



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



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

Item 15 of the Provisional Agenda

NINTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

New Delhi, India, 19–24 September 2022

Report from FAO on its contribution to the Implementation of the International Treaty

Executive Summary

At its Eighth Session, the Governing Body invited FAO to provide a comprehensive report at each Session on its contributions to the implementation of the International Treaty, and the Secretariat to provide updates on the status of implementation of invitations made to FAO. This document presents an updated report from FAO and the Secretariat, covering the intersessional period between the Eighth and Ninth Sessions of the Governing Body.

Guidance sought

The Governing Body is invited to consider the report and the other information contained in this document, and provide further guidance, taking into account the draft elements for a Resolution contained in the *Appendix*.

FAO-ITPGRFA documents can be consulted at: www.fao.org/plant-treaty/meetings/meetings-detail/en/c/1259571/

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In 2001, the FAO Conference adopted the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food Agriculture, which came into force in 2004. Since its entry-into-force, FAO has been hosting the Secretariat and providing financial, administrative and technical support to the implementation of the International Treaty. In recognition of such continuous support, the Governing Body, at its Eighth Session, for the first time, adopted a resolution on FAO's contribution to the implementation of the International Treaty (Resolution 8/2019) by which, among other matters, it thanked FAO for the financial and administrative support and made a number of invitations to FAO, including to provide a comprehensive report at each Session.
2. This document presents the report by FAO covering the intersessional period and, as requested by the Governing Body, contains updates on the invitations made to FAO.

II. FAO CONTRIBUTIONS AND INITIATIVES OF RELEVANCE

Administrative and financial support

3. FAO continues to provide human resources and administrative support to the Secretariat of the International Treaty, in accordance with the relevant FAO Staff Rules and Manual Sections.
4. Since June 2020, following the restructuring of FAO by the Director General, the Secretariat of the International Treaty has been hosted in the Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment (OCB). The Office provides several strategic opportunities for the Treaty regarding linkages between the biodiversity workstream and those working on climate change, resource mobilization and green finance. It also enhances synergies with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, also hosted within the Office.
5. FAO has continued providing financial support to the International Treaty towards its financial sustainability. In particular, based on the approved FAO Programme of Work and Budget for the 2020–2021 biennium, USD two million were allocated to International Treaty for the corresponding biennium. FAO's contribution, together with the contributions from its Contracting Parties, forms the Core Administrative Budget of the International Treaty.

Membership

6. The Governing Body invited FAO to continue supporting the efforts to increase the membership of the Treaty by undertaking concrete measures to promote ratification by FAO Member Countries that have not yet done so, with a view to making it a universal agreement.
7. In the biennium, the Secretariat worked with several FAO country offices and national correspondents to promote membership, namely in Bahrain, Kazakhstan, Mexico, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. The membership campaign also focused on involving the Permanent Representatives at FAO, such as in the case of San Marino, and promoting national consultations, such as in the case of China, Colombia, Nigeria, Thailand.

Food security in the digital era

8. The Governing Body invited FAO to continue its support to the International Treaty to increase its ability to address complex issues such as food security in the digital era.
9. Four initiatives undertaken by FAO address the digital transformation of food and agricultural systems into which PGRFA systems are integrated.
10. In July 2020, FAO finalized the establishment of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture. The Platform provides a voluntary and inclusive multi-stakeholder

mechanism to facilitate dialogue and knowledge sharing on how to strengthen the potential of digital technology applications on food and agriculture and how to address the related challenges. The Platform also aims to generate advocacy instruments, such as recommendations, best practices and voluntary guidelines, to support policy-makers in developing programmes, regulations and policy approaches.

11. As the host of the Food Systems Coordination Hub, FAO is playing a key role in the follow-up to the UN Food Systems Summit, in preparation for which scientific and dialogue processes addressed the role of crop diversity in food systems. Several actors have expressed interest to support and engage with the Hub, including with the emerging coalitions, stakeholders, action track leaders, science, and other international organizations. The Hub is also supporting the National Pathways' for sustainable and equitable agrifood systems by 2030.

12. In June 2022, FAO adopted its first-ever Science and Innovation Strategy. The Strategy covers all sectors and areas of agrifood systems, including crops. It recognizes that, both within and beyond agrifood systems, the landscape of science and innovation is continuously evolving, and important strides have been made in a range of scientific and technological fields, including digital tools. The vision of the Strategy is a world free from hunger and malnutrition, where the potential of science and innovation is fully leveraged to overcome complex social, economic and environmental challenges of agrifood systems in a globally equitable, inclusive and sustainable manner. The goal is for FAO Members to harness science and innovation to realize context-specific and systemic solutions for more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems.

