



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



**International Treaty
on Plant Genetic Resources
for Food and Agriculture**

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

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

14 – 15 MARCH 2023

REPORT

OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The seventh meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ACSU or Committee) was opened by the Co-chairs, Ms. Patricia Gadaleta (Argentina) and Mr. Pesach Lubinsky (USA).
2. The Co-Chairs welcomed participants and stressed that their knowledge and expertise was key for the success of the work of the Committee. The Co-chairs thanked the Secretary and his team for the preparations of this meeting.
3. The Secretary of the International Treaty, Mr. Kent Nnadozie, welcomed the members, experts and observers attending the meeting and expressed his appreciation especially to those who faced inconveniences because of time zone differences. He emphasized that conservation and sustainable use are fundamental for the International Treaty and that there is much more consensus in this area of work than in some others. He assured the Committee of the full support of his team.

ITEM 1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

4. The Committee adopted its agenda for the meeting as provided in *Appendix 1*. The list of participants is contained in *Appendix 2*.

ITEM 2. REVISION AND FINALIZATION OF THE CONCEPT NOTE OF THE JOINT PROGRAMME ON BIODIVERSITY IN AGRICULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE USE OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

5. The Secretariat introduced the document, IT/GB-10/ACSU-7/23/2, *Concept Note of the Joint Programme on Biodiversity in Agriculture for Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.
6. The Committee commended the Secretary for the improved version of the Concept Note, which takes into account earlier suggestions made by the Committee and by the Governing Body.
7. The Committee considered all elements of the updated Concept Note in document IT/GB-10/ACSU-7/23/2 and provided inputs for its preliminary revision, as given in *Appendix 3*.

8. The Committee agreed that the suggestions made during the meeting will be incorporated by the Secretariat into a revised version of the Concept Note for its consideration at the eighth meeting, which will be held virtually during the first week of July 2023.

9. Furthermore, the Committee requested the Secretary to suggest activities for the different outcomes and to consider developing additional short sections on:

- Implementation;
- Governance and management; and
- Added value of a Joint Programme.

ITEM 3. STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE BOTTLENECKS AND CHALLENGES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLES 5 AND 6 OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY

10. The Secretariat presented the document, IT/GB-10/ACSU-7/23/3, *Strategies to Address the Bottlenecks and Challenges to the Implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty*.

11. The Committee welcomed the indicative strategies presented in the document as a useful basis to develop its suggestions on future strategies to address the bottlenecks identified in the Background Study, for the consideration of the Governing Body at its Tenth Session.

12. The Committee agreed to further discuss the matter at its eighth meeting, considering in particular the following items:

- Possible development by the Committee of voluntary guidelines or options on the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty;
- Elaboration of an inclusive process to develop voluntary guidelines or options during the next biennium, possibly including a global symposium and expert input or small groups to address each type of bottleneck;
- Undertake detailed analysis on the current state of implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty at regional level, and develop a mechanism to identify and support countries with the greatest challenges in implementing Articles 5 and 6, according to specific context and local needs;
- Suggest terms of reference of the Committee for the next biennium, which could include the above items.

13. The Committee invited the Secretary to prepare a document, with inputs from Members and Experts, to support discussion of these items at its next meeting.

14. The Committee also invited the Secretary to prepare a document highlighting aspects of the recently adopted Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework relevant for the work of the Committee.

ITEM 4. REPORT TO THE GOVERNING BODY ON THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

15. The Committee agreed to postpone consideration of this agenda item to its eighth meeting.

ITEM 5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16. The Committee noted with concern the absence of members and experts from certain Regions and the lack of civil society and farmers' organization participation, and requested the

Secretariat to follow up with Regional Groups that had not yet finalised their nominations to the Committee.

ITEM 6. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

17. The Co-Chairs expressed their appreciation for the constructive contributions of the members and experts, and thanked the observers for their participation. The Co-Chairs also expressed their appreciation to the Secretariat for their efforts made in preparing the meeting.

18. The Committee agreed to adopt this Report electronically.

*Appendix 1***AGENDA**

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Revision and finalization of the Concept Note of the Joint Programme on Biodiversity in Agriculture for Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
3. Strategies to address the bottlenecks and challenges to the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty
4. Report to the Governing Body on the work of the Committee
5. Any other business
6. Adoption of the Report

Appendix 2

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Concept Note

The Joint Programme on Biodiversity in Agriculture for Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Joint Programme)

Rationale

The Joint Programme is a cooperation between and among relevant international organizations, governments and all interested stakeholders committed to working together with the shared ambition and goal of transforming our food and nutrition systems and improving livelihoods in a sustainable, inclusive and gender-responsive manner, in line with Article 7 of the International Treaty.

