



The International Treaty

ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



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REPORT ON THE EXECUTION OF THE PROJECT CYCLE OF THE BENEFIT-SHARING FUND SINCE THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Executive Summary

This document provides a progress report on the implementation of the projects funded by the Benefit-sharing Fund. During the biennium, the Bureau of the Sixth Session of the Governing Body has received reports and provided guidance on a regular basis on the execution of the project cycle. This document provides key facts and figures of results under the second project cycle and update on the finalization of the 19 projects of the second project cycle that started execution on 2012, which will now undergo an independent evaluation. It also gives an overview on the main steps and processes that have been carried out to launch of the Third Call for Proposals and the approval and implementation of the portfolio of the 22 new projects.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This information document has been prepared with a view to provide background information relevant to the *Report on the Funding Strategy*,¹ which deals with general policy matters related to the implementation of the Funding Strategy and its Benefit-sharing Fund and that are not exclusive to the execution of a particular round of the project cycle of the BSF.

2. This inf document reports on the execution of the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF) project cycles since its last Session (September 2013). It therefore covers the last months of biennium 2012-2013 as well as most of the present biennium 2014-2015. During this time, most projects approved for funding in the second round of the project cycle has been finalized and the focus has been the launch and execution of the Third Call for Proposals. The Secretariat has also advanced in the preparation of a technical *Report on the execution of the second project cycle* as well as the planning of the Independent Evaluation of the second cycle portfolio, as requested by the Governing Body.

II. EXECUTION OF THE SECOND ROUND OF THE PROJECT CYCLE

a. The second round of the project cycle: key facts and figures

3. A wide range of institutions and stakeholders have been involved in this second project portfolio through innovative partnerships between research centers, farmers and farmers' organizations, civil society, and public sector. This is helping to establish integrated approaches to global challenges in areas where a real opportunity exists for advances in crop diversity to improve nutrition and contribute to more sustainable livelihoods.

4. In fact, the executing agencies have been working with more than 222 partnering institutions among universities, institutes for biodiversity conservation, international organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations, donor agencies, genebanks and national and international research institutes by bringing together complementary expertise to improve the livelihoods of targeted communities and help share the results and lessons learned within and outside the countries involved. In the case of the "multi-country projects", a consortium of institutions with complementary know-how and understanding of the local needs and aspirations of rural communities joined forces in the implementation of project activities.

5. The geographical extension of the areas that have been subject to project activities amount to 1.812.793km² for both Window 1 and Window 2 projects, for total of 1.110 villages and districts involved². The coverage of field activities (Window 2 projects) amount to 94.0237 km² for a total of 1005 districts/villages involved. This coverage, coupled with the vulnerability assessments and active involvement of local communities, contributed to an increased sense of ownerships and reveals the scale of distribution of project benefits and their potential of being scaled up across agro-ecological zones.

¹ IT/GB-6/15/ 11

² The source of this information is the *Monitoring questionnaire* that the executing agencies had to fill in as part of the reporting requirements and the section *Coverage* of the final progress Reports. It is supposed that the actual coverage in km² of the implemented activities is higher than the reported number given that 7% of the executing agencies were not able to quantify the coverage in km² and provided only the coverage in terms of number of districts/villages involved. In addition and especially for Window 1 projects the coverage of the implemented activities referred to the territorial extension of entire targeted countries. These figures were not included in the reported number.

6. An analysis of the reports of the executing agencies showed that more than 340.000 (90% farmers) people and 215 grassroots organizations have been directly involved in collection, characterization, evaluation and development of new varieties of targeted crops, training and capacity building, participatory variety selection, plant breeding and establishment of community seed banks. It is expected that more than 760.000 among farmers and farming communities will indirectly benefit from the activities and achieved outputs of the second cycle portfolio. Farmers' knowledge and their socio-cultural dimensions, systems and institutions have been integrated in all project activities and the role of local communities in securing access to and management of biological diversity is being broadly recognized and prioritized.

