

REPORT

Rome, Italy,
18 July 2018

**Report on the 49th
Session of the
Executive Committee
of the International
Poplar Commission**

**INTERNATIONAL POPLAR COMMISSION
(IPC)**

Report of the 49th Session of its Executive Committee

Rome, Italy 18 July 2018

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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REPORT OF THE 49TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE INTERNATIONAL POPLAR COMMISSION

ORGANIZATION

1. The 49th Session of the Executive Committee of the International Poplar Commission (IPC) was held at FAO in Rome, Italy on 18 July 2018. Martin Weih, Chair of the International Poplar Commission, chaired the session. The closed session was attended by 17 people, including 11 people from the Executive Committee, two observers, and four from the Secretariat. Four members participated via teleconference.

THE SESSION

Item 1: Opening

2. Mette Wilkie, Chief of FAO Policy and Resources, welcomed participants to the meeting on behalf of FAO. She then introduced Benjamin Caldwell, the incoming Planted Forests Officer at FAO to the group.

3. Chair Martin Weih greeted the group and opened the session.

4. The provisional meeting agenda was adopted as presented (Annex I).

Item 2: Reports of Working Parties

5. The Chair introduced item 2 of the agenda and explained that in order to accommodate presentations by working parties in different time zones, those working parties would not present sequentially.

Working Party 2: Domestication and Conservation of Genetic Resources

6. Ian McIvor, vice-chair of the Working Party, presented the report. At the last IPC session, four activities were planned: 1) creation of a data platform with researchers and experts on the domestication and conservation of poplar genetic resources; 2) update the database on breeding programmes and pollen collection; 3) develop a database of clones and gene banks; and 4) improve interaction with the other working parties. The Working Party reported that it now has updated information on experts and breeding programmes (activities 1 and 2) which was obtained via questionnaire and was current as of October 2017. Updating these resources was done as part of the fifth International Conference on Salicaceae in Talca, Chile¹. There has been some initial work done to develop a database of clones and gene banks, through a link with the Working Party on Taxonomy, Nomenclature and Registration (activity 3). As part of work on activity 4, the Working Party consulted colleagues from 14 countries (Argentina, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Serbia, Sweden, Spain and the United States of America) to obtain information on new and relevant activities. The Working Party received responses from seven countries. Notable activities from each country were as follows.

- In **Argentina**, the fifth International Conference on Salicaceae was held in November 2017; there were further advances in the collection and molecular characterization of *Salix humboldtiana* Willd (the only native species of Salicaceae in South America). As well, a project for technical collaboration on Salicaceae between Estación Experimental Agropecuaria Delta

¹ Available at: <http://jornadasdesalicaceas2017.blogspot.com/2016/11/jornadas-de-salicaceas-2017.html>

del Paraná, Argentina and Unità di ricerca per le produzioni legnose fuori foresta (CREA-PLF) of Casale Monferrato, Italy was developed and will be signed shortly.

- In **China**, 14 poplar varieties were approved for use by the National Review Committee; two technical meetings on poplars and willows were held at Zhejiang Forestry University in September 2016, and at Baoding, Hebei in September 2017.
- In **France**, two relevant peer-reviewed publications were released.
- In **Italy**, in addition to ongoing clonal testing trials, there was a new project initiated on the adaptation of improvement and selection programmes to meet anticipated needs in the light of climate change².
- In **New Zealand**, there are ongoing trials of 13 poplar and nine willow clones; and two technical meetings of researchers and extension officers were held.
- In **Sweden**, five new Salix varieties were released by the Lantmännen/SW Seed company and the European Willow Breeding AB (EWB) company; and, there are two ongoing projects, OPTUS (Optimized Utilization of Salix)³ and CLAP (Climate-adapted poplars)⁴.
- In **Serbia**, four new poplar clones were released; one technical meeting held in December 2016.

7. The Working Party noted three general difficulties with all breeding programmes: 1) lack of the necessary long-term funding; 2) commercial adoption of new clones; 3) promotion of poplar and willow as a viable species for timber and wood products.

