



The International Treaty

ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



E

THIRD MEETING OF THE *AD HOC* TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE USE OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Vienna, Austria, 24 and 25 October 2016

Implementation of the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and Supporting Initiatives

I. BACKGROUND

1. The implementation of Article 6 is a standing item on the agenda of the Governing Body of the International Treaty, with the aim of promoting an integrated approach to the sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) among Contracting Parties and other stakeholders.

2. At its Sixth Session, the Governing Body of the International Treaty adopted Resolution 4/2015 on the implementation of Article 6, Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.¹ By the same Resolution, the Governing Body endorsed the revised Programme of Work on Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and its Supporting Initiatives for the period 2016–2019 (Programme of Work), and reconvened the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Sustainable Use (ACSU).

II. THE PROGRAMME OF WORK ON SUSTAINABLE USE AND SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

3. *Annex 1*, Table 1 to Resolution 4/2015 contains different sets of activities by stakeholders, divided into programmes agreed by the Governing Body (Part A), and supporting initiatives to be undertaken by Contracting Parties and other stakeholders voluntarily (Part B).

4. The present document describes the steps taken by the Secretariat to implement the guidance of the Governing Body with regard to Part A of the Programme of Work, and summarizes information received in regard to Part B. The document will be complemented by information documents and in-session presentations by stakeholders who are contributing, including through the Supporting Initiatives, to the vision, mission and goals of the Programme of Work.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bl143e.pdf>

Part A : Activities agreed to by the Governing Body

A1. Report on activities, projects and programmes for the achievement of sustainable use of PGRFA

5. On 4 April 2016, the Secretary issued the notification “*Submission on Information relating to the implementation of Article 6 of the Treaty: Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources*” to all the National Focal Points.² The Secretary invited Contracting Parties to share with the Secretariat any relevant information on any actions or activities planned or undertaken by them in response to the invitations made by the Governing Body, in order to report on those activities to the Seventh Session of the Governing Body. The notification contained a summary of the main relevant decisions of the Governing Body, which are reproduced in Table 1 below for ease of reference.

6. As foreseen in Resolution 4/2015, the implementation of the Programme of Work has been making progress, thanks the financial contribution and in-kind support made some Contracting Parties.³

Table 1: Summary of the main decisions affecting Contracting Parties in relation to the implementation of Article 6, Sustainable Use of PGRFA

<i>Paragraph of Resolution 4/2015</i>	<i>MAIN DECISIONS OF RELEVANCE TO CONTRACTING PARTIES. The Governing Body:</i>
1	<i>Requests Contracting Parties and stakeholders to continue reporting on the implementation of the revised Programme of Work as contained in Annex 1 to the Resolution 4/2015</i>
2	<i>Requests all Contracting Parties to promote, as appropriate, the access of all farmers including small-holder farmers, farmers’ organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities to PGRFA in the Multilateral System and the broadening of the genetic base of crops in use</i>
4.a	<i>Requests the Secretary to invite further inputs from Contracting Parties, other governments, farmers’ organizations, relevant stakeholders and experts to collect additional and prospective tools for the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA</i>
4.d	<i>Requests the Secretary to invite and collect submissions from Contracting Parties, other governments, relevant institutions and organizations, and stakeholders on how to promote and improve measures for the sustainable use of PGRFA</i>

7. Several Contracting Parties provided information on activities and programmes on the implementation of Art.6. (Table 2). The role of local and organic plant breeding, public-private partnerships for pre-breeding, the release of farmers’ varieties and seed production, the value of the Multilateral System of the Treaty, and the need to count on a facilitated access to PGRFA were highlighted.

Table 2: Submissions by Contracting Parties, governments and relevant institutions and organizations on the implementation of Article 6

² <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bp417e.pdf>

³ Austria, Indonesia, Italy, Switzerland and Norway

Italy	Contracting Party	15/03/2013
Benin	Contracting Party	07/04/2013
Norway	Contracting Party	22/08/2014
Finland	Contracting Party	15/03/2015
GREEN Foundation	Civil Society Organization	10/02/2013
ACRA	Civil Society Organization	15/03/2013
FMPA	Civil Society Organization	08/04/2013
FMPA	Civil Society Organization	08/04/2013

8. The Programme of Work aims “to provide support to Contracting Parties and stakeholders to implement the provisions of Articles 5, 6 and 9 of the Treaty that are relevant to the sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, based on national priorities and needs.” Therefore, in addition to the activities of the Contracting Parties on sustainable use, the Secretariat compiled the views, experiences and best practices on the implementation of Article 9 of the Treaty, ‘Farmers’ Rights’, submitted by Contracting Parties, farmers’ organizations and other relevant stakeholders.⁴

