



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**



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

## **Item 12 of the Provisional Agenda**

### **NINTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY**

**New Delhi, 19 – 24 September 2022**

## **New prototype of the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Toolbox for Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Toolbox) is an online database of resources on the management and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA). It contains publications, reports, research, studies and other relevant information resources from various organizations and bodies around the world, including research and academic institutions, intergovernmental bodies, and both national and international agricultural research institutions.
2. At its Eighth Session, the Governing Body, through Resolution 5/2019, requested the Secretary to continue to update the Toolbox, disseminate information about it, and provide information about its use for consideration by the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Committee or ACSU).<sup>1</sup>
3. The Governing Body, at the same Session, mandated the Committee to review the information provided by the Secretary on the Toolbox, assess its relevance and effectiveness, 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 PGRFA.<sup>2</sup>

### **II. UPDATES, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO FURTHER IMPROVE THE USE, RELEVANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TOOLBOX**

4. During the intersessional period, the Secretariat continued to populate and update the Toolbox.<sup>3</sup>
5. In the absence of a mechanism for monitoring the use of the Toolbox, the Secretariat in consultation with the Committee,<sup>4</sup> conducted an online survey to evaluate the usage, relevance and effectiveness of the Toolbox, and to gather suggestions for its further improvement. The outcome was presented to the Committee at its fifth meeting.<sup>5</sup>
6. At its fifth meeting, the Committee acknowledged the importance of the Toolbox as a useful source of information, guiding Contracting Parties and stakeholders in implementing Articles 5 and 6 of the International

<sup>1</sup> Para. 4, Resolution 5/2019, [www.fao.org/3/nb783en/nb783en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/nb783en/nb783en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Para. 4, Resolution 5/2019, [www.fao.org/3/nb783en/nb783en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/nb783en/nb783en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The Toolbox was launched in 2017. Since then, the Secretariat has continued to populate it with relevant information resources. As of May 2022, a total of 1 908 resources have been made available in the Toolbox, most of which are open source.

<sup>4</sup> In February 2021, the Secretariat organized an informal briefing session for the members of the Committee to provide updates and receive initial guidance on the preparations of the ACSU meeting.

<sup>5</sup> IT/GB-9/ACSU-5/21/Inf.2, *Outcomes of the online survey on the use, relevance and effectiveness of the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA*. [www.fao.org/3/cb6757en/cb6757en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb6757en/cb6757en.pdf)

Treaty. The Committee noted the very useful recommendations gathered from the survey respondents and made a number of suggestions to further improve the use and effectiveness of the Toolbox, especially:

- **regular updating** of information and removal of outdated resources, 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 increased 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.

7. Based on the above key points, the Committee invited the Secretariat to prepare a note for the improvement of the Toolbox.<sup>6</sup>

8. In February 2022, at its sixth meeting, the Committee considered the Note for the improvement of the Toolbox and invited the Secretary to prepare an information document detailing the new prototype of the Toolbox, including a communication strategy and visibility plan, for the Ninth Session of the Governing Body.<sup>7</sup>

### **III. THE NEW PROTOTYPE OF THE TOOLBOX ON SUSTAINABLE USE OF PGRFA**

#### *The new prototype*

9. Access to the Toolbox will continue to be available through the website of the International Treaty, with the current navigation structure.

10. To facilitate future development and utility, the Toolbox application will be incorporated into the Global Information System (GLIS) Portal. The incorporation of the Toolbox into the GLIS Portal offers comparative advantages, such as:

- one portal for all the information system on PGRFA and tools of the International Treaty
- a function to search, browse and download information resources
- a feature to manage and monitor the use of the tool

11. The features and functions of the Toolbox will allow for more accurate and extensive monitoring of the Toolbox, e. g. to produce regular statistics and analytics on its use, improved browsing experiences and, among others, to rely on improved search functions and an option to export the list of found resources in a format that will allow users for offline browsing in Microsoft Excel or in any similar spreadsheet application.

12. In addition to information resources gathered by the Secretariat, the new prototype can allow Contracting Parties, interested stakeholders and other users to submit their resources using the online submission form, subject to validation.