7. More than 340.000 direct beneficiaries, mostly farmers, have been involved in field activities, surveys, seed fairs, community biodiversity registers, training and capacity building, participatory variety selection, plant breeding and establishment of community seed banks in 45 targeted countries in more than 1.110 villages and districts. Around 16 community seed banks storing a total of 1120 crop varieties have been created as a platform for offering multiple channels of access and availability of seeds at community level, conserving and restoring local varieties as well as sharing of agricultural biodiversity, knowledge and expertise.

8. More than of 310 capacity building workshops and training sessions have been delivered as to enhance human and institutional competences to conserve and sustainably use PGRFA. More than 16,000 among farmers, extension agents, researches and governmental officials have benefited from training sessions on characterization, evaluation and breeding of crop varieties, on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA. Over 20 MSc student theses were directly supported through the implementation of Window 1 projects and over 43 student theses – from BSc to PhD – resulted from implementation of the Window 2 projects.

9. A total of 21 Strategic Action Plans have been developed in 28 countries. Over 3000 maps were produced, as well as an entire atlas. 22 baseline study reports and surveys were conducted and their results made public, and five scientific publications and four policy briefs were disseminated. One community-managed database of regional genetic diversity was established in Brazil, and a National Charter for the Conservation of Oasean Systems was developed and circulated at a high level in Tunisia.

10. As part of implementation of Window 2 projects, a total of 12 baseline studies – on household vulnerability, agronomic practices and traditional knowledge – were realised, as well as 2 participatory market research studies.

b. Progress made in the execution and finalization of the first batch of 19 projects

11. Two types of projects have been supported by BSF in the second project cycle: Strategic Action Plans (Window 1 projects) and Immediate Action Projects (Window 2 projects). The project funded have been approved in 3 different batches, as funding became available:

- The first batch of projects funded became operational in 2012 and consisted of 19 projects (7 Strategic Action Plans and 12 Immediate Action Projects);
- The second batch of projects consisted of 3 Window 1 projects executed by UNDP and that became operational at the end of 2013 when funding became available for such partnership;
- A final batch of favorably appraised projects was approved for funding by the Bureau of the Fifth Session of the Governing Body prior to the Session of the Governing Body (September

2013) and consisted of 8 projects (2 Strategic Action Plans and 6 Immediate Action Projects). Six projects became operational throughout 2014³.

12. From the 19 projects approved in the first batch, 17 have been successfully concluded and Final Results and Financial Reports approved⁴.

13. All the Strategic Action Plans approved in the first batch of projects have been finalized and published.⁵ The Final outputs of the implementation of Window 1 projects are represented by road maps to strengthen conservation, access and use of plant genetic resources at national and regional levels, as strategic elements for food security and agricultural adaptation to climate change.

14. By August 2015, all activities of 12 Immediate Action Projects which became operational in 2012 have been completed and 10 projects have been finalized, meaning that the contracts signed with the executing agencies have been closed.⁶ Two executing agencies of the Immediate Action Projects are compiling the final data related to the expenditures and results to be submitted to the Secretariat as part of the Final Reporting requirements in order to be able to close the contracts. The portfolio of the first batch of 19 projects will be closed by November 2015.

15. By August 2015, 10 executing agencies had already provided detailed plans of inclusion into the Multilateral System of PGRFA material resulting from projects funded and 1149 accessions of value-added material resulting from the projects has been made available according to the terms and conditions of the MLS⁷. A number of notifications have been published on the Treaty website containing detailed accession-level information and in some cases the links to the online databases where further information can be obtained are indicated.⁸

c. Progress made in the execution of the second and third batches of projects approved for funding

16. The second batch of three UNDP nested projects has become operational during 2013-2014, when Germany and Italy have contributed USD 1.000.000 to finance three Strategic Action Plans in Namibia, Philippines and Kenya.