13. FAO commissioned an issue paper on genome editing technologies for efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems. The issue paper is intended to be science and evidence-based and forward-looking, drawing on current information and the plurality of science, methods and analytical scales. A member of the Secretariat is in the internal task force overseeing the development of the issue paper, which will also be peer-reviewed.

Biodiversity mainstreaming

14. The Governing Body called upon FAO to consider supporting International Treaty activities as part of its stream of work on biodiversity. It recommended that FAO's Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors place adequate emphasis on genetic diversity, and invited FAO to continue including the Secretary of the International Treaty in activities to implement the Strategy.

15. In 2021, FAO approved the 2021-23 Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy. The Secretariat made inputs into the Action Plan. Key actions are clustered into core action areas, with specific actions and deliverables.

16. The core action areas containing explicit references to the International Treaty are: a) supporting countries in the development and implementation of normative and standard-setting instruments related to biodiversity; b) supporting countries to collect, analyse and use biodiversity-related information in decision-making; c) supporting capacity development in biodiversity mainstreaming.

17. The corresponding actions and deliverables are: a) facilitating policy dialogue at country or regional levels for ratification and implementation (national/regional consultations conducted); b) providing training and capacity building for countries to in collecting, assessing and reporting data, and in documenting efforts made to conserve and sustainably use genetic resources, including to enable the monitoring of SDG indicators 2.5 and 15.6 (Global Information System of Article 17 updated, in sync with WIEWS and other relevant databases); c) assisting Members, at their request, in improving capacity for developing, adapting and implementing access and benefit-sharing measures to take into account the importance of genetic resources for food and agriculture, their special role for food security and their distinctive features (crop wild relatives considered under the International Treaty).

18. For its review and updating, the Action Plan foresees the consideration of new developments and agreements, including those reached under the International Treaty, and sets forth that, on the occasion of the review of FAO's Strategy, the International Treaty should be explicitly mentioned in the section on effective governance of the Strategy.

Sustainable Development Goals

19. The Governing Body invited FAO to continue its active support to the International Treaty as a key international instrument required for the fulfilment of the SDGs, in particular SDG 2 and SDG 15, and to build awareness of the importance of the implementation of, and compliance with, the International Treaty at the highest national levels.

20. For the annual High Level Political Forum, FAO submits a consolidated corporate response which contains contributions of technical committees and intergovernmental bodies, including the Governing Body of the International Treaty. Requested inputs are policy actions and recommendations made by those technical bodies to advance the implementation of SDGs. The process provides FAO with an opportunity to influence global discussions on sustainable development with its technical and concrete inputs into the SDG follow-up and review process.

Technical support and capacity building

21. The Governing Body emphasized the importance of FAO's continuous assistance with the implementation of the International Treaty at the national level, including through the provision of technical, capacity-building and operational support to the International Treaty and its mechanisms, such as the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF).

22. Within the context of FAO technical development cooperation, the Secretariat collaborated and liaised with other units and decentralized offices to provide technical inputs and support national projects on agricultural biodiversity thematic areas, e.g. in situ/on-farm conservation of local crops, the establishment of community seed banks, the collection and depositing of samples of traditional crop varieties into national seed banks, and technical guidance on mainstreaming PGRFA into relevant policies and measures.

23. FAO country offices have continued to collaborate with and support the Secretariat on an emergency project being implemented in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe for rebuilding and strengthening local seed systems after Cyclone Idai. The project is funded by the governments of Germany and Norway.

24. Regarding the BSF, the Secretariat strengthened its collaboration with FAO's country offices on project operations. The Offices provided logistical support with the organization of field missions to selected projects sites in Ecuador, India, Serbia, Yemen and Malawi. The Offices also supported the procurement of project agricultural inputs, research and high-tech equipment, for which FAO's technical units reviewed and cleared of the technical specifications.

25. The Secretariat continued to collaborate with FAO's LoA Unit on the monitoring and amendment of the letters of agreement for BSF projects in the fourth cycle (BSF-4). The collaboration will extend to the preparation of the contracts for BSF-5.

26. The Secretariat collaborated with FAO's Resource Mobilization and Private Sector Partnerships Division (PSR) on the preparation and signature of the new funding agreement with the European Union (EU) for BSF-5. PSR also supported the Secretariat with the management, reporting, monitoring and closure of the EU-funded agreement for BSF-3.

27. The Secretariat coordinated with FAO's Office of Evaluation on the planning and execution of the independent evaluation of BSF-3 projects.

Outreach and resource mobilization

28. The Governing Body requested the Secretary and the Bureau to consider collaboration with other units and instruments within FAO to benefit from experiences such as the use of online information sharing platforms and activities for outreach and resource mobilization, including those related to the International Year of Plant Health in 2020.

