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STATUS OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD INFORMATION AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission, at its Sixteenth Regular Session, considered the World Information and Early Warning System (WIEWS) on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) and stressed its key role for exchange of information on PGRFA.
2. The Commission also noted the need to continue the collaboration and coordination with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Treaty) and its Global Information System (GLIS), and stressed the role of WIEWS as a key PGRFA information system with respect to the implementation of Article 17 of the Treaty.¹ In this regard, the Commission welcomed the coordination with the Genesys database hosted by the Global Crop Diversity Trust. It requested FAO to complete the restructuring of WIEWS, and publish, through WIEWS, information on the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second GPA) and Target 2.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).² In addition, the Commission recommended that the new WIEWS platform highlight the indicators of the Second GPA relevant to SDG indicator 2.5.1, i.e. *Number of plant and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture secured in either medium or long term conservation facilities*³, and enable National Focal Points (NFPs) to report annually on this indicator.⁴
3. Furthermore, the Commission requested FAO to consult the Members of the Commission and observers on options for further simplifying the reporting format for monitoring the implementation of the Second GPA (Reporting Format)⁵ and to prepare a proposal for review by the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group).⁶
4. This document provides a report on the status of the restructuring of WIEWS, the use of WIEWS for monitoring the implementation of the SDG and introduces the simplified Reporting Format.

II. BACKGROUND

5. WIEWS is the information system established by FAO in 1993 for the preparation of periodic, country-driven global assessments of the status of conservation and use of PGRFA. Since October 2014, WIEWS, through its online Reporting Tool, has also been used for country reporting on the implementation of the Second GPA. Since December 2016, WIEWS has served as the platform for reporting annually on the plant component of SDG Target 2.5.
6. With its 2014, 2016 and 2017 datasets, WIEWS is presently the largest source of data for monitoring over time the status of the global diversity of PGRFA conserved in genebanks. The 2017 dataset alone includes detailed information on over 4.89 million accessions of 6 900 genera and their 50 800 species secured under medium- or long-term conditions in 575 genebanks of 90 countries and 16 regional and international centres. Eight countries and two regional centres contributed for the first time to the reporting process in 2017. Compared to May 2016 the WIEWS data coverage of *ex situ* conservation has increased by 27 percent in terms of reporting countries (19 additional reporting countries) and 36 percent in terms of accessions (additional 1.2 million accessions documented).⁷

¹ CGRFA-16/17/Report/Rev.1, paragraph 57.

² CGRFA-16/17/Report/Rev.1, paragraph 57.

³ Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Target 2.5: By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed

⁴ CGRFA-16/17/Report/Rev.1, paragraph 69.

⁵ CGRFA-15/15/Inf.9.

⁶ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 56.

⁷ CGRFA/WG-PGR-8/Inf.1 Rev.1, page 28

7. WIEWS forms an important part of the global framework of databases on PGRFA. In November 2017, the Governing Body of the Treaty invited Contracting Parties “to use FAO WIEWS, Genesys or other existing information systems that the Global Information System is built on, for the notification of material that forms part of the Multilateral System.”⁸ The Governing Body further requested its Secretary to link the GLIS to the PGRFA data on *ex situ* collections and on-farm management in WIEWS.⁹ The Governing Body also recognized the value of country reports on the Second GPA implementation to measure progress in the context of Article 6, Sustainable Use.¹⁰

III. STATUS OF THE RESTRUCTURING OF WIEWS

8. Since the adoption of the Second GPA, WIEWS provides the platform for its monitoring and reporting framework adopted by the Commission. WIEWS has been restructured to not only facilitate reporting on the implementation of the Second GPA by the NFPs and key PGRFA stakeholders, but also to make such information accessible to the general public through a user-friendly interface.

The Second GPA Monitoring Framework

9. The new WIEWS portal provides a synthetic overview of the national, regional and global status of the conservation and use of PGRFA. The overview is based on a customizable graphical representation of the Higher-order Composite Indices (HCIs) showing progress towards the three PGRFA targets adopted by the Commission in 2015.¹¹ The HCIs show progress in the implementation of the 18 Priority Activities of the Second GPA and the 63 monitoring indicators, as rated by the NFPs.

10. Summary and detailed data for each indicator can be accessed through either the HCIs graphical representation or the menu item, *Priority activities and Indicators*, on the WIEWS Data tab.¹² Data on the indicators can be viewed by country¹³ and selected geo-grouping (e.g. regions, world)¹⁴ and by stakeholder, as applicable. Summary data sets of each indicator and NFP rating as well as details provided by countries may also be downloaded from WIEWS. Design and look-and-feel of the interface for accessing the Second GPA indicators is similar to the interface of FAOSTAT, one of the most accessed agricultural databases.

