



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



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

Item 16.1 of the Provisional Agenda

NINTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

New Delhi, India, 19–24 September 2022

**Cooperation with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and
Agriculture**

Executive Summary

This document, prepared jointly by the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission), provides a brief update on their cooperation since the Governing Body's last session.

Guidance Sought

The Governing Body is invited to take note of the information contained in this document and to provide further guidance regarding cooperation with the Commission, taking into account the elements for a possible Resolution provided in the Appendix to this document.

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

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Governing Body and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission) have regularly stressed the importance of their close cooperation. This document, prepared jointly by the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission, provides a brief update on the status of their cooperation in response to the requests of their respective governing bodies. The document *Report from the Secretariat of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, including on FAO activities related to the Supporting Components of the International Treaty*¹ provides more detailed information on relevant work of the Commission and on relevant outcomes of the Commission's Eighteenth Regular Session (27 September to 1 October 2021) relevant to the cooperation between the Treaty and the Commission.

II. BACKGROUND

2. At its Eighth Session, the Governing Body adopted Resolution 9/2019 on cooperation with the Commission.² It agreed to keep the matter of the functional division of tasks and activities between the Governing Body and the Commission under review and requested the Secretary to regularly report any relevant developments in the cooperation with the Commission. The Governing Body welcomed the joint activities of the Secretariats of the Treaty and the Commission during the past intersessional period and, echoing a request of the Commission,³ requested the 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, 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 Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
- (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) the 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;
- (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, subject to the availability of resources;
- (j) conservation and sustainable use.

¹ IT/GB-9/22/16.1/Inf.1.

² www.fao.org/3/nb787en/nb787en.pdf

³ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraphs 62, 67, 103.

III. COLLABORATION SINCE THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

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

3. The Secretariat of the International Treaty has been cooperating with FAO in the preparation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. Such collaboration has, so far, included:

- *Preparation of the thematic background study on germplasm exchange:* The purpose of one of the thematic background studies currently being carried out in the preparation of the Third Report, is to further explore the contribution of germplasm exchange to the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. The study considers information on germplasm exchange, as reported by countries through the WIEWS Reporting Tool and under the Data Store of the Multilateral System of the International Treaty. The Secretariat of the International Treaty is collaborating in the preparation of the study, including through the identification of experts, the design of the methodology, the provision of data and review of drafts.

The Commission, at its last session, recommended that the thematic studies build upon existing and ongoing studies in other fora on similar subjects.⁴ This thematic study will build upon methodologies and data arising from the collaboration between the Secretary, the Crop Trust and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), to produce the ongoing study “The Plants That Feed the World: baseline data and metrics to inform strategies for the conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.” This study identifies and systematizes baseline data of a wide range of crops and their genetic resources.

- *Elaboration of draft chapters for the Third Report:* FAO has sought inputs from the Secretariat of the International Treaty, on a need basis, at various steps necessary for preparing the draft chapters.
- *FAO provision of assistance to countries in reporting for the Third Report:* Upon request, the Secretariat of the International Treaty provided support in preparing some of the agreements established with national partners for the preparation of country reports.

4. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, requested FAO, based on the findings of the Third Report, and following regional consultations, to review and revise the Second GPA for consideration by the Commission's Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group) at its Twelfth Session, and subsequently the Commission at its Twentieth Regular Session.⁵ The Treaty Secretariat is committed to providing support to both, the review of the Second GPA and the regional consultations that will be conducted in this context.

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

In situ conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA

5. At its Eighth Session, the Governing Body requested the Secretary to cooperate with the Secretariat of the Commission in the organization of the international symposium on *in situ*

⁵ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 109.

conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and requested that the outcomes of the symposium be made available to the Governing Body.⁶

6. 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 was convened virtually on 29 and 30 March 2021 by the Commission in collaboration with the Global Crop Diversity Trust and the Treaty Secretariat. It was attended by more than 800 participants.

