



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



The International Treaty
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 14 of the Provisional Agenda

EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Rome, Italy, 11 – 16 November 2019

Report from FAO on its Contribution to the Implementation of the International Treaty

Executive Summary

In 2001, the FAO Conference adopted the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food Agriculture, which came into force in 2004. For the 15 years since its entry-into-force, FAO has been hosting the Secretariat and providing financial, administrative and technical support to the implementation of the International Treaty. This document presents a brief report from FAO on its most recent contributions to the implementation of the International Treaty

Guidance Sought

The Governing Body is invited to take note of this report and provide any guidance it considers appropriate in regard to the contribution of FAO to the implementation of the International Treaty.

*This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page;
an FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener
communications. Other documents can be consulted at <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/meetings/meetings-detail/en/c/1111365/>*



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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The development and implementation of normative and standard-setting instruments are at the core of FAO's work, and a more focused relationship between its normative mandates and operational activities is essential in delivering on its Strategic Objectives and biennial Programmes of Work. It was in this context that the FAO Conference, in 2001, adopted the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food Agriculture (International Treaty), which came into force in 2004. FAO considers the International Treaty one of its major achievements.¹

2. The International Treaty is considered vital to the continued availability of plant genetic resources that countries need to safeguard global food security and nutrition. Since its adoption and entry into force, FAO has been hosting the Secretariat and providing financial, administrative and technical support to the implementation of the International Treaty.

3. In this regard, the Bureau of the Eighth Session of the Governing Body agreed to include an agenda item on FAO's contribution to the implementation of the International Treaty and requested the Secretary to invite FAO to prepare the corresponding document. The document selects a number of areas where FAO's contribution has been strategic to International Treaty's global achievements and also presents how FAO's programmes and projects integrate or support the implementation of the International Treaty at the national level.

II. FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

4. FAO has funding commitments for various conventions, treaty bodies and intergovernmental arrangements it hosts. The resources for these commitments are budgeted and ring-fenced as Corporate Technical Activities under the relevant Strategic Objectives. Based on the approved FAO Programme of Work and Budget for the 2018-2019 biennium, USD 2 million was allocated to International Treaty for the 2018-2019 biennium. FAO's contribution forms the Core Administrative Budget (CAB) of the International Treaty together with voluntary contributions from its Contracting Parties.

5. All the trust funds and financial accounts of the International Treaty are governed and managed by the FAO according to its financial regulations and rules. FAO's Finance Division provides policy and operational support for all financial, accounting and reporting functions, ensuring that processing and recording of receipts and disbursements of funds are made judiciously, accurately and timely. FAO also prepares and issues certified financial statements of all accounts of the International Treaty, that is submitted to the Governing Body as well as donors.

6. FAO also provides human resources and administrative support to the Secretariat of the International Treaty, in accordance with the relevant FAO Staff Rules and Manual Sections.

III. SUPPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

7. The Director-General of FAO serves as the Depository for the International Treaty. Since the adoption of the International Treaty, FAO has continued providing support to the Secretary through the network of FAO's Offices, to promote the expansion of membership in the International Treaty. In the past biennium, the Secretary has collaborated with FAO's Country Offices in Mongolia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, for the organization of a multi-country workshop to promote accession by countries in the Central Asia region.

8. Similar collaborations have been developed with FAO's Liaison Office in the Russian Federation and the European Union. In 2019, FAO's Country Offices in China, Somalia, South Africa,

¹ The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food Agriculture is presented as one of the top 10 achievements of FAO. See: Chapter 3: "Greatest Achievements in the History of FAO"; *Challenges and Opportunities in a Global World*.

Thailand as well as FAO's Liaison Office in Brussels and the Subregional Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council States and Yemen collaborated with the Secretary of the International Treaty on the membership campaign.

9. Other FAO's units have also supported the efforts of the Secretary on various follow-up actions to the membership campaign. The Secretary has also sought the assistance of various offices for the preparation and dispatch of customized letters from the FAO Director-General to the higher authorities of a number of countries that showed interest.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Policy Support

10. The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture is central to FAO's mission, and has been on the agenda of the Organization since 1948. In recent years, the importance of biodiversity mainstreaming has been gaining greater attention among FAO Members. FAO is currently finalizing its Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors, and such strategy, together with biodiversity activities more generally, have received significant attention by various Governing Bodies of FAO, including the Committee on Agriculture, the Programme Committee and the FAO Conference. At its Forty-first Session, the FAO Conference, mandated the FAO Council to consider and adopt the Strategy before 2020.²

11. The implementation of the Strategy provides opportunities for the International Treaty, including for FAO to enhance the capacity of Members to mainstream the International Treaty in the national policies and to enhance the recognition of the important role that plant genetic resources play for food and nutrition security. In the implementation of the Strategy, FAO intends to work in partnership with Members, relevant international organizations and instruments, including the Governing Body of the International Treaty.

12. FAO is currently undertaking a number of regional dialogues on mainstreaming biodiversity across the agricultural sectors. Such dialogues and other related capacity building activities on biodiversity mainstreaming also offer opportunities for enhancing implementation of the International Treaty at the regional and national levels.

Monitoring of the SDGs global indicators

13. The Office of Chief Statistician (OCS) oversees the development and validation of the SDG indicators under FAO custodianship. OCS is responsible for ensuring consistency and guaranteeing the quality of FAO's statistical data and provides FAO's views on the global indicators monitoring. FAO is a contributing agency for the indicator 15.6.1 of Target 15.6, which is directly relevant to the International Treaty and whose custodian agency is the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. OCS has been providing technical guidance to the Secretariat of the International Treaty on the compilation of necessary information and data on this indicator.

