



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



**The International Treaty**  
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES  
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

**Views, Experiences and Best Practices as an example of possible options for  
the national implementation of Article 9 of the International Treaty**

*Note by the Secretary*

*At its [second meeting](#) of the Ad hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights (AHTEG), the Expert Group agreed on a revised version of the [template](#) for collecting information on examples of national measures, best practices and lessons learned from the realization of Farmers' Rights*

*This document presents the updated information on best practices and measures of implementing Article 9 of the International Treaty submitted by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) on 23 July 2019.*

*The submission is presented in the form and language in which it was received.*

## **International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)**

### Basic information:

#### **Title of measure/practice:**

Heirloom Rice Project

#### **Date of submission:**

23 July 2019

#### **Name(s) of country/countries in which the measure/practice is taking place**

Philippines

#### **Responsible organizations**

International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)  
Department of Agriculture of The Philippines  
PhilRice  
Local Government Units (LGUs)  
Department of Agriculture- Cordillera Administrative Region (DA-CAR)  
Self-help groups (SHG)  
CGIAR Research Programme RICE

#### **Type of institution/organization (categories)**

IRRI: International Research Centre within CGIAR

Department of Agriculture: Governmental Organization

PhilRice: Public Research Organization

DA-CAR: Regional governmental organization within Philippines

LGUs: Local governmental organizations

SHGs: Farmers' organizations

RICE: CGIAR Research Programme involving CGIAR Centres and a wide range of national partners from the whole globe.

#### **Collaborating/supporting institutions/organizations/actors, if applicable**

Food Staples Sufficiency Program (FSSP) of the Philippines' Department of Agriculture

### Description of the examples

#### Mandatory information:

#### **Short summary to be put in the inventory (max. 200 words)**

The Heirloom Rice Project, which started in 2014, is supported by the Department of Agriculture of the Philippines and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). It aims to enhance the productivity and enrich the legacy of heirloom and traditional rice varieties through empowering communities in rice-based ecosystems in the Philippines. Heirloom rice varieties, handed down

for generations and grown by small landholders, have exceptional cooking quality, flavour, aroma, texture, colour, and nutritional value. There is high demand for these varieties, and they command higher prices in both domestic and international markets. However, there are also challenges hindering farmers to seize these opportunities, while some of the varieties are at risk of extinction. The Heirloom Rice Project thus takes a market and product development approach. Core activities include (1) characterizing existing heirloom or traditional varieties alongside modern climate-resilient varieties; (2) capacity development and enterprise building in farming communities; (3) identifying opportunities for value addition and market linkages; (4) documenting and disseminating good management practices through various communication channels; and (5) improving resistance and/or tolerance of selected heirloom varieties to diseases and environmental stresses. Key results include an increase in production of heirloom rice varieties by almost 80% in six years.

### **Brief history (including starting year), as appropriate**

Handed down through generations, heirloom rices are special breeds of rice that have come to be regarded as the treasured heirlooms of the communities that developed them. They exhibit exceptional nutritional value, flavour, aroma, colour, and cooking quality. While the demand for these varieties is high both in local and international markets, their production is low. Heirloom rice varieties are grown in certain regions of Mindanao, such as Banasilan, Alamada, and the Arakan Valley in North Cotabato. They are also widely grown in provinces and municipalities of Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

In the 2010 decade the partners listed above got together to design and implement a project oriented to conserve the diversity of heirloom rice varieties by supporting their use and commercialization by farmers in selected sites and promoting awareness of their value. The Heirloom Rice Project started in 2014, and, in a span of 3 years, it was able to establish 14 two-cropping-season farmer field schools (FFS) with 290 farmer graduates, and 12 demonstration and seed production farms for farmer-preferred varieties: Chong-ak and Ulikan in Kalinga, Minaangan and Tinawon in Ifugao, Chorchor-os, Ominio, and Balatinaw in Mt. Province, Lasbakan and Balatinaw in Benguet, and Denorado and Azucena in Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat. A total of 124 varieties were collected from seven municipalities of CAR, two municipalities of North Cotabato, and one municipality of Sultan Kudarat, and 10-15 varieties grown in roughly 1000 square meter plots in each SHG barangay. These varieties were used for characterization, purification, seed production, and as learning fields for the farmers. Furthermore, 13 varieties were demonstrated, characterized, and purified in Benguet; 16 in Mt. Province; 19 in Kalinga; 22 in Ifugao; 38 in North Cotabato; and 16 in Sultan Kudarat. During the FFS, farmers were shown how to make their own organic foliar fertilizers through the use of readily-available resources such as fruit and plant juices and snails. The 13 FFS were conducted in 6 provinces in collaboration with various local organizations. From these FFS, a Farmer Field School Curriculum Guide was developed. In addition, the project distributed farm machines to the farmers, and evaluated the usefulness of the machines on local farming conditions.

