



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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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 World Agricultural Heritage Foundation (WAHF) on 26 June 2019.

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



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

Submitted by WAHF (measure 2)

Basic information

- Title of measure/practice : Recognition of farming communities through Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)
- Date of submission:
- Name(s) of country/countries in which the measure/practice is taking place: Islamic Republic of Iran
- Responsible institution/organization (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s) and contact person)

Research Department with the Agricultural Planning, Economic and Rural development Research,
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- Type of institution/organization (categories): Government
- Collaborating/supporting institutions/organizations/actors, if applicable (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s))
Farming communities, World Agricultural Heritage Foundation (WAHF), country and province government units

Description of the examples

Mandatory information:¹

- Short summary to be put in the inventory (max. 200 words) including:
 - Implementing entity and partners: see above
 - Start year: Since 2005 (research study of traditional systems in the Islamic Republic of Iran)

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



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- Objective(s): To safeguard and dynamically conserved agricultural heritage systems and its goods and services, and to promotion recognition of farming communities and indigenous peoples who are the custodians of this heritage agriculture.
- Summary of core components: Recognition of “farmers and indigenous communities” from ancient times to present day, and to recognize their important contribution to conservation and development of crop and animal genetic resources, preservation of cultural diversity, not only just recognition but to leverage support for these heritage agriculture to continue to evolve so to provide the goods and services.
- Key outcomes:
In Iran, to date, FAO recognized three GIAHS Sites: (i) Pomegranate Qanat irrigated Agricultural Heritage System; (ii) Malayer Grape Production Agricultural Heritage System and (iii) Saffron Qanat-based Agricultural Heritage System.
- Lessons learned (if applicable)

Summary to be put in the Inventory

The Agricultural Planning, Economic and Rural Development Research Institute (APERDRI), a public research institute under the Ministry of Agriculture, together with country and province government units, farming communities and the World Agricultural Heritage Foundation (WAHF), have engaged in identifying Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) in Iran. In many countries, specific agricultural systems and landscapes have been created, shaped and maintained by generations of farmers and herders, based on diverse natural resources, species and their interactions and using locally adapted, distinctive and often ingenious combinations of management practices and techniques. These ingenious agricultural systems have resulted not only in outstanding aesthetic beauty, maintenance of globally significant agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems, ingenious adaptations and valuable cultural inheritance but, above all, in the sustained provision of multiple goods and services, food and livelihood security and a way of life . The overall goal of GIAHS is to is to mobilize global recognition and national support for this important contribution of farmers and indigenous communities, from ancient times to present day, so that they can continue to provide the global, national and local benefits derived through these systems. Iran is a country with a long history of farming; it has been argued that dryland farming first evolved in the western part of the country about 10,000 years ago, simultaneously with the domestication of goats and sheep. After identifying agricultural system that could qualify as GIAHS, Iran’s Ministry of Agriculture submitted to FAO a preliminary list of such systems, of which three systems, to date, has been recognized as GIAHS sites: (i) Saffron Qanat-based Agricultural Heritage System, (ii) Pomegranate Qanat irrigated Agricultural Heritage System; and (iii) Malayer Grape Production Agricultural Heritage System. This recognition of GIAHS sites represents the great achievements of /and agricultural knowledge systems of the farming communities.

- Brief history (including starting year), as appropriate:
The GIAHS concept was formulated in 2002, in FAO, and initially started as a project with funding from the Global Environment Facility, IFAD, National Governments of pilot countries, Germany and other organizations. After 10 years of piloting designation and dynamic conservation, due to positive results an doutcomes, it gained support from many countries and was adopted as an FAO Programme in 2015. Then, the designation of sites has continued.



- Core components of the measure/practice (max 200 words)
The components of this measure includes studying and documenting the traditional yet evolving agricultural practices. It involves assessing the characteristics of the farming system based on five general criteria, such as their global (and local, national) importance to: (1) food and livelihood security; (2) agricultural biodiversity of global significance; (3) local and traditional knowledge systems; (4) cultures, value systems and social organization; and (5) remarkable landscapes features. After documentation and assessment, if passes through this criteria, the recognition of the farming system as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems under the FAO. And this recognition is dedicated to the farmers nurturing conservation of agricultural biodiversity of local and global importance to food security; preservation of traditional knowledge and cultural diversity.
- 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)

In many countries specific agricultural systems and landscapes have been created, shaped and maintained by generations of farmers and herders based on diverse natural resources, species and their interactions and using locally adapted, distinctive and often ingenious combinations of management practices and techniques. Building on dynamic local knowledge systems and experience, these ingenious agricultural systems reflect the evolution of humanity, the diversity of its knowledge, and its profound harmony with nature. They have resulted not only in outstanding aesthetic beauty, maintenance of globally significant agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems, ingenious adaptations and valuable cultural inheritance but, above all, in the sustained provision of multiple goods and services, food and livelihood security and a way of life.

