



Food and Agriculture
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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 information on best practices and measures of implementing Article 9 of the International Treaty submitted by Serbia on 19 May 2021.

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



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:
Facilitating small-scale farmers access to diversity seeds of traditional small grains varieties and landraces and providing support to sustainable use and conservation of local small grains resources
- Date of submission
19/05/2021
- Name(s) of country/countries in which the measure/practice is taking place
Serbia
- Responsible institution/organization (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s) and contact person)
Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops
Maksima Gorkog 30, 21000 Novi Sad, Serbia
<http://ifvcns.rs/en/home-page>
Contact person: Sanja Mikić, sanja.mikic@ifvcns.ns.ac.rs
- Type of institution/organization (categories)
Governmental research institute
- Collaborating/supporting institutions/organizations/actors, if applicable (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s))
 - International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
 - Institute of Plant Genetic Resources, Sadovo, Bulgaria;
 - Plant Gene Bank, The Directorate for National Reference Laboratories, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Republic of Serbia;

Description of the examples

Mandatory information:¹

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

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



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The practice is being implemented by the Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops from Serbia and Institute for Plant Genetic Resources from Bulgaria in cooperation with the national and community gene banks, NGOs and agriculture extension services.

○ Start year:

2020

○ Objective(s):

The objectives of the practice are to increase on-farm small grains crop diversity, contribute to food security and enhance resilience to climate change by collecting, multiplying, evaluating, maintaining and facilitating the adoption, access and exchange of farmers' seeds.

○ Summary of core components

1. Collection of small grains genetic resources from farms, institutes' collections and gene banks as well as local traditional knowledge on crop management and use;
2. Seed multiplication, characterization and evaluation of the small grains genetic resources;
3. Raising farmers' and other stakeholders' awareness of the importance of PGRFA for food security;
4. Seed distribution to farmers with capacity building to diversify, conserve, use and add value to local products.

○ Key outcomes

- In total 141 local landraces and traditional varieties were collected and multiplied for multi-location and multi-year characterization and evaluation trials in Serbia and Bulgaria.
- The multiplied seeds will be distributed to 40 farmers with necessary institutional support to maintain, select, use, add-value and market their local PGR.
- Establishment of firm linkages and cooperation between farmers, researchers and national and local community gene banks is one of the key outcomes.

○ Lessons learned (if applicable)

Involvement of farmers conserving and using PGRFA are important in raising awareness of the importance of farm diversification, plant genetic resources and farmers' rights.

● Brief history (including starting year), as appropriate

This practice is an integral part of the Fourth Cycle Benefit-sharing Fund project "Redesigning the exploitation of small grains genetic resources towards increased sustainability of grain-value chain and improved farmers' livelihoods in Serbia and Bulgaria - GRAINEFIT", PR-166-Serbia (2020-2023). The project started in June 2020.

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

The expedition missions were undertaken to collect local varieties and landraces of wheat, barley, oats and rye that were still being cultivated on farmers' fields. The special attention was taken to gathering



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traditional knowledge of local communities on PGRFA management and use. The traditional varieties were also collected from national research institutes' collections and gene banks.

The collected seeds were multiplied for 1) distribution to farmers, 2) national and local community gene banks deposition and 3) biotic and abiotic stress resistance assessments, field performance trials, end-use quality and nutritional analyses.

The farmers will be provided access to PGRFA seeds together with know-how, technical support, field demonstrations, opportunity to take part in participatory variety selection and help to increase their ability to add-value and market their local products.

Cooperation among a national gene bank, a local community gene bank and a research institution has been established to facilitate farmers access to PGRFA seeds.

The attention of policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders of the importance of farmers' rights to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seeds of PGRFA has been brought by organizing a seminar where farmers' voices, experiences and needs could be heard.

- 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 genetic erosion on farms in Serbia and Bulgaria is a serious threat to food security under unpredictable climate changes, as it may cause the disappearance of potentially climate resilient traditional small grains varieties and landraces. The poverty and the lack of additional income in the vulnerable rural communities are additional problems in both countries. Many small-scale farmers are not aware the benefits from PGRFA as a means to tackle climate change and secure stable yields.

