



Food and Agriculture
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The International Treaty
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 9.1 of the Provisional Agenda

EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Rome, Italy, 11 – 16 November 2019

The Benefit-sharing Fund: 2018-2019 Report

Executive Summary

This information document contains an overview of the developments relevant to the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF) at both policy and operational levels, since the last Session of the Governing Body. It provides an update on the financial situation in the BSF and the steps undertaken by the Secretariat to enable the approval and operationalization of the Fourth Call for Proposals (BSF-4). In addition, it gives an overview of the on-going projects that have been approved for funding in the Third Call for Proposals (BSF-3) including the reporting and monitoring of results and impact.

Finally, it describes efforts to enhance collaboration and synergies between the BSF funded projects and other relevant mechanisms of the Treaty.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since its establishment, the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF) has constantly evolved under the overall guidance of the Governing Body. A number of policy developments relating to the implementation of the Funding Strategy have taken place since the last session of the Governing Body that directly affect the operations of the BSF. These developments are detailed in the working document IT/GB-8/19/9.1.
2. This information document reports on the execution of the BSF project cycles since the last Session of the Governing Body (November 2017). It therefore covers the last months of the 2016-2017 biennium as well as most of the present biennium, i.e. 2018-2019. During this period, the projects approved for funding as part of the Third Call for Proposals (BSF-3) have been fully operational and relevant results have been achieved.
3. During this intersessional period, the Secretariat, under the guidance of the Bureau, launched the Fourth Call for Proposals (BSF-4) and approved a portfolio of 20 new projects to be executed globally. As suggested by the Co-Chairs of the *Ad-hoc* Advisory Committee on the Funding Strategy, the BSF-4 has been developed in accordance with the programmatic approach of the revised Funding Strategy of the Treaty.
4. The sections below contain information on the voluntary contributions to the BSF, including the first user based payments to the Fund. It also provides an update on the relevant processes and activities related to the BSF, including data and information on the main impact and results achieved in the implementation of the BSF-3 and gives an overview of the status of implementation of the BSF-4, including details on the activities undertaken at each step of the project cycle.

II. FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BENEFIT-SHARING FUND

5. Financial Resources under the Benefit-sharing Fund are used strategically to play a catalytic role in international cooperation in the area of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).
6. The following Contracting Parties contributed to the BSF during the biennium: Canada, European Commission, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.
7. The first user-based income to the Benefit-sharing Fund arising from the use of the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA) of the Multilateral System on Access and Benefit-sharing was received in June 2018. Nunhems Netherlands by then a subsidiary company of Bayer (now a subsidiary of BASF), paid USD 119,083 to the International Treaty's Benefit-sharing Fund. This amount was equal to 0.77 percent of seed sales of ten varieties of vegetables commercialized using germplasm made available by the Centre for Genetic Resources of the Netherlands (CGN) and the Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK) of Germany through the SMTA.¹
8. During the biennium, the French seed sector, *Groupement National Interprofessionnel des Semences et Plantes* (GNIS), made regular annual voluntary contributions to the Benefit-sharing Fund. GNIS is the first private sector institution that has decided to make contributions on an annual basis to the Benefit-sharing Fund.
9. A summary of financial position of the Benefit-sharing Fund at 31 July 2019 is given in Appendix 7 to document IT/GB-8/19/9.1/Inf.1 Rev.1, *Financial Report of the Work Programme and Budget for the 2018-2019 Biennium*. Details of contributions to the Benefit-sharing Fund since its

¹ www.fao.org/plant-treaty/news/news-detail/en/c/1143273/

establishment, as well as income accrued from the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing, are provided in *Appendix 2* to this document.

THIRD ROUND OF PROJECT CYCLE

10. The scope of projects funded in BSF-3 remains similar to those supported in the previous calls, and focuses on helping local communities cope with global challenges through the management, conservation and study of PGRFA. While Window 2 projects support activities that ensure that local crop varieties of importance for food security are preserved, reintroduced, developed and maintained in farmers' fields through on-farm conservation and management of plant genetic resources primarily at the farm and community levels, Window 3 projects aim to enable the exchange of value added information about PGRFA through scientific research and study and identify specific traits that tolerate climate induced stresses. Both Window 2 and Window 3 projects sponsor activities that are mutually reinforcing and complementary and that ultimately contribute to increased resilience, adaptability, environmental sustainability and improved livelihoods.

11. The 22 projects approved for funding² in the BSF-3 involve a total of 44 developing countries across Africa, Asia, South West Pacific, Near East, GRULAC and Europe. The main purpose of the sponsored portfolio is to build resilience in the face of climate change and food insecurity through the sustainable use, conservation, development and study of genetic diversity for the benefit of vulnerable communities.

Beneficiaries reached

12. The primary beneficiaries of BSF-3 are vulnerable communities in the target countries struggling to build resilience and food security through the management of PGRFA. A total of 81,540 individuals – 85 percent of whom are farmers (69,601), and 15 percent of whom are researchers, breeders, gene bank curators, governmental officials, students and lecturers - have been directly involved and benefited from initiatives funded as part of BSF-3.

13. Farmers have benefited from increased availability to germplasm and access to lost and underutilized crops that have been reintroduced in farmers' fields. Considering that the majority of the new varieties developed as part of BSF-3 are undergoing a process of official certification and registration within the public authorities, farmers reported to benefit from better market opportunities, including income generation and availability of highly nutritious food. Practical training on on-farm conservation and management techniques, seeds certification, participatory plant breeding as well as crop diversification systems are all benefits that our partners have reported on. Farmers have been involved in on-farm trials and field schools and trained in seed multiplication, participatory breeding and licensing seeds as farmers' varieties. In addition, a series of seed fairs have been organized where farmers had the opportunity to showcase the varieties they conserve, exchange seeds and information on good cultivation and management techniques.

² While the approved portfolio for BSF-3 consists of 22 projects, there have been some legal and bureaucratic constraints to finalize the contracts for two projects, namely W2A-PR-200-Cuba and W3A-PR-08-Costa Rica that are not operational at the moment.