Objective

The general objective of the Joint Programme is to mainstream plant genetic diversity into seed, food and nutrition systems while strengthening agricultural systems' resistance and resilience to climate change and other emerging challenges.

Areas of Action

The proposed Joint Programme is action- and results-oriented. It includes five mutually supportive and interdependent areas for action to mainstream the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic diversity into seed, food and nutrition systems:

- (i) Supporting knowledge and information exchange on actions directly related to Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty;
- (ii) Supporting the implementation of enabling policies and legal measures according to national contexts, priorities and specificities;
- (iii) Strengthening multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder cooperation for the development of projects, actions and activities;
- (iv) Raising and strengthening public awareness of the importance of plant biodiversity for sustainable breeding, seed, food and nutrition systems and for climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
- (v) Building capacities for developing actions directly related to the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty.

A Partnership Approach

The Joint Programme will be carried out following an iterative, dynamic and multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder participatory process of engagement where all stakeholders at local, national, regional and global levels and of all sizes can take ownership and be involved in the promotion and implementation of the Joint Programme's objective and areas of action.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the world's population continues to grow, the increasing demand for food places unprecedented pressure on natural resources, which is exacerbated by some unsustainable forms of consumption and farming systems. It is estimated that by 2050, a global population of 9.7 billion will demand 70 percent more food than that consumed today.¹ Whereas the crucial role of biodiversity – the extraordinary variety of life at genetic, species and ecosystem levels – in food security and nutrition and in adapting agriculture to the effects of climate change is increasingly recognised, biodiversity for food and agriculture – the subset of biodiversity that contributes in one way or another to agriculture and food production – is declining globally at unprecedented rates due to unsustainable production practices; lack of interest in and neglect of diverse crops and varieties and their related traditional knowledge; climate change and land-use changes; and pressure on value chains, thereby threatening future agricultural production, food security, and overall ecological integrity.

In the last century, parts of the world's food crop diversity disappeared forever, which reduces coping strategies and resources needed to grow more resistant, resilient, productive, and nutritious crops. The loss of diversity depletes the very resources that are the foundation of our ability to achieve food security, improve nutrition and adapt to ongoing global environmental changes.

2. RATIONALE

2.1 The call for sustainable, resistant and resilient seed, food and nutrition systems

There is global consensus that food systems, which refer to the constellation of activities involved in producing, processing, transporting and consuming food, need to be transformed to nourish people with more nutritious foods while protecting and preserving the environment. The benefits of a more diverse diet are widely recognized. Dietary diversity, founded on diverse farming systems and growing nutrient-dense foods, delivers better nutrition and greater health, with additional benefits for human productivity and potential contributions to increasing livelihoods.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognize that the challenges of biodiversity loss, food and nutrition insecurity, and climate change are interconnected and multi-dimensional. To address these challenges, food production requires sustainable food systems that are based on sustainable seed and agricultural systems.² As a concept introduced in 2014 by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security of the FAO, 'sustainable food systems' are defined as "a food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised".³

In December 2022, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, with its four goals and 23 action-oriented targets, was adopted within the ambit of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Target 10 aims to ensure that areas under agriculture, among other sectors, are managed sustainably, in particular through the sustainable use of biodiversity, to contribute to the resilience and long-term efficiency and productivity of production systems and to food security.

2.2 The contribution of agrobiodiversity and plant genetic resources to sustainable, resistant and resilient seed, food and nutrition systems

Agricultural biodiversity, which includes all components of biological diversity that constitute the agricultural ecosystem, contributes to many aspects of a sustainable food production system by

¹ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO. 2018. *The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2018. Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition*. FAO, Rome.

² FAO. 2019. *The state of the world's biodiversity for food and agriculture*. J. Bélanger & D. Pilling (eds.). Rome. www.fao.org/3/CA3129EN/CA3129EN.pdf

³ HLPE (High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security of the FAO) (2014) *Food Losses and Waste in the Context of Sustainable Food Systems* (FAO, Rome).

providing a set of resources that help “meet current food needs while maintaining healthy ecosystems that can also provide food for generations to come, with minimal negative impact to the environment”.⁴ Within biodiversity, plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), defined as any genetic material of plant origin of actual or potential value for food and agriculture, underpin sustainable farming systems that deliver diverse crops to all end users, notably smallholder farmers, in sufficient quantity, quality and diversity through well-functioning seed systems, and produce sufficient, diverse, and nutritious foods in a sustainable way while providing options for climate change mitigation and adaptation. In turn, the use of plant biodiversity for food and nutrition building upon the agroecological knowledge of local and indigenous communities and farmers, embodied in the development and use of specific varieties, species and landscape patterns, together with the knowledge of breeders and scientists, contributes to the conservation of crop diversity, including crop wild relatives and wild edible species, thereby making them available for future climate scenarios and today’s nutrient needs. However, many potential benefits of agricultural biodiversity to sustainable food systems and adaptation of agriculture to the effects of climate change are often not realized because of the lack of information, knowledge and understanding of its value, poor conservation systems, or restrictive policies.⁵

