



FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

SETTING THE STAGE

Background and context

1. Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture make an essential contribution to increasing and safeguarding food security and nutrition, improving rural livelihoods and economies, supporting the maintenance of biodiversity and to meeting the challenges of adapting to climate change.
2. The food processing industry benefits from plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, as is recognised in Article 13.6 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Treaty). Article 13.6 states that the Treaty's *Contracting Parties shall consider modalities of a strategy of voluntary benefit-sharing contributions whereby Food Processing Industries that benefit from plant genetic resources for food and agriculture shall contribute to the Multilateral System*.
3. This Article, along with the request made by the Treaty's Governing Body through paragraph 29h in the Annex of Resolution 3/2019, which calls on the Funding Committee to develop a strategy to mobilize funds from food processing industries, as called for in Article 13.6 of the Treaty, constitute the mandate for the development of this Food Processing Industry Engagement Strategy (the Engagement Strategy). In developing it, the Standing Committee on the Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilization (the Funding Committee) has also taken into account that Article 13 of the Treaty acknowledges different mechanism of benefit-sharing, namely: exchange of information, access to and transfer of technology, capacity building and sharing of monetary and other benefits of commercialization.
4. The Engagement Strategy has been developed in the context of the Treaty's new Funding Strategy 2020–2025. The Funding Strategy was adopted by the Governing Body at its Eighth Session and strives to ensure that sufficient resources are mobilized through a range of channels for the implementation of the Treaty, including from the food processing industry.
5. The Engagement Strategy will be implemented in the context of relevant global policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The SDGs include a robust role for the private sector in global development, and analysis has shown that it is common practice for companies in the food processing industry to judge their activities against them.
6. As stated in the Treaty's Funding Strategy, PGRFA conservation and sustainable use contribute directly and indirectly to the implementation of a number of SDGs. These include SDG 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 12 (Responsible Production and Consumption), 13 (Climate Action), 15 (Life on Land) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). There is a clear opportunity to engage with the food processing industry to develop strategic partnerships for the implementation of the Treaty to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.
7. The Engagement Strategy sets out: a vision and objective in connection to the Treaty; principles for engagement; and assessing and managing related risks.

Evolution, experience and opportunities for the Treaty's engagement with the private sector

8. Since its inception, the Treaty has engaged with the private sector in different ways. The Treaty plays a regulatory role related to facilitated access to PGRFA and the sharing of benefits arising from its use, and also recognises and encourages the role of the private sector in the Treaty's implementation.
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9. The Treaty has established a Multilateral System on Access and Benefit-sharing, which contains the world's largest genepool available for research, breeding and training for food and agriculture. The Multilateral System includes a requirement that a recipient who commercializes a plant variety that incorporates material accessed from the Multilateral System, shall pay to the Treaty's Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF), an equitable share of the benefits arising from the commercialization of that product, if certain conditions are met, as stated in Article 13.2 (d).

10. The private seed sector has engaged in Treaty implementation through its role as an active observer in Treaty negotiations and also through making voluntary contributions to areas of the Treaty's implementation, such as to the Treaty's BSF and to the Global Crop Diversity Trust.

11. There are a number of examples of food manufacturer's involvement in PGRFA initiatives. These include public-private-partnerships, with a specific crop focus, that are designed to help small-holder farmers. Many of the Top 100 food companies have been involved in such partnerships, that have included a focus on particular crops such as sorghum, barley, cassava, cocoa, soybeans, coffee and tea, among others¹. Similarly, the Global Crop Diversity Trust has developed global conservation strategies for specific crop commodities of interest to the food processing industry with a view to raising funds for their implementation.

12. In the development of this Engagement Strategy, the previous experiences of engaging with the private sector for Treaty implementation has been taken into account, as well as the recommendations arising from the 2019 independent evaluation of FAO's 2013 Private Sector Partnership Strategy, as documented in FAO's new Private Sector Engagement Strategy², and input from external experts.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

13. The vision and objective of this strategy are aligned with those of the Treaty's overall Funding Strategy³.

The vision

14. Through engaging with the food processing industry, partnerships can be formed that enable voluntary contributions to be mobilized for the implementation of the objectives and provisions of the Treaty in a long-term, coordinated, synergistic and effective manner. This further enables the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, contributing to increasing and safeguarding food and nutrition security, improving rural livelihoods and economies, supporting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, meeting the challenges of adapting to climate change and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Objective

15. To enable partnerships with the food processing industry to support the Multilateral System and the implementation of the Treaty as a whole, at national, regional and international levels, including through voluntary financial contributions, as well as other resources.

