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Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



**The International Treaty**  
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES  
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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

### SIXTH MEETING OF THE AD HOC TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

22 – 23 FEBRUARY 2022

### THE TOOLBOX ON SUSTAINABLE USE OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. According to the Terms of Reference established by the Governing Body, one of the tasks of the Ad hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ACSU or Committee) is to review the information provided by the Secretary on, and assess the relevance and effectiveness of the Toolbox, and prepare concrete recommendations on how the Toolbox can be monitored, evaluated and improved to better guide Contracting Parties and stakeholders for the sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).

2. At its fifth meeting, the Committee acknowledged the efforts made by the Secretariat to gather feedback from users through an online survey.<sup>1</sup> It noted the very useful recommendations made by the respondents and made a number of suggestions to further improve its use and effectiveness, especially:

- **Regular updating** of information and removing outdated resources, also by coordinating with other initiatives with similar objectives, and exploring if and how Contracting Parties and relevant stakeholders can upload documents to the Toolbox;
- **Enhancement of the structure, technical functioning and design** of the Toolbox to make it more user-friendly;
- **Expansion of the scope and coverage of the resources** reflected in the Toolbox, for instance resources on crop wild relatives and wild edible species;
- **Promotion of the Toolbox and creating awareness** through increasing its visibility both on the International Treaty website and through other relevant systems and processes;
- **Conducting capacity building activities** on the contents and use of the Toolbox, including through regional webinars;
- **Monitoring and collecting information on the use and users**, which could be done with the help of stakeholders and evaluated by the Secretariat; and
- **Regular evaluation of the Toolbox** to enable the assessment of its added value.

<sup>1</sup> See: Notification – Online Survey on the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/cb4298en/cb4298en.pdf>

3. Based on the above key points and suggestions received from the survey, the Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare a note detailing the proposed improvements to the Toolbox and how it could be practically and meaningfully evaluated, including broadening the scope of the Toolbox to include information for promoting the implementation of Article 5 provisions that are relevant for sustainable use of PGRFA, for the consideration of the ACSU at its next meeting.

## **II. IMPROVEMENT OF THE TOOLBOX ON SUSTAINABLE USE OF PGRFA**

4. Access to the Toolbox will continue to be mainly through the website of the International Treaty, with the current navigation structure. However, to facilitate future development and utility, the Toolbox application will be incorporated into the Global Information System (GLIS) Portal. Using the GLIS Portal for the Toolbox to search, browse and download information resources offers comparative advantages in terms of managing and monitoring the use of the Toolbox, and it also consolidates all the information system of the Treaty. New features and functions will allow for more accurate and extensive monitoring of the Toolbox, e.g. to produce regular statistics and analytics on its use, improved browsing experience and, among others, to rely on improved search functions and an option to export the list of found resources in a format that allows for offline browsing in Microsoft Excel or similar spreadsheet application.

5. In addition to resources gathered by the Secretariat, Contracting Parties, interested stakeholders and other users can submit their resource suggestions using the online submission form, subject to validation.

6. The thematic areas will be separated into “Technical Resources” and “Policy Resources”. Keywords will help users to find the required resources, also it will facilitate the identification of resources submitted in different languages. It will also allow to exclude results in languages different from the user's one.

7. The Secretariat will prepare a “communication strategy and visibility plan” including capacity building activities on the content and the use of the Toolbox.

8. A detailed note for the improvement of the Toolbox is presented in Annex 1.

## **III. GUIDANCE SOUGHT**

9. The Committee is invited to consider the note for improvement provided in this document and to provide any additional advice and guidance for the revamping of the Toolbox.

## **Note for the Improvement of the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA**

### ***(i) Enhancement of the Structure***

#### Proposal:

Access to the Toolbox will continue to be mainly through the website of the International Treaty, with the current navigation structure. However, to facilitate future developments, the Toolbox application will be incorporated into the Global Information System (GLIS) Portal. The presentation of the Toolbox menu and sub-menus will be re-arranged and a re-worked introductory page will be provided. Thematic areas will be classified as either “technical” or “policy” to streamline the use of the Toolbox. Additionally, facilitated user feedback and an online submission of resources will be implemented. Beside the main access point from the Treaty website, an icon of the Toolbox will be added to the GLIS portal with the aim to enhance the browsing experience while making all the available information in one site, the Global Information System Portal.

Remarks: Using the GLIS Portal for the Toolbox to search, browse and download information resources offers comparative advantages in terms of managing and monitoring the use of the Toolbox, and it consolidates all the information system on PGRFA.