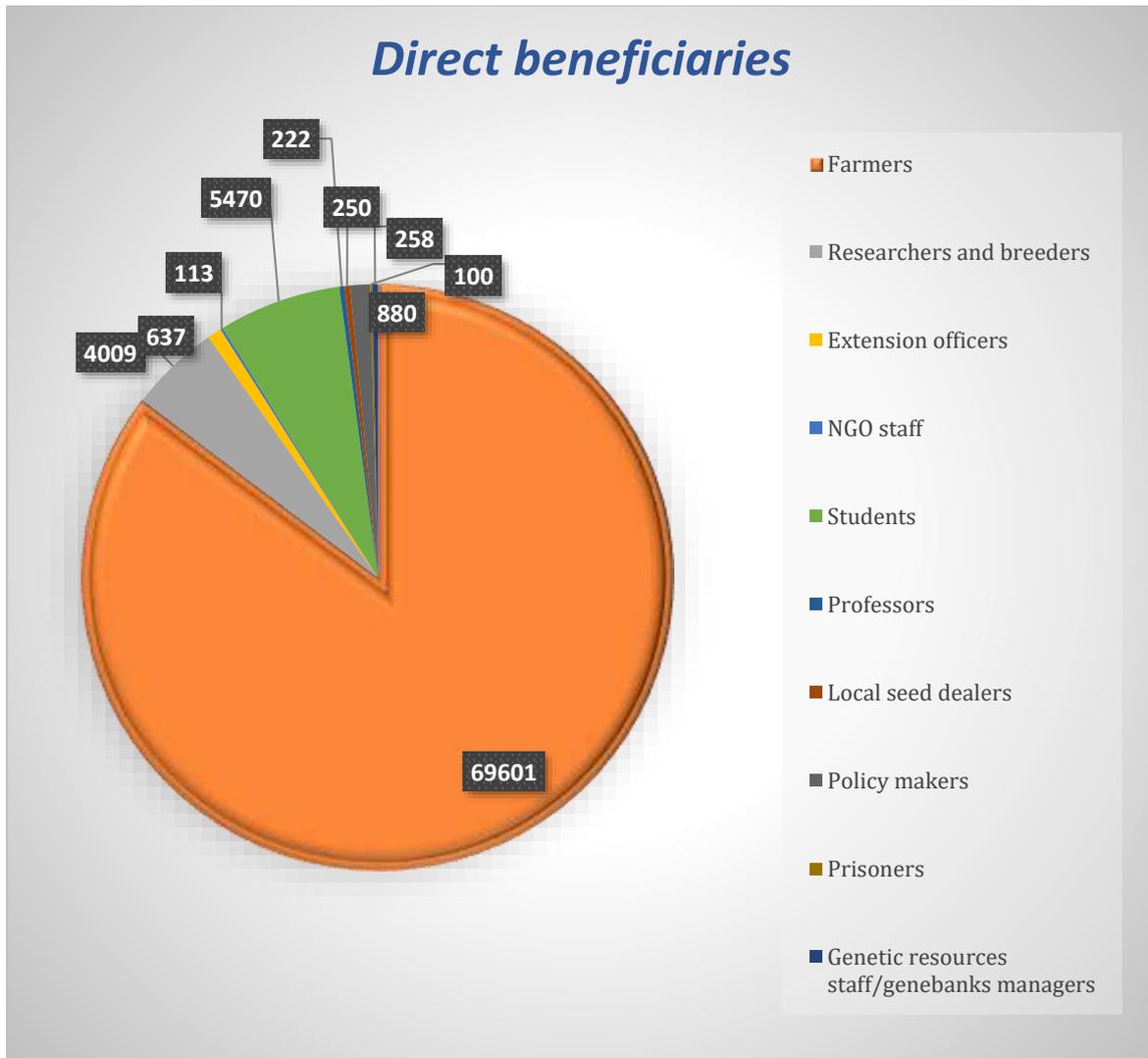


Figure1: BSF-3 direct beneficiaries reached

The project “Sustainable use of the agrobiodiversity of maize, beans and underutilized species in indigenous communities in Mesoamerica” is working with more than 50 producers’ organizations and 13,000 families across Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. The project aims to increase the diversity of underutilized and promising varieties for adaptation. Asociación de Organizaciones de los Cuchumatanes (ASOCUCH), the lead institution of the project, has already established, together with partners in the target countries, more than 38 community seed banks storing 3,500 accessions of maize, beans and underutilized species that are serving 3,000 farmers (25 percent of whom are women). Most importantly, the project has organized a series of seed fairs with the participation of more than 7,000 farmers, who were empowered to showcase the richness of the agrobiodiversity they manage and conserve.



Seed fairs are platforms for awareness raising amongst farmers, researchers, extension agents and district planners with regard to the agrobiodiversity that is conserved and managed by farmers. The fairs link farmers from different agro-ecological zones, regions and countries, facilitate exchange of knowledge of good agronomic practices, and enable access to seeds at affordable prices. Through contacts made at such fairs, crop research development initiatives can better focus on supporting farmers and incorporate their knowledge, preferences and seed varieties in research and development programmes.

14. Projects funded as part of BSF-3 have so far reached a wide range of stakeholders:

- 4,000 researchers and breeders are benefiting from involvement in participatory breeding programmes; integrated packages of information and technologies about climate ready germplasm, including genomic sequence data - phenotypic, accession-level, etc. - - needed for plant breeding. Gene banks and research institutions are benefiting from the adoption of better technologies and knowledge associated with adapted genetic material.
- In addition to integrating agrobiodiversity into research and development, BSF-3 projects provide research data and experience for students on a broad range of agrobiodiversity topics. More than 5,000 students, both MSc and PhD, are gaining knowledge of participatory methods of plant breeding and community-based management systems of PGRFA and are benefiting from practical application of genomics, phenotyping and use of molecular techniques. They constitute a future generation of PGRFA scientists and breeders to support the Treaty implementation;
- More than 1,300 government officials, policy-makers, extension agents and gene bank staff are involved in project activities, mainly in training and capacity building, in order to create baselines for future decision-making and policies. As part of this portfolio, gene banks are actively engaged in providing material for analysis and evaluation, including molecular characterization. Gene banks are the main sources for reintroduction of lost material in farmers' fields.

15. BSF-3 partners have reported that by the end of portfolio implementation, approximately 350,000 people will indirectly benefit from the scaling up and out the results of this project portfolio.



Photo 1: Experimental Chamber at Machachi, USFQ, Ecuador

Women in Benefit-sharing Fund projects: major scientists and conservationists

16. The BSF, through its projects, emphasizes the role of women as major custodians of agrobiodiversity and specifically encourages the involvement of women in project implementation.

17. As part of the BSF-3 implementation, a total of 23,610 women (29 percent of all participants) have been directly involved and benefited from the implementation of BSF-3 activities, and up to 60,000 are expected to benefit indirectly from the outcomes of the portfolio implementation. The Independent Evaluation of the second project cycle of the Benefit-sharing Fund requested that reporting on future BSF project cycles puts more emphasis on mainstreaming gender dimension and ensure a gender differentiated reporting on results.

18. Women's roles in the conservation and improvement of PGRFA, their practices, and intimate knowledge of household needs have been taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of BSF projects. Women's understanding of the importance of crop varieties, in terms of nutritional value, and source of income or medicine amongst others, make them important decision-makers of what needs to be conserved and used. Throughout the BSF-3 projects, women farmers had the opportunity to work with government breeders, researchers, agricultural extension officers and project staff in conducting Participatory Variety Selection, Participatory Varietal Enhancement and Participatory Plant Breeding. They are taking a lead role in setting breeding objectives by choosing the preferred traits of target crops to be incorporated in improvement processes, like for example, resistances, early maturity, high yields, nutrition and taste traits.

19. In addition, new and improved varieties are tested in farmers' fields and women's observations and indications are recorded by scientists and breeders who benefit from a clear and reliable indication on community preferences and needs. Women are considered seed experts and selectors due to their field observation practices and experience.



Photo 2: Secretary of Shingirirai FFS showing panicle size of pearl millet crop during a field day, Shingirirai, Zimbabwe

20. In addition, women manage the community seed banks established as part of the BSF projects and are members of the respective management committees. This gives them decision-making power with regard to what has to be conserved and preserved at the community level.

