



COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

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DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

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Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its Seventeenth Regular Session, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) requested FAO to initiate the development of a new global information system on forest genetic resources, subject to the availability of extra-budgetary resources.¹ It noted that FAO should, while developing the information system on forest genetic resources, avoid duplicating efforts with the existing global information systems on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. It also encouraged FAO to seek synergies with the existing regional information systems on forest genetic resources to avoid increasing countries' reporting burden. The Commission further encouraged FAO to consider ways to strengthen national and regional information systems on forest genetic resources, including by offering technical and financial support.²

2. This document presents the background and planned activities for developing a new global information system on forest genetic resources, for consideration by the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (Working Group).

II. BACKGROUND

3. At its last session, the Commission adopted the outline and timeline for the preparation of *The Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* (Second Report), as well as the guidelines for preparing country reports.³ The country reports are the primary source of data and information for the preparation of the Second Report, and thus also for the development of the new global information system. The data and information provided by the National Focal Points on forest genetic resources in the country reports will be complemented by data and information obtained from other relevant assessments and data providers, as well as from scientific literature.

4. A country report consists of two sections: (i) an online questionnaire gathering data on the management of forest genetic resources, and (ii) a written report providing complementary information.⁴ The questionnaire is based on the targets, indicators and verifiers for forest genetic resources adopted by the Commission at its Sixteenth Regular Session for monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources* (Global Plan of Action).⁵ The targets and indicators were designed to assess the state of relevant policies, mechanisms and institutions, as well as the state of conservation, use and development of forest genetic resources.

5. In 2018, countries reported on the progress made in implementing the Global Plan of Action by completing the questionnaire and FAO prepared the *First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources* (First Implementation Report)⁶, which was based on the progress reports submitted by 44 countries⁷. The same questionnaire is being used to collect data for the preparation of the Second Implementation Report and the Second Report.

6. Countries are expected to report on the genetic resources of trees and other woody plants species that are currently managed and/or used, or that could potentially be used, for forestry (including agroforestry systems). These species can be managed in both natural and planted forests, as well as in other wooded lands not classified as "forests" by the FAO Global Forest Resources

¹ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 79.

² Ibid.

³ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 78.

⁴ CGRFA-17/19/10.3/Inf.1

⁵ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 74; CGRFA-16/17/20, *Appendix C*.

⁶ CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.1

⁷ Armenia, Australia, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Eswatini, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Poland, Sri Lanka, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, United States of America and Vanuatu.

Assessment.⁸ Countries should not report on the genetic resources of trees and other woody plant species that are used as agricultural crops and that are included in their reports on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Domesticated fruit trees and their varieties, or oil palm, for example, are not considered as forest genetic resources in the preparation of the Second Report.

7. As the current online reporting system using the Open Foris platform does not allow countries to generate summaries of the reported data in a user-friendly manner for their own use, it is necessary to transfer the online questionnaire into the new global information system on forest genetic resources. In terms of functionalities, the new information system could therefore be similar to the existing World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS)⁹ and the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS)¹⁰, i.e. providing both an online reporting system for the National Focal Points and a public platform for visualizing and sharing data and information on forest genetic resources.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

8. In response to the request by the Commission, FAO initiated the development of the new global information system on forest genetic resources and the mobilization of extra-budgetary resources for this purpose. In November 2020, the Government of Germany and FAO signed a funding agreement for a three-year project¹¹ with a budget of approximately USD 673 000 to develop the new global information system on forest genetic resources.

9. In parallel with the resource mobilization efforts, FAO gathered lessons learnt from previous efforts to maintain and upgrade WIEWS and DAD-IS, as well as from the ongoing development of a registry of farmed types of aquatic genetic resources. Experiences from the development of a new online platform¹² for the 2020 Global Forest Resources Assessment were also considered.

10. The National Focal Points on forest genetic resources will be the main users of the new information system and they will be invited to provide their inputs and ideas on its development. The National Focal Points in Asia and the Southwest Pacific were briefed on the global project during the virtual regional meetings organized in October and November 2020, respectively. Similarly, the National Focal Points in Africa, Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Near East will also be briefed on this project during the regional meetings that will be held in 2021. Opportunities for briefing the National Focal Points in Europe and North America are also being sought. Following these briefings, FAO will continue consulting the National Focal Points while developing the new information system.

11. To collect more comprehensive inputs from the National Focal Points, FAO will carry out a needs assessment in 2021. It will be carried out through an online survey with the aim of identifying key functionalities of the new information system. Furthermore, the National Focal Points will be given an opportunity to provide additional ideas for the development of the new information system as part of the needs assessment.

12. Taking into account the results of the needs assessment, the designing of the back-end database and the user-interface (Web site) will commence in 2021. A test version is expected to be available by the end of 2021. Once it has been created, FAO will transfer the data and information from the existing online reporting system to the new back-end database.

⁸ FAO 2018. *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020. Terms and Definitions*. Forest Resources Assessment Working Paper 188. Rome. <http://www.fao.org/3/I8661EN/i8661en.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/wiews/en/>

¹⁰ <http://www.fao.org/dad-is/en/>

¹¹ GCP/CLO/384/GER

¹² <https://fra-data.fao.org/>

13. The National Focal Points will have an opportunity to test the new information system before its launch. As part of the global project, FAO will provide the National Focal Points in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East and the Southwest Pacific with training on the documentation of forest genetic resources. For this purpose, FAO will prepare a user manual for the information system in 2022, and a series of regional workshops will be held between late 2022 and early 2023. The feedback provided by the National Focal Points during the testing period will be taken into account when finalizing the information system. It will be then launched online in conjunction with the publication of the Second Report in 2023.

14. While implementing the global project, FAO will collaborate with regional networks on forest genetic resources and relevant international organizations. Many of them have developed various regional and/or global databases related to forest genetic resources, or are in the process of doing so. Such collaboration will not only allow avoidance of duplication of efforts but also strengthen global and regional efforts in increasing access to, and the availability of, information on forest genetic resources.

IV. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

15. The Working Group may wish to take note of the activities reported to develop the new global information system on forest genetic resources, and provide its guidance for this process.

16. Furthermore, the Working Group may wish to recommend that the Commission:

- i. invite countries and their National Focal Points on forest genetic resources to contribute to the development of the new global information system on forest genetic resources, and to continue providing data on forest genetic resources for this purpose; and
- ii. request FAO to continue its efforts in developing the new global information system on forest genetic resources.