7. The report of the symposium is contained in the document *Report of the First International Multi-Stakeholder Symposium on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.⁷ The presentations of the symposium are available in all languages on a dedicated website.⁸

8. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, commended FAO for convening, in collaboration with the Crop Trust and the Treaty Secretariat, the Multi-stakeholder Symposium and requested FAO to organize, subject to the availability of the necessary extra-budgetary resources, symposia (which may be held virtually) and webinars on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA, at regular intervals, in collaboration with the Treaty Secretariat and other relevant international instruments or organizations, in support of the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second GPA) and relevant articles of the Treaty.⁹

9. The Commission called for extrabudgetary funds to support countries, at their request, in the implementation of the Second GPA, including through the development and implementation of national strategies for PGRFA, in close coordination with the Treaty and its Funding Strategy.¹⁰

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

10. The Commission and the Governing Body called for collaboration with regard to the implementation of the *Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Genebank Standards).¹¹

11. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, took note of the three Draft practical guides for the implementation of the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, as revised in the light of comments received following the Tenth Session of its Working Group. It requested FAO to finalize and disseminate them¹². The three practical guides to be used as companion volumes to the Genebank Standards cover *ex situ* conservation of orthodox seeds in seed genebanks;¹³ conservation in field genebanks;¹⁴ and conservation via *in vitro* culture.¹⁵

12. It further requested FAO to develop further additional practical guides, especially for the conservation in genebanks of species producing recalcitrant seeds, and for cryopreservation, in collaboration with relevant international and national partners, including the CGIAR and the Global Crop Diversity Trust.¹⁶ Collaboration with the Treaty Secretariat in this area will be pursued in the next biennium.

⁶ Resolution 9/2019, para. 4.

⁷ IT/GB-9/22/16.1/Inf.2

⁸ www.fao.org/about/meetings/multi-stakeholder-symposium-on-pgrfa/en/

⁹ CGRFA-18/11/Report, paragraph 98.

¹⁰ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 103

¹¹ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 103(d); GB Resolution 9/2019, paragraph 5(c).

¹² CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 100.

¹³ <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0021en>

¹⁴ <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0023en>

¹⁵ <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0025en>

¹⁶ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 100.

(d) Support to countries with strengthening their crop improvement capacity

13. The Governing Body, at its last session, requested the Secretary to continue to collaborate in supporting countries, at their request, in strengthening their crop improvement capacity, including pre-breeding, in support of the implementation of the Second GPA and Article 6 of the Treaty.¹⁷ Further collaboration in this area will be pursued in the next biennium.

(e) Effects of seed policies, laws and regulations

14. The Commission, at its Seventeenth Regular Session, and the Governing Body, at its Eighth Session, requested collaboration regarding the preparation of in-depth case studies on the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations on: (i) on-farm diversity of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (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.¹⁸

15. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, considered the study *Impact of implementation of seed legislation on diversity of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*¹⁹ and requested FAO, in cooperation with relevant international organizations, to continue to support countries in the development or revision of their national seed policies, as appropriate and according to their specific situations, taking into account the Commission's Voluntary Guide for National Seed Policy Formulation.²⁰ The Commission also requested FAO to undertake, in collaboration with the Treaty, further research on the impact of seed policies, laws and regulations, taking into account the variety of factors that may affect, and possibly improve, farmers' ability to access sufficient and affordable seeds and planting materials of diverse, locally adapted varieties, including farmers' varieties/landraces. Furthermore, it requested FAO to take a bottom-up, demand-driven approach to seed security and promote farmers' participation in seed-related FAO activities. It also requested the Secretariat to raise awareness of the *Inventory of National Measures, Best Practices and Lessons Learned on the Realization of Farmers' Rights*, which contains many submissions on seed policy and legislation.²¹

(f) Access and Benefit-sharing

16. A representative of the Secretariat of the International Treaty attended the Fifth Session of the Team of Technical and Legal Experts on Access and Benefit-sharing. The Secretariat of the International Treaty provided inputs related to access and benefit-sharing to relevant documents of the Tenth Session of the Commission's Working Group and to the *Survey of access and benefit-sharing country measures accommodating the distinctive features of genetic resources for food and agriculture and associated traditional knowledge*,²² presented to the last session of the Commission.