8. In 2018-2020, the Working Party committed to complete the work proposed at the last IPC session.

9. The Executive Committee thanked the Working Party and encouraged it to continue its work as planned.

Working Party 4: Sustainable Livelihoods, Land-use, Products and Bioenergy

10. Joris Van Acker, the Chair of Working Party 4, presented its report.

11. Working Party 4 is currently reorganizing as part of the IPC reform, transitioning from previous working parties on production systems and on harvesting and utilization of wood. To that end, Working Party 4 has developed an action plan for the next two years. The key lines of action are first, networking with industry and new countries. Second, the Working Party intends to organize itself around regional network managers. Third, the Working Party intends to organize topic conferences on poplar wood products. Fourth, it proposes developing a database on wood products and initiating new research through young scientists with small grants. Fifth, the Working Party intends to explore other species in the tropics that can achieve similar objectives to Salicaceae. Finally, the Working Party intends to update its webpage to reflect this work. The Working Party concluded by noting that since the topics and geographic scope of this Working Party are quite varied, there is need to increase membership and specialization to address them all.

12. Members thanked the Working Party for its work. They commented on the fact that since wood producers and users are often not the same, and can be geographically quite distant from each other, there is an opportunity for the Working Party to help evaluate and anticipate the types of tree crops best suited for users' needs.

Working Party 1: Taxonomy, Nomenclature and Registration

² See B4EST available at: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/214319_en.html

³ Available at: <https://www.slu.se/en/Collaborative-Centres-and-Projects/optus/>

⁴ Available at: <https://www.slu.se/en/departments/crop-production-ecology/research1/forskningsprojekt/clap/>

13. Julia Kuzovkina, the Chair of Working Party 1, presented its report.

14. The report was presented against the four activities that had been planned in the 48th session of the IPC Executive Committee: 1) continue to update the *International Register of Populus Cultivars* and the *Checklist for Cultivars of Populus*; 2) initiate the *International Register of Salix Cultivars* and continue to update the *Checklist for Cultivars of Salix*; 3) raise breeder awareness of the importance of cultivar registration; and, 4) maintain a network and update the web portal.

15. Progress:

- **Activity 1:** An update of the *International Register of Populus Cultivars* was completed in 2017 and will be published on the IPC website by the end of 2018. The checklist for cultivars of *Populus* was updated with two new cultivars (it currently includes 473 cultivars and 93 experimental cultivars), and an annual report of data on *Populus* cultivars was submitted to the Special Commission for Cultivar Registration of the International Society for Horticultural Sciences in March 2017.
- **Activity 2:** The revision to the *Salix* cultivar checklist began in February 2018 and should be completed by November 2018. No cultivar registrations have been received as of the 18 July 2018 by the Working Party during 2016-2018 to initiate the *International Register of Salix Cultivars*.
- **Activity 3:** In November 2016, 150 poplar and willow breeders and researchers were contacted by email and invited to review the website and submit new registrations.
- **Activity 4:** A mailing list was compiled in November 2016; the portal was updated in November 2016; in 2018, a new series of seven publications titled 'Name Changes Alerts' were prepared.

16. The Working Party Chair noted that a challenge encountered to successfully completing planned work was that there were few registrations submitted after 2016 to the Working Party's registers. As a corrective action, the Working Party will pursue arrangements with National Poplar Commissions to encourage more registrations, and publicize the utility of the registries in the next IPC newsletter.

17. In the next two years, the group will continue Activities 1 and 2. For Activity 3, the group will focus on getting formal registrations from breeders, and guiding breeders on naming conventions. For Activity 4, the group will continue to maintain the portal, including uploading the second version of the *Checklist for Cultivars of Salix* and the updated *International Register of Populus Cultivars*. A database might be more attractive than a spreadsheet and will be explored.

Working Party 3: Plant Health, Resilience to Threats and Climate Change

18. Mauritz Ramstedt, the Chair of Working Party 3, gave its report.

19. The goals for this Working Party agreed to in the last IPC session were to assist in developing and exchanging disease-resistant breeding stock in willows and poplars. Objectives to achieve through those goals were to create fora for experts in plant health to interact, and to attract younger researchers.

20. The Working Party has begun a list of active researchers in plant health, which will be posted on the IPC website once completed. The group has begun a report on poplar and willow selection and breeding for sustainable resilient plants; the report is complete for Europe and needs to be updated to cover more countries. The group will have a side meeting at the next session of the International Poplar Society in 2018 in Buenos Aires, to discuss activities and next steps in 2016-2018.

21. The Chair noted that he would be retiring from that position at the end of 2018, and that the Working Party would therefore require a replacement.

