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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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PREPARING *THE THIRD REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE*

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2019–2027 of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) foresees the presentation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Third Report) at the Commission's Nineteenth Regular Session.¹
2. In 2019, the Commission requested National Focal Points (NFPs) to report between January and December 2020 on the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second GPA) for the period of July 2014 to December 2019 through the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS). In addition, it invited the NFPs to provide a summative narrative of the progress made (between January 2012 and December 2019) and the remaining gaps and constraints.² The Commission requested FAO to propose thematic background studies, including on the global exchange of germplasm from and to genebanks, to complement the information used for the preparation of the Third Report. It requested FAO to specify the purpose and content of proposed thematic background studies and how the studies would contribute to the Third Report.³
3. This document gives an update of progress made in the preparation of the Third Report, and specifies the purpose and content of the proposed thematic background studies and those parts of the Third Report to which they will contribute (*Appendix I*). It also contains a budget for the completion of the Third Report (*Appendix II*) and discusses, as a follow-up to the Third Report, the review of the Second GPA.

II. BACKGROUND

4. The first report on *The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (First Report) was launched in 1996 on the occasion of the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources.⁴ Over 155 countries contributed to the preparation of the First Report. The findings of this first global assessment of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) triggered the adoption of the first Global Plan of Action on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GPA) by the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources.
5. In 2009, FAO launched *The Second Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Second Report)⁵ that was endorsed by the Commission at its Twelfth Regular Session.⁶ Country reports of 115 countries provided the main source of information for the Second Report. The Second Report highlighted the main changes and developments that had occurred since 1996 and identified the most significant gaps and needs related to the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. In response to the Second Report, the Commission agreed to revise the GPA and, in 2011, approved the Second GPA,⁷ subsequently adopted by the FAO Council on behalf of the FAO Conference.⁸
6. In 2013, the Commission decided that the draft Third Report should be made available at its Eighteenth Regular Session in 2021.⁹ In 2017, at its Sixteenth Regular Session, the Commission

¹ CGRFA-17/19/Report, *Appendix F*, Annex 1.

² CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 69.

³ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 70.

⁴ ITCPR/96/REP.

⁵ FAO. 2010. *The Second Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/i1500e/i1500e00.htm>).

⁶ CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraph 17.

⁷ FAO. 2011. *Second Global Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/i2624e/i2624e00.htm>).

⁸ CL 143/REP, paragraph 43.

⁹ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 101.

revised the timeline for the preparation of the Third Report and postponed its launch to its Nineteenth Session in 2023.¹⁰

III. COUNTRY REPORTING AND OTHER DATA GATHERING PROCESSES

7. In line with the previous global assessments, the Third Report will be based on information provided by countries, complemented by reports from relevant international organizations, and thematic background studies.

8. In line with the approach endorsed by the Commission at its last session, the preparation of the Third Report no longer relies on stand-alone country reports.¹¹ Instead, the Third Report will be based on data gathered during two reporting periods with the first reporting period spanning from January 2012 to June 2014 and the second from July 2014 to December 2019. NFPs reported between January 2015 and December 2017 on the first reporting period and commenced reporting on the second reporting period in January 2020. Reporting was facilitated through an online questionnaire, which was based on the indicators that the Commission had previously agreed on. During the second reporting cycle, in 2020, NFPs complemented the data provided by a report on the progress made in the implementation of the Second GPA between January 2012 and December 2019 and on remaining constraints (“summative narrative”).

9. The guidelines for country reporting include the revised reporting format, as endorsed by the Commission in 2019,¹² and assist countries in completing the summative narratives for each of the 18 priority activities of the Second GPA.

10. The use of the WIEWS Reporting Tool, developed by FAO as an online application available in all FAO official languages, facilitates standardized data reporting by NFPs and national stakeholders, and helps to analyse country data. The WIEWS Reporting Tool enables NFPs to rate progress made in the implementation of the Second GPA and guides them in the elaboration of the summative narrative for each of the 18 priority activities of the Second GPA.