Empowering women through Farmer Field Schools

Farmer Field Schools (FFS) are an efficient tool to promote participation, first hand learning, social inclusion and ownership. BSF-3 has contributed to the establishment of more than 160 FFS across Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia with 70 percent of all participants being women. FFS act as learning and sharing platform for women to exchange ideas and knowledge on selection and cultivation of small grains such as sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet, cowpeas, ground nuts and bambara nuts. These crops are often tended to primarily by women, who reported that as a result of their participation in FFS, they have gained knowledge on good agricultural practices and have been able to increase yields and marketable surplus, as well as proactively taken part in the decision-making processes and thus gained self-confidence.

21. Women are also the main actors and leaders in Window 3 projects that deal with research and development. Besides taking a lead role in undertaking agricultural research and analysis, women have a prominent role in managing the consortia of institutions that implement the projects. More than 60 percent of all the students involved in BSF-3 projects are women.

22. One of the researchers engaged in the implementation of the project “Addressing the challenges of climate change for sustainable food security in Turkey, Iran and Morocco” in Turkey,

Emel Ozer, received an award from the Turkish government for her merits and achievements in research and development.³

Women: main custodians of traditional knowledge and good practices

Women are important holders of knowledge on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. As part of the project “Improving food security by enhancing wheat production and its resilience to climate change” implemented in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, a Gender



Group has been established under the leadership of the Faculty of Anthropology, University of Ankara. The group has gathered information on how farmers’ women contribute to the maintenance of on-farm wheat diversity, as well as documented their knowledge and preferences regarding the cultivation, use and conservation of wheat. The study involved 26 villages and 140 women and the results have subsequently been incorporated into the project implementation. The study has shown that women are the main knowledge holders and decision-makers at household levels. Their knowledge is highly sophisticated and is transmitted from generation to generation and plays a fundamental role in the conservation, use and sharing of wheat diversity in Turkey.

Crops addressed

23. All the projects sponsored by the BSF-3 are targeting crops of a high importance for food security at local and global levels, with adaptability to biotic and abiotic stresses, and of relevance for income generation.

24. The portfolio addresses 29 crops, mainly Annex 1⁴ crops of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA). While ten projects are focusing on a single

³ Turkey recognizes scientist for work on wheat and climate change data: <http://news.trust.org/item/20170406064304-k9yoq>

⁴ Annex I of the International Treaty currently comprises 64 food and forage crops, chosen by the international community according to their importance for global food security, as well as countries’ interdependence with regard to these crops. One of the main outcomes of the ninth meeting of the *Ad hoc* Open-ended Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System (Working Group) held in Rome from 17 to 21 June 2019, is the Amendment of Annex 1 of the Treaty in order to expand its coverage to all plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

crop, the other ten operational projects deal with mixtures/package of crops and address up to ten crops in one project.⁵

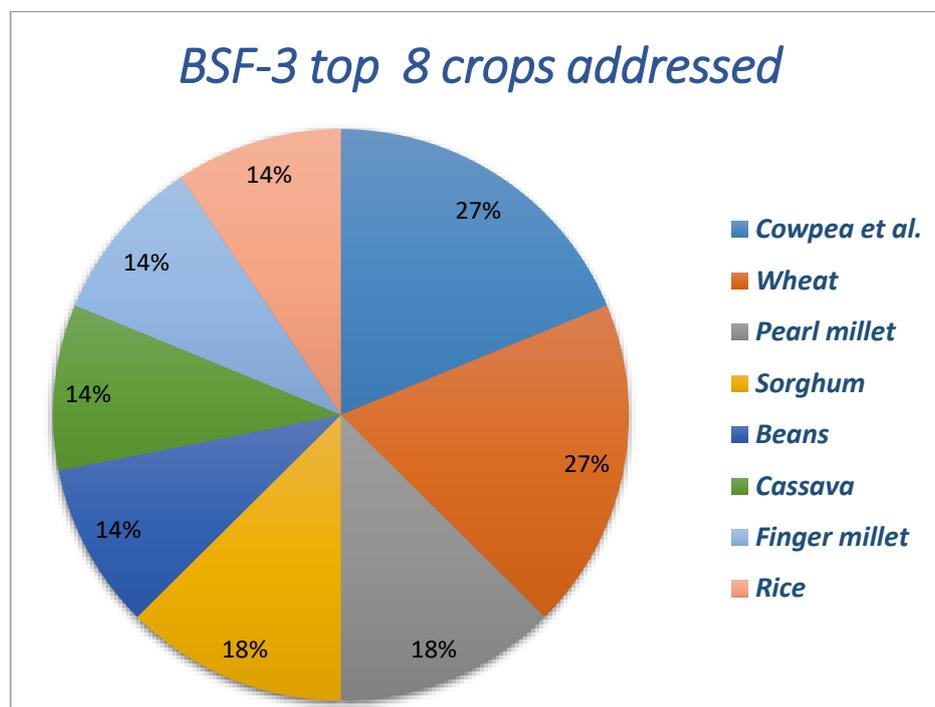


Figure 2: BSF-3 top 8 crops addressed⁶

25. Partners from Window 2 projects have diversified the range of crops and thereby strengthened community resilience in the face of climate shocks, market uncertainties and food insecurity. The plant genetic resources addressed by projects in this Window are local varieties with resistances to biotic and abiotic stresses, of high nutritional and market value, which form a useful reservoir for research and breeding purposes.

26. Diversification of productive systems and the availability of a genetically diverse portfolio is expected to improve productivity, build resilience for farming systems, improve livelihoods, and promote environmental sustainability.

27. The material that is currently managed by BSF-3 partners has been accessed from genebanks through the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA) of the ITPGRFA. Conversely, as stipulated in the LoAs with lead institutions, the germplasm within the scope of the projects belonging to crops listed in Annex I of the ITPGRFA, has been made available more widely according to the terms and conditions of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing, that is, under the SMTA.

28. In this way, participating countries will share the benefits arising from the BSF projects by making available genetic material and related information resulting from the projects to stakeholders in other countries, as well as providing value added information on PGRFA for adaptation breeding.

⁵ While the approved portfolio for CFP-3 consists of 22 projects, there have been some legal constraints to finalize the contracts for two projects, namely W2A-PR-200-Cuba and W3A-PR-08-Costa Rica that are not operational at the moment.

⁶ The figure comprises also the multiple crop projects, meaning that the same project

PGRFA accessed, used and developed as part of BSF-3 implementation

29. A total of 2,750 accessions of wheat, barley, cassava, sweet potato, squash, corn and bean have been reintroduced from national, regional and international gene banks via MLS. Farmers have also reported to benefit from increased availability and distribution of disease free, clean planting material as a result of identification and incorporation of useful candidate genes in breeding programmes.
30. According to the projects' preliminary plans of inclusion of material in the Multilateral System (MLS), after conclusion of BSF-3 projects, plant genetic resources of over 7,000 plant genetic resources varieties will be made available under the MLS. Additionally, information resulting from projects, including phenotypic and genetic information, will be made available to the global community through the Treaty's Global Information System (GLIS).
31. BSF-3 partners are working with traditional cultivars and landraces, local varieties, pre-breeding materials, crop wild relatives, and in some cases underutilized crops. This material has either been collected during project implementation or has been accessed from national gene banks, breeding institutes and international research institutions through the Treaty Standard Material Transfer Agreement. More than 2,037 plant genetic resources of potato, wheat, maize, cassava and taro have been collected by BSF-3 partners. All material has been characterized, evaluated and genotyped, using both traditional and scientific methods.
32. Farmers and scientists have been involved in characterization, evaluation and participatory selection of plant varieties to harness the potentials of PGRFA and to develop new, resistant crop varieties with superior agronomic traits. Almost 7,300 plant genetic resources of wheat, barley, cassava, sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet, pigeon pea, ground nuts and apples have been evaluated in farmers' fields or at research stations. These activities have empowered local farming communities to identify genetic diversity in their fields, start the development of new varieties, select and breed high yielding varieties and make adapted planting material available at the community level. From the evaluated material, 633 plant genetic resources have been identified as particularly useful and are being incorporated in breeding programs.
33. Almost 90 percent of ongoing projects have reported to be undertaking activities for crop improvement with the aim of incorporating identified beneficial traits in the development of climate smart varieties.