Approach

16. The Engagement Strategy will utilise a step-wise approach, enabling the development, testing and refining of concepts, models and tools to inform a targeted and effective set of actions for the Treaty's engagement with the food processing industry. This approach allows for regular review, learning and consultation with industry stakeholders to deepen the joint understanding and identification of opportunities of mutual interest, for building strategic and sustainable partnerships between the Treaty

¹ Source: Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, 2015

² FAO's Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021-2025: <http://www.fao.org/3/nd961en/nd961en.pdf>

³ Resolution 3/2019, *The Funding Strategy Of The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources For Food And Agriculture 2020–2025: Paragraph 6*: A new Vision for the Funding Strategy: The Funding Strategy enables the Governing Body, Contracting Parties, funding agencies, farmers and other relevant actors to secure funding and other resources for the programmatic implementation of the International Treaty in a long-term, coordinated, synergistic and effective manner.

Paragraph 14: The objective of the Funding Strategy is to enhance the availability, predictability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the provision of financial resources to implement activities under the Treaty, in accordance with Article 18 of the Treaty.

and the food processing industry. The *Implementation, Monitoring and Review Plan: Food Processing Industry Engagement Strategy (Inception Phase)*⁴ is updated periodically by the Funding Committee and is provided as a separate document.

17. It is envisaged that this strategy should involve the voluntary participation and contribution of a range of partners enabling the implementation of the Treaty, at national, regional and international levels. Engagement may also be informed by existing experiences of Treaty enabling partners in private sector engagement, such as those facilitated by the Global Crop Diversity Trust in the development of global conservation strategies for specific crop commodities, some of which are of interest to the food processing industry. The Funding Committee will play a leading role in overseeing the planned activities and outputs of this strategy and develop key milestones and actions.

18. At the inception, efforts will be made to define the Treaty's value proposition for the food processing industry, develop communication tools, identify entry points and possible models for engagement.

19. These elements will be informed by further analysis, the distillation of lessons learned and best practices, and through identifying areas of common interest to the Treaty and food processing industry.

20. Elements developed will be further refined through consultations with key stakeholders, including from the food processing industry, such as industry platforms and associations, and other relevant private sector actors. This will involve the identification of a sounding board to facilitate consultation with these stakeholders.

Food processing industry: description, scope and sectors

21. The food processing industry, or food and drink manufacturing sector, is one stage in the complex overall agri-food chain that starts with the input industries which provide farmers with the products they require to produce their crop and livestock, and the products flow through the food value chain, including the final consumers.

22. The food processing industry is extremely vast and encompasses a wide array of enterprises, from large national and multinational companies and industries, to medium, small-scale and micro businesses and industries, as well as family farms in many countries.

23. Analysis⁵ has been undertaken by an external expert on the food processing industry, as part of the development of this strategy including on trends and drivers, and the Treaty's value proposition. The analysis also highlighted that the food processing industry is highly diversified and fragmented. The Funding Committee may decide to commission further studies in the future to ensure that approaches developed under this strategy remain relevant, including in both developed and developing country contexts.

Why partner with the food processing industry?

24. There are numerous areas of synergy between the food processing industry and the Treaty, and various mutually reinforcing benefits of their successful functioning.

25. Benefits to the Treaty of partnering with the food processing industry include those related to communication, knowledge, technology and innovation. Partnerships may generate joint communication on biodiversity and sustainable food systems, real-time knowledge and data, market intelligence and best practices, and facilitate the effective dissemination of information nationally, regionally and globally.

26. Common threads with the Treaty include addressing issues such as biodiversity, climate change, technology transfer/capacity building, agricultural diversification and support to family farming, and benefit sharing. Further areas to be explored could be the whole diversity of food, in particular highly nutritious food, and the contribution of PGRFA to the achievement of the SDGs.

Why should the private sector partner with the Treaty?

⁴ Appendix 1, SFC-5 Meeting Proceedings (15–17 February 2022): <http://www.fao.org/3/cb9206en/cb9206en.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/CB6664EN/CB6664EN.pdf>

27. The food processing industry is inextricably linked to, and reliant upon the seed sector, and benefits from plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, agrobiodiversity, sustainable access to seeds and the unique partnerships that the Treaty's systems provide.