### ***(ii) Technical Functioning and Design***

#### Proposal:

The migration of the Toolbox backend (database and application server) into the GLIS portal offers a number of advantages, such as improved browsing experience, separate search links for each thematic area, improved search function and an option to export the list of found resources in an appropriate format for offline browsing with Microsoft Excel or similar spreadsheet application. In addition, new functions will allow for more accurate and extensive monitoring of the Toolbox, e.g. to produce regular statistics and analytics on its use.

Remarks: Design and structure of the Toolbox follows the FAO Corporate policy on website and communication, e.g. visuals, colors and fonts are based on the FAO guidelines.

### ***(iii) Expansion of the Scope and Coverage***

#### Proposal:

Subject areas and categories are reviewed to expand the scope and coverage.

To enhance the browsing experience and facilitate accessing the Toolbox’s resources, thematic areas are clearly separated into “Technical Resources” and “Policy Resources”. Technical Resources will have several additional subject areas and expanded scope, while Policy Resources will feature the different types of policies that may be available. These characterizations will be supported by keywords and free text search.

Keywords help users find the required resource, also it will facilitate the identification of resources submitted in different languages. It will also allow users to exclude results in languages other than theirs.

#### Remarks:

Additional “subject areas” will be added to expand the scope and coverage of the information resources, e.g. crop wild relatives, neglected and underutilized species, and other relevant subjects to expand the scope. The list of keywords will also be expanded.

***(iv) Monitoring and Collection of Information Resources on the Use and Users***

Proposal:

This improvement plan includes extensive logging functions to facilitate monitoring and assessment of the use of the Toolbox. In addition to resources gathered by the Secretariat, Contracting Parties, interested stakeholders and other users can submit their resource suggestions using the online submission form, subject to validation by the Toolbox editorial team. Information resources can also be submitted through an email link. The same for the user's feedback on the use, relevance and effectiveness of the Toolbox, a structured questionnaire is made available for online feedback and a link to email for unstructured commentary.

Remarks:

Both information resources received online and via email, will be validated by the Toolbox editorial team to ensure proper tagging of the resources. In addition to users' online feedback, the GLIS portal includes a system to monitor the use and access of information resources in the Toolbox.

***(v) Regular Evaluation***

Proposal:

The information resources contained in the Toolbox will be monitored, ensuring that it has the latest or updated information. The Toolbox shall be evaluated and reviewed regularly (e.g. bi – annually) using criteria, such as:

- How many users accessed the Toolbox?
- Which information resources are generally/mostly downloaded?
- Comments received via the online form and via email will be consolidated for review.
- Ensure the URL links are working or updated regularly.
- Ensure the information provided for each resource are accurate and updated.
- Encourage users to provide feedback and comments for further improvements.

***(vi) Promotion of the Toolbox and conduction of capacity building activities***

Proposal:

The Secretariat will prepare a “communication strategy and visibility plan” including capacity building activities on the content and the use of the Toolbox.

Remarks:

As of this writing, the Secretariat has conducted six regional webinars, from 25<sup>th</sup> of January to 3 February 2022, to share the tools on conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. One of the objective of the webinar was to promote the use of and share information about the Toolbox on Sustainable use of PGRFA.

## The Toolbox menu

### About

(Brief introduction)

### Resources

Technical (with introduction about the resources)

Policy (with introduction about the resources)

### Links

[Submissions on the Implementation of Article 6](#)

[Compliance National Reports](#)

[The Inventory](#) of national measures that may be adopted, best practices and lessons learned from the realization of Farmers' Rights, as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty

Other useful links (e.g. database/websites, relevant Glossaries)

### Share with Us

Short description

[Tell us your experience](#) (online form)

Submit resources (online form)

**\*Disclaimer note (on relevant pages)**

## About

### *The Toolbox*

*The Toolbox* for Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is an online database of information resources relevant to the management and sustainable use of PGRFA. It makes available publications, reports, research and studies and other information coming from various organizations and bodies from across the globe, including research and academic institutions, intergovernmental bodies, as well as national and international agricultural research institutions.

**User Guide**

### *Purpose of the Toolbox*

*The Toolbox* was created as a *one-stop hub* of knowledge and learning, for people seeking information resources on sustainable use of PGRFA, or on guidance, policies, strategies and activities that can promote and enhance the sustainable use of PGRFA, particularly at national and local levels. Ultimately, the purpose is to facilitate the implementation of sustainable use of PGRFA so as to halt and reverse genetic erosion, promote sustainable agriculture and to ensure the food security for present and future generations.

### **How does the Database work?**

The Toolbox consists of two different data repositories, on Technical Resources and on Policy Resources. Both repositories provide a starting point to organize the existing knowledge on conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, collecting publications,

articles, videos, case studies, books, policies, guidelines, and other important material in one place.

