



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



The International Treaty  
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES  
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

#### Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

### INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

#### FOURTH MEETING OF THE COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

3 - 4 February 2021 (Teleconference -1)

### GLOBAL INDICATORS RELEVANT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Seventh Session of the Governing Body reaffirmed the important role of the International Treaty in providing an effective governance framework for the management and exchange of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. It also emphasised that the effective implementation of the International Treaty contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieving its goals. In this context, this document provides an overview of some previous consideration of the matter by the Governing Body. It also illustrates how the International Treaty facilitates the collection of information for the monitoring of progress made by Contracting Parties towards these global goals, in collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity and other units of FAO. It furthermore provides, in Section II, information on the draft monitoring framework for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
2. In section III, the document provides some detail of the information generated and shared so far with international monitoring processes and on the options for future reporting tracks using existing datasets. The process does not impose any additional reporting obligation on contracting Parties, but rather contributes to showing the International Treaty's value as a development Instrument.
3. One of the functions of the Compliance Committee is to assist the Governing Body in its review and monitoring of the implementation by Contracting Parties of their obligations under the International Treaty on the basis of reports received in accordance with Section V of the *Compliance Procedures*.
4. The Committee is invited to take note and advice on the use of the information available to measure the contribution of Contracting Parties to the implementation of their global commitments in the framework of the International Treaty.

#### II. THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

5. The Governing Body, at its Seventh Session, adopted Resolution 1/2017, "Contribution of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The Resolution emphasises that the effective implementation of the International Treaty contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, Targets 2.5 and 15.6, relating to conservation, and access and benefit-sharing of genetic resources, while also contributing indirectly to SDGs 1, 12, 13 and 17.
6. In adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, member governments of the United Nations set out a "*supremely ambitious and transformational vision*," which envisages a world free of poverty and hunger by 2030 and one in which all life can thrive. The vision

and goals require countries to develop sustainable food systems and new ways of managing natural resources, including plant genetic diversity, in order to build a viable future for people and the planet.

7. Agricultural biodiversity is instrumental in addressing these challenges in the coming decades. The sustainable management of agricultural biodiversity contributes to the diversification of agricultural systems and to make national food and agriculture sectors more sustainable through economic growth, environmental protection, and improved rural livelihoods.

8. The conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources are essential for achieving sustainable agriculture and food security for present and future generations. It is indispensable for crop genetic improvement to adapt to unpredictable environmental changes and human needs.

#### **A. The Sustainable Development Goals**

9. By Resolution 1/2017, the Governing Body highlighted the contribution of the International Treaty towards achieving Goals 2 and 15, in particular to Targets 2.5 and 15.6.

10. The overall goal of the International Treaty is the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture for sustainable agriculture and food security. Plant genetic resources are the raw materials that farmers and plant breeders use to improve biodiversity and agricultural productivity to allow the feeding of a growing population. The International Treaty facilitates access to a gene pool of crops and forages for research, training, and breeding.

#### **SDG Target 2.5.**

11. The objectives and the work of the International Treaty also include facilitating the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

12. The Multilateral System of the International Treaty has facilitated access to over 5.5 million samples for farmers, plant breeders, and other stakeholders worldwide. Through its Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF), the International Treaty shares monetary benefits primarily with farmers in developing countries who promote the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. More than 500 institutions in 67 countries have already benefited from the BSF of the International Treaty.

#### **SDG Target 15.6.**

13. Through the same resolution, the Governing Body also highlighted the contribution of the International Treaty towards achieving SDGs 1, 12, 13, and 17.

14. The International Treaty supports vulnerable and small-scale farmers in their efforts to increase resilience and secure livelihoods through the improved management and sustainable development of plant genetic diversity in the fields. The work of the International Treaty has benefited more than one million people since 2008. It helps in increasing the diversity of crops grown in the farmers' fields for improved yields and income.

15. For a more responsible food production, the International Treaty has supported training activities, including community-based approaches for the management of plant genetic resources and the generation and sharing of new knowledge. It has helped to establish eighty-nine community seed banks around the world and involved more than 30 000 women in the conservation and use of plant genetic resources.

16. The International Treaty helps to build resilience in the face of climate change and food insecurity. It directly supports actions to increase the availability and distribution of disease-free, clean planting material as a result of the identification and incorporation of preferred candidate genes in the breeding of climate-smart varieties. More than 5 300 varieties of target crops have been evaluated for adaptability to biotic and abiotic stresses, and almost 1 000 accessions resistant to pests, diseases, and climate-induced shocks have resulted from projects of the International Treaty.