Monitoring PGRFA under the SDGs

11. In July 2017, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a global indicator framework (GIF) to monitor the implementation of the SDGs.¹⁵ FAO is the United Nations (UN) custodian agency for indicator 2.5.1 whose plant component is equivalent to Indicator 20 of the Second GPA monitoring framework. With the adoption of the SDG global indicator framework, and the FAO custodianship of indicator 2.5.1, WIEWS has acquired a new and essential role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

12. At its last session, the Commission recommended that FAO invite countries to report annually on the SDG indicator 2.5.1 and requested FAO to assist countries in assessing their national reporting obligations and improving data and capacity to report on this indicator. It also requested the Secretariat to continue collaborating with the Statistical Division of FAO and to inform the Commission of any

⁸ IT/GB-7/17/Resolution 4/2017, paragraph 2.

⁹ IT/GB-7/17/Resolution 5/2017, paragraph 5.

¹⁰ IT/GB-7/17/Resolution 6/2017, paragraph 2.v.

¹¹ <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/domains/monitoring-framework/en/>

¹² <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/domains/en/>

¹³ Different country lists based on membership to FAO, the Commission or the Treaty can be selected.

¹⁴ Six different regional groupings, namely FAO, M49, SDG, MDG, CGRFA (Commission), and ITPGRFA (Treaty) can be selected.

¹⁵ A/RES/71/313

relevant developments, including the final decision taken by the UN Statistical Commission on the global reporting mechanism for the SDGs.¹⁶

13. In line with the Commission's recommendations, the indicators of the Second GPA relevant to the SDG Target 2.5 have been highlighted under WIEWS and a form for the annual data reporting on SDG indicator 2.5.1 has been made available on the WIEWS home page to facilitate reporting. The form includes an annotated list of mandatory and recommended descriptors for reporting on the plant component of the indicator and an Excel table for data recording. The form is available in English, French and Spanish. Countries already publishing *ex situ* collections data that are compliant with the requirements of the SDG indicator 2.5.1 have the alternative option of communicating the address for downloading the data to FAO.

14. Countries, regional and international organizations reported on the status of *ex situ* conservation in the context of the monitoring of the Second GPA as at 30 June 2014. In addition, they provided annual reports on SDG indicator 2.5.1 reflecting the status of *ex situ* conservation as at 31 December 2016 and 31 December 2017. FAO was therefore in a position to submit three reports to the UN Statistical Commission.

15. As requested by the Commission, WIEWS features a section specifically dedicated to the information on SDG indicator 2.5.1 for 2014, 2016 and 2017, where:

- (i) an overview page¹⁷ allows access to a range of summary data by year, region, sub-region and country (as well as regional and international centres), which can be customized for selected crops, genera and their crop wild relatives;
- (ii) maps¹⁸ display geo-referenced genebanks and their holdings by year, accession, genus and species; and
- (iii) an advanced search¹⁹ allows the retrieval and download of accession-level information for each year, country and/or multiple holding institutes, crops (including or excluding their wild relatives), genera and species. Additional search parameters include accession number, biological status, type of storage, country of origin, and status under the Multilateral System of the Treaty.

Organizations

16. The WIEWS portal also provides access to information about over 17 700 organizations involved in the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA.²⁰ Each organization has an assigned WIEWS code which corresponds to the first descriptor of the FAO/Bioversity Multi Crop Passport Descriptors and is widely used among genebanks while exchanging materials and information. Simplified and advanced search functions for the organizations' dataset are available for data retrieval and download. A text file with the full list of organizations is also generated every day and available for download from the WIEWS home page.

¹⁶ CGRFA-16/17/Report/Rev.1, paragraphs 69-70.

¹⁷ <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/overview/en/>

¹⁸ <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/ex-situ-sdg-251/maps/en/>

¹⁹ <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/search>

²⁰ <http://www.fao.org/wiews/data/organizations>

Future improvement of WIEWS

17. With the completion of its restructuring, WIEWS will provide countries with user-friendly access to data reported under the Second GPA and SDG 2.5.1. WIEWS will further be improved through:

- the availability of the interface in additional languages, starting with French and Spanish;
- the graphical visualization of the information on the indicators for monitoring the Second GPA;
- the development of a search and retrieval function for crop varieties reported by countries;²¹ and
- the development of a country profile, summarizing all information provided.