(g) Digital Sequence Information / Genetic Sequence Data

17. With regard to DSI/GSD, the Secretary has provided information on the state of the discussions and outcomes in the Commission, in the document *Consideration of Digital Sequence Information in Accordance with Resolution 13/2017 and the Multi-Year Programme of Work*.²³

18. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, requested the Secretariat to hold an intersessional workshop, in collaboration with relevant instruments and organizations, to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders of the role of DSI for the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture and the sharing of benefits derived from them, address the

¹⁷ GB Resolution 9/2019, paragraph 5(d).

¹⁸ GB Resolution 9/2019, paragraph 5(e); CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 67.

¹⁹ CGRFA-18/19/12.3/Inf.1.

²⁰ <https://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/tools/toolbox-for-sustainable-use/details/en/c/1071260/>

²¹ CGRFA-18/21/Report, para. 105.

²² Background Study Paper No.70.

²³ IT/GB-9/22/17.2,

state of the art of DSI on genetic resources, present possible implications that related technologies might have for research and development related to GRFA, and consider the challenges associated with accessing and making full use of DSI.²⁴

19. The workshop *Digital sequence information and genetic resources for food and agriculture* is tentatively scheduled for November 2022 and will be co-organized by the Commission, the secretariats of the International Treaty and the Convention on Biological Diversity and possibly other partners.

(h) The 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

20. The Commission and the Governing Body have stressed the need to promote coherence in the development and implementation of GLIS and WIEWS. The Governing Body, at its last session, also requested that both bodies collaborate on targets and indicators and the development of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.²⁵

21. The Commission, at its Seventeenth Regular Session, requested FAO to continue developing the WIEWS portal and strengthening cooperation with GLIS and Genesys to avoid duplication of efforts. In addition, it requested a report clarifying the specific roles of these databases to streamline country reporting to the Commission and the International Treaty.²⁶ The report *Strengthening cooperation amongst the global information systems on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*²⁷ was prepared in close cooperation with FAO and the Global Crop Diversity Trust (Crop Trust) that manages Genesys. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, welcomed the report and requested FAO to continue developing and simplifying the WIEWS portal while strengthening cooperation with other information systems, with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts and facilitating reporting by countries.²⁸

22. The Secretariats of the Commission and the International Treaty collaborated closely in advocating the objectives and relevant policies of the Commission and the International Treaty in the development of global strategies and frameworks, such as the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

(i) Joint training events

23. The Governing Body, at its last session, requested 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, subject to the availability of resources.²⁹ While no joint training events were held during the reporting period, further collaboration in this area will be pursued in the next biennium.

(j) Conservation and sustainable use.

24. The Governing Body, at its last session, requested collaboration on “conservation and sustainable use.”³⁰ Information on collaboration in these areas is provided throughout the current document.

²⁴ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 38.

²⁵ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 103(g); GB Resolution 9/2019, paragraph 5(h).

²⁶ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 66.

²⁷ CGRFA-18/21/12.2/Inf.2.

²⁸ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 104.

²⁹ GB Resolution 9/2019, paragraph 5(i).

³⁰ GB Resolution 9/2019, paragraph 5(j).

25. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, requested FAO to continue assisting countries in strengthening national seed systems, including plant breeding, for the delivery of diverse and high-quality seeds and planting materials, in particular to meet the needs and priorities of smallholder farmers.

(k) Climate change and genetic resources for food and agriculture

26. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, took note of the scoping study on *The role of genetic resources for food and agriculture in climate change adaptation and mitigation*³¹ to which the Secretariat of the International Treaty had made valuable contributions.

