



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**



**The International Treaty**  
**ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES  
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

## **Item 12 of the Provisional Agenda**

### **NINTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY**

**New Delhi, India, 19–24 September 2022**

### **Report of the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to the Ninth Session of the Governing Body**

#### **Note by the Secretary**

*At its Eighth Session, the Governing Body reconvened the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ACSU) for the 2020-2021 biennium in order to, inter alia:*

*“recommend further steps on how the Governing Body can assist Contracting Parties in advancing the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty for consideration of the Governing Body at its Ninth Session”.*

*This document contains the Report of the ACSU to the Ninth Session of the Governing Body, describing the work undertaken during the biennium.*

*The Report on the Implementation of Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is provided in the document, IT/GB-9/22/12, which also contains elements for a draft Resolution for consideration and adoption by the Governing Body.*

#### **Guidance Sought**

The Governing Body is invited to welcome the Report of Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and to provide further guidance for the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty, taking into account the recommendations of the Committee, as well as the elements for a draft Resolution contained in the document, IT/GB-9/22/12.

**REPORT OF THE AD HOC TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON  
CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF PLANT GENETIC  
RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
TO THE NINTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ACSU or Committee) was reconvened by the Governing Body through Resolution 5/2019.
2. Pursuant to its Terms of Reference, the Committee was requested to:
  - i. Review the compilation and summaries provided by the Secretary on the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA;
  - ii. Based on this review, identify examples and opportunities to support and assist Contracting Parties and stakeholders in promoting, enhancing and further developing the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA as set out in Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty;
  - iii. Review the information provided by the Secretary on the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA;
  - iv. Based on this review, assess the relevance and effectiveness of the Toolbox and prepare concrete recommendations on how it can be monitored, evaluated and improved in order to better guide Contracting Parties and stakeholders for the sustainable use of PGRFA;
  - v. Provide advice about the possibility of a future Joint Programme on Biodiversity in Agriculture for Sustainable Use of PGRFA based on the documentation prepared by the Secretariat;
  - vi. Based on the above, recommend further steps on how the Governing Body can assist Contracting Parties in advancing the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty for consideration of the Governing Body at its Ninth Session.
3. In reconvening the Committee, the Governing Body decided that, subject to the availability of financial resources, the Committee may hold up to two meetings in the biennium 2020–2021.
4. The Governing Body also requested the Committee to report on its work at its Ninth Session.
5. The Committee elected Ms Teresita Borromeo (Philippines) and Mr François Pythoud (Switzerland) as its Co-Chairs.
6. The Committee held its fifth meeting from 4 to 7 October 2021 and its sixth meeting from 22 to 23 February 2022, both by virtual means due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. This report describes the work undertaken by the Committee during the biennium pursuant to its Terms of Reference.

## **II. TOOLBOX ON SUSTAINABLE USE OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

8. The Committee closely followed the development of the Toolbox, throughout the last biennia, providing inputs and guidance.
9. The Committee acknowledged the importance of the Toolbox as a useful source of information guiding Contracting Parties and stakeholders in implementing Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty.
10. The Committee made a number of suggestions to improve the operational aspects, use and effectiveness of the Toolbox, which were incorporated by the Secretariat together with further suggestions received through an online survey.
11. The Committee welcomed information received from the Secretariat on the new prototype of the Toolbox and noted that the Secretary would prepare an Information document detailing the new prototype of the Toolbox, including a communication strategy and visibility plan, for the Ninth Session of the Governing Body.

## **III. FUTURE JOINT PROGRAMME ON BIODIVERSITY IN AGRICULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE USE OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