The submissions received are as follows:

<p>Contracting Parties:</p> <p>1. Australia; Canada; Czech Republic; Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea; Ecuador; France; Germany; Italy; Madagascar; Mali; Niger; Norway; Pakistan; Poland; Syrian Arab Republic; Uruguay; Zambia.</p> <p>Other relevant stakeholders:</p> <p>1. Asocuch; The Berne Declaration; Biowatch; Centre for Genetic Resources (CGN); Centre for Sustainable Development (Cenesta); Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT); Development Fund; European Seed Association; Fridtjof Nansen Institute; Green Foundation; International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED); International Seed Federation (ISF); La Via Campesina;. Let’s Liberate Diversity-Coordination of the European Forum; LI-BIRD; Practical Action; The Global Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation Network.</p>
--

9. In recent years, the Secretariat received a number of concerns related, in particular, to how to share information on activities carried out at the local level among the different stakeholders because of the persistent lack of extra-budgetary resources at national level to support this thematic area of work. Therefore, the lack of capacity and resources still remains the main factor limiting the implementation of the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use, as highlighted in document IT/GB-6/15/Inf. 3.

10. An analysis of the submissions received in implementing Articles 6 and 9 of the Treaty will be finalized and presented at the Seventh Session of the Governing Body, with a view to encouraging further actions in the sustainable use of PGRFA by all Contracting Parties and other stakeholders.

A2. Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA

11. The concept of the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA and the justification for its development were described in detail in documents, IT/ACSU-1/12/5 and IT/ACSU-1/12/Inf.4, considered at the first meeting of the ACSU.⁵ The ACSU welcomed the concept of the Toolbox, supported its development and, on that basis, the Secretary was invited to continue with its preparation.⁶

12. At its second meeting (March 2015), the ACSU confirmed its support for the launch of an electronic consultation to gather information on stakeholder needs to inform the development of the Toolbox.⁷ Document IT/GB-6/15/Inf.3 details the design, execution and results of the consultation which was conducted from April to June 2015.⁸

13. In Resolution 4/2015, the Governing Body requested the Secretary, in collaboration with other stakeholders and subject to the availability of financial resources, to invite further inputs from Contracting Parties, other governments, farmers' organizations, relevant stakeholders and experts to collect additional and prospective tools for the Toolbox and publish it in all the working languages of FAO. Thanks to the generous contributions by the Governments of Italy and Switzerland, the Secretary convened an Expert Meeting on the Toolbox for the Sustainable Use of PGRFA, which took place at the International School for Advanced Education (SIAF), Volterra, Italy, 19–21 July 2016. The meeting was convened with the objectives of:

- a) defining the required functioning and contents of the Toolbox according to different user groups; and
- b) identifying specific resources for inclusion in the Toolbox.

14. The documents prepared for the Toolbox Expert Meeting and the full report containing the outcomes of the working group discussions and details of plenary discussions are available on the Treaty Website.⁹ The Document IT/ACSU-2 provides further information on progress in the development of the Toolbox.

Part B: Supporting Initiatives undertaken by Contracting Parties and other stakeholders voluntarily

B1. Platform for the Co-Development and Transfer of Technologies within the context of non-monetary benefit-sharing

15. The idea of a Platform for the Co-Development and Transfer of Technology was developed by interested institutions since 2011. In line with provisions of the International Treaty, technology transfer under this initiative is as a primary form of non-monetary benefit-sharing related to the management and use of PGRFA.

16. In September 2015, in Rome, Italy, the third meeting of the Platform was convened to define the strategic focus of the initiative in the light of developments in other Treaty processes, expand the network of active institutions, and report on progress at the Sixth Session of the Governing Body of the Treaty. The Platform decided to continue operating as a functioning network of institutions, and agreed on a strategic programme of work as a supporting initiative

⁵ <http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/ACSU1w5e.pdf> and <http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/ACSU14e.pdf>

⁶ http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/gb5i5e_Report_of_the_ACSU.pdf

⁷ [Report of the Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Sustainable Use of PGRFA](#)

⁸ [Item 11 of the Provisional Agenda – Sixth Session of the Governing Body – Development of a toolbox for sustainable use of PGRFA](#)

⁹ <http://www.planttreaty.org/content/expert-meeting-toolbox-sustainable-use-plant-genetic-resources-food-and-agriculture>

under the the PoW on Sustainable Use 2016–2019, to enhance the coherence and focus of the Platform.