Working Party 5: Environmental and Ecosystem Services

22. Ron Zalesny, the Secretary of Working Party 5, gave its report

23. Since the last meeting of the IPC, the Working Party has made progress on its agreed work programme. First, it led a meeting during the International Phytotechnologies Conference in Montreal in 2017. The group intends to hold a meeting at the 2018 Woody Crops International Conference that is being held in Rhinelander, Wisconsin; and, at the International Phytotechnologies Conference in Serbia in 2018. Second, it has created information sheets on green technologies for distribution, and will upload these to the IPC website. Third, it has contributed several articles to the IPC newsletter, and has a series of articles forthcoming on quickly connecting phytotechnology research in greenhouses to the field scale.

Working Party 6: Communication and Outreach

24. Barbara Thomas, the Chair of Working Party 6, presented its report.

25. Currently, the Chair is the only active member of the Working Party. The Chair has reached out by email to the IPC to ask that additional members join. Based on response from that outreach, the positions in the communication and outreach Working Party could be divided geographically or thematically. The Chair will also engage with the National Poplar Commission in Argentina while at the IPS VII meeting in Buenos Aires in October/November 2018.

26. After discussion, the Executive Committee agreed that a useful next product for Working Party 6 and the IPC would be short videos that communicate the purpose of each Working Party. The Secretariat committed to ascertain the necessary arrangements and costs, and then report back to the IPC and Executive Committee before moving forward.

Item 3: IPC Reform and other relevant matters

Update on IPC Reform

27. The Secretariat updated the Executive Committee on the arrangements for the special session for voting on proposed amendments to the Convention, which was to be held on 19 July 2018.

28. The Executive Committee thanked the Secretariat, and asked it to facilitate consultations with non-active IPC member states thereafter.

New arrangements for the organization of full IPC Sessions and Executive Committee Sessions (Chair/Secretariat)

29. The Secretariat related to members that in September 2016, just before the 25th Session of the International Poplar Commission, Japan conveyed to FAO Forestry:

“(...)(b)eing (IPC) a statutory body of the FAO to which FAO Members, including Japan, contribute for its Regular Budget, IPC meetings should be open to all IPC members and the participation should not be subject to a participation fee (. ..)”.

After consultation with the legal office in February 2017, FAO responded:

“...we concur with your interpretation of Article X item 5 of the IPC Convention text that states: ‘When the Commission or Executive Committee hold sessions elsewhere than at the seat of the Commission, all additional expenses related to such sessions shall be borne by the host government’. (...) the practice of levying fees for sessions of the International Poplar Commission shall be discontinued (...).”

This notwithstanding, Article III, letter (d) of the IPC Convention says that: *“Functions of the Commission shall be: (...) d) To stimulate the organization of congress combined with study tour; (...).”*

30. After discussion, Executive Committee members agreed that, given the comment from Japan and the interpretation of FAO’s legal office, fees for the formal sessions would be discontinued for future sessions of the IPC. Scientific and outreach events, study tours and any associated fees would be organized separately or as optional side events to any formal IPC sessions.

IPC Newsletter, review of format and contents to facilitate editing and publishing (Secretariat/Chair)

31. The Secretariat shared with the Executive Committee news that FAO Forestry has implemented a policy requiring professional editing and design of any publication with the FAO logo.

32. The Executive Committee asked the Secretariat to continue with the newsletter in its current format, and explore whether, with careful planning, the newsletter could continue to be issued with the current frequency.

33. The Secretariat agreed to do so for the next two issues and report back to the IPC Executive Committee.

Use of video conference facilities during IPC formal sessions (Chair/Secretariat)

34. The IPC Chair proposed to members the increased use of video conference facilities as a means to facilitate more frequent interactions between members without incurring travel costs. Members agreed that this would be a useful option to move work forward between Executive Committee meetings, but should not substitute for the typical in-person meetings of the Executive Committee.

Proposals for the date and place of the 26th Session of the IPC (2020)

35. The IPC Chair called for proposals to host the next IPC Session, in 2020. Giuseppe Nervo, Italy, said that Italy was in the process of preparing a proposal, which it would be in a position to put forward in October 2018 for the committee’s consideration.

36. The Chair thanked Mr Nervo and encouraged him to submit the proposal as soon as possible so that the necessary planning could begin for the IPC Session.