Communication and Outreach

14. FAO provides a unique platform for International Treaty communication and outreach, including to raise awareness within the donor community and provide more visibility to its activities, plans and programmes.

² The 163rd Session of the FAO Council will be held from 2 to 6 December 2019. The document *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors* is available at:
<http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/council/cl163/documents/en/>

The document introduces the International Treaty in the section of main activities on biodiversity carried out by FAO.

15. FAO decided to designate this Eighth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty and the celebration of the 15th anniversary of entry into force, as a Corporate Event.

16. The Benefit-sharing Fund and the International Treaty were extensively featured in the FAO publication, *Results Partnerships Impact 2018*,³ which captures selected results achieved by FAO, worldwide, in 2017. It reflects key impacts obtained thanks to the collaboration with a wide range of partners including Member Nations, a range of resource partners, civil society, the private sector, academia, research centres and cooperatives.

17. International Treaty events and communication products are distributed and disseminated through FAO's channels and the Secretariat receives support and advice from relevant FAO units when designing communication products.

Preparatory processes for the Governing Body

18. FAO has also provided support to organize a number of processes in preparation for the Eighth Session of the Governing Body. Regional preparatory meetings were organized in Asia, Africa, Near East and Latin America to prepare for this Eighth Session of the Governing Body. The meetings provided an opportunity for National Focal Points to receive updates on progress made during the intersessional period and discuss regional positions in preparation for the Session. A number of FAO Country Offices supported these preparatory meetings, namely those in Argentina, India, and Rwanda.

19. The Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System held a number of informal consultations during the biennium that were supported by the decentralized offices of Ethiopia and Costa Rica.

V. IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

FAO's Technical Support to the Implementation of the Supporting Components of the International Treaty

20. *The Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Second GPA) is a supporting component of the International Treaty, as provided under Article 14. Implementation of the Second GPA is an essential contribution to achieving the objectives of the International Treaty. FAO regularly reports on its activities in support of the implementation of the Second GPA to the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which regularly reviews and provides guidance to FAO on this area. Detailed information on FAO's technical support provided to Member Countries is provided in document, IT-GB/8/19/15.1/Inf.1, *Report from the Secretariat of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, including on FAO activities related to the supporting components of the International Treaty*.

Capacity-building for International Treaty implementation: regional workshops

21. During the 2018–19 biennium, the Secretariat of the International Treaty has conducted a number of regional workshops on implementation. The realization of these workshops was only made possible with the support of FAO's decentralized offices and other partners.

22. During 2018, the FAO Country Offices in Ethiopia, Guatemala and India supported the organization of three regional workshops on implementation and reporting under the Compliance Procedures. FAO Country Offices in South Africa and Tunisia have also supported the organizations of workshops for the implementation of the Global Information System.

³ <http://www.fao.org/3/I9057EN/i9057en.pdf>

23. Workshops on conservation and sustainable use and Farmers' Rights were organized with the support of the offices in the Philippines, Uruguay and Senegal.

Operational and Technical support to the Benefit-sharing Fund

High-level donor field visits

24. The Secretariat of the International Treaty has strengthened the collaboration with FAO Country Offices with regard to the operations of Benefit-sharing Fund. FAO Country Offices, in coordination with the Secretariat and donors (e.g. Government of Norway, European Union), supported the organization and delivery of high-level donor field missions to selected project sites in Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The main purpose of these missions was to meet with relevant project stakeholders, including beneficiaries, enable a direct dialogue with partners and donor agencies and see, first-hand, the practical impacts of projects in farmers' fields. The Country Offices helped plan the programmes of the field missions, which included visibility and awareness-raising opportunities, media engagement, press conferences, video interviews and informal discussions with policymakers, community leaders, researchers.

25. The support from FAO Country Offices has also been vital to reaching a wide range of relevant stakeholders in the countries and drawing attention to the initiatives sponsored by the Benefit-sharing Fund.

26. In relation to the newly-approved projects under the Fourth Call for Proposals, all FAO's country and regional offices have received official communications from the Secretary of the International Treaty introducing the approved projects, so as to establish relevant synergies and complementarities with other ongoing programmes and projects. As FAO is executing many projects on agrobiodiversity, climate change and food security that directly contribute to the implementation of the International Treaty, developing and maintaining partnerships within FAO is key to achieving the necessary synergies and building complementarities.

Upscaling successful project interventions and building synergies with other FAO projects and activities

27. Considering the importance of mainstreaming the gender dimension in agricultural projects, FAO's experts on gender participated in a workshop that the Secretariat of the International Treaty organized to improve the addressing of gender aspects in project proposals. At the workshop, the experts presented how gender aspects have been integrated into national adaptation plans. In addition, the FAO Office of Corporate Communication trained participants on the development of communication and visibility strategies.

28. FAO supported the Benefit-sharing Fund partners of the third and fourth project cycles in the procurement of certain agricultural inputs, research and high-tech equipment, especially in relation to the provision of genomic data and phenotypic analysis from advanced laboratories.

VI. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

29. The Governing Body is invited to take note of this report and provide any guidance it considers appropriate in regard to the contribution of FAO to the implementation of the International Treaty.