



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

Item 5 of the Draft Provisional Agenda

COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Ninth Regular Session

Rome, 14 – 18 October 2002

REPORT FROM FAO ON ITS POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES ON AGRICULTURAL BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY: (3) PRIORITY AREAS FOR INTER-DISCIPLINARY ACTION (PAIAs)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Para.</i>
I. Introduction	1- 2
II. Priority Areas for Inter-Disciplinary Action (PAIAs) of relevance to genetic resources for food and agriculture	
1. PAIAs as a new programming approach	3- 5
2. Biological Diversity for Food and Agriculture	6-13
3. Biotechnology	14-19
4. Biosecurity in Food and Agriculture	20-27
5. Organic Agriculture	28-33
6. WTO Multilateral Trade Negotiations on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	34-39
7. Ethics in Food and Agriculture	40-46
III. Guidance requested from the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture	47

**REPORT FROM FAO ON ITS POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND
ACTIVITIES ON AGRICULTURAL BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY:
(3) PRIORITY AREAS FOR INTER-DISCIPLINARY ACTION (PAIAs)**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission regularly receives reports from international organizations, including FAO, on their policies, programmes and activities for the conservation and use of plant and animal genetic resources. The Commission considers such reports to be of value, both for it and for the organizations, which are able to acquaint countries with their objectives and programmes, and benefit from their comments.

2. This report provides information on FAO's Priority Areas for Inter-disciplinary Action (PAIAs). Sectorial activities are addressed in document CGRFA-9/02/14.1, and cross-sectorial activities are addressed in document CGRFA-9/02/14.2. Reports submitted by other organizations are in document CGRFA-9/02/15.1, CGRFA-9/02/15.2 and CGRFA-9/02/15.3.

II. PRIORITY AREAS FOR INTER-DISCIPLINARY ACTION (PAIAs) OF RELEVANCE TO GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

1. PAIAs as a new programming approach

3. Endorsement by FAO's Governing Bodies of a comprehensive application of the new programming approach has led to the establishment of inter-departmental working groups (IDWGs) for each Corporate Strategy¹ to review the programmes which address their respective strategies, and to identify genuine opportunities for inter-disciplinary cooperation. Each working group selects Priority Areas for Inter-disciplinary Action. Currently, 16 Priority Areas for Inter-disciplinary Action (PAIAs) have been established.² They are part of an overall effort to strengthen the capacity for inter-disciplinary planning within FAO, to develop fully the new programme model based on cross-sectorial planning; and to enhance mechanisms within and between units for the cross-sectorial aspects of programme implementation.

4. Flexible approaches are required in the application of the new programme model, in recognition of the fact that PAIAs vary in nature and are at different stages of development. Each PAIA must develop the necessary cooperative mechanism to facilitate planning, implementation, monitoring, and eventual evaluation. Efforts are also being implemented to ensure that planned achievements under the PAIAs are duly reported.

5. This report provides a brief overview of the main activities being undertaken in the PAIAs that are most relevant to the work of the Commission: Biological Diversity; Biotechnology; Biosecurity; Organic Agriculture; WTO Multilateral Trade Negotiations on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; and Ethics in Food and Agriculture. The intent is to acquaint the Commission with this new cross-sectorial approach of the Organization, and provide an opportunity for the Commission to comment on work in the identified Priority Areas.

¹ The Strategic Framework for FAO, 2000-2015: <http://www.fao.org/strategicframework/default.htm>

² <http://www.fao.org/paia/>

2. Biological Diversity for Food and Agriculture³

6. The *ad hoc* IDWG has, in the last decade, been the main mechanism for the coordination of activities on biological diversity of interest to food and agriculture. More recently, the group developed a cross-sectorial programme, which, as of January 2002, is FAO's Priority Area for Inter-Disciplinary Action on Biological Diversity for Food and Agriculture (PAIA/BIOD).

7. FAO already implements several biodiversity-related activities of relevance to food and agriculture. Synergies between the various sectors are captured in a common vision: an understanding of the functions of biodiversity in agricultural ecosystems, in order to promote the ecosystem approach for the management of production systems. Practical examples of this approach include: farmer field schools for integrated pest management, community-based organic agriculture, co-management of forest and fishery resources, and recent innovative payments to farmers for delivering ecosystem services like clean water and air.

