

# "The Multilateral System"

- What is the Multilateral System?
- What does it "contain"?
- How does it work?
- What is the role of information and information systems?

The Multilateral  
System consists of  
accessions of a set  
of crops, listed in  
*Annex 1*

to the International  
Treaty: this is what  
it "contains"

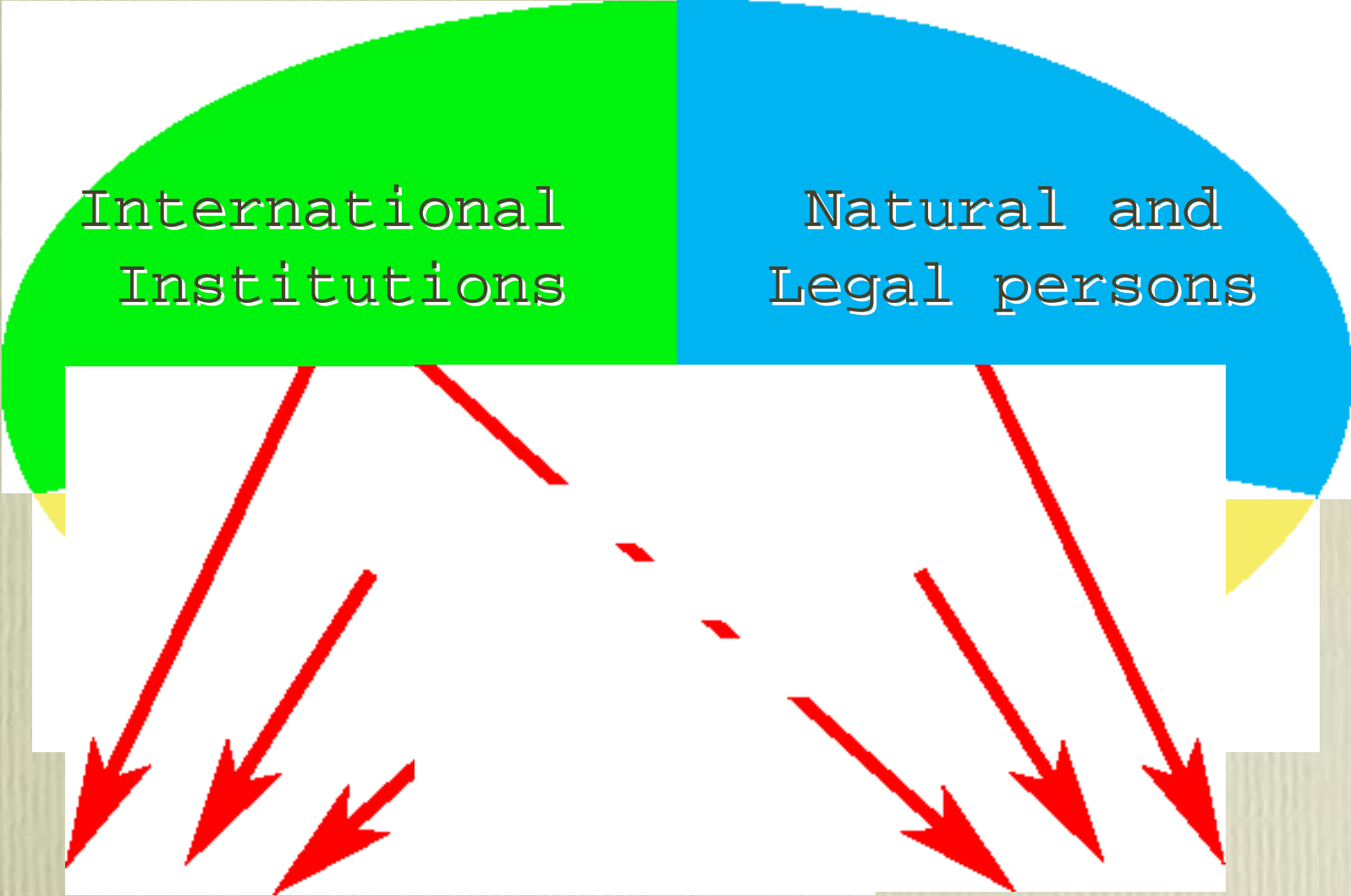
Material is “put  
into”

the System by

- Contracting parties and the institutions they control
- International Institutions that conclude agreements with the Governing Body under Article 15 of the Treaty
- Natural and legal persons—anyone, that is—within the jurisdiction of Contracting Parties

# The System also "contains"

- The unaltered material that anyone, anywhere, has received under a Standard Material Transfer agreement, and is obliged to make available
- The "material under development" derived from material received from the System (though it is at the developer's discretion whether to provide such material to others, and under what conditions)