Photo 3: Ms Ilima Catarina Pascual Francisco, involved in participatory plant selection and evaluation showing the quality of maize obtained as result of evaluation and that contributed to raise yields by 30 percent (Huehuetenango, Guatemala)

34. To date, partners have succeeded in developing 160 new varieties of potato, rice, cassava, cowpea and pearl millet. These new varieties present resistances to biotic and abiotic stresses and meet farmers' preferences in terms of taste, nutrition, yields, economic and cultural values.



Photo 4: Farmers' fields cultivating adapted varieties of beans, Chiantla Huehuetenango, Guatemala

35. More than 4,390 plant genetic resources of wheat, barley, rice and potato have been subject to molecular characterization in research institutes to identify traits of potential value for adaptation to biotic and abiotic stresses.

Cowpea [*Vigna unguiculata* (L.) Walp] is an affordable source of protein-rich food for over 70 percent of Ghana's population. The production of this crop is challenged by the *Striga gesnerioides* that has led to 80 percent -100 percent yield losses. This, coupled with drought and disease in major production regions of northern Ghana, have severely affected the food security of farming communities.

As part of the project "Sustainable utilization of cowpea genetic resources for enhanced food security and poverty alleviation in the dry savannah northern regions of Ghana", the University of Cape Coast has analysed 30 cowpea genotypes to detect useful traits through the use of molecular markers and in collaboration with the University of Virginia (United States of America). Seven new varieties have been identified as resistant to *Striga*, rust, viruses, root rot and drought. Efforts are currently underway to have the varieties officially approved and released as certified seeds by the Ministry of Agriculture. It is expected that the income of cowpea producers will increase by 25-60 percent as part of the cultivation of these new varieties with positive spillover effects also on nutrition.

Cowpea genotype	Variety (Local name)	Meaning	Language
UCC-473	Yor-Kpitio	Short cowpea	Dangbe
UCC-366	Aduapa	Good cowpea	Twi
UCC-Early	UCC-Early	Early maturing cowpea	English
IT10K-819-4	Aluba-Kpole	Cowpea-large grains	Nzema
UCC-32	Asare-Moya	Well done Asare	Kusal
UCC-241	Saka-Buro	<i>Striga</i> -killer	Sissala
UCC-328	Kum-Zoya	Hunger has run away	Dagbani



Photo 5: New, disease resistant and high yielding cowpea varieties developed by University of Cape Coast, Ghana

BSF partnership approach

36. The BSF facilitates increased cooperation among a wide range of PGRFA stakeholders within and across Contracting Parties and is an instrument to generate collective benefits. BSF-3 projects have established partnerships between more than 270 farmers' organizations, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), universities, extension services, institutes for biodiversity conservation, national research institutions, gene banks, governments and the private sector. Given the integrated nature of agrobiodiversity, the involvement and collaborative engagement of a multitude of stakeholders at national, regional and international levels is critical to make BSF interventions meaningful and sustainable over time.

37. Recognizing that farmers' knowledge and management of local varieties is an integral part of sustainable conservation efforts, BSF-3 projects have forged partnerships between farmers and their organizations, NGOs and national and regional research institutions. 12 NGOs have been involved in project activities so far and worked with more than 130 farmers' and producers' organizations.

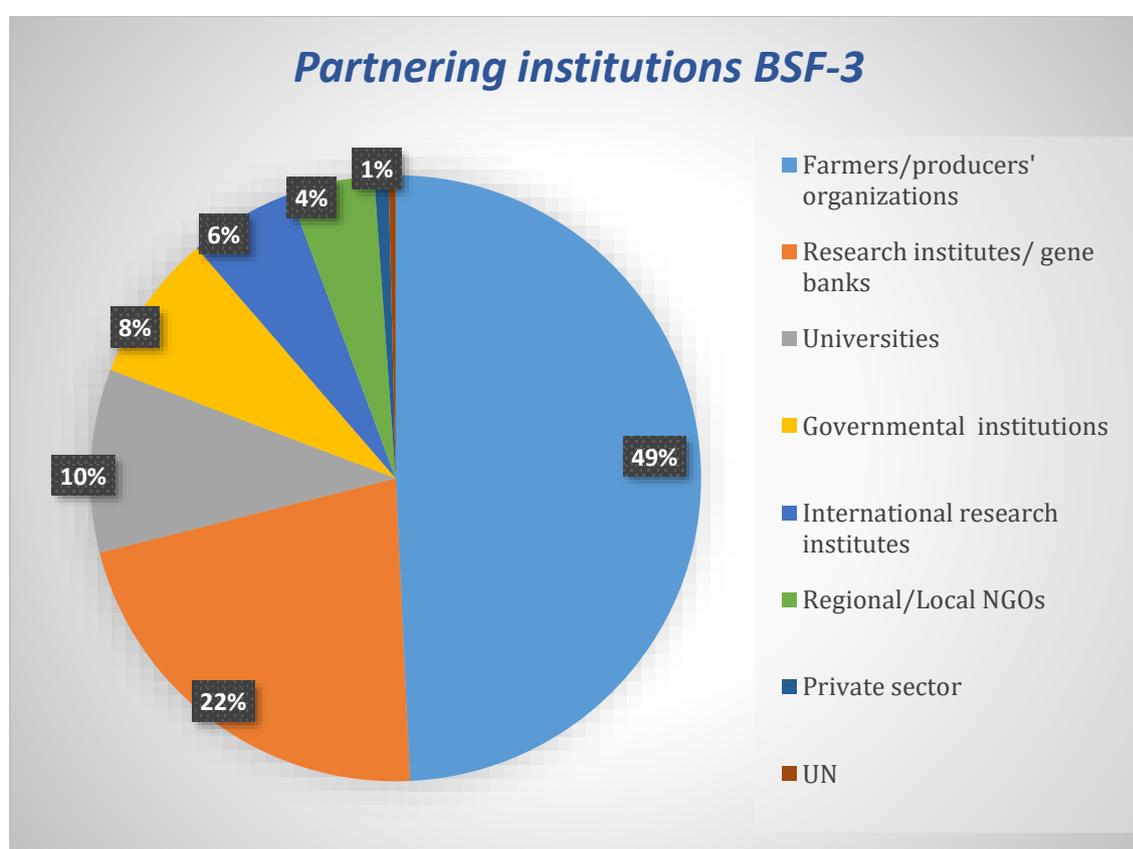


Figure 3: Partnering institutions in BSF -3

38. This collaborative and dynamic approach to project activities increases ownership of results with farmers exercising their rights and articulating their needs and actively using and sharing the benefits arising from their seeds.