13. The new features facilitate the identification of resources submitted in different languages, when searching, it will by default exclude results in languages different from the user's one, although they can be

<sup>6</sup> Para. 7, IT/GB-9/ACSU-5/21/Report, available at: [www.fao.org/3/cb7136en/cb7136en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb7136en/cb7136en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Para.7, IT/GB-9/ACSU-6/22/Report, available at: [www.fao.org/3/cb8996en/cb8996en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb8996en/cb8996en.pdf)

included if desired. A detailed note for the improvement of the Toolbox<sup>8</sup> is presented in Annex 1 and the communication strategy and visibility plan is presented in Annex 2.

---

<sup>8</sup> The outline of the new Prototype has been presented at the Sixth meeting of the ACSU: [www.fao.org/3/cb8639en/cb8639en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb8639en/cb8639en.pdf)

---

*Annex 1*

---

**Note for the Improvement of the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA*****(i) Enhancement of the Structure***

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 of the PGRFA in one portal.

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

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. graphic elements, colours and fonts are based on the FAO guidelines.

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

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

To enhance the browsing experience and facilitate accessing the Toolbox, resources are sorted into “Technical Resources” and “Policy Resources”. Technical Resources are further categorized by subject areas, while the Policy Resources are dedicated to available policy frameworks. The searching and browsing will be aided by a keyword and free text search.

Keywords help users find the required resource and facilitate the identification of resources submitted in different languages. By default, results in languages other than the user’s language in use will be excluded from the search. However, it will be easy to include them if so desired.

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 initial list of keywords will also be expanded over time.

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

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:

Information resources received either online or 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***

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 conduct of capacity building activities***

A communication and visibility plan are presented in *Annex 2*.

**Annex 2****Communication and Visibility Plan**

The Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA is a global and comprehensive database of resources that makes available original publications, reports, research and studies and other relevant information for sustainable use of PGRFA. It offers a brief description of the information resource and other useful parameters to aid the user in searching for information. These resources are provided by various organizations and bodies from across the globe, including research and academic institutions, intergovernmental bodies, as well as national and international agricultural research institutions.

**A. Objectives**

The specific objectives are to:

- create awareness about, and promote the use and dissemination of the Toolbox;
- promote best practices on sustainable use of PGRFA; and
- encourage Contracting Parties and other stakeholders to support the Toolbox by contributing information resources that are relevant to the sustainable use of PGRFA.

The plan describes the target groups, the communication and visibility activities, the expected results and the indicators. A biannual evaluation will be reported.

**B. Target Group**

Contracting Parties, interested stakeholders and farmers communities, research and academic institutions and civil society organizations.

**C. Visibility**

Prepare and disseminate visibility materials:

- brochure and catalogue of the Toolbox;
- user guide (print and video clips), frequently asked questions (FAQs)
- inclusion of/or link to available glossary of commonly used terminologies on sustainable use of PGRFA

**D. Communication**

<b>Communication activities</b>	<b>Expected results</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Increase the Toolbox visibility on the Web and on the social networks	To improve the quality and quantity of information resources that can be made available in the Toolbox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification in six languages</li> <li>• Notification to users via email about the Toolbox publication</li> <li>• Report the new Toolbox to all the intersessional Treaty Committees during the next biennium</li> <li>• Number of communication and visibility activities/materials produced e.g. tweets, posts, news articles, video clips</li> </ul>
Include Toolbox in the training and capacity development activities organized by the Secretariat	Provide an accessible online platform, knowledge hub where a variety of different information resources, tools, knowledge, experiences, and policies for sustainable use of PGRFA are available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of trainings conducted</li> <li>• Number of workshop participants</li> <li>• Number of interested stakeholders</li> <li>• Number of information resources received</li> </ul>

Invite stakeholders to promote and disseminate the use of the Toolbox, and invite submissions of their available information resources	To improve the quality and quantity of information resources that can be made available in the Toolbox.	Number of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Subscribers and/or users</li><li>• Resources uploaded</li><li>• Website visits</li><li>• Materials downloaded and disseminated</li></ul>
Connect and link with other FAO relevant knowledge hubs and database	To improve the visibility of the Toolbox within the Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of links, knowledge and data hubs linked</li></ul>