8. The focus of the PAIA/BIOD is on the ecological functions performed by agricultural biodiversity through the interactions among its components, the physical environment, and socio-economic factors, at all scales, and on the impact of agricultural practices on biodiversity and ecosystem functions. Interactions among the diversity of genes and species, both domesticated and wild, are among the main building blocks for ecosystem biodiversity.

9. The purpose of the PAIA/BIOD is to improve understanding and develop instruments which will allow policy-makers, farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, forest dwellers and their local communities and organizations to manage better agricultural biodiversity for sustainable production and livelihood improvements.

10. The approach taken by the PAIA/BIOD to achieve its objectives is:

- Assessments of the relationships between agriculture, biodiversity and ecological functions;
- Collection and synthesis of cases of adaptive management over a range of spatial scales from field to eco-regional landscapes;
- Capacity-building for the management of biodiversity, including both community-based learning and mainstreaming agro-biodiversity and ecological functions in national policies and programmes.

This approach is receiving substantial extra-budgetary resources as the agro-biodiversity theme of the FAO/Netherlands Partnership Programme.

11. The main activity areas contributing to the PAIA/BIOD include: plant genetic resources, animal genetic resources, GURTs, access and benefit-sharing, legal and institutional arrangements, integrated pest management, organic agriculture, soil biota, pollinators, invasive species, forest ecosystem services, marine and freshwater biodiversity, indicators and remote sensing.

12. The PAIA/BIOD will present a series of parallel information meetings on key aspects of agricultural biological diversity, around the Ninth Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

13. The Commission may wish to provide guidance on how best the PAIA/BIOD could contribute to the development of activities on biodiversity, in terms of the ecological functions associated with genetic resources.

³ See <http://www.fao.org/biodiversity/index.asp>

3. Biotechnology⁴

14. FAO recognizes the potential of biotechnology in fighting hunger and malnutrition and in feeding increasing numbers of people, through quantitative and qualitative increases in agricultural production, and with reduced environmental impact. However, it also recognizes that the development and deployment of new technologies should be managed safely and efficiently, and that benefits should be distributed equitably. Members have called on FAO to strengthen efforts in maximizing the benefits and minimizing the potential adverse consequences of biotechnology, most recently through the Committee on Agriculture, the Council and the Conference, which endorsed the development of a multi-disciplinary, cross-sectorial programme. In response, the Biotechnology Applications in Food and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries PAIA (PAIA/BIOT) was established in 2002, and an IDWG was set up to oversee its planning and implementation.

15. The PAIA/BIOT has two broad focuses – the *Distributed Technical Focus* and the *High-level Policy Focus* – both of which are important, and intended to be mutually reinforcing. The former is overseen by the IDWG, but relies on the Technical Divisions working alone or in combination to implement activities and produce outputs that cover virtually all disciplines, sub-sectors and sectors of agriculture, and target almost the entire range of end-user beneficiary groups. However, the *raison d'être* of the PAIA, and therefore the main role of the IDWG, is to support the *High-level Policy Focus* of the PAIA by providing the institutional capacity to identify and fill knowledge gaps of a cross-sectorial, inter-disciplinary nature. This is achieved both by encouraging appropriate contributions from individual Divisions, and by planning and implementing synergistic value-added activities with partners. The ultimate aim of such effort is to develop and keep up-to-date a series of in-depth policy option analysis documents, which will form the core of a comprehensive Information System on Policy Analyses in Food and Agriculture, and in future, of modular training and capacity-building packages for policy, regulatory and technical level decision-makers.

16. A major role of the PAIA is to provide Members and their institutions with factual, comprehensive and current information on international developments relating to biotechnology applications. In 2001, a website on biotechnology was launched, in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish. It is currently visited by over 15,000 people per month. An *Electronic Forum on Biotechnology in Food and Agriculture* was established in early 2000. Six email conferences were held, covering the possible impacts of biotechnology on crop, livestock, forestry and fisheries sectors, and on food security in developing countries, as well as the impact of intellectual property rights. A seventh conference entitled *Gene flow from GM to non-GM populations in the crop, forestry, animal and fishery sectors* was held in June and July 2002. In 2002, an email newsletter called *FAO-BiotechNews* was also launched, to inform policy-makers and technical decision-makers without access to the Internet, about current developments and issues. It currently has about 2,500 subscribers.