39. A total of 60 national research institutes, 15 international research institutes and 26 universities have been working with farmers and their organizations to identify crop varieties of potential interest, select material with useful traits in an inclusive and participatory manner, and further improve and conserve high performing seeds in gene banks. Universities function as knowledge centres and platforms for sharing and exchanging know-how and technical expertise, as well as providing research facilities. In BSF-3 projects, both South-South and North-South

collaboration between local universities and universities from Australia, Japan, Norway, Spain and the U.S. have been established. The role of these universities was linked to research expertise, especially genomic technologies associated with target crops, climate change modelling and diagnosis, as well as the establishment of PGRFA information systems.

Inclusiveness and participation for success

The project executed in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda – “Promoting open source seed systems for beans, forage legumes, millet and sorghum for climate change adaptation in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda” - has put in place an inclusive, participatory and bottom up approach where primary beneficiaries of the project, local farmers, implement the project in close collaboration with a wide range of institutions. The Genetic Resources Research Institute (GeRRI), under the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Act of 2013 has established field teams at project sites in the three countries that are ensuring the smooth implementation of field activities, including training, crowdsourcing and field trials. The transboundary collaboration between the national genebanks in the three countries has led to the exchange of more than 400 accessions of beans, finger millet and sorghum using standard material transfer agreements (SMTAs) and the Treaty Multilateral System (MLS) of Access and Benefit Sharing.

The established field teams are the primary source of new varieties and advanced breeding lines for Participatory Varietal Selection and Participatory Plant Breeding of target crops. HIVOS, an international NGO, is responsible for policy dimensions of the project, as well as capacity building for the creation of value chains. The national gene banks act as sources of genetic diversity for re-introduction of lost varieties in farmers’ fields; and they are responsible for the development of training modules on seed management and the establishment of community seed banks. Bioversity International, the lead institution of the project, is responsible for the scientific coordination and set up. In addition, the project is working closely with producers' groups, farmers' groups and cooperatives within the communities in which the project has established community seed banks, with the aim of assisting farmers in the registration and certification of their seeds and establish market links. Local governments are involved in each phase of the project and use the expertise of extension workers to provide training for the target groups and motivate communities to actively engage with and participate in the project.

Capacity development for better crop management and value addition

40. Training and capacity building are highly prioritized in all of the BSF-3 projects with special attention paid to the empowerment of local communities to better conserve and manage local diversity, diversify production systems and evaluate and characterize varieties in their fields for further development and improvement. In addition, especially for Window 3 projects, highly specialized and knowledge intensive training in techniques for detection of useful genes for further breeding and research has been delivered.

41. At the time of writing, 50,000 farmers, scientists and breeders, extension agents, governmental officials and students have been involved in training and capacity development through workshops, field days and demonstration plots, laboratory works, remote training, and similar events.



The project “An Integrated Approach to Identify and Characterize Climate Resilient Wheat for the West Asia and North Africa Region” currently executed in Morocco, Egypt, Ethiopia, Jordan and Sudan has contributed to an increase of interest by breeders at the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) in adopting sophisticated research techniques for phenotyping and genotyping.

As a result, the adoption of a molecular breeding approach is facilitating the exact selection of preferred traits at early stages of research and thus accelerates the delivery of improved lines. The young NARS breeders and scientists showed great interest in adopting molecular markers in their national breeding programs. Improved heat and drought tolerant germplasm will find its way into varieties released in the participating countries by the end of the project. The project is also involving a large number of students in specialized training courses and research.

42. Exchange visits, seed fairs, focus group discussions, international conferences and development of rural extension networks are only a few initiatives currently underway for capacity building. More than 200 demonstration plots have been set up and more than 160 Farmer Field Schools have been established as interactive, bottom up, outdoor learning platforms and as a means to showcase climate resilient crops.

Community seed banks- local hubs for diversification, access and benefit sharing

43. Community seed banks are repositories of local genetic diversity and secure improved access to, and availability of, diverse locally adapted crops. They are contributing to the realization of Farmers' Rights, as the Community Seed Banks (CSB) are owned by the communities, and form an inclusive and empowering platform for farmers to exercise their rights, exchange knowledge and seeds and join forces in the conservation of agrobiodiversity.

44. To date, more than 60 CSBs have been established in Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Guatemala and a further 16 are still to be built as part of BSF-3. These CSBs have been set up in response to local need for continuous access and exchange of diverse seeds and to support conservation of adaptive and traditional varieties.

45. The majority of these CSBs are linked to national gene banks, both helping restore lost, local varieties by reintroducing material from national *ex-situ* collections, and providing back-up of community collections. Furthermore, national gene banks often provide technical facilities and training for the conservation and management of community collections.

Building synergies to enhance impact

46. All activities funded by the BSF are projected to be consistent with national strategies and plans related to biodiversity and poverty alleviation in order to enhance impact and scale results up and out. 80 percent of the ongoing projects have already established relevant linkages with existing national or international programmes on biodiversity, food security, and poverty alleviation in the targeted countries and an additional 20 percent declared that synergies will be established throughout different phases of project implementation.

47. In addition, the Secretariat, through its BSF projects, has established linkages with other areas of the Treaty. Partners from BSF projects have been invited to attend relevant technical meetings of the Treaty, such as the Scientific Advisory Committee on the Global Information System.

48. Stakeholders of the Treaty have been invited to share their experiences, best practices and concrete examples of activities and initiatives for the implementation of Farmers' Rights, to be compiled in the Farmers' Rights inventory which is being produced by the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Farmers' Rights. It is notable that more than 10 percent of the total submissions received so far by the Secretariat have been submitted by BSF partners.

49. By the end of BSF-3 in December 2019, more than 7,000 plant genetic resources resulting from BSF-3 implementation will be included in the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing and the related information will be made available in the Global Information System

Donor Field Missions

50. In 2018, the Secretariat, in coordination with the Government of Norway organized field visits to BSF project sites in northern Malawi district of Mzuzu.⁷ The visits took place from 3 to 8 March 2018 and involved the Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Food of Norway, national focal points, staff from the Norwegian Embassy in Malawi, BSF partners and beneficiaries, local press and FAO-Malawi staff.

51. The main purpose of this visit was for the Norwegian Deputy Minister and other Norwegian delegates to meet with relevant BSF-3 stakeholders, including beneficiaries, meet partners, donor agencies and to see practical impacts in farmers' fields. The program of the mission was developed to include visibility and awareness-raising opportunities, including media engagement, photo opportunities, video interviews, and discussions with policy-makers, community leaders, farmers, researchers and others.

“All countries benefit from the exchange of material and information made available through the Multilateral System of the International Treaty, so it is only right that we give back by contributing to the Benefit-sharing Fund and help farmers conserve agricultural biodiversity”
Deputy Minister for Food and Agriculture of Norway, Hanne Maren Blåfjeldall Blåfjeldal.

⁷ Press release related to the mission to Malawi has been prepared and published on the Treaty web site: <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/news/news-detail/en/c/1105368/> and <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/news/news-detail/en/c/1107421/>



Photo 6: Deputy Minister for Food and Agriculture of Norway, Ms Hanne Maren Blåffjeldall Blåffjeldal and the Secretary of the International Treaty, Mr Kent Nnadozie, meeting with BSF beneficiaries in Mzuzu, Malawi.