Documentation of best and new farming practices from seed selection to post-harvest activities was done through farmer interviews (focus group discussion and participatory needs and

opportunities assessment), participatory discussion during FFS, and study results from the established FFS learning field trials and Participatory Heirloom Rice Characterization Plot.

Developing business plans and linking heirloom rice farmers to local and international markets have been an important part of the project. Some milestones of the project in this regard were: 1) A Market Development Workshop in March 2016, which was attended by Local Government Units, farmers and the project management team. They discussed business plans, market linkages, Geographical Indication (GI) registration, and other market-related concerns. Participating farmers from Ifugao, Benguet, Kalinga, and Mountain Province provided comments on and suggestions to their specific business plans. The farmers and local champions had started putting together these business plans in December 2015 under the guidance of the Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Division of the Department of Agriculture (DA)-CAR and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI); 2) Participation of the project in Madrid Fusion, a congress that attracts annually chefs and food aficionados from all over the World. Heirloom rice varieties attracted the attention of local and international audiences. Among them were local and international restaurateurs who showed keen interest in including heirloom rice in their menus, chefs who are on the lookout for new ingredients, and heads of food companies who are seeking to diversify their products. The rice likewise drew food bloggers and writers, health advocates, government representatives, students, and senior citizens.

### **Core components of the measure/practice (max 200 words)**

The project focuses on the following actions:

1. Characterize existing heirloom or traditional varieties or landraces and modern climate resilient varieties in selected provinces;
2. Enhance local capacity and enterprise building in farming communities;
3. Identify opportunities for adding value and creating market linkages for heirloom or traditional rice varieties;
4. Document good management practices and disseminate through modern and traditional information, education and communication channels; and
5. Improve resistance to disease and tolerance of environmental stresses of selected heirloom varieties.

### **Short description of the context and the history of the measure/practice is taking place**

Since 2005, the Rice Terraces Farmers Cooperative has exported 97 metric tons of grain from heirloom varieties, such as Tinawon and Unoy, to the US market. This includes a 2012 shipment of 24.4 metric tons valued at PhP1.3 million. Production of heirloom rice varieties has increased by almost 80% in six years. But the huge potential of heirloom rice as a lucrative livelihood is hindered by the inability of local farmers to produce these with higher seed quality and purity and in greater quantity. Moreover, certain heirloom varieties preferred in the market are gradually disappearing, some even close to extinction. Market and product development, alongside maintaining biodiversity in the region, could be crucial in encouraging farmers to continue growing these threatened rice varieties, both traditional in the Cordillera Region and traditional and improved in the Arakan Valley Complex in Mindanao. Adding value to every step—from varietal development to market linkages—will benefit farmers in the long term.

### **To which provision(s) of Article 9 of the International Treaty does this measure relate**

Art. 9.1 ✓

Art. 9.2a ✓

Art. 9.2b ✓

Art. 9.2c ✓

Art. 9.3 ✓

Other information, if applicable

**Please indicate which category of the Inventory is most relevant for the proposed measure, and which other categories are also relevant (if any):**

No.	Category	Most relevant	Also relevant
1	Recognition of local and indigenous communities', farmers' contributions to conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, such as awards and recognition of custodian/guardian farmers		X
2	Financial contributions to support farmers conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA such as contributions to benefit-sharing funds		
3	Approaches to encourage income-generating activities to support farmers' conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA	X	
4	Catalogues, registries and other forms of documentation of PGRFA and protection of traditional knowledge		X
5	In-situ/on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA, such as social and cultural measures, community biodiversity management and conservation sites		X
6	Facilitation of farmers' access to a diversity of PGRFA through community seed banks, seed networks and other measures improving farmers' choices of a wider diversity of PGRFA.		
7	Participatory approaches to research on PGRFA, including characterization and evaluation, participatory plant breeding and variety selection		X
8	Farmers' participation in decision-making at local, national and sub-regional, regional and international levels		X
9	Training, capacity development and public awareness creation		X

10	Legal measures for the implementation of Farmers' Rights, such as legislative measures related to PGRFA.		
11	Other measures / practices		

**Links to further information about the measure/practice**

<https://www.heirloomrice.com/>

<http://cure.irri.org/heirloom-rice-project>

<https://www.philrice.gov.ph/heirloom-rice-preserved-made-productive/>

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03066150.2017.1284062>

<https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/issues/hunger/70991-heirloom-rice-project-irri-cordilleras> .