12. The Committee recalled that the Committee at its fifth meeting had highlighted that there was a “window of opportunity” for developing and implementing a Joint Programme, taking into account the urgency, momentum, and importance of cross-sectoral cooperation for addressing the climate crisis, the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (when adopted), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the outcomes of the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). The Committee noted that a Joint Programme represents a unique opportunity to promote the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA in the context of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, when adopted, and the outcomes of the UNFSS.
13. The ACSU further recalled that its fifth meeting considered the outcomes of the informal meeting of experts held in Bari, Italy, from 23 to 25 May 2018, as a basis for a Joint Programme, and identified Thematic area 3 (“*A food-system approach to food and nutrition security and ensuring resilience to climate change*”) as the most relevant to link the possible Joint Programme to the current challenges and context, but emphasised the importance of framing this topic within the context of food systems transformation. It considered all objectives for a possible Joint Programme identified at the informal meeting in Bari and emphasised that Objective 5 (“*Boost sustainable use activities on the ground through an integrated approach to in situ on farm and ex situ strategies, and through mainstreaming sustainable use activities in on-going measures aimed at achieving the SDGs*”) is central.<sup>1</sup>
14. The Committee commended the Secretary for his efforts during the biennium to approach the initial potential partners that are most relevant for the selected thematic area.
15. The Committee requested the Secretary to continue the discussions with interested partners, including CGRFA and the relevant units of FAO, and to prepare an updated concept note, following further consultations with potential partners, for the consideration of the Ninth Session of the Governing Body.

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<sup>1</sup> The full report of the informal meeting is contained in the document, IT/GB-9/ACSU-5/21/Inf.3, *Proceedings, Informal Meeting of Experts 23-25 May 2018, CIHEAM Bari, Italy: “Exploring Possible Elements of a Joint Programme on Biodiversity in Agriculture for Sustainable Use of PGRFA 2020-2030”*.

#### **IV. BOTTLENECKS AND CHALLENGES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLES 5 AND 6 OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY**

16. The Committee expressed strong interest in the possibility of developing, as an additional initiative, tailored intra- and inter-region -based activities on exchange of knowledge and practical/technical experience based on the diverse topics it considered at its fifth meeting, in order to identify the bottlenecks to the implementation of Articles 5 and 6, with particular emphasis on access to PGRFA, including seeds, and how to address the identified bottlenecks.

17. The Committee noted that the Secretary commissioned a study on the bottlenecks and challenges to the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty, and presented the methodology, structure and preliminary analysis at its sixth meeting.

18. The Committee welcomed the efforts of the Secretariat in gathering the information and presenting the preliminary analysis from the study and noted that the Secretary would present the full study to the Governing Body at its Ninth Session for its information, and would provide the major highlights for further considerations on future work on conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA.

19. The Committee noted the need to use up-to-date information and data in the study, to facilitate a fully informed discussion by the Governing Body, and suggested additional possible sources of data and information that the Secretariat could consider when finalizing the study. It also noted that the study could help in assessing the changes in bottlenecks and challenges over time.

20. The Committee emphasized the need to avoid duplication of efforts and suggested that the Governing Body, in its consideration of future work on Articles 5 and 6, could apply this principle. It further suggested that the future work on Articles 5 and 6 could initially focus on policy and institutional issues.

21. The Committee advised the Secretary to invite the Secretary of the CGRFA to provide an information document on the status of preparation of the Third Report of the State of the World PGRFA to update the Governing Body at its Ninth Session.

#### **V. EXAMPLES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT AND ASSIST CONTRACTING PARTIES AND STAKEHOLDERS IN IMPLEMENTING ARTICLES 5 AND 6 OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY**

22. The Committee recalled that part of its mandate was “to identify examples and opportunities to support and assist Contracting Parties and stakeholders in promoting, enhancing and further developing the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA”. It identified the following approaches or possibilities on how best to respond to this request:

- a. Development of a collection of examples and opportunities on the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA; with a concise structure of categories, building on the different sub-provisions of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty; the collection would subsequently be used to assess possible gaps and needs in promoting the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA and for the Governing Body to identify any further work in these areas;
- b. Updates to the *Toolbox*, so that it would become the repository of examples and opportunities to support and assist Contracting Parties and stakeholders in promoting, enhancing and further developing the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA;

c. Consider the summary list given in paragraph 33 of the document, IT/GB-9/ACSU-5/21/4,<sup>2</sup> to develop a more comprehensive list of examples and opportunities.