28. The Treaty's successful implementation may benefit the food processing industry including in the areas of research and development, farmers' continued access to reliable and diverse seed, and addressing threats to the environment and supply chain.

29. For companies with existing seed initiatives, association with the Treaty could be seen as formal recognition of their seed efforts. For companies without any specific seed-related initiatives but which recognise the importance of seeds in their ESG communications, association with the Treaty could be seen as a formal initiative which acknowledges their seed awareness.

30. The Treaty may serve as a trusted broker of relevant alliances. The Treaty is able to bring together and facilitate communication between Governments and the private sector on shared priorities, governance and policy issues and investments.

Areas for engagement with the food processing industry

31. The potential areas for engagement and partnership with the food processing industry will be refined based upon further analysis of the areas of synergy between the Treaty and food processing industry. It is anticipated that the broad areas of engagement may include those priority areas identified by FAO for its engagement with the private sector in its new strategy, as listed below:

- a) Policy dialogue
- b) Capacity development
- c) Resource mobilization
- d) Technical cooperation
- e) Knowledge and research
- f) Advocacy and communication
- g) Innovation
- h) Data sharing and dissemination
- i) Support for financing and investment
- j) SDG alignment
- k) SDG advocacy

Fully supporting international, regional and national engagement opportunities

32. Contracting Parties of the Treaty will play a critical role in promoting and enabling food processing industry investments in their countries and for Treaty implementation more broadly. The Engagement Strategy will explore the support required and develop tools and models to be tested and made available to assist with engaging the food processing industry and developing partnerships at national, regional and international levels, taking into account different national and regional contexts and, if possible, in more than two UN languages.

Principles for engagement

33. The principles for engagement should be integrated throughout the operationalization of this strategy. They are in line with and build on those set out in FAO's new Private Sector Engagement Strategy including, in no particular order, to:

- a) demonstrate a clear contribution to the attainment of the Treaty and the SDGs that are relevant to the implementation of the Treaty;
- b) respect the values of the Treaty, FAO and the United Nations and apply the exclusionary criteria of FAO's new Private Sector Engagement Strategy, notably those referring to human rights and labour rights;
- c) not compromise the Treaty's neutrality, impartiality, integrity, independence, credibility or reputation;
- d) be effectively managed and avoid any conflicts of interest or other risks to the Treaty

- e) demonstrate a clear contribution to the Treaty's mandate, and objectives and its Members national development goals;
- f) respect the intergovernmental nature of the Treaty and the decision-making authority of its Members as set out in the Treaty text and other relevant rules;
- g) support and enhance, without compromise, the neutral and independent scientific and evidence-based approach that underpins the Treaty's work;
- h) protect the Treaty from any undue influence, especially on processes for setting and applying policies, norms and standards;
- i) be conducted based on transparency, openness, inclusiveness, accountability, integrity and mutual respect.

Assessing and managing risk

34. It is anticipated that engaging and developing partnerships with the food processing industry will be undertaken by a diverse range of different Treaty stakeholders and channels.

35. Where the Treaty engages or partners with the food processing industry through the Treaty's Secretariat, assessment and management of risk may be considered based upon those areas set out in FAO's Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021–2025, of:

- a) conflicts of interest;
- b) undue or improper influence exercised by a private sector entity on the Treaty's work, especially, but not limited to, policies, norms and standard-setting;
- c) a negative impact on the Treaty's integrity, independence, credibility, reputation or mandate;
- d) the engagement being primarily used to serve the interests of the private sector entity, with limited or no benefit to the Treaty;
- e) the engagement conferring an endorsement of the private sector entity's name, brand, product, views or activity;
- f) the "blue-washing"⁶ and/or "green washing" of a private sector entity's image through an engagement with the Treaty;
- g) failure of the partnership to provide the expected benefits.

Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation and Re-Planning

36. The Engagement Strategy is envisaged to be a living document that takes an iterative or "step-wise" approach and may be periodically updated. In line with the monitoring and review arrangements of the Treaty's Funding Strategy, the Funding Committee will regularly monitor and review progress on the implementation of the Engagement Strategy and update the Governing Body on a regular basis, and make recommendations for adjustments.

⁶ The term "blue-washing" is generally understood to be the marketing practice of corporations and companies to form collaborations and associations with United Nations entities to make their goods or services more attractive to their consumers and shareholders that may overstate their commitment to responsible social and ethical practices.