Improved availability, accessibility, affordability and utilisation of PGRFA are thus critical to achieving food security and better diets and adapting agriculture to the effects of climate change. The links among conservation, use, production and consumption are fundamental to sustainable, resistant and resilient seed, food and nutrition systems in order to ensure food diversity and security, achieve healthy diets, provide options for mitigating and adapting to climate change, and improve livelihoods. Bringing together seed, food and nutrition systems, and the conservation and use of agricultural biodiversity, including PGRFA, is key to tackle the challenges of biodiversity loss, food and nutrition insecurity, climate change and other emerging challenges.

2.3. Existing relevant initiatives and added value of the Joint Programme

{To be further developed for ACSU-8}

3. MAINSTREAMING PLANT BIODIVERSITY INTO FOOD AND NUTRITION SYSTEMS

3.1 General objective of the Joint Programme

The proposed Joint Programme aims to respond to the call for a transformation of contemporary food systems according to national contexts, priorities and specificities so that they become more sustainable, resistant and resilient. Its general objective is to mainstream plant genetic diversity into seed, food and nutrition systems while strengthening agricultural systems’ resistance and resilience to climate change and other emerging challenges.

3.2 Expected outcomes of the Joint Programme

By focusing on the policy and institutional issues that are currently inhibiting the integration of plans, policies, practices and activities on the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic diversity into food and nutrition systems, the proposed Joint Programme seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

⁴ Story M, Hamm M, Wallinga D (2009) Food systems and public health: linkages to achieve healthier diets and healthier communities. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* 4(3-4):219–224.

⁵ Bioversity International, 2017. *Mainstreaming Agrobiodiversity in Sustainable Food Systems: Scientific Foundations for an Agrobiodiversity Index*. Bioversity International, Rome, Italy.

- (i) Enhanced knowledge at all levels and across all relevant sectors on the value of plant genetic diversity to nutrition, food security and climate change mitigation and adaptation, in order to inform and support policymaking based on up-to-date data and information to promote healthy diets and build sustainable seed, food and nutrition systems;
- (ii) Strengthened capacities to develop actions for the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA and to implement sound, enabling and mutually-supportive policy frameworks that support the integration of plant genetic diversity in sustainable seed, food and nutrition systems for diverse, healthier and more sustainable consumption patterns;
- (iii) Wider and strengthened cooperation among relevant public, private and civil actors at local, national, regional, and global levels in the planning and implementation of relevant policies, strategies and programmes aimed at promoting the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural plant biodiversity to build sustainable seed, food and nutrition systems and adapt agriculture to the effects of climate change;
- (iv) Increased public awareness of the importance of conserving and using plant genetic diversity including the role of varieties and cultivars of plants, as well as wild, neglected and underutilized species to build sustainable seed, food and nutrition systems and adapt agriculture to the effects of climate change;
- (v) Higher uptake and improved distribution and rationalization of funds available, including funding for agriculture and rural development, food security, nutrition, biodiversity, regional policy and climate change to implement the proposed Joint Programme.

In working towards sustainable agricultural and food production, the proposed Joint Programme will help achieve multiple SDGs, especially SDGs 2, 12 and 15. It will also contribute to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, especially Targets 4, 10, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21 and 22 aimed at reducing threats to biodiversity; meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing; increasing awareness; and adopting tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming.

3.3 Areas of action of the Joint Programme

The proposed Joint Programme is action- and results-oriented. It includes five mutually supportive and interdependent areas of action to mainstream the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic diversity into breeding, seed, food and nutrition systems:

- (i) Supporting knowledge and information exchange on actions directly related to Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty;
- (ii) Supporting the implementation of enabling policies and legal measures according to national contexts, priorities and specificities;
- (iii) Strengthening multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder cooperation for the development of projects, actions and activities related to the Implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty;
- (iv) Raising and strengthening public awareness of the importance of plant biodiversity for sustainable breeding, seed, food and nutrition systems and for climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- (v) Building capacities for developing actions directly related to the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty.

