?

Its objectives are the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, for sustainable agriculture and food security.

## What is the Multilateral System for Access and Benefit-Sharing?

Through the Treaty, countries agree to establish an efficient, effective and transparent Multilateral System to facilitate access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and to share the benefits in a fair and equitable way. The Multilateral System applies to over 64 major crops and forages. The Governing Body of the Treaty, which is composed of the countries that have ratified it, has set out the conditions for access and benefit-sharing in a "Standard Material Transfer Agreement".

## What are the conditions for access in the Multilateral System?

Resources may be obtained from the Multilateral System for utilization and conservation in research, breeding and training. When a commercial product is developed using these resources, the Treaty provides for payment of an equitable share of the resulting monetary benefits, if this product may not be used without restriction by others for further research and breeding. If others may use it, payment is voluntary.

## How does the Treaty protect Farmers' Rights?

The Treaty recognizes the enormous contribution that farmers and their communities have made and continue to make to the conservation and development of plant genetic resources. This is the basis for Farmers' Rights, which include the protection of traditional knowledge, and the right to participate equitably in benefit-sharing and in national decision-making about plant genetic resources. It gives governments the responsibility for implementing these rights.



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**Who benefits from the Treaty and how? All benefit, in many ways:**

- Present and future generations, because of increased food security;
- Farmers and their communities, through Farmers' Rights;
- Consumers, because of a greater variety of foods, and of agriculture products, as well as increased food security;
- The scientific community, through access to the plant genetic resources crucial for research and plant breeding;
- International Agricultural Research Centres, whose collections the Treaty puts on a safe and long-term legal footing;
- Both the public and private sectors, which are assured access to a wide range of genetic diversity for agricultural development; and
- The environment, and future generations, because the Treaty will help conserve the genetic diversity necessary to face unpredictable environmental changes, and future human needs.



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Source: FAO

## MAPPING GENETIC DIVERSITY

Even foods that have been part of a culture for centuries often are indigenous to a region on the other side of the world. This global dispersal shows the generosity with which farmers and farming communities have always shared and exchanged seeds and genetic materials with neighbors. As people ventured forth, looking for new lands, their seeds were part of their diasporas. As a result, we now live in a world in which not one country can be considered self sufficient in terms of being able to survive solely on crops indigenous within its borders. The Treaty facilitates the continued open exchange of food crops and their genetic materials.

<http://www.planttreaty.org>



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