17. A preparatory session for the Fourth Partners' meeting of the Platform was convened in Geneva on 24 and 25 August 2016 to develop the agenda, plan for the substantive inputs, and expected outcomes.¹⁰

18. The fourth meeting on of the Platform will be held in Vienna, Austria, on 22 October 2016, back to back with the Third Meeting of the ACSU. A streamlined version of the vision, mission and goals of the Platform as well as a more succinct message about the platform products and services will be elaborated to draw the attention of potential partners.

19. In the current biennium, a number of important developments have taken place in support of the Platform, including the:

- development of an *online Platform* to facilitate the documentation and transfer of the packages in connection with the Global Information System;⁸
- development of *pilot technology packages for developing countries on selected crops*;¹¹
- definition of an *Action Plan for partnerships between the public and private sector in pre-breeding on selected crops*;¹² and
- preparation of a *study on innovation systems and technology cycles for the sustainable use of PGRFA*.¹³

A draft business plan was also requested with the aim of seeking ways to fund and facilitate the work of the Platform, as well as serve as a vehicle to elaborate a strategic paper.

20. In order for the Platform initiative to fulfill its potential, more sustainable funding arrangements are the most immediate goal of its institutions. In this regard, technology co-development and transfer could be taken into account in the fourth call for proposals of the Benefit-Sharing Fund, thus providing a funding opportunity for projects supporting the objectives of the Platform.

B.2 Implementation of relevant activities on Farmers' Rights¹⁴ - Resolution 5/2015

21. In Resolution 5/2015, *Implementation of Article 9, Farmers' Rights*, the Governing Body recognized the relevance of consultations and workshops to exchange experiences and promote the implementation of Farmers' Rights among Contracting Parties and relevant stakeholders. The Governing Body, by the same Resolution, requested the Secretariat:

- *to engage Contracting Parties and relevant organizations to take initiatives to gather information at national, regional and global levels for exchanging knowledge, views, experiences and best practices on the implementation of Farmers' Rights as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty.*

22. The Governing Body also invited Contracting Parties and relevant organizations:

- *to take initiative to convene regional workshops and other consultations including with farmers' organizations for the exchange of knowledge, views and experiences to promote the realization of Farmers' Rights as set out in Article 9 of the Treaty, and present results at the next session of the Governing Body.*

¹⁰ Information document, *Report on the Preparatory and Planning Session for the Fourth Partners' Meeting of the Platform for the Co-Development and Transfer of Technologies*, Geneva, Switzerland, 24 and 25 August 2016.

⁸ Rice, Sorghum, Bean, Wheat; Potato, Maize, Tomato, Quinoa.

⁹ Nordgen, CIRAD, Bioversity International, IRRI.

¹⁰ FAO Tropical Agricultural Platform/CIRAD.

¹⁴ *In this section, "Farmers' Rights" refers to Farmers' Rights as set out in Article 9 of the Treaty.

23. Based on a Concept Note prepared by the Secretariat, the Governments of Indonesia and Norway confirmed their commitment to sponsor and organize a global consultation on farmers' rights. The Secretary subsequently issued a notification announcing the Global Consultation on Farmers' Rights and inviting contributions.¹⁵ The Global Consultation was subsequently held from 27 – 30 September 2016, in Bali, Indonesia.

24. Prior to the Global Consultation, two pre-consultation meetings were facilitated: a small group workshop, organized by Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva, 28 May 2016, and attended by a mix of international experts, researchers, academics, civil society organizations, and government representatives,¹⁶; and the Africa Region Stakeholders' Consultation, held 27–29 June 2016, in Harare, Zimbabwe.¹⁷

25. During these meetings, limited understanding and lack of capacity to implement Farmers' Rights, in both governments and civil society, were identified as major challenges. The Africa Region Stakeholders Consultation requested a comprehensive package of guidelines for PGR policy development, including how Farmers' Rights can be effectively implemented.¹⁸ It acknowledged that Article 9 represents a useful 'checklist' of measures to protect and benefit farmers. It also considered it important to link Article 9 to other provisions of the International Treaty, in particular Article 6, relating to sustainable use of plant genetic resources.