17. The Three Strategic Action Plans have been ultimated and partners in the field are compiling the data and information on the main results and outcomes of the projects. 100% of the committed funds have been disbursed to UNDP. An overview of the three UNDP implemented projects as well as the detailed description of results, outcomes and impact is available in the *Report on the execution of the second project cycle*. The three projects will be closed by November 2015.

³ In 2012, 8 project proposals have been favourably appraised by the Panel of Experts to be funded when resources would become available in the Benefit-sharing Fund. Additional resources of USD 2,562,210 became available during 2013. Six out of the eight project proposals have expressed their willingness and capacity to implement activities under the approved projects. The executing agency for the project PR-22-Brazil *Crioula Seeds, Quilombola Resistance: building food sovereignty in the Caatinga bioma*, informed the Secretariat that they did not have the capacity to implement the project any longer and therefore declined the funding. The executing agency for the regional project PR-172-Iran *Utilization of chickpea and lentil genetic resources for adapting to climate change in the CWANA region* informed the Secretariat that due to operational problems in the Region, including insecurity levels, the start of the project had to be postponed.

⁴ The dates of the start of certain projects had to be postponed to adjust activities to cropping seasons or other operational requirements. A number of projects requested a no-cost extension to be able to finalize project activities. The average request of no-cost extension was of six months.

⁵ <http://www.planttreaty.org/content/factsheet/2010-2011>

⁶ The dates of the start of certain projects had to be postponed to adjust activities to crop seasons or other operational requirements. A number of projects requested a no-cost extension to be able to finalize project activities. The average request of no-cost extension was of six months.

⁷ This number will increase as the other projects will submit the Plan of Inclusion in their final reports, therefore, we will update the information accordingly.

18. The third and last batch of 6 project proposals favorably appraised but not funded during 2012-2013, became operational in 2014, for a total value of USD 2,562,210. Two Strategic Action Plans funded in this last batch will be finalized by the end of 2015. The Four Immediate Action Projects will be concluded during 2016. An overview of the ongoing projects as well as the detailed description of results, outcomes and impact is available in the *Report on the execution of the second project cycle*⁹.

d. Report on the execution of the second project cycle

19. At its Fifth Session, the Governing Body requested the Secretariat to prepare and make available a summary report on the implementation of the second project portfolio. The *Report on the execution of the second project cycle* provides an in-depth description of the activities, impact and results achieved in the implementation of the finalized projects of the second round portfolio and illustrates lessons learned, best practices and main institutional and operational progresses made in the evolution of the BSF grant mechanism. The *Report* follows the structure of the *Report on the execution of the first project cycle*¹⁰ and includes detailed analysis of:

- Overview of the second cycle project portfolio;
- Beneficiaries and partner organizations;
- Outcomes and outputs;
- Impact of achieved outputs on food security, resilience and adaptation in the face of climate change;
- Crops addressed and material included in the Multilateral System;
- Status of the on-going projects of the second and third batches;
- Information on crop genetic diversity generated and being made publicly available;
- Challenges, success stories and lessons learned;
- Compilation of financial data.

20. A first draft of the report will be made available during the Sixth Session of the Governing Body as IT/GB-6/15/Inf14.

e. Independent Evaluation

21. The *Operational Procedures for the use of resources under the direct control of the Governing Body* include, as the last step of the project cycle, an independent evaluation to be carried out at the portfolio level.

22. The independent evaluation of the project portfolio will be undertaken following the procedures for reporting, monitoring and evaluation adopted by the Governing Body, at its Fourth Session.¹¹ It will address issues of effectiveness and efficiency in the execution of the project portfolio, as requested by the Governing Body, at its Fifth Session.

23. An approach paper and Terms of Reference for the Independent Evaluation have been prepared by the Secretariat and the FAO Office of Evaluation. The outcome of the Evaluation will be a Report that will provide a comprehensive, systematic and evidence-based account of the performance of the completed projects by assessing their design, process of implementation, achievements (outputs, outcomes, impact etc) against project objectives and any other relevant results. The Report will be

⁹ IT/GB-6/15/Inf14

¹⁰ Available at <http://www.planttreaty.org/node/4355>

¹¹ Resolution 3/2011, Annex I. http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/R3_2011_en.pdf

made public in Treaty and FAO webpages and its conclusions will be taken into account in preparing for the review of the Funding Strategy by the Governing Body, at its Seventh Session.