Material received  
from the System

Material under  
development

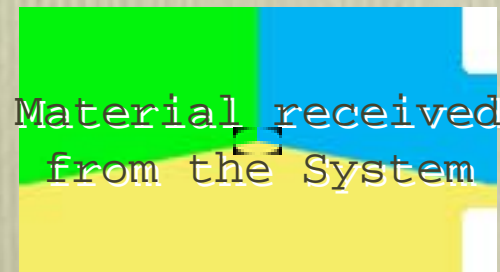
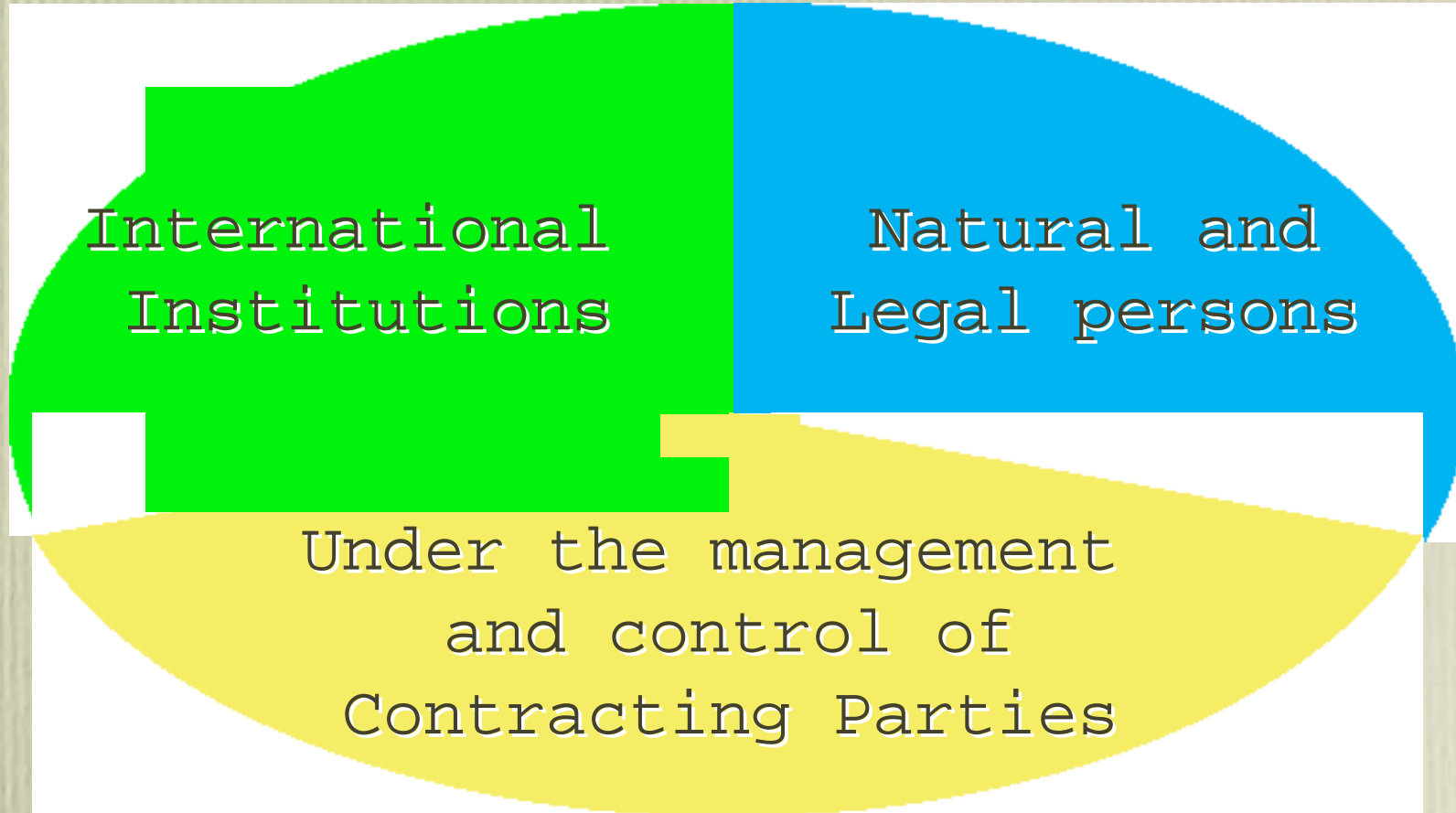
# The Multilateral

## System is

- A virtual genebank and not a physical genebank
- Not static, but continually evolving, through exchange, and plant breeding
- And only as useful as the information we have about it at any time
- And the Treaty obliges Recipients to put non-confidential research information back into the system

- A virtual system is only as good as the information we have about its contents
- Without adequate information, the system is useless to plant breeders
- The first task is therefore to make the contents of the system visible
- But how much do we currently know about the contents of the Multilateral system?

# Very little, indeed





# The whole system



Information  
about plant  
genetic resources

The Standard  
Material Transfer  
Agreement

The Third  
Party  
Beneficiary



## Information about plant

genetic resources

- To help plant breeders create benefits to share, information systems systems must "make the system visible"

- There is a great gap between the sophisticated databases of the CGIAR and developed countries, and developing countries

- Overcoming this is a major challenge



## The Standard Material Transfer Agreement

- The Standard Transfer Agreement is the backbone of benefit-sharing
- It establishes all rights and obligations of the Provider, Recipient and the Multilateral system
- Information about Standard Transfer Agreements and the resources transferred must be adequate and accurate



## The Third Party Beneficiary

- The Third Party Beneficiary must have the full information legally needed to initiate dispute settlement procedures, if required
- Information must be kept confidential, to protect users' rights
- Legal questions of data integrity, confidentiality, secure transmission and liability will need to be

# The current challenges

- To document and make visible the plant genetic resources in the system
- To facilitate exchange by lowering the transaction costs of the use of the Standard Transfer Agreement
- To feed non-confidential research information back to the system
- To provide legal effectiveness to the Third Party Beneficiary

So, an urgent need  
for



Effective, ready-made tools

for whoever needs them