11. A total of 78 countries contributed information on the first reporting period (2012–2014), even though not every country replied to all questions. In 2016, FAO presented an *Assessment of the Implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture 2012–2014*, based on data received from 43 countries, by March 2016.¹³

12. In 2019, FAO invited Member Nations¹⁴ to submit data for the second reporting period through their NFPs by December 2020. On that occasion, NFPs were also given the opportunity to retrospectively report, revise or complement data related to the first reporting period. A reminder was sent in April 2020.¹⁵ More detailed information, including on the online WIEWS Reporting Tool, the user manual,¹⁶ and the guidelines for country reporting, was made available online in all official languages of FAO.¹⁷ Furthermore, a comprehensive list of frequently asked questions (FAQs), including detailed explanations for all questions and indicators, and a glossary, were provided online.

13. In 2020, FAO held online training sessions in English, French and Spanish, with a view to assist NFPs and stakeholders in reporting for the Third Report. The training sessions included brief introductions to the process for the preparation of the Third Report and to the guidelines for country reporting, as well as a detailed introduction to the functionality of the WIEWS Reporting Tool. Over 440 participants from more than 75 countries attended the training sessions; recordings of the training sessions were made available to the participants through the Internet. FAO provided technical

¹⁰ CGRFA-16/17/Report Rev.1, paragraph 66.

¹¹ CGRFA-17/19/9.4; CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 69.

¹² CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 66.

¹³ CGRFA-16/17/Inf.17.1 & CGRFA-16/17/Inf.17.2.

¹⁴ CSL C/CBD-10 (June, 2019).

¹⁵ CSL C/AGP-30 (April, 2020).

¹⁶ WIEWS Reporting Tool on the Implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture - User Manual. (available at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/wiews/docs/UserManual_EN.pdf).

¹⁷ CGRFA/18/21/12.4/Inf.1.

assistance, including short training sessions addressing country-specific issues and queries, as required, to individual NFPs and their stakeholders on an ad hoc basis.

14. As of 29 June 2021, a total of 129 countries had nominated a NFP and, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting quarantine and travel restrictions, 55 countries had completed online reporting, while one country had provided a stand-alone report. In addition, 16 countries were in an advanced stage of the reporting process while 18 had just begun. Furthermore, while reporting on the second reporting period (July 2014–December 2019), 50 countries also provided information with regard to the implementation of the Second GPA during the first reporting period (January 2012–June 2014). Six of these 50 countries reported for the first time on the first reporting period, bringing the total number of countries that reported in the first period to 84.

15. The participation of key national stakeholders in the preparation of the Third Report is essential. Over 600 institutions and organizations provided information on the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA during the first reporting cycle. Preliminary results from the second reporting cycle indicate that data have been provided by about 1 000 stakeholders. In total 1 194 stakeholders have so far provided data on the implementation of the Second GPA, which contribute to the preparation of the Third Report.

16. Relevant international and regional organizations were invited to contribute to the preparation of the Third Report by completing an ad hoc survey. As of 17 April 2021, 12 international organizations provided information on their activities for both reporting periods.

17. Even though considerable progress has been made in the preparation of country reports, the Commission may wish to consider a postponement of the reporting deadline for countries to 31 December 2021. This would reflect the recommendation of the Working Group and take into account the delays in reporting caused by the challenges and constraints of the pandemic. The Working Group also recommended that the Commission consider significant simplifications of the WIEWS reporting format once the Third Report has been completed.¹⁸

IV. THEMATIC BACKGROUND STUDIES

18. At its last session, the Commission requested FAO to propose thematic background studies, including on the global exchange of germplasm from and to genebanks, to complement the information used for the preparation of the Third Report.¹⁹ The Working Group, at its Tenth Session, reviewed revised summaries of the proposed thematic background studies and recommended that they be further revised and re-structured. The Working Group also recommended that the scope of the thematic background studies on climate change and nutrition be narrowed to address specific technical aspects with practical implications for PGRFA, in a way that complements information submitted by countries and avoiding duplication of work in relation to other multilateral organizations and instruments.²⁰ Revised summaries of the proposed thematic background studies, as revised in the light of the Commission's and the Working Group's recommendations, are given in *Appendix I* to this document.

V. BUDGET

19. Financial support has already been provided by FAO through its regular programme budget and by Norway, Spain and Switzerland, including through the Commission's Multi-donor Trust Fund (GCP/GLO/841/MUL) to support reporting by 48 countries, including stakeholder consultations at national level and the hiring of local experts. The budget required for completing the preparation of the Third Report is provided in *Appendix II*. Extra-budgetary resources in the amount of USD 675 000 are still required for the finalization of the Third Report.