52. At the request of the European Union, the Secretariat organized a mission to BSF project sites in Kenya and Tanzania. The mission built on the main conclusions and recommendations of the *ROM* for the European Union for the BSF-3 portfolio. The main objective of the mission was to get acquainted with the overall intervention logic of BSF-3 portfolio, including meeting project beneficiaries and relevant Treaty stakeholders, gain first-hand experience of the main benefits and changes in the livelihoods of the targeted communities, and assess the relevance of BSF sponsored projects for building resilience and food security for rural communities. Raising awareness and visibility of the BSF-3 portfolio as well as communicating results were also objectives of the mission⁸.

“The European Union is pleased to partner with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to help farmers cope with the impact of climate change”, Juan Manuel Velasco, Policy Officer, DEVCO, EU.

⁸ A press release has been prepared by the Secretariat and published on the Treaty web site at the following link: <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/news/news-detail/en/c/1136222/>



Photo 7: Mr Juan Manuel Velasco, Policy Officer, DEVCO, EU and the Secretary of the International Treaty, Mr Kent Nnadozie, together with BSF stakeholders, meeting project beneficiaries in Nyando, Kenya.

53. Additional field missions to project sites in Zimbabwe and Guatemala have been undertaken by the Treaty staff as part of broader Treaty missions and attendance of international meetings.

54. BSF initiatives contribute and further enhance the implementation of different Treaty mechanisms at field level. BSF puts forward platforms for building mutual support between different Treaty provisions and processes.

III. FOURTH ROUND OF THE PROJECT CYCLE

Approval of project portfolio

55. The Governing Body, at its Seventh Session, decided to launch the Fourth Call for Proposals of the Benefit-sharing Fund. The BSF-4 opened on 15 December 2017 with a deadline to submit pre-proposals set at 1 March 2018. As in the context of previous calls, Africa, GRULAC and Near East regions submitted the most pre-proposals for both single country and multi-country projects. For more information on the main steps undertaken by the Secretariat at each step of the BSF-4 project cycle, see Appendix 1 to this document.

56. In July 2018, the Bureau of the Eighth Session of the Governing Body approved the portfolio of 20 new projects to be funded in the BSF-4 based on the *Methodology for selection of projects by the Bureau* prepared by the Secretariat and taking into account the recommendations made by the Independent Panel of Experts.

57. The Secretariat thereafter communicated to the successful applicants, including FAO Country Offices and FAO Regional Offices, informing them of the success of their applications.⁹

⁹ The list of approved projects is available at: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/faoweb/plant-treaty/cfp4/CFP_4_projects_invited_en.pdf

The main innovations related to the Fourth Call for Proposals

58. The projects funded under BSF-4 mark a transition towards a programmatic approach to the implementation of BSF projects and a more strategic, sustainable and diversified implementation of the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty.

59. Considering the high number of pre-proposals that the Secretariat receives at each Call for Proposals and the limited amount of funding available, for this BSF-4 the Secretariat has streamlined the process of development of full project proposals by inviting only the successful applicants to work together to further develop, strengthen and improve their full project proposals. This drastically reduced the transactions costs for the BSF-4 applicants, the Panel of Experts and the Secretariat.

60. While many of the high-quality pre-proposals received for the BSF-4 have not been funded, the Bureau of the Eighth Session of the Governing Body issued 25 certificates of excellence to those very innovative and high quality project proposals in order to help applicants to mobilize funding from other donors. These proposals constitute a unique body of ideas for strengthening Treaty implementation and ensure agrobiodiversity conservation.

61. In addition, for this BSF-4, the Secretariat has organized, as part of the Helpdesk function, a global workshop for all the successful partners who worked together under a programmatic approach to refine their full project proposals, establish linkages between selected projects and across regions. The aim was to work in an inclusive, collaborative and participatory manner towards a collective understanding of the BSF-4 programme in order to maximize impacts beyond individual projects and contribute to the scaling up and sustainability of funded interventions¹⁰. The workshop set the scene for further consultations with communities, governments and other PGRFA stakeholders. It provided an excellent opportunity to share views, ideas, and experiences among a wide range of partners¹¹. The Secretariat has incorporated lessons learnt and concepts that emerged during the workshop in its work plan for 2019-2020.

62. As part of the follow-up, the Secretariat had a series of meetings with FAO colleagues and also made progress in the establishment of an on-line BSF Community of Practice for communication and knowledge sharing. The aim of the platform is to bring together, in its first phase, all the BSF partners as a community, to build synergies and complementarities between BSF funded projects, enable the exchange of knowledge and lessons learnt and share innovative solutions to common challenges. The first topic of discussion will be launched immediately after the Eighth Session of the Governing Body.

Overview of the Fourth Call for Proposals

63. The projects funded under BSF-4 mark a transition towards a programmatic approach to the implementation of BSF projects and a more strategic, sustainable and diversified implementation of the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty.

66. The main beneficiaries of BSF-4 projects are farmers. All projects have been designed to demonstrate the benefits arising for farmers, with a special emphasis on support to on-farm/*in situ* management and a better flow of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) from *ex-situ* collections to farmers and back.

¹⁰ The Report of the workshop is available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA2859EN/ca2859en.pdf>

¹¹ Interviews of project participants were conducted. A press release in relation to the Helpdesk Workshop is available in 4 languages at: <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/news/news-detail/en/c/1162875/>

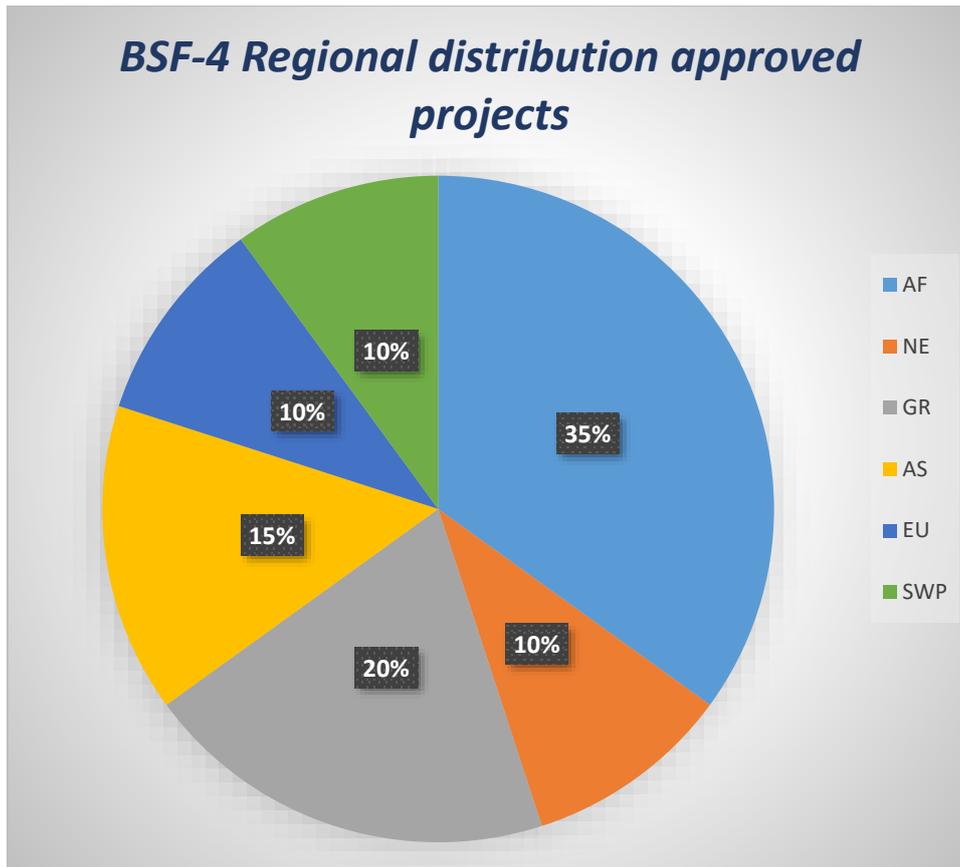


Figure 4: Regional distribution of the projects approved for funding in the BSF-4

