



Japan Becomes 130th Contracting Party of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Japan has ratified the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and becomes a Contracting Party as of today, 28 October 2013, bringing the total number of Contracting Parties to 130.

“We are delighted to welcome Japan to our growing membership,” said Shakeel Bhatti, Secretary of the Governing Body of the Treaty “and we look forward to developing a close collaboration with Japan in building food security through international cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.”

Becoming a Contracting Party will grant Japan a number of advantages, including facilitated access to a global gene pool of more than 1.6 million plants that belong to the most important food crops and the right to be represented at the biennial meetings of the Governing Body of the International Treaty.

Japan is currently funding a project “*Enhancing understanding and implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in Asia*” to provide information to countries that have not ratified yet and regional coordination and support for the implementation of the main provisions of the Treaty to those that have ratified.

Agriculture in Japan

Japan is making efforts to preserve genetic resources useful to agriculture, forestry and fisheries, promote their sustainable use and examine the possible effects on biodiversity from genetically-recombined agricultural products. As of 31 March 2008, about 250,000 accessions of PGRFA were stored in their national genebank system, including large collections of wheat, rice, and soybeans. According to the genebank Director, Mr Makoto Kawase, one of the main challenges for the Japanese national genebank in the next 10 years is the rejuvenation of PGRFA not well adapted to the Japanese environment. To address this, Japan is expanding its cooperation with other countries and the International Treaty provides a solid framework for this through various systems and initiatives.

Major food crops in Japan include rice, wheat, potato, and soy beans. Rice still dominates in terms of acreage and production value, but there are many vegetables, fruits and other crops that are significantly contributing to the Japanese farm economy.

Japan is one of the world's leading contributors of foreign aid and, recognizing the importance of agriculture, has contributed 38 % of its foreign aid to the field of agriculture and food in the world. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the National Institute of Agrobiological Sciences and other Japanese overseas support organizations have cooperated with governmental agencies and international institutions such as Bioversity International on joint research programs, and the preservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources, particularly in developing countries.

Japan is also member of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and one of the early signatories of the Nagoya Protocol.

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The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture recognizes the enormous contribution of farmers to the diversity of crops that feed the world; establishes a global system to provide farmers, plant breeders and scientists access to plant genetic materials; and ensures that recipients share benefits they derive from the use of these genetic materials with the countries where they have originated.

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