24. The FAO Office of Evaluation¹² will manage the process to carry out the evaluation, including the hiring of the independent experts that will carry out the bulk of the work. The Office is currently finalizing a number of major evaluations of programmes and projects. The independent evaluation has therefore been scheduled to start at the beginning of 2016 with a view to have results ready at the end of the first semester of 2016.

III. EXECUTION OF THE THIRD ROUND OF THE PROJECT CYCLE

a. Issuance of the Third Call for Proposals and dissemination

25. The Third Call for Proposals was launched on the 7th of March 2014 by posting it on the website, together with the relevant Notifications in all Treaty languages. The Secretariat undertook the standard correspondence to disseminate the Third Call, by sending a Notification on the issuance of the Call to 96 National Focal Points to the Treaty, 161 accredited Permanent Representations to FAO and FAO Representations in countries that are Contracting Parties to the Treaty, inviting them to circulate and advertise the Call to all potential beneficiaries in their country, as well as to forward any future applications that they might receive to the Secretariat.

26. The submission phase of pre-proposals was concluded on 2 July 2014. An Independent Panel of Experts was established by the Bureau of the Sixth Session of the Governing Body. It was composed by 14 experts, two representing each of the FAO regions. According to the *Operational Procedures for the use of resources under the direct control of the Governing Body* adopted through Resolution 2/2013, the Panel is responsible for the screening and appraising the pre-proposals and the full project proposals submitted for the Third Call. The Secretariat has circulated to the Panel of Experts the *Policy on Conflicts of Interest and related Standards of Conduct for the Benefit-Sharing Fund*, as adopted by the Governing Body at its Fifth Session, and requested the Panel to conform to its provisions.

b. Pre-proposal phase

27. The Call has received a lot of attention from all corners of the world, including government agencies, international research institutes, NGOs, genebanks and international development organizations. A total of **394 pre-proposals** have been received for both, Window 2 and Window 3 projects.

28. As a first step, the Secretariat filtered all pre-proposals that were not submitted before the deadline, as well as those that have not been channeled through the recognized authorities of an eligible Contracting Party of the International Treaty as indicated in Annex 3 of the Call. **270 pre-proposals** have been codified and filed.

29. As a second step, and in order to further facilitate the work of the experts, the Secretariat undertook a first screening of the pre-proposals against a set of eligibility criteria listed in the text of the Call. At the end of this first step, 188 pre-proposals resulted eligible to apply for funding (147 Window 2 and 41 Window 3).

¹² <http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed-about/en/>

30. All the eligible pre-proposals were submitted to the Panel of Experts for screening against the screening criteria listed in the text of the Call and the *Guidelines for screening the project pre-proposals* that has been prepared by the Secretariat.

31. The result of the pre-screening by the experts was a shortlist A of recommended pre-proposals in order of scoring for each Region. On 23rd of September the Bureau of the Sixth Session of the Governing Body has endorsed *the Methodology for pre-screening of project proposals* and has invited 64 institutions to develop and submit full project proposals.

c. Helpdesk

32. In order to facilitate the process of preparing pre-proposals and full proposals, the Secretariat has established a Helpdesk. Applicants have been invited to contact the Helpdesk for elaboration and explanation of the information contained in text of the Call or to seek answers to any queries regarding the submission of proposals under the Third Call. The Helpdesk has provided support to the applicants by replying to more than 400 enquiries. The Helpdesk operated in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.

33. The Helpdesk has organized and delivered three regional workshops, of two days duration each, from 30 October to 14 November, in Ecuador, Egypt and Malaysia. The workshops were organized in collaboration with FAO decentralized offices through the FAO Representation in Ecuador and the FAO Regional Office for Near East in Cairo, Egypt. The workshop for the Asian and the South West Pacific Regions was hosted and supported by the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI).