17. In 2002, FAO and ISNAR held an Expert Workshop on Policy Planning and Decision-Support for Biosafety. A second workshop in June 2002 was organized with the University of Tor Vergata, to analyse the effects of intellectual property rights on biotechnology research and development within the food and agricultural sector of developing countries, the policy issues that these raise, and the options that countries have in meeting their priority needs for biotechnology, while also meeting their obligations under the WTO-TRIPS Agreement.

18. Details of the specific outputs planned for the current biennium and during the 2004-09 Medium Term Plan are available at <http://www.fao.org/mtp/>.

19. The PAIA/BIOT addresses all applications of biotechnology, but recognizes that genetic resources provide the raw materials for most of these. The Commission may therefore wish to

⁴ See <http://www.fao.org/biotech/index.asp>

consider the role of the PAIA in monitoring, providing follow-up and reporting on issues relating to genetic resources and biotechnology, including in the context of the possible further development of the draft *Code of Conduct on Biotechnology as it Relates to Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. The Commission may therefore wish to provide advice on possible technical contributions they would wish to receive in support of efforts to develop the *Code of Conduct*, including whether it should be expanded to biotechnology in food and agriculture in general, and whether internationally agreed guidelines for biosafety evaluation of genetically modified organisms in food and agriculture should be included in the *Code*, in order to better apply the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol in the sector.

4. Biosecurity in Food and Agriculture⁵

20. FAO's use of the term, "biosecurity", originated from the Strategic Framework, which emphasized enhanced multi-disciplinary approaches by the Organization⁶. In 2001, biosecurity was identified as one of 16 PAIAs to help achieve this goal by facilitating cooperation across departments. It was included in the Medium Term Plan 2002-2007 as one of three PAIAs to address Corporate Strategy B, which is aimed at *Promoting, developing and reinforcing policy and regulatory frameworks for food, agriculture, fisheries and forestry*.

21. Biosecurity in food and agriculture is a relatively new term used to reflect the *process* of institutional and methodological convergence among ministries and services dealing with food safety, animal health, plant health and certain environmental issues to *achieve* a more effective and efficient regulatory framework. Biosecurity encompasses regulatory frameworks (policy, instruments, activities) to manage risks associated with agriculture and food, *i.e.*, in relation to food safety, the introduction and release of GMOs and their products, and the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, alien genotypes and plant pests, animal pests and diseases and zoonoses.

22. Because of a number of developments, including accelerated globalization, rapid increase in transport and trade, and technological progress, governments need improved national and international frameworks and standards to achieve biosecurity. A number of countries are consolidating, rationalizing, and harmonizing across sectors to achieve this. This trend is expected to continue. FAO will need to strengthen its capacity as an active service provider on biosecurity to meet Members' current and future needs. The central role of agriculture as a partner in ensuring food safety and as a steward of the environment within a biosecurity approach needs to be emphasized.

23. Acting on guidance from COAG, FAO, through the IDWG on Biosecurity, is undertaking three main activities to further develop the concept and to strengthen its core elements:

- Development of an electronic information exchange mechanism, as a single access point for official national and international information on food quality and safety, and plant health and animal health, to be maintained as a collaborative exercise among national and multilateral partners, each in its respective areas of expertise and authority. A prototype has been prepared and is being tested.
- Technical level inter-agency meetings to coordinate capacity-building and technical assistance for biosecurity. Three meetings involving the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) and the World Bank have been held.

⁵ See http://www.fao.org/docrep/x7572e/X7572e02.htm#P1895_86164.

⁶ At the time of preparing the report (June 2002), consideration was being given to replacing the term, "Biosecurity" by another term

- International Expert and Technical Consultations during 2002 to improve understanding and recognition of the nature and importance of biosecurity, and to explore ways to implement biosecurity measures in a practical manner.

24. Papers on a number of key areas concerning biosecurity are being prepared as background to the above consultations. The outcome of these consultations will be used to prepare a document on biosecurity for agriculture and food production to be submitted to appropriate FAO governing bodies during 2003.