18. Efforts are also being undertaken to implement the request of the Governing Body of the Treaty to link the GLIS to PGRFA *ex situ* collections and on-farm management data documented in WIEWS.²²

19. The Secretariat has continued collaborating with the Statistical Division of FAO. In particular, an e-learning course to facilitate the application and analysis of the two indicators of SDG Target 2.5 is being produced through a joint collaboration among FAO relevant divisions. The e-learning course provides background information on PGRFA, data reporting and the use of the new WIEWS portal to retrieve information. Another output is a webpage²³ for SDG indicator 2.5.1 on FAO's SDG website.

IV. SIMPLIFICATION OF THE REPORTING FORMAT

20. The framework for monitoring the implementation of the Second GPA agreed by the Commission in 2013 is based on 63 indicators and 51 questions.²⁴ The 2013 monitoring framework was used to assess progress in the implementation of the Second GPA during the period 2012–2014. In 2015, NFPs were invited to answer the 51 questions and provide an expert judgement (rating) on the level of achievement for each indicator through the WIEWS on-line Reporting tool. As of March 2016, 43 countries had reported to FAO. Based on the results of the application of this framework, a summary and a detailed assessment of the implementation of the Second GPA during 2012–2014 were made available to the Commission.²⁵

21. Noting the need for a greater number of country reports in order to have a more comprehensive assessment of the global state of the implementation of the Second GPA, the Commission decided to extend the deadline for reporting until December 2017 and requested FAO to prepare a proposal for simplifying the Reporting Format, for review by the Working Group.²⁶

22. As requested by the Commission, FAO consulted Commission Members and observers on options for further simplifying the Reporting Format. NFPs were invited to provide comments on the Reporting Format and the on-line reporting tool, as well as suggestions for their simplification. Inputs from 15 countries were received. In late 2017, FAO organized an expert consultation at its Headquarters with the objective of identifying ways for enhancing the quality and coverage of data reporting on the state of PGRFA through the monitoring frameworks for the implementation of the Second GPA and SDG Target 2.5, respectively.

23. A draft Revised Reporting Format, prepared in the light of inputs received, is contained in the document, *Draft Revised Reporting Format for monitoring the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.²⁷ The draft Revised Reporting Format, as given in the Appendix to the document, consists of 48 questions covering 58 indicators.

²¹ Information on over 20 000 varieties, including a synthetic description of each variety is currently available.

²² IT/GB-7/17/Res5, paragraph 5.

²³ <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/251/en/>

²⁴ CGRFA-15/15/Inf.9.

²⁵ CGRFA-16/17/Inf.17.1 and CGRFA-16/17/Inf.17.2.

²⁶ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 56.

²⁷ CGRFA/WG-PGR-9/18/Inf.8

Proposed changes are marked throughout the document. Five of the 63 indicators adopted in 2015 are proposed to be discontinued, namely indicator 1, Number of *in situ* (including on-farm) surveys/inventories of PGRFA carried out; 15, Number of targeted collecting missions in the country; 18, Number of crops conserved *ex situ* under medium or long-term conditions; 58, Number of remedial actions resulting from the existing national systems to monitor and safeguard genetic diversity and minimize genetic erosion; and 63, Number of types of products developed to raise public awareness. Indicators 1, 15 and 58 are proposed to be discontinued as they lack the necessary specificity for the counted categories which are not expressed by comparable measurement units. Indicator 18 should be dropped as the overall documentation of the *ex situ* collections for the descriptor measured is poor and often in the local language. Indicator 63 is of limited analytical value.

24. Following the discontinuation of indicators, related questions should also be discontinued or, where they also serve other indicators, be simplified. The proposed reduction of questions and indicators will reduce the reporting burden for NFPs without affecting the overall quality and depth of the resulting assessment.

25. An overall improvement derives from several small, though significant adjustments and standardizations applied systematically throughout the Reporting Format, including a much broader use of scientific names instead of vernacular crop names. Furthermore, the elaboration of frequently asked questions will, together with the already existing glossary, guide NFPs as to the correct interpretation of indicators and questions.

26. Links to four common tables, namely the *Agreements*, the *Areas*, the *Cultivars* and the *Infosys* tables, which were used to capture complementary information are proposed to be removed. Links to the remaining common tables, which previously were mandatory, have been made optional.

V. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

27. The Working Group may wish to:

- Review and revise, as necessary the draft Revised Reporting Format, as given in the Appendix to document CGRFA/WG-PGR-9/18/Inf.8, for consideration by the Commission;
- Recommend that the Commission invite FAO to continue elaborating, on an annual basis, the status of implementation of SDG target 2.5 and share results with the Working Group and the Commission; and
- Recommend that the Commission request FAO to complete the restructuring of WIEWS, reflect the Revised Reporting Format and continue updating and improving the WIEWS portal.