The Technical repository contains ....(descriptions)

The Policy repository contains .... (descriptions)

\*The repositories are a “living process” that is constantly being updated. The external references on this website are provided for informational purpose only – they do not constitute an endorsement or an approval by FAO. (disclaimer)

## Technical Resources

Brief description

The list of terms below is the proposed initial one. The Toolbox will allow for the addition of terms to continually expand coverage and accuracy.

**[Link to the GLIS portal \(directly in the Technical Resources database\)](#)**

## Technical Resources (GLIS portal)

Inclusion of results in other languages  
 Free text search  
 Keywords  
 Subjects  
 Resource type  
 Publication year  
 Region  
 (Possibility to export the search results as Excel)

### By Subject Area

- Crop wild relatives, neglected and underutilized species
- Crop Diversity
- Grains/Cereals/Pulses/Root crops/Fruits
- Farming Systems
- Plant Breeding techniques and approaches
- Traditional Knowledge
- Training, Capacity Development
- Seed system

### By Keywords

1. Access and benefit-sharing
2. Agricultural biodiversity
3. Best practices
4. Catalogues and registries

5. Community seed banks
6. Crop wild relatives, neglected and underutilised species
7. Crowdsourcing
8. Farmers' field school
9. Farmers' Rights
10. Food security and nutrition
11. Food system
12. Integrated seed sector development
13. Recognition of the role of farmers
14. Seeds
15. The role of Genebanks
16. The role of private sectors
17. Traditional knowledge
18. Training, capacity building
19. Value chain
20. Women farmers

### **Type of resources**

- Learning materials (manuals / tools / educational modules / guides)
- Multimedia (audio / video / podcasts / webinars)
- Publications (scientific articles / conference proceedings / reports / working papers / case studies)
- Database / Website / Portal

### **Country/Region**

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Near East
- North America
- South West Pacific

## **Policy Resources**

Brief description

The list of terms below is the proposed initial one. The Toolbox will allow for the addition of terms to continually expand coverage and accuracy.

**[Link to the GLIS portal \(directly in the Policy database\)](#)**

### **Policy (GLIS portal)**

Inclusion of results in other languages

Free text search

Keywords

Categories

Resource type

Publication year

## Region

(Possibility to export the search results as Excel)

## By Category

- Legislation and policies, Directives
- Agreements / Principles / Declarations
- Voluntary Guidelines
- Strategies and Action Plans
- Miscellaneous

## Keywords

1. Access and benefit-sharing
2. Agricultural Biodiversity
3. Agricultural/environmental/rural development
4. Catalogues and registries
5. Crop wild relatives, neglected and underutilised species
6. Farmers' Rights
7. Farmers' varieties
8. Food security and nutrition
9. Food System
10. Plant variety protection
11. Role of farmers and indigenous local communities
12. Seed Act
13. Sustainable agriculture
14. Traditional knowledge

## Type of resources

- Learning materials (manuals / tools / educational modules / guides)
- Multimedia (audio / video / podcasts / webinars)
- Publications (scientific articles / conference proceedings / reports / working papers / case studies)
- Database / Website

## Country/Region

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Near East
- North America
- South West Pacific

## Links

- Submission page on CSU
- Compliance National Reports
- CGRFA – GPA
- Inventory FR
- Other useful links (database/websites)



## Join us

- **Tell us your experience Feedback** (survey)
- **Send resources** (link to GLIS “submit a resource”)

Disclaimer note

## Outline of each resource

### A. TECHNICAL RESOURCES

#### 1. **First appearance:**

**Title:** (with hyperlink to the document)

(Next line after the title, to include first lines of the summary / description or introduction about the document)

**Geographic Coverage:** (region)

**Country/ies:**

**Type of resources:**

**Year:**

#### 2. **Once you click on the resource:**

**Title:** (with hyperlink to the document)

**Description/About the document:** (The abstract, two to three sentences introducing the document, (or the possibility to directly see the video/brochure/article’s first page, sort of hyperlink. You click on the image, and you go to the document)

**Subject area:** (*Links to relevant information sources (website/database)*)

**Publisher:**

**Year:**

**Geographical Coverage:**

**Country/ies:**

**Content language:** Arabic, English, French, Spanish

**Type:**

**Link:**

**Keywords:**

### 3. POLICY RESOURCES

#### 1. **First appearance:**

**Title:** (with hyperlink to the document)

(Next line after the title, to include first lines of the summary / description or introduction about the document)

**Country/ies:**

**Geographic Coverage:**

**Type of resource:**

**Year:**

**2. Once you click on the resource:**

**Country** + flag

**Region:**

**Title:** (hyperlink to the document)

**About the document:**

**Type:**

**Link:**

**Year:**

**Keywords:**