25. The approach taken by the IDWG is to build on FAO's already significant range of activities and outputs that address biosecurity issues, including international instruments: biosafety in relation to GMOs; biosecurity in relation to invasive alien species; and the closely associated concerns for food safety, agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

26. The following achievements are envisaged as elements of the vision for biosecurity:

- FAO is enhancing its capacity to support the development of national biosecurity policies and strategies, including capacity-building in cooperation with other agencies.
- FAO is involved in periodic reviews of international biosecurity policies and regulatory frameworks.
- FAO is supporting a clearinghouse for official information on food safety, animal and plant health.
- FAO is enhancing coordination of its internal biosecurity policies and activities.

27. The Commission may wish to provide guidance on the development of aspects of biosecurity of particular importance to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture.

5. Organic Agriculture⁷

28. Organic management relies on optimizing competition for food and space between different plant and animal species. As organic farmers may not use synthetic inputs (such as mineral fertilisers, synthetic pesticides, pharmaceuticals and genetically modified seeds and breeds), they must restore the natural ecological balance because ecosystem functions and adapted biodiversity are their main productive "inputs."

29. Organic agriculture has developed from farmers' willingness to experiment, innovate and share. More recently, concerns of organic farmers to source and maintain GMO-free seeds and breeds further developed farmers' and local communities' efforts to conserve on-farm species, and to establish community-based gene banks. Organic farmers are therefore both custodians and users of biodiversity at all levels:

- Gene level: locally adapted and under-utilized seeds and breeds are maintained and recovered for distinctive properties such as greater resistance to multiple stress factors, including pests, diseases and climatic stresses.
- Species level: ecological principles and diverse combinations of plants and animals are applied in order to optimize nutrient and energy cycling, and hence soil fertility and agro-ecosystem health. Reliance on natural control methods maintains species diversity and avoids the selection of pest species resistant to chemical control methods.
- Ecosystem level: maintenance of diverse farming systems, of natural areas within and around organic fields, and the absence of chemical inputs, create productive landscapes

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/organicag/>

and suitable habitats for wild crop relatives, non-domesticated biota (such as pollinators) and wildlife (such as migratory birds).

30. The new market opportunities offered by organic agriculture and increasing concerns for the environment led to the establishment of a PAIA on Organic Agriculture (PAIA/ORGA). This new cross-sectorial programme has been designed and is implemented by the IDWG on Organic Agriculture. It covers all stages of the food supply chain, from the farm to the table.

31. The three main thrusts of the PAIA/ORGA are the following:

- Creating the information base and strengthening networks on organic agriculture production, conservation, processing, labelling and marketing; the objective is to make available reliable, accessible and high quality information for informed decision-making.
- Policy and technical decision-support tools for productive and efficient organic farming systems; the objective is to enhance the contribution of organic agriculture to environmental quality and food security, with a particular emphasis on poorly endowed and market-marginalized areas.
- Studies, technical assistance and policy advice on institutional and legal structures, certification and trade of certified organic agriculture products; the objective is to facilitate access to international markets, especially for small holders and exporters from developing countries.

32. Efforts of the organic agriculture community (*e.g.*, indigenous farmers and civil society organizations) to manage and conserve biodiversity need to be promoted in the following areas:

- Strengthening of traditional knowledge and practices of organic food production and processing, especially in relation to the utilization of genetic resources and the informal seed production system (*e.g.*, regional seed exchange mechanisms, seed fairs or community seed banks).
- Support for *in situ* conservation of indigenous food species; wild varieties of cultivated species; under-utilized species of ecological interest (*e.g.*, rotation crops to build soil fertility); varieties adapted to local agro-ecological conditions (*e.g.*, resistance to specific climatic conditions or local pests and diseases); and varieties with specific culinary and medicinal characteristics.
- Collection, characterization, evaluation, breeding and exchange of genetic resources appropriate to organic agriculture (*e.g.*, open pollinated, GMO-free and adapted to local conditions).
- Development of seed and breed regulatory mechanisms appropriate to organic agriculture (*e.g.*, registration of locally adapted species and varieties, guidelines for organic seed certification, protection against GMO contamination).

33. The aspect of the work of the PAIA/ORGA which may be of most interest to the Commission is the role and potential of organic agriculture to sustainably maintain and use genetic resources. A document on *Organic Agriculture and Agro-biodiversity* is under preparation by the PAIA Secretariat and is expected to be available at the time of the Commission meeting. The document comprises a brief overview of case studies on organic management of agro-biodiversity of specific socio-cultural and environmental interest. Such examples, however, remain scarce and their potential is under-investigated. The Commission may wish to provide advice on how the PAIA/ORGA could best contribute to promoting the role of organic agriculture to *in situ* conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture.