The overall goal of the Globally Important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) initiative² is to promote recognition and safeguard traditional agriculture and their associated landscapes, agricultural biodiversity and knowledge systems, through mobilizing global recognition and national support for such systems so that the global, national and local benefits derived through these systems will continue.

During the process of the GIAHS concept development, around 200 cases of potential traditional agricultural heritage systems were documented, particularly those in countries with long history of agriculture, such as Iran, Mexico, Peru, Chile, India, Philippines, China, Algeria, Tunisia, and others, including the ones that are listed in UNESCO List of Cultural and Natural Heritage. It has been argued that dryland farming first evolved in the western part of the country about 10 000 years ago, simultaneously with the domestication of animals (goats and sheep). Farmers have managed their traditional agroecosystems for centuries by focusing on sustaining nature and environment. Before, farmers relied on nature's bounty and locally available natural resources to maintain soil fertility and to combat pests and diseases. The farming systems evolved common principles and processes of sustainability, such as holistic management and use of natural resources, optimize use of local resources with no or low external inputs, consideration of genetic and physical diversity, protection and conservation of soil, risk minimization and local site-specific techniques. Traditional agriculture formed the foundation of farming and resulted in a

² The origin of GIAHS concept was developed and spearheaded by Parviz Koohafkan, during his career in FAO until his retirement. The GIAHS initiative was made successful through collaboration of interested countries and through the funding from the multilateral institutions (Global Environment Facility, IFAD, bilateral and unilateral institutions). When he retired in 2012, many GIAHS sites had been already designated, due to GIAHS project success and impacts at local at national levels, the FAO adopted the GIAHS initiative as an FAO Regular Programme during the FAO Conference in June 2015.



tremendous accumulation of indigenous knowledge in farming practices and food production, based on integrated crop production and livestock grazing, and ingeniously farming the most difficult and disadvantage ecological environment.

Against this backdraft, the idea of recognizing the work of “farmers and indigenous communities” from ancient times to present day, and to recognize this important contribution, not only just recognition but to leverage support for these heritage to continue evolve and provide the goods and services.

- 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 ³	Also relevant ⁴
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		
5	In-situ/on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA, such as social and cultural measures, community biodiversity management and conservation sites	x	

³ Please select only one category that is most relevant, under which the measure will be listed.

⁴ Please select one or several categories that may also be relevant (if applicable).



6	Facilitation of farmers' access to a diversity of PGRFA through community seed banks ⁵ , 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		
8	Farmers' participation in decision-making at local, national and sub-regional, regional and international levels		
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): *see above*
- Target group(s) and numbers of involved and affected farmers⁶

Farming and indigenous communities with heritage agriculture

- Location(s) and geographical outreach
National, and currently 3 designated GIAHS sites in 3 provinces
 1. Pomegranate Qanat irrigated Agricultural Heritage System in Kashan Township, Isfahan Province
 2. Saffron Qanat-based Agricultural Heritage System in Khorasan Razavi province and Grape
 3. Production Agricultural Heritage System in Jowsan Valley, Hamedan Province.
- Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice: *National*
- How has the measure/practice affected the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture?
 - Farming communities – as guardians of their own agricultural heritage are valuing the conservation and sustainable use of crops and genetic resources.
 - The protection of traditional knowledge related to traditional agriculture and food productions becomes more apparent.
- 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:
 - *National Seed Policy Document*

⁵ Including seed houses.

⁶ Any classification, e.g. of the types of farmer addressed, may be country-specific.



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- Plant Variety Protection Act, 2003
- Intangible Heritage

- Are you aware of any other international agreements or programs that are relevant for this measure/practice?
 - Nagoya Protocol
 - UNESCO Convention

- 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).
- What challenges encountered along the way (if applicable) (max 200 words)
- 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)
 - Iran has a long history of traditional ecological agriculture, stretching back 10 000 years. The recognition of many of these ancient agriculture systems and its farming communities surely benefit the global, national and local farming communities, in particular, it demonstrated the realization of Article 9 of the International Treaty, recognizing the role of farmers in conserving, developing and managing crop genetic resources and associated biodiversity and traditional knowledge systems
 - Recognition of agricultural heritage sites promotes the implementation of the Treaty objectives: recognition of the important role farmers and indigenous communities play in the conservation, development and management of crop genetic resources for food and agriculture; protection of traditional knowledge systems; and empowering farmers and promotes their participation to decision-making.
 - Designation processes of GIAHS by FAO and the lack or limited technical support from the current GIAHS Secretariat, and the lack of coordination and harmonization of implementation of FAO programmes that are operating independently – posing challenge to achieve full results.

Further information

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

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=2309> initiative

GEF project data base: <https://www.thegef.org/project/cbpf-conservation-and-adaptive-management-globally-important-agricultural-heritage-systems>

FAO GIAHS website: <http://www.fao.org/giahs/giahsaroundtheworld/designated-sites/en/>

WAFH website: <http://www.worldagriculturalheritage.org/AgLegacy>