Electronic Survey

26. Drawing from the Survey Questionnaires on Farmers' Rights used in 2010 by Fridtjof Nansen Institute, the Secretariat conducted an electronic survey from 1 June to 15 August 2016. The electronic survey was designed, in the context of Resolution 5/2015 of the Governing Body, to gather views, perceptions, options and approaches and possible strategies to encourage the implementation and promotion of Farmers' Rights. In order to involve as many stakeholders as possible, the electronic survey was made available in three languages (English, French and Spanish). At the closure of the survey, a total of 164 respondents from 59 countries were gathered. Some of the respondents provided a consolidated response on behalf of groups of organizations and networks. A summary of the results was presented at the Global Consultation on Farmers' Rights in Bali, Indonesia, 27–30 September 2016. The full report will be made available before the end of 2016.

Global Consultation

27. In response to the call of the Governing Body, following the confirmation of Indonesia and Norway to sponsor and organize the Farmers' Rights Global Consultation, other Contracting Parties and civil society organizations also offered contributions to support the process.¹⁹ About 100 participants representing various stakeholders including farmers and farmers' organizations attended the event. The objectives of the Consultation were to address why Farmers' Rights matter, explore the different challenges for their realization and identify possible ways of further strengthening the realization of Farmers' Rights.

28. The outcome of the Global Consultation will be presented at the ACSU meeting and at the Seventh Session of the Governing Body in 2017.

¹⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bp419e.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://www.quno.org/timeline/2016/5/quno-and-international-treaty-host-consultation-farmers-rights>

¹⁷ Organized by Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) on the margins of the WIPO Meeting (WIPO/GRTKF/IC/30) [Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC)].

¹⁸ The full report of the Africa Stakeholders' Consultation will be published on the Treaty website. [<http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/areas-of-work/farmers-rights/en/>]

¹⁹ Government of Italy, Switzerland, Development Fund of Norway, Oxfam, Bioversity International, Global Alliance for the Future of Food, and several participants who travelled on their own means.

B.3 Raising awareness of the actual and potential value of crop wild relatives, landraces and underutilized species of local and regional importance for food security and sustainable development

29. Under the Programme of Work, it was agreed that by 2017, subject to the availability of financial resources, the Secretary, in collaboration with partners such as the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), FAO, the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR), CGIAR, as well as relevant non-governmental, farmers' and private sector organizations, would undertake "joint research on Aichi Targets related to sustainability in agriculture and the linkages between *in situ* conservation/on-farm management and community-based initiatives and programmes for the sustainable use of crop wild relatives, landraces and underutilized species".

30. A plan of work detailing the objectives, outputs and timeline of the research will be discussed with the Secretariat of the CBD and other potential partners with a view to making common efforts in terms of technical and financial commitment to achieve this Supporting Initiative.

31. Taking into account the Sustainable Development Goals, some initial thoughts on the objectives of this research include:

- a) Undertake a review of the extent to which Aichi Target 13 has been met with regard to developing and implementing strategies for maintaining the genetic diversity of CWR, landraces and underutilized species;
- b) Evaluate the impact of Target 13 on promoting the development of *in situ* conservation/on farm management and community-based initiatives for the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA;
- c) Collate a database of case studies, lessons learned and best practices in conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA which can be used to support countries in their efforts to achieve Target 13;
- d) Review potential synergies between actions undertaken to meet Target 7 on the sustainable management of areas under agriculture to ensure the conservation of biodiversity and those undertaken to meet Target 13 on the conservation and sustainable use of CWR, landraces and underutilized species;
- e) Explore linkages between activities related to Aichi Targets 7 and 13 with regard to conservation and sustainable use of CWR, landraces and underutilized species and the priority activities of the Second GPA, as well as with Articles 5 and 6 of the Treaty (and any other relevant Articles), including opportunities for provision of support to nations through the Treaty's Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA.

32. The work is expected to be finalised by the next session of the Governing Body in the second semester of 2017.

III. OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. The contribution of the Benefit-Sharing Fund projects of the Treaty to the Sustainable Use of PGRFA

33. Sustainable use of PGRFA is one of the three agreed priorities of the Benefit-sharing Fund of the International Treaty (BSF).²⁰ Recognizing the importance of agrobiodiversity to climate change adaptation, since its inception in 2009, the BSF has invested more than 20 million USD in projects addressing the development of appropriate strategies and actions that will ensure that PGRFA are conserved and sustainably managed at national and regional levels by implementing, inter alia, the following measures:

²⁰ Since its establishment in 2009, the BSF has sponsored 61 projects in 55 developing countries across Africa, Asia, Near East, Latin America and South West Pacific regions with the aim of building the resilience of local communities in the face of climate change and food insecurity through the management of PGRFA.