6. WTO Multilateral Trade Negotiations on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry⁸

34. The purpose of this PAIA is to enhance FAO's support to Members, particularly developing countries and countries with economies in transition, for their effective participation in multilateral trade negotiations (MTN) on agriculture, as well as their integration into global trade in food, agricultural, fishery and forestry products. It is focused, therefore, on capacity-building for trade, and involves normative and operational field activities. The document *Technical assistance related to the Multilateral Trade Negotiations in Agriculture* will be available to the Commission Members. The main planned achievements of a cross-sectorial nature include:

- Analytical studies on developments in commodity markets and trade (in both print and electronic form).
- Medium-term agricultural projections to 2010.
- Studies on trade liberalization and food security.
- Analytical reports and information regarding the implications of alternative proposals emerging from the agenda of trade negotiations.
- Meetings of experts on trade and food security issues under negotiation, including support to trade policy conferences.
- Support to countries in the implementation of trade agreements, including the adjustment and adaptation of domestic policies.
- Establishment of benchmarks for evaluating progress in developing countries' integration into global agricultural trade.
- Support to training activities related to commodity and trade policies for agricultural commodities, as requested.

35. Recent and ongoing activities and events of particular relevance to agricultural biodiversity include the following:

- Fourth WTO Ministerial Meeting, 9-14 November 2001, Doha, Qatar: The WTO launched a new broader round of trade negotiations that will encompass the ongoing negotiations on agriculture as part of a single undertaking. The new round will cover other areas of relevance to FAO, including market access for fishery and forestry products and fishery subsidies. The Ministerial Declaration asserts for the first time the right of Members to adopt environmental measures at the level they consider appropriate, as long as these are not applied in an arbitrary or discriminatory manner and do not unduly restrict international trade. This could affect the measures countries adopt to preserve their agricultural biodiversity.
- The Ministerial Declaration also specifically instructed the WTO Council for TRIPS to examine, inter alia, the relationship between the TRIPS Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the protection of traditional knowledge and folklore, and other relevant new developments relating to Article 71.1.
- The Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force for Foods Derived from Biotechnology, a subsidiary body of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, at its last session, held in Yokohama, Japan, in March 2002, has reached agreement on a final draft of the Principles for the risk analysis of foods derived from biotechnology and of the Guideline for the conduct of food safety assessment of foods derived from recombinant-DNA plants.

36. The *Principles* will provide a framework for evaluating the safety and nutritional aspects of Genetically Modified (GM) foods. They define the need for a pre-market safety assessment of

⁸ <http://www.fao.org/trade/index.asp?lang=en>

all such foods, on a case-by-case basis. The assessment should look into both intended and unintended effects, identifying new or altered hazards, and identifying changes of relevance to human health, especially in regard to key nutrients and potential allergenic components.

37. The *Principles* would require government authorities to consider the uncertainties identified in the safety-assessment and implement appropriate measures to manage these uncertainties. One management option described in the *Principles* is post-market monitoring. The *Principles* also provide guidance related to analytical methods and other tools to be used in risk management. In this area, the Task Force reached a very important new agreement concerning the tracing of GM products for the purpose of facilitating withdrawal from the market, when a risk to human health has been identified.

38. The *Guideline* describes detailed requirements for assessing specifically the safety of GM plants, including tests for allergenicity. FAO and WHO jointly organized a series of three expert consultations on foods derived from biotechnology, which have contributed to the successful outcome of the Codex Task Force. The reports of these consultations and their recommendations were used as a scientific basis for the development of the Codex documents. The Task Force will go on developing guidelines for risk-assessment of GM foods originating from micro-organisms. It will continue its efforts until March 2003. The final work of the Task Force will be submitted to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, at its next meeting in July 2003, in Rome, Italy, for adoption.

39. The Commission may wish to request the Secretariat to follow closely developments relating to issues concerning biological diversity in the WTO negotiations, including the WTO Council for TRIPS, and report to the Commission.

7. Ethics in Food and Agriculture⁹

40. Major changes in the fields of food and agriculture in recent years, including accelerating technological development, changes in the resources base, and economic and market developments, have brought to the fore a variety of ethical questions of relevance to food and agriculture, and the work of FAO.