¹⁸ CGRFA-18/21/12.1, paragraph 35.

¹⁹ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 70.

²⁰ CGRFA-18/21/12.1, paragraph 34.

VI. REVIEW OF THE SECOND GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

20. The Second GPA needs to be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose. According to the Second GPA, the Commission will plan the review of the implementation of the Second GPA as well as the review of the Second GPA itself within its MYPOW, in close cooperation with the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Treaty). The review should deal with the progress made at the national, regional and international levels in the implementation of the Second GPA and with its adjustment as appropriate, thus making it a “rolling” plan. The Commission may wish to schedule the review of the Second GPA for the Twelfth Session of the Working Group and the Twentieth Regular Session of the Commission.

VII. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

21. The Commission may wish to:

- (i) invite countries that have not yet done so to nominate National Focal Points;
- (ii) invite National Focal Points that have not yet done so to report by 31 December 2021 through WIEWS on the implementation of the Second GPA for the period of July 2014 to December 2019 and to provide a summative narrative of the progress made (between January 2012 and December 2019) and the remaining gaps and constraints;
- (iii) request FAO continue to support countries in reporting for the Third Report;
- (iv) review and revise, as appropriate, the list of thematic background studies, as given in *Appendix I* to this document;
- (v) recommend that FAO, based on the findings of the Third Report, and following regional consultations, review and revise, as appropriate and necessary, the Second GPA for consideration by the Working Group at its Twelfth Session, and subsequently the Commission at its Twentieth Regular Session;
- (vi) invite donors to continue to provide extra-budgetary resources for the finalization and publication of the Third Report and for the review process of the Second GPA; and
- (vii) request FAO to propose significant simplifications to the WIEWS Reporting Tool, once the Third Report has been completed.

APPENDIX I

REVISED LIST OF PROPOSED THEMATIC BACKGROUND STUDIES

The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Third Report) shall be based on data and summative narratives on the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second GPA) for the period, January 2012 to June 2019. It will document the progress made and the identified gaps and constraints in relation to the 58 Indicators for the implementation of the Second GPA as reported by National Focal Points. In response to the Commission's request to propose thematic background studies to complement the above sources of information used in preparing the Third Report, a revised list of studies on cross-cutting themes that are relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) is proposed in this *Appendix*. The thematic background studies shall provide context for the Third Report. They shall review the relevant emerging issues, advances and/or trends, especially in scientific and technological disciplines, legal and regulatory matters, policies, norms and societal developments since the publication of the *Second Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*²¹ (Second Report). The purpose and content of the proposed thematic background studies and the sections of the Third Report to which they should contribute are indicated below.

Climate change

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to further explore the effects of climate change on the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA and the potential of PGRFA to contribute to the adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change. Extreme weather events will continue to impact on where and how PGRFA are conserved, especially crop wild relatives (CWR) and wild food plants. These events therefore affect the distribution and continuing evolution of adaptive traits of these PGRFA and also shape decisions on how they are used, especially in the breeding of crop varieties that are tolerant of harsh environmental conditions. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)²² to the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement²³ include measures to adapt agricultural production to the vagaries of changing climatic conditions. Therefore, countries, in order to meet their obligations in the NDCs and to implement the related Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction²⁴ and the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture²⁵ (that also seeks to address the vulnerabilities of agriculture and hence food security and nutrition to climate change), will require support and tools for, *inter alia*, predicting the PGRFA that are most at risk and determining how to safeguard and use them sustainably. This has become important especially in light of the recent Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C²⁶ of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which detailed a continuing rise in global surface temperature.

Content: A study that builds upon the results of the scoping study “The role of genetic resources for food and agriculture in climate change adaptation and mitigation”²⁷ is proposed as a means to document which PGRFA are most at risk and how they are being protected from the effects of climate change. Importantly, it will also explore how PGRFA are being used to adapt crop production systems to climate change and also mitigate these systems' environmental footprints.

Contribution to the Third Report: The thematic study will provide empirical evidence on the observed trends – over time and across regions; validated good practices for the use of PGRFA in both climate change adaptation and mitigation; identified gaps and needs and prognosis for

²¹ FAO. 2010. *The Second Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/i1500e/i1500e00.htm>).