17. The International Treaty provides an enabling framework and incentives for stakeholders to collaborate in the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. It calls for international cooperation and collaboration and continued development of partnerships among Contracting Parties and stakeholders for monetary and non-monetary benefit sharing. The areas of collaboration include information sharing,

technology transfer and dissemination, and capacity building, which are essential to achieve the SDGs. More than 500 institutions have collaborated with the International Treaty so far in the field operations.

### **B. Monitoring Progress and Relevant Indicators**

18. The variation in the "number of nations that have adopted legislative, administrative, and policy frameworks to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits" arising out of the use of biodiversity is an indicator that is used to track the progress made in adopting such frameworks at the national level. In practice, it refers to the efforts made by countries to implement two major international instruments regarding access to and the sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources: the Nagoya Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the International Treaty. The monitoring of frameworks under other legal instruments may also become relevant in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

19. The CBD is the custodian agency for this indicator, and the International Treaty, through FAO, acts as a contributing agency. Since 2016, the International Treaty has been making available the information and data provided by Contracting Parties related to the Treaty's implementation to facilitate the international monitoring and reporting on this indicator.

20. The reports submitted by Contracting Parties under Section V of the Compliance Procedures is the relevant source of information. Each report specifies the measures the Government has taken to implement its obligations under the International Treaty, including its access and benefit-sharing provisions. In addition, information on the number of Standard Material Transfer Agreements (SMTAs) is also available.

21. The International Treaty also contributes to the narrative of the annual SDG progress reports, feeding into the High-Level Political Forum's follow-up and review processes.

22. The work of the International Treaty is also relevant for SDG Target 2.5 for which FAO is the custodian agency. It state that: *"By 2020 maintain genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at national, regional and international levels, and ensure access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge as internationally agreed"*.

### **C. The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework**

23. The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) is expected to support and be aligned with the 2030 Development Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this context, there are expectations that the biodiversity-related instruments and conventions, like the International Treaty, will be ready to contribute with other relevant datasets and indicators to assist governments in the monitoring and tracking of progress.

24. The second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework invited the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the CBD at its twenty-fourth meeting to, among other things, carry out a scientific and technical review of the updated goals and targets – and related indicators and baselines – of the draft GBF.

25. The draft document, which compiles the already operational indicators at the global level with underlying data and an organization committed to their periodic update, was published online for review in 2020.<sup>1</sup> The document shows one of the indicators relevant to the work of the International Treaty in row 140 in relation to the proposed Target 12 (Updated 2030 Target): *"By 2030, increase by [X] benefits shared for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity through ensuring access to and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge"*.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/sbstta/sbstta-24/post2020-monitoring-en.pdf>

26. In particular, the document contains in Row 140 an indicator introduced by the International Treaty under draft Target 12.1, “*Access to genetic resources*”, for the monitoring of trends in access to genetic resources, as follows:

*Total number of transfers of crop material from the Multilateral System of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) received in a country.*

27. The same document reflects another relevant indicator, namely for draft Targets 12.1 in row 145 and for Target 12.2, “*Benefit[s] shared from the use of genetic resources*”, in row 148:

*Number of countries that have adopted legislative, administrative and policy frameworks to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits (SDG Indicator 15.6.1)*

28. The Secretary will provide information related to these indicators to the Ninth Session of the Governing Body, including on the state of the negotiations regarding the GBF.

### III. RELEVANT INDICATORS UNDER THE 2030 AGENDA

29. The CBD is the custodian of Indicator 15.6.1, to which the International Treaty data through FAO. This indicator measures progress made by countries in establishing legislative, administrative, or policy frameworks on access and benefit-sharing (ABS). By developing their ABS frameworks, countries are contributing to the achievement of Target 15.6 and to the conservation and sustainable use of biological and genetic diversity.

30. Indicator 15.6.1 is composed of several indicators. The CBD provides information on “*Countries that have reported legislative, administrative and policy framework or measures reported to the ABS Clearing-House*” and “*Countries that are Parties to the Nagoya Protocol*”.