41. In July 1998, the Director-General accordingly established a Committee on Ethics in Food and Agriculture, to advise him, under the chairmanship of the Deputy Director-General, and with the participation of the Assistant Directors-General of FAO's technical departments and the Legal Counsel. The Committee appointed a Sub-Committee on Ethics in Food and Agriculture, with representatives of the technical divisions, to assist it in its task. This Sub-Committee manages the PAIA on Ethics in Food and Agriculture (PAIA/ETHI).

42. The Director-General also established, under Article VI.4 of the FAO Constitution, a panel of Eminent Experts in Food and Agriculture, to advise him on pressing issues in food and agriculture, and to help foster a wide-ranging debate and thereby enrich deliberations, within FAO and in the wider world. He informed the Thirtieth Session of the FAO Conference accordingly. The Panel was initially established for a period of four years, from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2003, to meet at least once every two years. It consists of eight eminent experts in a personal capacity.¹⁰

43. The PAIA/ETHI plays a number of roles. It prepares and supports meetings of the Panel of Eminent Experts, and implements and oversees a technical work programme to mainstream ethical considerations within FAO's work. It also coordinates the preparation of studies within

⁹ http://www.fao.org/ethics/index_en.htm.

¹⁰ Biographies of the Eminent Experts are at <http://www.fao.org/news/2001/010407-e.htm>.

the *FAO Ethics Series*. These studies are aimed at the public and at policy-makers, and seek to clarify ethical dimensions of issues that are prominent in the public debate on food and agriculture. Where relevant, the advice of the Panel of Eminent Experts is sought in preparation of these studies. Two publications in this series were issued in 2001, in the FAO official languages: *Ethical issues in food and agriculture*, and *Genetically modified organisms: consumers, food safety and the environment*.¹¹ Two further studies are in preparation, on ethical issues arising from the globalization of food and agriculture, and ethical issues involved in sustainable agricultural intensification.

44. The Panel of Eminent Experts has met twice, in September 2000 and March 2002, and addressed a number of issues of relevance to the work of the Commission. In its first meeting,¹² the Panel identified the main ethical issues in food and agriculture, including the impact of human population growth and demographic shifts, the impact of disease on food and agriculture, the pressure on natural resources, gaps and differences that could generate inequities and conflicts, and economic globalization and the need for global governance. It gave advice and suggestions on ecosystem management, buffering the negative consequences of agricultural intensification, countering the negative consequences for agricultural research of the concentration of economic power, and information and education. It endorsed guidelines for an equitable system based on ethical considerations, directed at the national and international levels. It discussed biotechnology including genetically modified organisms, addressing the risks, uncertainty and doubts involved in their use, the potential benefits and the problems faced, and enabling conditions to realize the potential and avoid the risks of modern biotechnologies, including genetically modified organisms.

45. At this meeting, the Panel also made reference to the Commission as a useful example of a mechanism to balance interests and resolve conflicts, which has been successful in providing a forum for discussing difficult issues. It also noted the ongoing work on the draft Code of Conduct on Biotechnology, and expressed its appreciation for the consensus that was forming among FAO Members in the negotiation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which was then approaching completion.

46. The Commission has on a number of occasions considered issues with an ethical dimension, including, for example, the conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture in the interests of future generations and questions of equity involved in the use of genetic resources for food and agriculture, including in relation to Farmers' Rights and the development of codes of conduct. The Commission may therefore wish to suggest:

- Subjects which the Panel of Eminent Experts might be invited to address;
- Possible themes for studies within the context of the FAO Ethics Series; and
- Ethical considerations to be taken into account in the further activities of the Commission.

III GUIDANCE REQUESTED FROM THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

47. In the closing paragraphs of the presentation of each of the individual PAIAs in the previous section, specific requests for guidance have been addressed to the Commission. Moreover, the Commission may wish to express its views and make suggestions on the policies

¹¹ The two studies are available at on the PAIA website, http://www.fao.org/ethics/index_en.htm.

¹² The Report is available at <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/003/X9600E/X9600E00.HTM>. At the time of preparing this document (June 2002), the Report of the Second Session of the Panel of Eminent Experts was not yet available.

and activities covered in this document, which the PAIAs can take into consideration when carrying out their specific tasks, and when planning for the future.