



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 United States of America on 30 July 2019.

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



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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**

U.S. Submission

USDA Crop Germplasm Committees

Basic information

- Title of measure/practice **USDA Crop Germplasm Committees**
- Date of submission **July 30, 2019**
- Name(s) of country/countries in which the measure/practice is taking place **United States**
- Responsible institution/organization (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s) and contact person) **U.S. Department of Agriculture**
- Type of institution/organization (categories) **Government**
- Collaborating/supporting institutions/organizations/actors, if applicable (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s))

Description of the examples

Mandatory information:¹

- Short summary to be put in the inventory (max. 200 words) including:
 - Implementing entity and partners
 - Start year
 - Objective(s)
 - Summary of core components
 - Key outcomes
 - Lessons learned (if applicable)

The Crop Germplasm Committees (CGC) comprise a cross section of National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS) users, including farmers, who provide technical support to NPGS genebanks and collections. They serve as subject matter experts to guide curatorial staff on best practices, including the priorities and techniques for characterizing the collections. They also help review proposals that fund plant explorations and evaluate grants for scientific rigor.

There are currently 43 CGCs representing almost all major and minor crops of economic importance in the United States. Each committee includes a chair and members from government agencies, universities, and commercial interest groups, such as commodity groups and farmer/producers, who volunteer their time and expertise to support the NPGS.

- Brief history (including starting year), as appropriate .

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



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The first CGCs were established in the mid-1980s as outgrowths of commodity-specific crop improvement/breeding conferences. The initial CGCs covered primarily the major agricultural commodities (grains, pulses, oilseeds); CGCs for horticultural and specialty crops were initially established in the late-1980s.

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

CGCs are needed to provide sound information and authoritative technical input regarding the conservation and use of germplasm of specific crops. Selection for membership on a CGC carries with it both national and professional prestige as recognized by the competence required, importance of issues considered, influence on research, and support of genetic resource management activities. The CGCs serve their crop commodity groups and provide expert input to individuals or organizations such as the USDA/Agricultural Research Service (ARS), State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES), and others on technical matters relating to crop germplasm, its collection, preservation, characterization, evaluation, enhancement, and effective utilization. The CGCs develop comprehensive Crop Vulnerability Statements and concise Crop Vulnerability Updates which assess a crop's or group of crop's vulnerabilities to specific threats, and the adequacy of the germplasm base for a crop or group of crops. These reports inform appropriate governmental and private agencies of the needs for broadening and strengthening each base via additional exploration, collection, acquisition of private collections, and evaluation. They also develop and provide a strategic overview of the total national scientific effort devoted to the study and utilization of germplasm of specific crops or group of crops and identify priorities and cooperative approaches for improvements in the germplasm management system where needs are apparent.

- 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 CGCs are informal groups, initially organized by NPGS personnel who recognized the need for regular, broad-based germplasm user input. External input from knowledgeable germplasm users—researchers, breeders, educators, producers/farmers—is critical for guiding the operations of the US NPGS so that it can optimally conserve a broad spectrum of genetic diversity and make that diversity as widely accessible as possible. In agriculture, production of most key food, feed, fuel, fiber, and ornamental crops, and associated research is generally crop-commodity oriented. Therefore, plant genetic resources (“crop germplasm”) and their conservation and use are also most effectively considered on a crop-by-crop basis.

Research and development efforts on crop germplasm involve collective support from U. S. Federal and State agencies and private industry. The boundaries for each sector's responsibilities and efforts are difficult to delimit. There is a continuum from the utilization of germplasm in agricultural production back through seed/propagative material production, breeding, enhancement, evaluation, characterization, preservation, and the acquisition of plant genetic resources and associated information. The acquisition, preservation, characterization, and distribution of basic germplasm stocks and associated information are mainly supported by Federal and State funds whereas the production and delivery of commercial seeds/propagative material to the grower is largely in the hands of private industry.

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

Art. 9.2b

Art. 9.2c



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		
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		
5	In-situ/on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA, such as social and cultural measures, community biodiversity management and conservation sites		
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.		
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		

- 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) _____

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.



- Target group(s) and numbers of involved and affected farmers⁵
- Location(s) and geographical outreach

- Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice
- How has the measure/practice affected the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture?
- Please describe the achievements of the measure/ practice so far (including quantification) (max 200 words)
- Other national level instruments that are linked to the measure/practice
- 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

- Describe lessons learned which may be relevant for others who wish to do the same or similar measures/practices (max 250 words).

The most effective CGCs are led by an engaged and committed Chair, and incorporate a broad diversity (scientific discipline, public and private-sector, farmers and scientists, different US geographical regions) of perspectives and experiences.

- What challenges encountered along the way (if applicable) (max 200 words)

CGCs are voluntary. Because their members are experts, their time is precious, so arranging regular meetings and conferences can be problematic.

- 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)

An engaged and committed committee Chair is crucial for success.

Further information

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

<https://www.ars-grin.gov/npgs/cgcweb.html>

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