Statement from the National Poplar Commission of Chile

37. Francisco Zamudio requested technical assistance from FAO, asking FAO to continue to strengthen support for technical coordination. In particular, he highlighted the importance of FAO’s role in communicating the importance of forestry research in fast-growing species.

Presentation of the article ‘Poplars and willows, sustaining livelihoods in urban and peri-urban forests in China’

38. Meng-Zhu Lu presented his article ‘Poplars and willows, sustaining livelihoods in urban and peri-urban forests in China’ to the Executive Committee members. The Committee agreed to provide any written feedback on the content of the article by 1 August 2018, after which the article would be finalized and posted on the IPC website.

Item 4: Discussion and Conclusions

39. The Chair opened this item for members’ discussion. Mirko Liesebach brought to members’ attention the fact that since Georg Von Wuehlisch had suddenly retired from his home institution, he would likely not participate any longer in Executive Committee meetings. Members agreed that for future nominations to the Executive Committee, there should be clear instructions that members should expect to serve a full four-year term.

40. The Chair then closed the session of the IPC’s Executive Committee.

Item 5: Report on IPC progress to the Committee on Forestry

41. In the plenary meeting to the 24th Committee on Forestry (COFO 24), the IPC Chair presented a report on IPC progress as part of the COFO 24 agenda item 6.3. The IPC Chair presented information on the nature, organization, key achievements, challenges, and progress and direction of the IPC reform to date.

42. The report of COFO 24 concerning the IPC reads:

28. The Committee:

- a) supported the process for reforming the International Poplar Commission (IPC), including the reorganization of its Working Parties;
- b) reiterated that there are neither new obligations on contracting parties nor additional costs to the FAO Regular Programme;
- c) encouraged members of the Commission to actively contribute to the reform of IPC;
- d) encouraged the IPC to consider potential new species, especially those of significance to support tropical countries, while avoiding duplication of work with other organizations such as ITTO;
- e) encouraged FAO to enhance coordination with the IPC ensuring timely distribution of relevant documents and enabling member countries to be more informed about IPC progress.

(Report of the Committee on Forestry 2018, p. 9)

ANNEX I

Agenda of the 49th Session of the Executive Committee

International Poplar Commission 49th Session of the Executive Committee	
FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy	
18 July 2018	

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

09.00–09.15 hrs	Item 1: Opening Opening and welcome (Chair) Adoption of the provisional agenda and arrangements for the meeting (Chair/Secretary a.i.) Introduction of the new Planted Forest Officer (Secretary a.i.)
09.15-09.45 hrs	Item 2: Working Parties (participating officers) Summary reports and programme of work for working parties: Domestication and Conservation of Genetic Resources (Ian McIvor); Sustainable Livelihoods, Land-use Products and Bioenergy (Joris Van Acker).
09.45-10.45 hrs	Item 3: IPC Reform and other relevant matters Update on IPC reform. Information on the forthcoming voting session (Chair/Secretariat) New arrangements for the organization of full IPC Sessions and Executive Committee Sessions (Chair/Secretariat)
10.45–11.00 hrs	Coffee break
11.00-12.30 hrs	Item 3: (continue) IPC Newsletter, review of format and contents to facilitate editing and publishing (Secretariat/Chairperson) Use of video conference facilities during IPC formal sessions (Chairperson/Secretariat)
12.30-14.00 hrs	Lunch break
14.00-15.00 hrs	Item 2 (continue from the morning session): Working Party reports through video conference Taxonomy, Nomenclature and Registration (Julia Kuzovkina); Plant Health, Resilience to Threats and Climate Change (Mauritz Ramstedt); Environmental and Ecosystem Services (Ron Zalesny); Policy, Communication and Outreach (Barbara Thomas).
15.30–15.45 hrs	Coffee break
15.45-16.45hrs	Item 3: (continue)

Proposals for the date and place of the 26th Session of the IPC (2020)

Statement from NPC Chile

Presentation of the article 'Poplars and willows, sustaining livelihoods in urban and peri-urban forests in China'

16.45-17.30

Item 4: discussion and conclusions

Other matters

Discussion (all members)

Summary and conclusions (Chair/Secretariat)

17.30-18.00 hrs

Report on IPC progresses to the COFO Plenary Session (Chair)

Annex II

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