In Serbia, most of old traditional varieties and landraces collected during the 20th century has been maintained at several national research institutes, since the national gene bank did not exist at that time. The construction of the national gene was delayed until 2009 due to the civil war and economic crises. The research breeding institutes kept seeds under short-term storage conditions that often did not comply with internationally recommended standards. Moreover, some of the institutes bankrupted and the seeds in their collections were at risk. There was a need to collect available PGRFA of the country and deposit the material in the new national gene bank for long-term storage. There was also a need to establish links between gene banks and farmers, and facilitate farmers' access to PGRFA seeds.

- 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 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		X
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		
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
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)

The objectives of the practice are to increase on-farm small grains crop diversity, contribute to food security and enhance resilience to climate change by collecting, multiplying, evaluating, maintaining and facilitating the adoption, access and exchange of farmers' seeds.

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

The target group are 40 local small-scale farmers interested to diversify their agriculture system and test different local varieties that are potentially resilient to climate change with the support and scientific advice of the project team experts.

- Location(s) and geographical outreach

Northern and central Serbia, southeast Bulgaria

- Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice

The implementation of this practice is supported by the ITPGRFA through the Benefit-sharing Fund project number PR-166-Serbia. The practice is also carried out through mobilisation of human capacities of IFCNS and IPGR, agriculture extension services, academic researchers and NGOs working close with local community seed banks, and national gene banks. The small-scale farmers contributed to the practice implementation with genetic resources collected on their farms, their land and traditional knowledge.

- How has the measure/practice affected the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture?

The measure is expected to contribute to:

- securing and enriching the *ex-situ* national small grains PGRFA collections,
- fostering the local community-based conservation of small grains PGRFA by providing access to the collected and stored *ex-situ* PGRFA, as well as technical support and scientific advices to rural families,
- diversifying *on-farm* small grains PGRFA production,
- safeguarding traditional local knowledge and farmers rights to save, use and exchange seeds and
- creating stronger linkages between farmers, community and national gene banks and other civil society organisations to share expertise and cooperate on better utilization of climate resilient PGRFA that are important for food security.

- Please describe the achievements of the measure/ practice so far (including quantification) (max 200 words)

- 141 local landraces and traditional varieties were collected from farmer fields, institute collections and international gene banks and multiplied for multi-location and multi-year characterization and evaluation trials in Serbia and Bulgaria.
- The multiplied seeds will be distributed to 40 farmers with necessary institutional support to maintain, select, use, add-value and market their local PGR.
- The multiplied seeds will be deposited in two national gene banks from Serbia and Bulgaria.
- An agreement on cooperation was reached between the national gene bank, a local community seed bank and the Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops from Serbia.

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



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- A seminar for agronomists was organized with active participation of 100 farmers, policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders, with a session focusing on the importance of PGRFA and needs of farmers, bringing forth the voices of farmers.
- Other national level instruments that are linked to the measure/practice
Law on Agricultural Plant Seeds (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 45/2005)
Regulation on the list of varieties of agricultural plants involving exceptions to the plant breeders' rights and on the elements for determining small agricultural producers (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 38/2010)
Regulation on incentives for the conservation of plant genetic resources (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 85/2013)
- Are you aware of any other international agreements or programs that are relevant for this measure/practice?
Convention on Biological Diversity, Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Global Strategy for Plant Conservation
- 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).
Farmers themselves proved to be good advocates of farmers' rights and the use of PGRFA. The raising awareness of the importance of plant genetic resources and farm diversification seemed to be more effective if it was done by those farmers who have already adopted, conserved and used PGRFA. Bringing farmers speak to farmers by arranging farm visits and meetings could discard the scepticism that some farmers sometimes have towards researchers.
- What challenges encountered along the way (if applicable) (max 200 words)
The main challenge encountered during the implementation of the measure was the restriction measures during the COVID-19 pandemic that limited local travels and direct contacts with farmers and other stakeholders.
- 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)
The success of the practice depends on clear communication of all aspects of the practice prior to its implementation to all stakeholders, including farmers, gene banks, researchers, extension agents, non-governmental organisations, policy makers. A vague idea of the planned activities/practice may cause disinterest and even distrust. Once all relevant stakeholders understand the purpose, background, means, aims, rationale and benefits of the activity, they would appreciate and readily contribute to its implementation.



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Further information

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

<http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/areas-of-work/benefit-sharing-fund/projects-funded/bsf-details/en/c/1198871/?iso3=SRB>