34. The regional workshops provided technical information and support to 64 applicants of the Third Call for Proposals on the main aspects and requirements they had to comply with while developing and submitting full project proposals. Practical guidance and explanation on how to develop high quality and technically sound proposals has been provided to each applicant through individual coaching sessions and case studies.¹³

d. Full project proposal phase

35. On the 5th of December, the deadline for the submission of full project proposals was closed. From the 64 pre-proposals that have been invited to develop a full project proposal, the Secretariat received a total of 56 full project proposals.

36. The 56 full project proposals have been subject to the appraisal by the Panel of Experts according to the methodology prepared by the Secretariat. The methodology has been refined and improved building on the experience gained in the second funding cycle and has enabled the Bureau to receive a good quality ranked list of best proposals, with the highest scores.

e. Approval of projects portfolio

37. On 5th of March, the Bureau of the Sixth Session of the Governing Body approved a portfolio of 22 projects to be funded as part of the Third Call for Proposals for a total of USD 10.078.580. Activities will take place in 44 developing countries across Africa, Asia, Near East, Latin America and the Caribbean and South West Pacific.

38. The focus and scope of projects to be funded in this Third Call for Proposals remain similar to those supported in the Second Call. Window 2 projects will implement activities geared to strengthen

¹³ <http://www.planttreaty.org/news/treaty-holds-regional-workshops-bsf-project-applicants>

the on-farm conservation and management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture through action primarily at the farm and community levels.

39. For the Third Call for Proposals, an additional funding window, Window 3, has been opened up specifically to support the co-development and transfer of technologies as to enhance non-monetary benefit-sharing by increasing technology transfer, capacity building and information exchange as foreseen in the first priority of the Benefit-sharing Fund.

40. The 22 approved projects feature the following windows and sub-windows:

- Five single-country Immediate Action Projects of duration of 3 years for a maximum funding of US\$ 150.000;
- Five multi-country Immediate Action Projects of duration of 4 years for a maximum funding of US\$ 800.000;
- Three single-country projects for Co-development and transfer of technologies of duration of 2 years and maximum funding of US\$ 300.000;
- Nine multi-country projects for Co-development and transfer of technologies of duration of 3 years and maximum funding of US\$ 500.000;

f. Development and signature of project agreements

41. Upon the approval of the third cycle portfolio, the Secretariat, in consultation with relevant FAO offices, started the preparation of the project agreements to be signed with each executing agency. The contractual instrument available at FAO to obtain services from governmental, inter-governmental, non-governmental and non-profit legal entities is the "Letter of Agreement" (LoA). The following steps have been carried out by the Secretariat for the finalization of the Letters of Agreement to be signed with the executing agencies:

- Update of the project proposals, especially budgets, procurement, financial information and work plans to align the project proposals and related documentation to the FAO revised rules on Letters of Agreement. In this regard, specific guidelines have been prepared by the Secretariat and provided to the executing agencies;
- Consultations in house with the relevant FAO Units with regard to the updated template of the Letters of Agreement to be signed with the executing agencies;
- Circulation of the draft LoAs within the executing agencies and request feedback and endorsement. A number of Service Providers had questions relating to IPR, taxes, financial reporting, payment schedule and others;
- Preparation of the necessary documentation (Note to the file, Quality Assurance documents, Routing Slip and vendor registration) and submit the packages to the fao unit in charge of reviewing each agreement and related documentation and verify the compliance with established FAO rules and procedures.

42. The Secretariat has initiated to submit the first LoAs to FAO relevant unit for clearance and, upon receiving the Quality Assurance, the LoAs will be signed by both parts and first disbursement of funds done. The Secretariat plans to have all LoAs signed and approved by 31 December 2015.