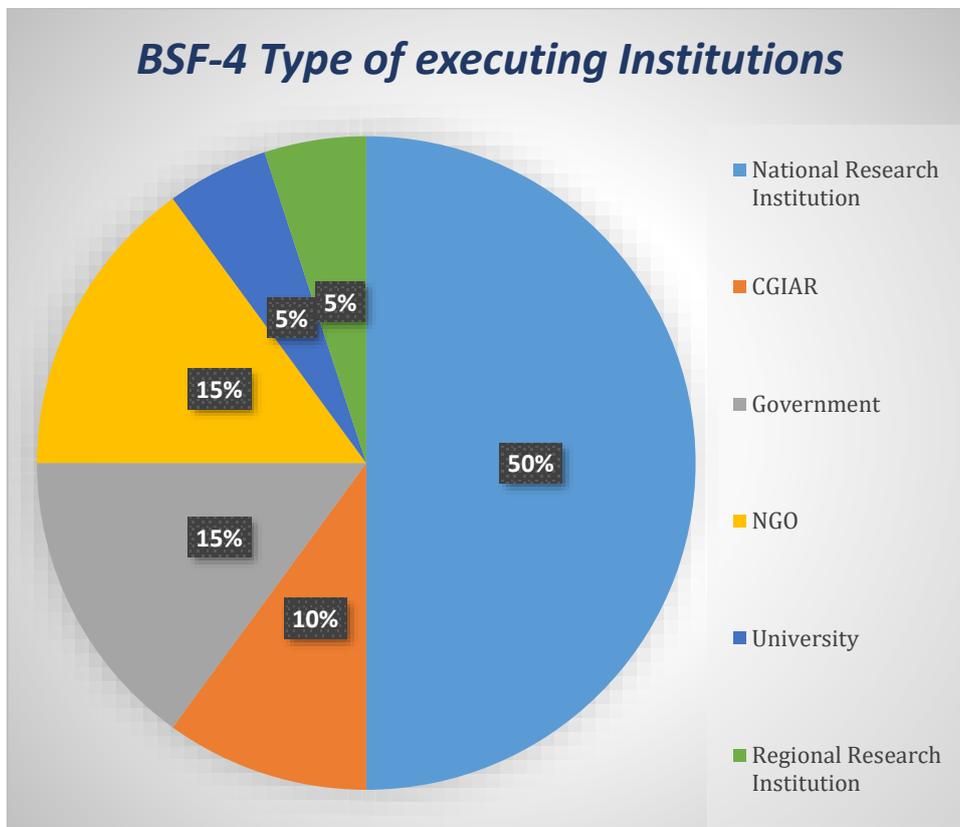


Figure 5: Type of the executing institutions of the BSF-4 projects

67. The Secretary of the International Treaty has sent communication to all FAO country offices where BSF projects have been approved, including to the regional offices, notifying FAO staff of the imminent start of project activities and calling for enhanced collaboration, synergies and mutually enforcing initiatives in the field of agrobiodiversity. Feedback from the country and regional offices has been positive and further efforts to enhance collaboration, avoid duplication of initiatives and build synergies in the field of plant genetic resources will be strengthened.

68. The Secretariat has prepared and circulated the Letters of Agreement (LoAs) to all BSF-4 executing institutions for information and comments. In addition, partners have been asked to submit additional documentation to enable the finalization, clearance and quality assurance of the LoAs. In some cases, the clearance and quality assurance of LoA documentation can be a long, cumbersome process which requires extensive interaction, both with executing institutions and with different FAO Units. At the time of this document preparation, the contracts for 75 percent of approved projects have been finalized and first tranches disbursed. Subsequent payments will be contingent upon the approval of *Implementation Reports*, which will include reporting on results and expenditures.

69. Selected national and international partners will work together within a broader programme to, *inter alia*, ensure farmers adapt to climate change through use of crop biodiversity and incorporate crop biodiversity in national planning for climate change and other development areas, including by providing training and capacity building.

70. Through its projects, the BSF-4 is supporting *in situ* and on-farm management and creating linkages with broader *ex-situ* conservation efforts. The BSF-4 will enable small-scale farmers, scientists and breeders to tap into the Treaty's global gene pool of millions of genetic materials to undertake research and develop new crop varieties. Together, these activities are meant to impact the conservation of the agrobiodiversity, contribute to building resilient agricultural production systems and improve the food security of small-scale farmers.