²² <http://unfccc.int/focus/items/10240.php>

²³ http://unfccc.int/files/home/application/pdf/paris_agreement.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework>

²⁵ <http://www.fao.org/koronivia/en/>

²⁶ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

²⁷ CGRFA/WG-PGR-10/21/7/Inf.1.

the future. These would serve as an invaluable companion piece to the Report's Chapters 2 and 3, on conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, respectively.

Nutrition

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to further explore the contributions of PGRFA to nutrition. Hidden hunger, i.e. micronutrient deficiency, and obesity are critically important public health concerns. The international community, through, *inter alia*, the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) Framework of Action²⁸ and its facilitating United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025),²⁹ commits to address the scourges. While the 2016 World Food Prize was awarded for work on the biofortification of staple crops and their enhanced availability to vulnerable populations,³⁰ the levels of malnutrition have continued to rise steadily over the past few years.³¹ Yet, a majority of the potential sources of plant-based nutrients are largely neglected, either only semi-domesticated or harvested from the wild. Currently, though almost 30 000 plant species are edible³² and over 6 000 have been cultivated for human consumption, only three crops (maize, wheat and rice) account for 42 percent of total food supply (kcal/capita/day) in the human diet.

Content: A thematic background study that reviews the documented and potential contributions of PGRFA to enhanced nutrition will be a worthy complement to information provided by countries. The study will encompass the enhancements of the nutritional qualities of improved crop varieties through plant breeding, and highlight options for more diversified diets resulting from a greater availability and consumption of local fruits, vegetables and pulses.

Contribution to the Third Report: In addition to this obvious relevance to the Third Report's Chapter 3 on the sustainable use of PGRFA, this study shall additionally provide context to Chapter 2 on the conservation of PGRFA, especially as resource-poor people in developing countries often rely on wild plants harvested for food as indispensable sources of micronutrients.

Genotyping and phenotyping PGRFA

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to further explore the contributions of high-throughput molecular and morphological assays and various 'proxy' assessments to the characterization, evaluation, conservation and, ultimately, the use of PGRFA. New efficiency-enhancing tools and methods are increasing our capacities for generating large amounts of reliable data on germplasm at cost and time-efficient rates previously unimaginable. For instance, Focused Identification of Germplasm Strategy (or FIGS) enables the predictive characterization of new genetic resources by permitting the assignment of potential phenotypic or genotypic properties based on environmental information of the collecting sites and data on already characterized samples. The average costs for generating molecular genetic data have decreased sharply in the recent past. This, coupled with increasingly improved human and institutional capacities, is permitting, especially in well-equipped laboratories of developed countries, the routine use of high-throughput molecular genetic platforms to generate unprecedented amounts of data relatively quickly and cheaply.

Content: The thematic study will showcase the use of new tools and methods in countries, such as genotyping by sequencing and high-throughput phenotyping platforms, including those based on imaging, which are being used to generate vast amounts of morphological, physiological and biochemical data that are of important predictive value. Other approaches that will be reviewed

²⁸ ICN2 2014/3 Corr.1.

²⁹ <http://www.who.int/nutrition/decade-of-action/workprogramme-2016to2025/en/>

³⁰ https://www.worldfoodprize.org/en/laureates/2016__andrade_mwanga_low_and_bouis/ 6 CGRFA/WG-PGR-9/18/4

³¹ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO. 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets*. Rome, FAO. (also available at <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9692en>).

³² Food Plants International Database. <http://foodplantsinternational.com/plants/>

include phenomics, a relatively new biological discipline that is concerned with aligning phenotypic and genotypic data and therefore aiding the establishment of cause–effect relationships between observed traits and their underlying molecular bases.

Contribution to the Third Report: The widespread uptake of the advances may be a cost-effective means to both identify elite breeding lines, prioritize targets for conservations and eliminate redundancies in germplasm collections. A review of the advances, trends and gaps in these areas shall provide context for Chapters 2 and 3 of the Report but also for Chapter 4 on institutional and human capacities.

