



COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 15 of the Provisional Agenda

Eighteenth Regular Session

27 September – 1 October 2021

COLLABORATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission), at its last session, welcomed Resolution 11/2017 of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Treaty)¹ and the joint activities of the Secretariats of the Treaty and the Commission during the past intersessional period.

2. It requested its Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration with the Secretary of the Treaty to promote coherence in the development and implementation of the respective programmes of work of the two bodies in areas of relevance to them, including:

- (a) the preparation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and of a draft Third Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, as appropriate;
- (b) the organization of the international symposia on on-farm management and development of farmers' varieties/landraces and on *in situ* conservation of crop wild relatives and wild food plants;
- (c) the monitoring and implementation of the Second GPA;
- (d) the implementation of the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, including through capacity building;
- (e) access and benefit-sharing;
- (f) "digital sequence information" on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA);
- (g) Global Information System (GLIS) and FAO World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS), targets and indicators, as well as the development of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.²

3. The Commission also requested a report clarifying the specific roles of these databases for the next session of the Working Group to streamline country reporting to the Commission and the Treaty.³

4. It also requested FAO to carry out, in coordination with the Treaty and in consultation with the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), in-depth case studies for consideration by the Working Group, at its next session.⁴ These case studies should consider the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations.

5. The Governing Body, at its Eighth Session, held in November 2019, adopted Resolution 9/2019 and welcomed the ongoing close cooperation between the Commission and the Governing Body and the joint activities undertaken by the Secretariats of the Governing Body and the Commission during the past intersessional period.

6. The Governing Body welcomed the joint activities of the Secretariats during the past intersessional period and requested its Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration and coordination with the Secretary of the Commission to promote coherence and synergies, while avoiding duplications, in the development and implementation of the respective programmes of work of the two bodies, and in particular with regard to:

- (a) the preparation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and of a draft *Third Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, as appropriate;
- (b) the implementation and monitoring of the Second GPA

¹ IT/GB-7/17/Report, *Appendix A.11*.

² CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 103.

³ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 66.

⁴ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 67.

- (c) the implementation of the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, including through capacity building;
- (d) support to countries with strengthening their crop improvement capacity;
- (e) the preparation of in-depth case studies on the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations on: (i) on-farm diversity of PGRFA; (ii) smallholders' access to sufficient, affordable, diversified and locally adapted PGRFA, including farmers' varieties/landraces; and (iii) food security and nutrition under the different seed systems;
- (f) access and benefit-sharing;
- (g) "digital sequence information/genetic sequence data" (DSI/GSD);
- (h) GLIS and FAOWIEWS, targets and indicators, as well as the development of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;
- (i) joint training events at the regional level and the provision of assistance for the elaboration of national reports on monitoring of PGRFA, subject to the availability of resources; and
- (j) conservation and sustainable use.

7. This document provides information on the cooperation between the two Secretariats since 2019 and identifies possible areas of future collaboration.

II. COLLABORATION IN 2019–2021

(a) Preparation of The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

8. Recalling Article 17.3 of the Treaty, the Governing Body invited Parties to cooperate with the Commission in the preparation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Third Report) in order to facilitate the updating of the Second GPA. It also requested its Secretary to cooperate in the organization of the international symposium on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA, subject to availability of resources, and requested that the outcomes of the symposium be made available to the Governing Body.

9. As of 29 June, 81 Parties to the Treaty have contributed information to the Third Report. Joint efforts by both Secretariats are planned to assist the remaining 67 Contracting Parties of the Treaty to submit their contributions to the Third Report before the end of the year.

(b) Monitoring and implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

10. The two Secretariats continued collaborating with regard to monitoring and implementation of the Second GPA. The Secretary of the Commission's Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture attended the Fourth Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee on the Global Information System of Article 17 (20–21 April 2021) and the Commission Secretariat participated in the meetings of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights (August 2020 and May/September 2021).

11. The WIEWS reporting tool used by National Focal Points to report online on the implementation of the Second GPA was presented by FAO at several regional workshops organized by the Treaty Secretariat: (i) to enhance the capacity of National Focal Points to prepare and submit the national reports on the implementation of the Treaty; (ii) to provide an overview on the major areas of work and a brief update on the status of intersessional processes; and (iii) to facilitate discussion and coordination on ongoing policy and operational processes under the Treaty.

(c) First International Multi-stakeholder Symposium on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture – Technical Consultation on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture

12. FAO, in collaboration with the Treaty Secretariat and the Global Crop Diversity Trust, held in June 2021 the First International Multi-stakeholder Symposium on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture – Technical Consultation on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. More information on the Symposium is contained in the document *FAO activities in support of the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*⁵ and in the *Report of the First International Multi-stakeholder Symposium on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.⁶

13. The Commission's Working Group recommended that the Commission request FAO to hold, subject to the availability of resources, online symposia on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA at regular intervals, in collaboration with the Treaty and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).⁷

(d) Implementation of the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

14. FAO consulted the Treaty Secretariat in the preparation and review of the draft Practical Guides for the use of the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.⁸ The purpose of the Draft Practical Guides⁹ is to present the information contained in the Genebank Standards in a more user-friendly format detailing the different actions of the genebank workflow in a sequential manner and thereby facilitate more widespread application of the Genebank Standards. As such, they aim to contribute to the development of an efficient and sustainable system of *ex situ* conservation.