29. The Secretariat collaborated with the FAO Partnership Division on the publication of the White/Wiphala paper on indigenous peoples' food systems. The Secretariat also contributed to actions and processes initiated by FAO on relevant pillars of the Global Plan of Action and the UN Decade of Family Farming.

30. The Secretariat continued to strengthen its cooperation with FAO's communication units on the development of new communication and outreach products and materials; in particular with regard to increasing social media presence, graphic materials, short videos, and increasing the visibility of the BSF.

31. The Director of FAO's Resource Mobilization and Private Sector Partnerships Division gave a presentation to the Standing Committee on the Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilization (the Funding Committee) on FAO's new Private Sector Engagement Strategy 2021–2025 to provide insights on its development. The Funding Committee considered the insights useful in taking forward the International Treaty's own work on engaging with the Private Sector, including with the food processing industry.

32. FAO's GEF Unit gave a presentation to the Funding Committee on FAO's preparatory work for the Eighth Replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF-8), highlighting the importance of the International Treaty and FAO working together to ensure strong visibility and contributions toward conserving PGRFA by the GEF constituents. The Co-Chairs of the Funding Committee welcomed FAO's proposed strong engagement with the International Treaty in developing priority areas of work for GEF-8 and the proposed initiatives of FAO to further raise the profile of the International Treaty by working with other GEF agencies as well as the opportunities to create capacity, demand and actions from countries for designing and accessing innovative projects on PGRFA.

33. FAO collaborated with the Secretariat on the development of a proposal for a FAO-led GEF-7 Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes. The proposal has been funded with USD 104 million under the GEF-7 funding circle, along with over 800 million in co-financing and has commenced implementation. It will assist eleven countries across Africa and Asia and includes elements that support the implementation of the International Treaty in five countries in Southern Africa. The Secretariat is a member of FAO's Global and Regional Coordination Technical Project Task Force for the program.

34. The Secretariat is collaborating with FAO's units and international stakeholders in building an initiative to enable the safeguarding and re-establishing of Ukraine's PGRFA system. FAO-Ukraine is working closely with relevant institutions and has undertaken missions to visit the national genebank. FAO has also identified possible funding partners to support the immediate needs under the initiative and is currently in discussions with donors to obtain financial support.

Preparatory processes for the Governing Body

35. FAO-India has provided extensive support to the preparations for this Ninth Session of the Governing Body. The Office appointed a focal point for coordination with the Host Government, who assisted the Secretariat with key logistics for the Session. The Office also provided advice on liaison matters with the Host Government and other organizations based in India. It also facilitated the procurement of local services and goods under FAO's responsibility for the organization of the Session.

36. Regional preparatory meetings were organized with the support of FAO-Egypt and FAO-Peru, for National Focal Points to receive updates on progress made during the intersessional period and discuss regional positions in preparation for the Session.

III. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

37. The Governing Body is invited to consider the information contained in this document, and provide further guidance, taking into account the draft elements for a Resolution in the Appendix.

Appendix

DRAFT ELEMENTS FOR A RESOLUTION **/2022
CONTRIBUTION OF FAO TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL TREATY

THE GOVERNING BODY,

1. **Thanks** FAO for the financial and administrative support it provides to the Secretariat of the International Treaty and to the implementation of the International Treaty, and **invites** FAO to continue its support to the Treaty to enhance its financial sustainability;
2. **Invites** FAO to continue supporting the efforts to increase the membership of the International Treaty by undertaking concrete measures to promote ratification by FAO Member Countries that have not yet done so, with a view to making it a universal agreement;
3. **Further invites** FAO to integrate the International Treaty into the implementation of relevant initiatives and strategies, such as the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture, the Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and its 2021–23 Action Plan, the Science and Innovation Strategy, with a view to improving the ability of the International Treaty to contribute to addressing complex social, economic and environmental challenges of agrifood systems in a globally equitable, inclusive and sustainable manner;
4. **Further invites** FAO to continue its active support the International Treaty as a key international instrument required for the fulfilment of Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 15, and to build awareness of the importance of the implementation of, and compliance with, the International Treaty at the highest national levels;
5. **Emphasizes** the importance of FAO's continuous assistance with the implementation of the International Treaty at the national level, including through the provision of technical, capacity-building and operational support to the International Treaty and its mechanisms, such as the Benefit-sharing Fund;
6. **Requests** the Secretary to continue pursuing collaboration with other units and instruments within FAO, including on outreach and resource mobilization;
7. **Invites** FAO to continue providing a comprehensive report at each Session on its contributions to the implementation of the International Treaty, and the Secretary to continue providing updates on the status of implementation of invitations made to FAO as well as on on-going and new collaborations and partnerships within FAO.