Novel biotechnologies

Purpose: Biotechnologies have been evolving rapidly since the publication of the Second Report in 2010. In fact, some of them, which had not even been described by the time the Second Report was published, have demonstrable profound impacts on the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. New biotechnologies are described in the document *Recent developments in biotechnologies relevant to the characterization, sustainable use and conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture*.³³ The purpose of this study is to explore the evolutions and applications of these novel biotechnologies and their impacts on the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA.

Content: Examples of themes to be covered in a background thematic study include genome editing, gene drive, synthetic biology, systems biology and next generation sequencing. Both the advances in science and technology and the enabling policy regimes will be examined.

Contribution to the Third Report: A review of the advances, trends and gaps in these areas shall provide context in particular for Chapters 3 and 4 of the Report.

Germplasm exchange

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to further explore the contributions of germplasm exchange to the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. The continued improvement of food security and nutrition largely depends on the possibility to exchange germplasm across countries and regions. Germplasm exchange and distribution may also play an important role for restoring crop collections in centres of origin or enhancing crop diversity in farmers' fields, including after disaster situations. Information on germplasm exchange, as reported by countries through the WIEWS Reporting Tool on indicators 6, 28 and 29 of the Second GPA monitoring framework³⁴ and under the Data Store of the Multilateral System of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Treaty) will form the basis for this thematic background study.

Content: The study will go beyond data usually reported by countries and make use of additional sources of information by incorporating data from other existing active collections currently not covered by country reporting in WIEWS. The study will also cover the germplasm collections of crops that do not fall under Annex 1 of the Treaty and, thus, complement information about material transferred with the Treaty's Standard Material Transfer Agreement. The study, which will be conducted in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Treaty, will also provide information on the possible impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on germplasm distribution.

Contribution to the Third Report: A review of the advances, trends and gaps in these areas shall provide context for data obtained from countries for Chapters 3 and 4 of the Report.

³³ CGRFA/WG-PGR-10/21/8/Inf.1.

³⁴ Indicator 6. Number of farmers' varieties/landraces distributed from national or local genebanks to farmers (either directly or through intermediaries); 28. Number of accessions distributed by genebanks to users of germplasm; and 29. Number of samples distributed by genebanks to users of germplasm.

APPENDIX II**BUDGET FOR COMPLETING THE THIRD REPORT: 2021 AND 2022–2023³⁵**

(Amounts in USD 1 000s)

| | 2021 | | 2022–2023 | | TOTAL | | |
|---|------------------|------------|------------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | RP ³⁶ | EB | RP ³⁷ | EB | RP | EB | RP+EB |
| Assist National Focal Points' country reporting³⁸ | | 68 | | | | 68 | 68 |
| Upgrade, maintain and moderate | 12 | | | 49 | 12 | 49 | 61 |
| Develop thematic background studies³⁹ | | 100 | | 50 | | 15 | 150 |
| Analyse data and prepare a synthesis | | | 38 | | 38 | | 38 |
| Prepare draft of The Third Report | | 30 | 120 | | 120 | 30 | 150 |
| Coordinate the updating of and update the appendices | | | 21 | 22 | 21 | 22 | 43 |
| Prepare the in-brief version | | | 7 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| Format and translate (5 languages) the Third Report and it's in-brief version⁴⁰ | | | | 232 | | 23 2 | 232 |
| Publish the Third Report and it's in-brief version | | | 24 | 119 | 24 | 11 9 | 143 |
| Launch the Third Report (communication strategy) | | | 19 | | 19 | | 19 |
| TOTAL | 12 | 198 | 229 | 477 | 241 | 67 | 916 |

RP = Regular Programme; EB = Extra Budgetary

³⁵ It is assumed that the Nineteenth Regular Session of the Commission will take place in 2023.

³⁶ Estimated Regular Programme contribution to the preparation process and the Third Report, not covering salaries for existing Professional and General Staff under NSP.

³⁷ Subject to the approval of PWB by FAO Conference.

³⁸ Assistance to 15 developing countries to hire a consultant supporting the NFP to produce assessment on the implementation of the Second GPA and summative narratives. Budgeted at USD 4 500/country.

³⁹ Support the development of thematic studies and other necessary background material and expert meetings for the Report, according to the priorities identified by the Commission. Budgeted at USD 30 000/study for 5 thematic studies.

⁴⁰ Estimated for a number of words equivalent to the Second Report.