23. The Committee agreed that work on this item would need to avoid duplication of efforts and to consider the availability of resources.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STEPS TO ASSIST CONTRACTING PARTIES IN ADVANCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLES 5 AND 6 OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY AND POSSIBLE FUTURE WORK**

24. At its fifth meeting, the Committee agreed to focus on the possible immediate further steps set out in section V of the document, IT/GB-9/ACSU-5/21/5, *Future work on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, particularly (i) activities for strengthening and capitalizing on ongoing initiatives to increase their benefit, impact and visibility; and (ii) possible new activities to further support Contracting Parties and stakeholders in the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty, which could be based, amongst other, on the study on bottlenecks and challenges to the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty.

25. The Committee discussed whether there was a need for a new Programme of Work on Conservation and Sustainable use of PGRFA. The Committee considered that a draft mandate for the next biennium should build upon strengthening and capitalizing on ongoing activities.

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<sup>2</sup> “This [list] summarizes some of the measures and practices found in the submissions and presentations of Contracting Parties and stakeholders. It is to be noted that the measures and practices were presented in the respective national contexts and consequently vary from one Contracting Party to another as well as between Regions:

- i. Establishment of an inventory of PGRFA and assessments of threats and gaps;
- ii. Seed systems (formal and informal sector complementarity), including the contributions of diverse actors to their functioning and development;
- iii. Integrated approaches (in situ and ex situ) for the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA;
- iv. Documentation and management of scientific and traditional knowledge for the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA;
- v. Technical and financial support to conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA;
- vi. Awareness raising on the value of crop genetic diversity and local activities such as seed fairs, seed exchange, seed networks, community seed bank, community biodiversity management, participatory plant breeding and varietal selection, farmers’ field school;
- vii. Recognition schemes for farmers, indigenous peoples and local communities who conserve and develop PGRFA;
- viii. Role of traditional knowledge, adaptive management system, and/or agroecological farming systems and practices for the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA;
- ix. Crop wild relatives (CWR) and wild edible species for food production, including status and degree of variation in existing populations, potential threats to them and possible approaches for their conservation and use, including approaches for value-chain development;
- x. In situ conservation and management (and/or protection) of crop wild relatives, wild plants, native species for food production are promoted through local or national system of protected areas /zones such as conservation sites, botanical gardens, parks, biosphere reserves, nature reserves, sanctuaries, and through other environmental conservation measures;
- xi. Enhanced coordination and partnerships among public institutions, researchers, private entities, and other stakeholders; and
- xii. Policies and regulatory frameworks supporting the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, including CWR, by integrated in national sectoral and intersectoral plans, programmes and strategies, such as for enhancing national food security, climate change adaptation, environment, rural livelihoods, poverty alleviation, biodiversity protection, agricultural development, etc.”

26. The Committee also discussed a range of possible new areas for future work, taking into account the possible new initiatives listed in paragraph 20 of the document, IT/GB-9/ACSU-5/21/5. The Committee highlighted the following indicative area for further consideration:

- a. Contributions and participation of farmers, local and indigenous communities to the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, possibly with a focus on gender-responsive approaches; and
- b. Country/region-specific studies to address the bottlenecks in the implementation of Articles 5 and 6.

27. The Committee commended the Secretariat for organising regional briefings on the implementation of Articles 5 and 6, and encouraged the Secretariat to continue to hold such briefings to update Contracting Parties and stakeholders on progress and relevant developments, as well as to receive feedback.

28. The Committee requested the Secretary to prepare elements of a draft Resolution for the consideration of the Governing Body at its Ninth Session, based on its report and incorporating the relevant recommendations. It invited the Secretary to include the following elements:

- a. The Committee recommends that the Governing Body welcome the new prototype of the Toolbox as a useful source of information supporting Contracting Parties and stakeholders in implementing Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty;
- b. The Committee recommends that the Governing Body continue to consider a Joint Programme on Biodiversity in Agriculture for Sustainable Use of PGRFA based on the concept note provided in the document, IT/GB-9/22/12, and provide further guidance;
- c. The Committee recommends that the Governing Body reconvene the Committee in the next intersessional period based on Terms of Reference to be developed by the Ninth Session of the Governing Body.