(e) Status and trends of seed policies

15. The Commission, at its last session, considered the document *Status and trends of seed policies and laws*¹⁰ and took note of the review¹¹ undertaken. It requested that FAO undertake, in coordination with the Treaty and in consultation with UPOV, in-depth case studies for consideration by the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group) at its next session.

16. The document *Effects of seed policies, laws and regulations*¹² summarizes the study *The impact of implementation of seed legislation on the diversity of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*.¹³

(f) Access and benefit-sharing

17. The Secretariat of the Treaty participated, as an observer, in the Fifth Session of the Team of Technical and Legal Experts on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS Expert Team), held in July 2021. The Secretariat of the Treaty also participated in the Tenth Session of the Commission's Working Group (22–24 June 2021), which, *inter alia*, reviewed of the Commission's work on access and benefit-sharing over the last two decades and considered the findings of the *Survey of ABS Country*

⁵ CGRFA-18/21/12.2, paragraphs 6–10.

⁶ CGRFA-18/21/12.2/Inf.3.

⁷ CGRFA-18/21/12.1, paragraph 22.

⁸ FAO. 2014. *Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. Rev. ed. Rome. (also available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3704e.pdf>).

⁹ CGRFA-18/21/12.2/Inf.1.

¹⁰ CGRFA-17/19/9.3.

¹¹ CGRFA-17/19/9.3/Inf.1.

¹² CGRFA-18/21/12.3.

¹³ CGRFA-18/21/12.3/Inf.1.

*Measures Accommodating Distinctive Features of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and Associated Traditional Knowledge.*¹⁴

18. On the occasion of the Tenth Session of the Working Group, the Treaty Secretariat reported on the negotiations for the development of a package of measures to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-Sharing during the Eighth Session of the Governing Body. It also reported on the informal consultation initiated by the Government of Switzerland in January 2021 with the objective of taking stock of the progress made so far in the process established under the Treaty to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System and exchanging views and ideas on how best to move forward in the efforts to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System.

(g) Digital sequence information on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture

19. The Commission's Tenth Session of the Working Group also considered the topic of DSI. On this occasion, the Treaty Secretariat informed the Working Group about ongoing work under the Treaty on DSI, including in the context of the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the Governing Body and the Global Information System of Article 17 of the Treaty.¹⁵

(h) Global Information System of the Treaty and the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

20. The Commission, at its last session, requested a report clarifying the specific roles of WIEWS, GLIS and Genesys to streamline reporting to the Commission and the Treaty.¹⁶

21. In response to the Commission's request, the document *Strengthening cooperation among global information systems on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*¹⁷ has been prepared. The Commission's Working Group welcomed the report and recommended that the Commission invite FAO to continue developing the WIEWS portal while strengthening cooperation with the other information systems to avoid duplication of efforts and facilitate reporting by countries.¹⁸

(i) Joint training events at the regional level and the provision of assistance for the elaboration of national reports on monitoring of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture

22. Close collaboration between the two Secretariats and the Global Crop Diversity Trust continued in the context of the annual report on indicator SDG 2.5.1.

(j) Conservation and sustainable use

23. FAO contributed to the International Panel on Fruit and Vegetable Genetic Diversity: The Status and Challenges of Conservation, Exchange and Use, held on 16 February 2021 by the Secretariat of the Treaty and the Global Crop Diversity Trust. The meeting highlighted the importance of these genetic resources to food security and nutrition. The Panel discussed how genetic resources of fruit and vegetable are currently conserved, shared and used and showcased examples of development and production of fruit and vegetable varieties suited to diverse agro-systems and farming practices.

24. FAO also contributed to two other International Panels that the Secretariat of the Treaty organized, on the impacts of COVID-19, in September 2020, and cryopreservation, in June 2021.

III. POSSIBLE AREAS OF FUTURE COLLABORATION

25. Collaboration between the two Secretariats may continue in various areas of mutual interest, to promote coherence in the development and implementation of the respective programmes of work of the two bodies.

¹⁴ Background Study Paper No. 70.

¹⁵ See CGRFA-18/21/15/Inf.5, paragraphs 12–14.

¹⁶ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 66.

¹⁷ CGRFA-18/21/12.2/Inf.2.

¹⁸ CGRFA-18/21/12.2.1, paragraph 20.

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- (a) The preparation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, including the preparation of the thematic background studies, and the updating of the Second GPA, remain important areas of collaboration.
 - (b) As recommended by the Commission's Working Group, the Secretariats of the Treaty and the Commission intend to collaborate in the organization of online symposia on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA at regular intervals, provided the Commission and the Governing Body endorse this recommendation.
 - (c) Collaboration should also continue with regard to the monitoring and implementation of the Second GPA, including technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the Genebank Standards.
 - (d) The Secretariats are already collaborating to ensure that the objectives and relevant work and policies of the two bodies are integrated into global strategies and frameworks, such as the FAO Biodiversity Strategy and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as to update FAO Members on progress in the implementation of their respective mandates and work programmes, for example through briefings for Permanent Representations.
 - (e) The Secretariats may collaborate on topics, such as ABS and DSI on PGRFA.
 - (f) Further areas of collaboration may include the GLIS and FAO WIEWS, and targets and indicators.