- *National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans for the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA and promotion of Diverse Farming Systems (Article 6.2a of the Treaty)*
- *Research that enhances biological diversity for the benefit of farmers (Art 6.2b of the Treaty)*

34. As part of the on-going Third Call for Proposals, which consists of 22 projects executed in 44 developing countries around the globe, projects on the co-development and transfer of technologies are being implemented. These projects aim at promoting international cooperation among research institutions across national boundaries for the co-development and transfer of key technologies. The projects will enable the generation, exchange and utilization of molecular, phenotypic and genotypic information for the development of new varieties adapted to climate change. They are expected to directly benefit at least 55,000 resource poor –farmers in developing countries. In this regard, at least 30 PGRFA technologies are planned to be co-developed and transferred to more than 80 research institutions of Contracting Parties in the developing world to enable integrated data analysis and interpretation of germplasm, genomic and phenotypic data. Further details are contained in the document IT/ACSU-3/16/Inf. 3.

2. The contribution of the Global Information System to the Sustainable Use of PGR

35. Characterization and evaluation information is key to the sustainable use of PGRFA. Since the last meeting of the ACSU, the Governing Body has made progress in the development of the Global Information System (GLIS) under Article 17 of the Treaty, with the adoption of a Vision and a Programme of Work (PoW-GLIS), including through the establishment of a Scientific Advisory Committee.²¹

- a. The Vision states that the GLIS “*integrates and augments existing systems to create the global entry point to information and knowledge for strengthening the capacity for PGRFA conservation, management and utilization*”.
- b. The PoW-GLIS aims at creating a web-based platform on PGRFA, thus facilitating access to sources of PGRFA and associated information and envisions activities to be undertaken by the Secretariat in collaboration with Contracting parties and stakeholders including the Convention on Biological Diversity, as follows:
 - **Facilitating access to information on sources of germplasm** in existing information systems on *ex situ* collections, *in situ* crop wild relatives, on-farm material and other sources and their relationship with the Multilateral System;
 - **Supporting value addition activities** such as generating phenotypic, genetic, environmental and other relevant data.
 - **Supporting the major uses of PGRFA.** GLIS should cater for the different purposes for which PGRFA is accessed and used, including conservation of PGRFA in *ex situ* or *in situ* conditions, to on-farm management and training.

36. During 2016, the Secretariat made efforts to raise funds for the implementation of the PoW-GLIS, particularly on capacity development activities. Further details are contained in the document, IT/ACSU-3/16/Inf. 4.

3. Breeding strategies and regulations concerning variety release and seed policies

37. Breeding strategies and regulations for variety release and seed distribution are also relevant to the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use,²² in addition to research and

²¹ Resolution 3/2015, The Vision and the Programme of Work on the Global Information System.
http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/RES3_GLIS.pdf

²² The Art.6.2 g of the Treaty provides for: “ reviewing, and, as appropriate, adjusting breeding strategies and ations concerning variety release and seed distribution”.

development. Seed certification, official approval of varieties and plant variety protection are three dimensions of seed systems.

It would be important that:

- knowledge about new varieties and adapted production methods are transferred to farmers, and
- farmers have access to the local varieties and high quality seeds.

Important measures for this include national seed and variety certification as well as other measures that can facilitate the exchange of genetic materials among farmers. All these measures should support the sustainability of agricultural ecosystems. FAO activities in supporting voluntary guidelines for National Seed Policy Formulation are contained in the document IT/ACSU-3/16/Inf. 5.

ADVICE SOUGHT FROM THE COMMITTEE

38. The Committee is invited to advise the Secretary on the implementation, coordination and continuation of the Programme of Work. In particular, the Committee is invited to:

- i. with reference to IT/ACSU-2 and the documents referenced therein, endorse the progress made in defining the functions and contents of the Toolbox and support its continued development, as well as assist the Secretariat in its efforts to seek the funding required for its development;
- ii. advise on how to recognize and integrate the sustainable use practices emerging from the Benefit-sharing Fund in the Programme of Work, in particular for the wider use of diversity of varieties and species in on-farm management;
- iii. integrate relevant activities relating to breeding strategies and regulations on variety release and seed policies, as appropriate;
- iv. take stock of progress with the Supporting Initiatives (Part B) as well as to consider more support to finalize all the activities included in the Programme of Work as appropriate;
- v. consider additional financial and human resources to finalize all the activities included in the Programme of Work as appropriate;
- vi. provide any additional advice on how to implement the Programme of Work.