VI. PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH ROUND OF THE PROJECT CYCLE

43. The Operational Procedures of the Fund foresee that there will be a new round of the project cycle every biennium. The Governing Body, at its Fifth Session, decided to launch the Third Call for Proposals.

44. During the last biennium the Secretariat received contributions for the fourth round of the project cycle for a total of USD 954,336.59 from donors such as Austria, Indonesia, Italy, Norway and Sweden. *Appendix 1* provides an overview of the actual income mobilized for the BSF from July 2009 to July 2015, compared to the targets set in *The Strategic Plan 2009–2014*.¹⁴

45. In November 2014, the European Seed Association announced its decision to make a voluntary contribution to the Benefit-sharing Fund¹⁵ and the expectation is that it will be received before the Sixth Session of the Governing Body. A number of donors have been approached and resource mobilization efforts for the Fund will be intensified in the lead up to the Governing Body. The Governing Body, through Draft Resolution 1/2015, is requested to give guidance about resource mobilization for the fourth round of the project cycle.

46. The Bureau of the Sixth Session of the Governing Body had an initial discussion on a concept note for the fourth round of the Call for Proposals. The concept note indicates the possibility of customizing and making more flexible the format of the Call and operations of the round

47. Under Draft Resolution 2/2015, the Governing Body may wish to request the Bureau of the Seventh Session of the Governing Body to consider measures to make the fourth project cycle more attractive to donors, including by making contributions, upon confirmation by the Bureau, with a regional or crop priority focus. This measure would build on the progress made within the Benefit-sharing Fund to identify priorities to be funded with a regional or crop focus through the Strategic Action Plans supported through Window 1 and through the *Framework Action Plan for the Implementation of the Benefit-Sharing Fund in the Near East and North Africa Region: Water-scarcity, Drought and Climate Change Impact on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, as developed by Contracting Parties and donors seeking to address these challenges in the Near East and North Africa region and which was welcomed at the Muscat ministerial declaration on the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

¹⁴ This table was first prepared as part of the documentation for the first meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System, and has been updated regularly since then. For a detailed description on how the table was prepared, please check paragraphs 11-30 of document IT/OWG-EFMLS-1/14/3, *Background on the Work Undertaken by the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on the Funding Strategy, and its Further Development* http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/OEWG-EFMLS_1-14-w3_en.pdf

¹⁵ <http://www.euroseeds.org/european-seed-sector-supports-fao-treaty-plant-genetic-resources-food-and-agriculture>

Appendix 1: Benefit-sharing Fund: actual income July 2009-July 2015, compared to the target in The Strategic Plan 2009–2014

	TARGET		ACTUAL	
	%	USD	%	USD
CONTRACTING PARTIES				
Australia				870,000
Austria				24,176
Germany				563,096
European Commission				5,570,960
Indonesia				100,000
Ireland				659,800
Italy				4,451,577
Norway				6,495,062
Spain				2,348,935
Sweden				98,727
Switzerland				28,612
Sub-total	75–85%	± 92,800,000	22.86%	21,210,945
OTHER COUNTRIES				
Sub-total	0–1%	± 580,000	0.00%	0
PRIVATE SECTOR				
Canadian seed company				1,297
Sub-total	7–11%	± 10,440,000	0.01%	1,297
FOUNDATIONS				0
Sub-total	7–11%	± 10,440,000	0.00%	0
INDIVIDUALS				0
Sub-total	1–2%	± 1,740,000	0.00%	0
TOTAL FUNDING STRATEGY	100%	116,000,000	18.29%	21,212,242
UNPLANNED: INTERNATIONAL FUNDS				
IFAD				1,500,000
Sub-total	Unplanned	116,000,000	1.29%	1,500,000
UNPLANNED: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES				
Norwegian initiative: 1.1% of national seed sales				738,178
Seed trade licencing platform				6,416
Sub-total	Unplanned	116,000,000	0.56%	744,594
TOTAL UNPLANNED	Unplanned	116,000,000	1.86%	2,244,594
GRAND TOTAL		116,000,000	20.22%	23,456,836