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 Development Fund on 30 July 2019.

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

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

The International Treaty ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Template for submission of

Measures, Best Practices and Lessons Learned from the Realization of Farmers' Rights as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty

Basic information

- Title of measure/practice: Community-based agrobiodiveristy systems for the realisation of Farmers' Rights
- Date of submission: 18 July 2019
- Name(s) of country/countries in which the measure/practice is taking place: Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Nepal, Ethiopia and Malawi (in collaboration with networks on Central America and South-East Asia)
- Responsible institution/organization (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s) and contact person):
    - Elin Cecilie Ranum, Head of Programme Department
    - Utviklingsfondet / The Development Fund
    - Mariboes gate 8, 0183 Oslo
    - Tel: +47 2310 9600 / +47 9622 9600
    - elin@utviklingsfondet.no
    - www.utviklingsfondet.no

- Type of institution/organization (categories): Non-Governmental Organisation
- Collaborating/supporting institutions/organizations/actors, if applicable (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s))
    - ASOCUCH (Guatemala), FUNDIT (Guatemala), FIPAH (Honduras), Zamorano University (Honduras), PRR (Honduras), CIPRES and FECODESA (Nicaragua), LI-BIRD (Nepal), EOSA (Ethiopia), BCI (Malawi), CEPA (Malawi)

Description of the examples
Mandatory information:[1]

- Short summary to be put in the inventory (max. 200 words) including:

The Development Fund (DF) supported local initiatives on conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources and the strengthening of Farmers's Rights for almost two decades in collaboration with local partners in Guatemala (ASOCUCH and FUNDIT), Honduras (FIPAH, PRR and Zamorano University, Nicaragua (CIPRES and FECODESA), NEPAL (LI-BIRD), Ethiopia (EOSA) and Malawi (BCI and CEPA). The main objective of the programmes was to strengthen community-based agrobiodiversity systems in order to improve food security and climate adaptive capacity. The programmes had an holistic approach, and included measures such as participatory plant breeding, participatory variety selection, recovery and rehabilitation of lost varieties, community seed banks, capacity building on Farmers' Rights, participation farmers in decision-making, and advocacy and local, national and international level.

[1] This mandatory information is required in order for the measure/practice to be included in the Inventory.

The main outcomes of the programmes were improved food security and livelihoods among poor rural households. More than 46,000 farmers and their families increased their access to seeds through a network of 81 community seed banks. 69 new varieties were developed through participatory plant breeding, resulting in increased yields for maize, beans, sorghum, rice and wheat by at least 25%. CSO and FOs gained space in decision making at local level, and in some cases at national level.

- Brief history (including starting year), as appropriate

  The programmes were implemented in local farming communities in the above mentioned countries, in the period between 2003 and 2009. The programmes were designed in a collaborative way, involving farmers' organisations, civil society organisations and research institutes, taking into account the local conditions and needs.

- Core components of the measure/practice (max 200 words):

  The main activities of the programmes were:

  - Participatory Plant Breeding (PPB)
  - Participatory process for seed and variety selection.
  - Recovery and rehabilitation of lost varieties
  - Community seed banks
  - Capacity building on Farmers' Rights
  - Participation in decision-making
  - Advocacy at local, national and international level

- Description of the context and the history of the measure/practice is taking place (political, legal and economic framework conditions for the measure/practice) (max 200 words)

  The programmes are implemented in local farming communities in the above mentioned countries. The farming communities share certain characteristics, such as high vulnerability to climate variations and high dependence on local and traditional varieties. Farmers are smallholders and production of staple crops such as maize, beans, rice, wheat or teff is the core activity. Farmers depend totally on agriculture for their livelihood. Small-scale farmers are the main producers of staple crops in the different countries, and play therefore a key role in securing food security at national level.

  With a few exceptions, the legal frameworks in the countries are not supportive to farmers' rights and do not contain elements that support and strengthen farmers seed systems. In countries like Malawi, governmental subsidy programmes have distributed hybrid seeds of maize. The lack of a supportive legal framework and governmental policies are some of the factors that have contributed to an erosion of genetic diversity and seed security among local farming communities.

  The key for success has been long term commitment and the involvement of mutliple stakeholders, including farmers' and breeders.

  Please see other submissions from DF, ASOCUCH, LI-BIRD and CEPA for more details on the measures and local contexts

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

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

The International Treaty ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Art. 9.1 ☐x

Art. 9.2a ☐x

Art. 9.2b ☐x

Art. 9.2c ☐x

Art. 9.3 ☐x

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[2]	Also relevant[3]
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		
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[4], seed networks and other measures improving farmers' choices of a wider diversity of PGRFA.	x	
7	Participatory approaches to research on PGRFA, including characterization and evaluation, participatory plant breeding and variety selection		x

[2] Please select only one category that is most relevant, under which the measure will be listed.