The suggested areas of action respond to the policy and institutional needs and priorities identified in regional and global assessments, including:

- the *Background study on the bottlenecks and challenges to the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty* presented at the Ninth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty in 2022;⁶
- The *Voluntary Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Policies, Programmes and National and Regional Plans of Action on Nutrition*, endorsed by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) in 2015;
- The *Framework for Action on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*, endorsed by the CGRFA in October 2021 and adopted by the 168th Session of the FAO Council in December 2021;
- the *Third Report on the State of the World's PGRFA* once published, and other reports of relevance to plant genetic diversity and sustainable food and nutrition systems.

3.4 Levels of action of the Joint Programme

The areas of action of the Joint Programme can be promoted and implemented at the local, national, regional and global levels in a coordinated, inclusive and integrated manner. Actors should be encouraged to foster synergies and linkages across these different levels of action, with a view to maximising the opportunities derived from the agreed actions and delivering broad impacts that contribute to the objective of the Joint Programme.

4. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

{To be further developed for ACSU-8}

The Joint Programme will be carried out following an iterative, dynamic, multi-sectoral and participatory multi-stakeholder partnership approach at local, national, regional and global levels and of all sizes can take ownership and be involved in the promotion and implementation of the Joint Programme.

4.1 Implementation arrangement

The Secretariat of the International Treaty will facilitate and coordinate the Joint Programme.

4.2 Collaborating agencies

The initial partners and collaborating agencies, which have also expressed their willingness, in principle, to collaborate include:

- CGIAR - Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT
- CIHEAM - Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari
- SCBD - Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
- UNDP - United Nations Development Programme
- UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and other relevant units of FAO

4.3 Partners and collaborators

In order to ensure effectiveness and efficiency, the Joint Programme will be inclusive of partners and collaborators whose work is relevant to PGRFA and who recognize the fundamental importance of crop genetic diversity and sustainable use of plant genetic diversity to build

⁶ FAO, International Treaty on PGRFA, 2022. *Background Study on the Bottlenecks and Challenges to the Implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty* (IT/GB-9/22/12/Inf.2).

sustainable seed, food and nutrition systems and strengthen agricultural systems' resistance and resilience to climate change and other emerging challenges:

Global partners: These are organizations beyond the UN System that play an active role at the global level in promoting agrobiodiversity to build sustainable seed, food and nutrition systems and to mitigate and adapt to climate change and who provide long-term sustainable funding.

Main partners: Many actors on the ground play a fundamental role in the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, in promoting healthy diets and sustainable food systems and in strengthening agricultural systems' resistance and resilience to climate change – such as national governments, local governments, civil society organisations, smallholder farmers, farmers' groups, the private sector, the seed sector, breeders, nutritionists, staff working in protected areas, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and their networks. Actors can actively provide advice, develop, support and implement activities aimed at improving seed, food and nutrition systems while mitigating and adapting to climate change through the sustainable use of plant genetic diversity.

Supporting partners: Considering the complexity of the many challenges faced by agriculture and food systems that calls for interventions that transcend disciplinary, sectorial, and institutional boundaries, the implementation of the Joint Programme requires the active support of scientists, researchers, universities, research institutes, implementers and facilitators in these fields. Supporting Partners will range from research institutes and universities to advocacy groups that can support the implementation of activities with a specific geographic or thematic focus within agrobiodiversity and food systems.

Funding partners: Funding Partners are entities or organizations that provide financial contributions either directly or indirectly to the implementation of the Joint Programme. All interested stakeholders can become a donor to the Joint Programme. In addition, partners may undertake joint resource mobilization to carry out relevant activities, as necessary and appropriate.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

{TO BE FURTHER DEVELOPED FOR ACSU-8}

6. MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR MAINSTREAMING PLANT BIODIVERSITY INTO FOOD AND NUTRITION SYSTEMS

The implementation of the Joint Programme requires diversified, sufficient, and stable financial resources from both private and public funding to be available and used in an efficient and rational fashion. In cooperation with relevant international organizations in line with Article 7 of the International Treaty, the Joint Programme will support the identification of private and public sources of funding for in situ conservation, including on farm and in the wild, and sustainable use of plant genetic diversity and their integration into sustainable seed, food and nutrition systems, as well as for the definition of areas or projects that could be developed at the local, regional and global levels.

7. DURATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Joint Programme is proposed to cover an initial period of six years (2024-2029).

The Joint Programme will be reviewed on a regular basis in close collaboration with collaborators and partners and build on their respective programmes, projects, partnerships and experiences. The areas of action and activities will be reassessed as new developments emerge and progress is made in the implementation of the Joint Programme. To support this process, activities to support the sharing of experiences and the dissemination of lessons learned and results achieved by different partners and interested stakeholders on the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic diversity will be organized on a regular basis.

The Joint Programme will be reviewed three years from its commencement, expected to be in 2026, with regular progress reports provided at each session of the Governing Body.