31. The relevant data contributed from the International Treaty are:

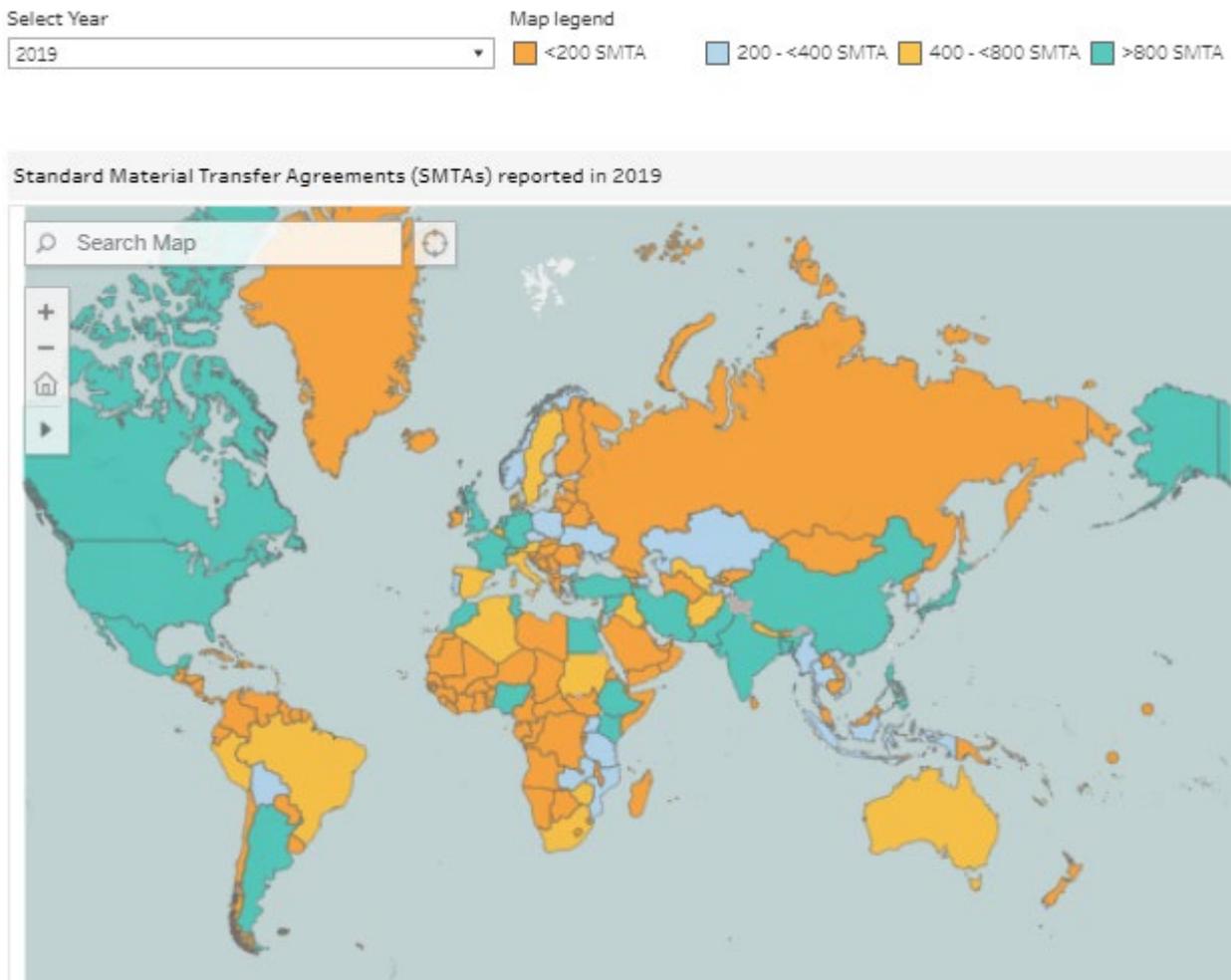
- *Countries that have reported legislative, administrative and policy frameworks or measures through the Online Reporting System on Compliance of the International Treaty;*
- *Countries that are Contracting Parties to the International Treaty;*
- *Total reported number of Standard Material Transfer Agreements (SMTAs) signed by users in the country as a recipient of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.*

32. The information available on the FAO's website is updated yearly,<sup>2</sup> and allows Contracting Parties and users to check the most recent figures and trends at the global and regional levels.<sup>3</sup> The figure below shows the trend on reporting on legislative, administrative, and policy frameworks through the Online Reporting System.

<sup>2</sup> The information is usually updated in February.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/1561/en/>





**Map 2.** Total reported number of Standard Material Transfer Agreements (SMTAs) signed by users in the country as a recipient of PGRFA as of 1 February 2019. Source: FAO, ITPGRFA.

35. These indicators are also referred to on the website of the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP).<sup>4</sup> The BIP is a global initiative that has been in operation since 2007 to promote and coordinate the development of indicators of biodiversity change, in support of the CBD and other treaties and conventions. The above indicators are displayed in their catalogue in relation to the SDG targets 15 and 2 and also the Aichi target 13.<sup>5</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

36. The Committee is invited to take note and advise on the use of the information and indicators available to monitor the progress of Contracting Parties with the implementation of the International Treaty and with their global commitments related to development and biodiversity referred to in this document.

37. The Committee may wish to reflect its advice on this matter in the recommendations to the Governing Body.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bipindicators.net/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bipindicators.net/indicators/number-of-countries-that-have-reported-legislative-administrative-and-policy-frameworks-for-measures-to-implement-the-international-treaty>