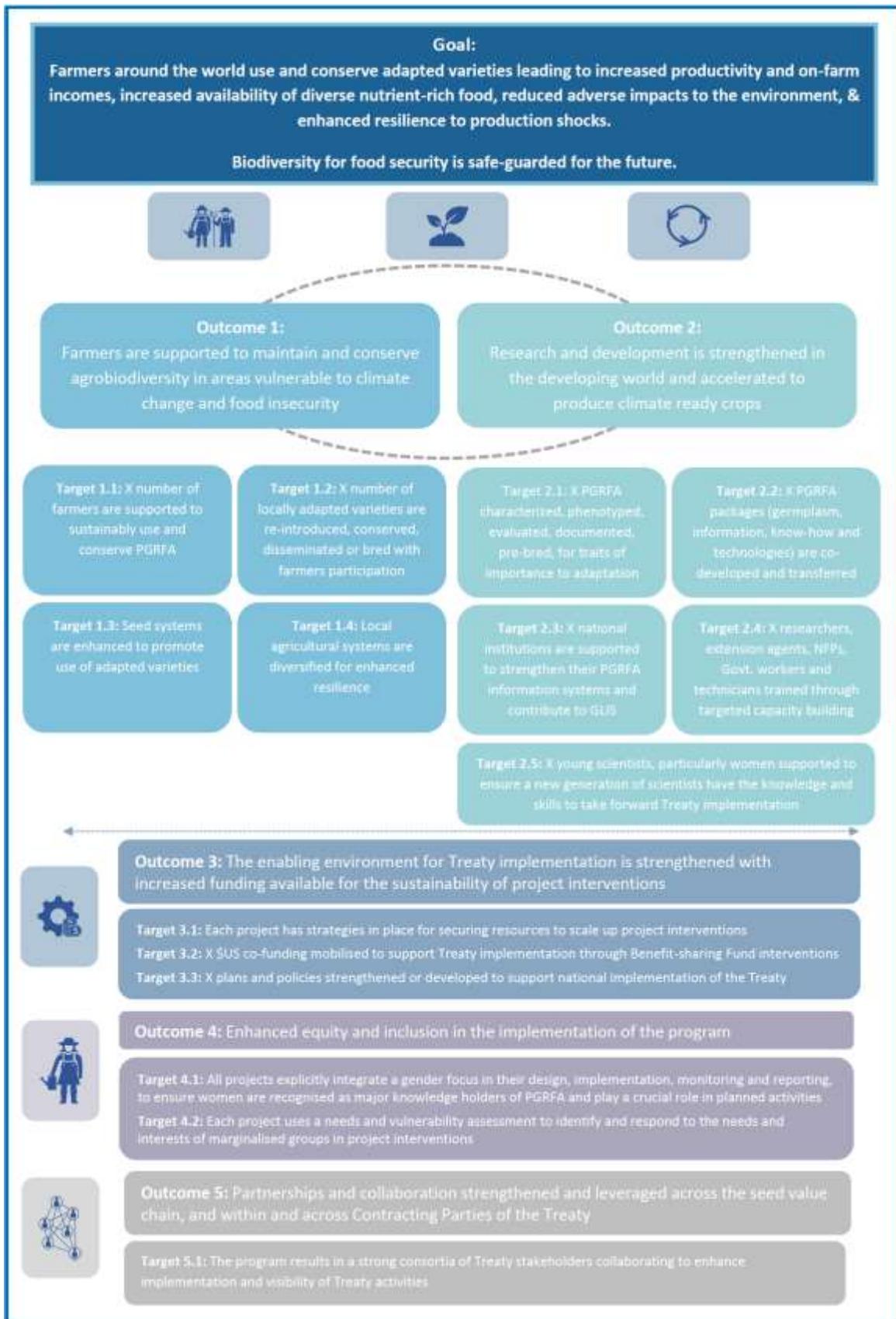
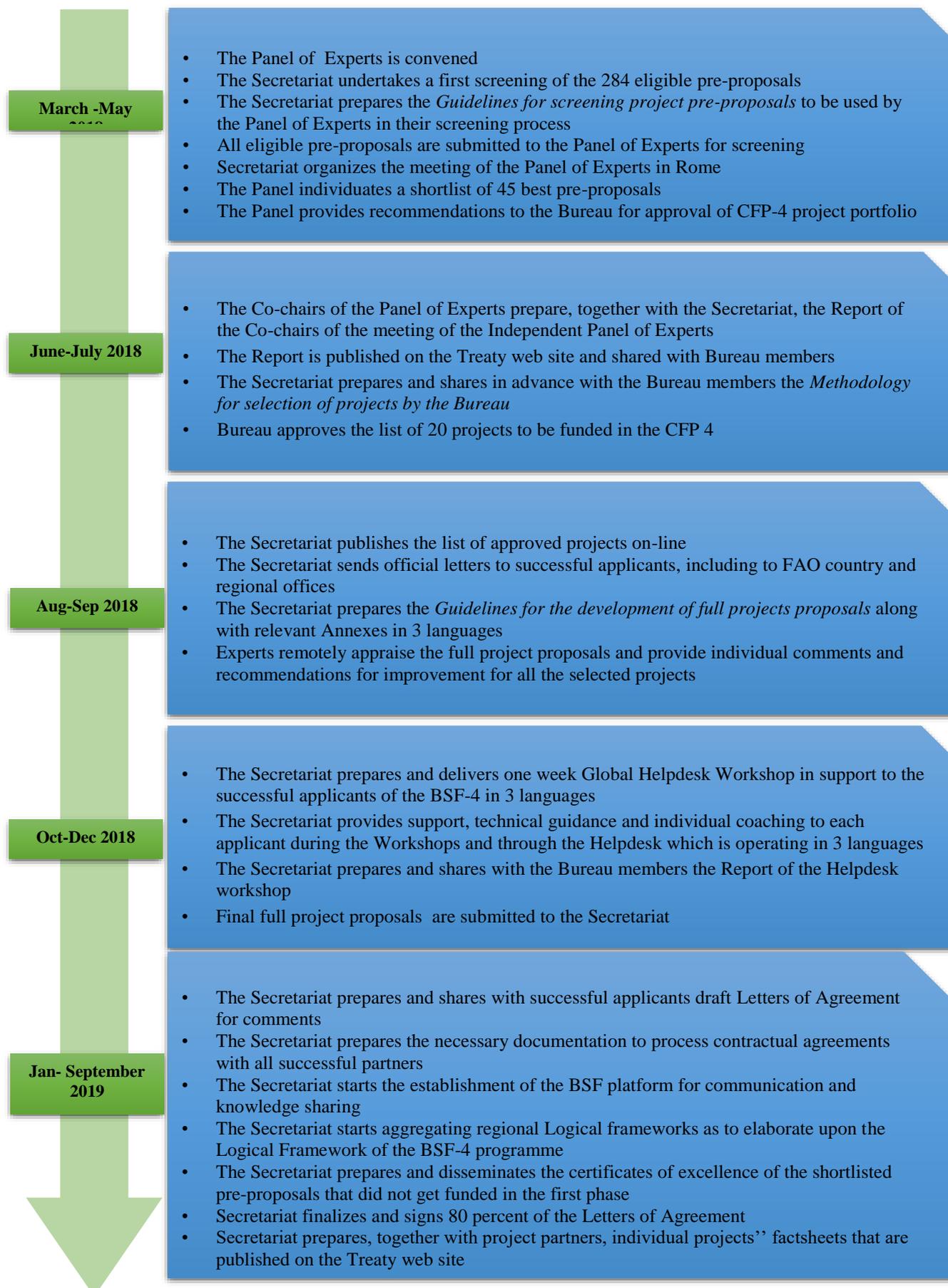


Figure 6: BSF4 Programme Outcome Matrix

Appendix 1: Main Steps of the Fourth Call for Proposals of the Benefit-sharing Fund since the last Bureau meeting



Appendix 2: Details of receipts to the Benefit-sharing Fund

	%	USD
MLS USER-BASED INCOME		
Canadian seed company		3,187
Nunhems Netherlands B.V.		153,835
Sub-total	0.54%	157,022
VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS		
a. Contracting Parties		
Australia		1,588,815
Austria		24,176
Germany		587,896
European Commission		5,495,777
Indonesia		100,000
Ireland		659,800
Italy		7,451,900
Norway		6,855,727
Spain		2,348,935
Sweden		244,903
Switzerland		135,974
Sub-total	87.56%	25,493,904
b. Seed Private Sector		
European Seed Association		339,751
Groupement National Interprofessionel des Semences		412,018
International Seed Federation		49,280
Sub-total	2.75%	801,049
c. Other Private Sector including Food Processing Industries		
Sub-total	0.00%	-
d. International Mechanisms and Funds		
IFAD		1,500,000
Sub-total	5.15%	1,500,000
e. Philanthropic Institutions and others		
Sub-total	0.00%	-
f. Innovative Approaches		
Norwegian initiative: 1.1% of national seed sales		1,156,435
Seed trade licencing platform		6,416
Sub-total	3.99%	1,162,851
GRAND TOTAL	100.00%	29,114,826