[3] Please select one or several categories that may also be relevant (if applicable).

[4] Including seed houses.

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		

- In case you selected 'other measures', would you like to suggest a description of this measure, e.g. as a possible new category? _____
- Objective(s)
    - Increased food security
    - Improved adaptive capacity to climate change

- Target group(s) and numbers of involved and affected farmers[5]
    - Small-scale farmers in rural communities
    - 46,000 farmers and their families benefitted from the programme
- Location(s) and geographical outreach
    - Guatemala
    - Honduras
    - Nicaragua
    - Nepal
    - Ethiopia
    - Malawi

- Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice
    - Given that this was a multiyear programme it is difficult to quantify the total amount of resources. The annual budget varied from USD 1 million to USD 2 millions per year (for all programmes)

- How has the measure/practice affected the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture?
    - The measure contributed to strengthen local conservation (in-situ and on-farm) through the establishment of community seed banks, improved on-farm management, rehabilitation of varieties among other measures. It also contributed to strengthening the links between in-situ/on-farm conservation and ex-situ conservation through the use of improved varieties and materials from gene-banks in participatory plant breeding and the registration and submission of new varieties to national gene banks.
    - The measure strengthened the sustainable use of plant genetic resources through improved on-farm management, improved food production systems, diversification of crops and varieties among other measures.

[5] Any classification, e.g. of the types of farmer addressed, may be country-specific.

- Please describe the achievements of the measure/ practice so far (including quantification) (max 200 words)
  - The main target groups of the programme are small-scale farmers in the above mentioned countries. Between 2012 and 2016, the programmes benefitted more than 46,000 farmers and their families directly. These farmers gained access to locally adapted high quality seeds through a network of 81 community seed banks.
  - Participatory plant breeding and participatory variety selection resulted in the development of 69 new varieties. The new varieties proved to be more resistant to pests, drought or too much rain, and resulted in improved yields for maize, beans, sorghum, rice and wheat by at least 25%. In some areas, additional measures such as soil conservation contributed to improved and a more climate resilient production.
  - More than 3100 varieties were rehabilitated and conserved in order to maintain their characteristics and germinating capacity.
  - CSOs and FOs gained space in decision making at local level, and in some cases at national level (through participation in national gene commissions9.
  - Capacity building on farmers' rights increased awareness among farmers on their rights to seeds. The capacity building materials (developed in collaboration with GFAR) are based on the programmes, and have been adopted by the ITPGRFA as part of training programmes on farmers' rights.

- Other national level instruments that are linked to the measure/practice
  - National gene banks
  - National University and/or Research Institutes
  - See submissions from ASOCUCH and LI-BIRD for more information

- Are you aware of any other international agreements or programs that are relevant for this measure/practice?
-
- Other issues you wish to address, that have not yet been covered, to describe the measure/practice

Lessons learned

- An integral approach to strengthen community based agro-biodiversity systems shows of the different elements of Farmers' Rights can be realised. The impact of measures such as PPB, participatory variety selection and community seed banks is strengthened when they are combined with other awareness raising, capacity building, and policy and advocacy.
- Active participation and involvement of farmers' at all stages is crucial for obtaining good results and impact.
- Alliances between farmers' organisation and research institutions are of mutual benefit for all actors.
- Additional activities such as agro-biodiversity seed fairs are important for the distribution of seeds developed through the programmes to other farmers. Exchange visits among farmers are another important measure. New and locally adapted varieties are often sold on local markets and can reach out to a large number of farmers that are not directly involved in the programme.

- Long-term commitment is required. It may take 5-8 years to obtain a real impact, and follow-up beyond this period may also be required.
- Marketing of seeds is important for sustainability, however this requires an enabling policy framework. Experiences from CBS in Nepal that are marketing seeds show that sustainability increases when other improved varieties are commercialised as this enables them to reach out to a larger group than farmers that prefer local varieties.
- Quality control of seeds that are returned to community seed banks is crucial for mainaining trust and the functioning of CSB.

- What challenges encountered along the way (if applicable) (max 200 words)
    - Sustainability of the community seed banks is a major challenge.
    - Policy frameworks (including seed laws and plant variety protection laws) that are not supportive to the different measures or directly impede the implementation of the measures hamper sustainability and the impact of the measure. Restrictions or lack of regulations on how farmers can register and sell local varieties and improved varieties affect sustainability and the outreach of e.g. new varieties developed through participatory plant breeding
    - Weak national gene banks in some countries

- What would you consider conditions for success, if others should seek to carry out such a measure or organize such an activity? (max 100 words)
    - Collaboration between different stakeholders, from farmers' organisations, research/breeders and national gene-banks is crucial
    - Enabling policy framework that ensures farmers' rights to use, save, exchange and sell seeds
    - Capacity building of farmers'
    - Long-term commitment and funding

Further information

- Link(s) to further information about the measure/practice