27. The Commission stressed that future work of the Commission on climate change should build on existing work on GRFA and be complementary to the work of other relevant international organizations and instruments. It recommended a number of follow-up actions, such as a review of the *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Integration of Genetic Diversity into National Climate Change Adaptation Planning*,³² taking into account the need to address the vulnerabilities of GRFA to climate change, in line with relevant international agreements. It further requested FAO to increase capacity-building and training programmes on climate change adaptation and mitigation in collaboration with existing intergovernmental and international bodies and to consider organizing regional workshops to allow for the sharing of country experiences and the discussion of opportunities for collaboration, as well as a global multi-stakeholder workshop on GRFA and climate change.

28. New possibilities for cooperation arise from recent decisions of the Commission and the Treaty's Governing Body regarding climate change. A number of decisions of the Governing Body in relation to the Treaty's Funding Strategy are relevant in this regard. The Governing Body called upon "FAO to prioritize the delivery of programmes and projects supportive of the implementation of the Treaty, and to support the nexus between biodiversity and climate change, in particular, through its involvement in the Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund, as appropriate, and to actively contribute to the work of the Committee."³³ It also called on the Secretariat to establish "a network of Treaty enabling partners which have successfully integrated PGRFA in larger sustainable development and climate change programmes, and share the lessons learned to build the capacity of others to participate in such programmes".³⁴

IV. COMMISSION REQUESTS REGARDING FUTURE COLLABORATION

29. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, requested the Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration and coordination with the Secretary of the Treaty to promote coherence and synergies, while avoiding duplication, in the development and implementation of the respective relevant programmes of work of the two bodies, including on:

- (i) the preparation of the Third Report, the review and possible update of the Second GPA, and the revision of the WIEWS reporting system;
- (ii) the organization of symposia on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA;
- (iii) the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations;
- (iv) the implementation and monitoring of the Second GPA, including technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and work on sustainable use of PGRFA;

³¹ www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb9570en

³² <https://www.fao.org/3/i4940e/i4940e.pdf>

³³ Resolution 3/2019, paragraph 6.

³⁴ Funding Strategy of the International Treaty for the period 2020 to 2025, para. 29 (g)

- (v) ABS and DSI on PGRFA;
- (vi) Joint efforts to advocate for the consideration of the objectives and relevant work and policies of the Commission and the Governing Body of the Treaty in global strategies and frameworks, such as the *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors* 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; and
- (vii) the GLIS and WIEWS and targets and indicators.³⁵

V. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

30. The Governing Body is invited to take note of the information contained in this document and provide further guidance on the cooperation with the Commission, taking into account the elements for a possible Resolution provided in the *Appendix* to this document.

³⁵ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 118.

DRAFT RESOLUTION **/2022**COOPERATION WITH THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE****THE GOVERNING BODY,**

Recalling Resolution 9/2019 and other previous Resolutions on the cooperation with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission);

1. **Welcomes** 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;
2. **Agrees** to keep the matter of the functional division of tasks and activities between the Governing Body and the Commission under review and **requests** the Secretary to regularly report any relevant developments in the cooperation with the Commission;
3. **Recalling** Article 17.3 of the International Treaty, **invites** Parties that still have not done so, 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* in order to facilitate the updating of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
4. **Welcomes** the joint activities of the Secretariats of the Treaty and the Commission during the past intersessional period and **requests** the Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration and coordination with the Secretary of the Commission to promote coherence in the development and implementation of the respective programmes of work of the two bodies, and in particular with regard to:
 - i. the preparation of the *Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, the review and possible update of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the revision of the WIEWS reporting system;
 - ii. the organization of symposia on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA;
 - iii. the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations;
 - iv. the implementation and monitoring of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, including technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and work on sustainable use of PGRFA;
 - v. ABS and DSI on PGRFA;
 - vi. joint efforts to advocate for the consideration of the objectives and relevant work and policies of the Commission and the Governing Body of the Treaty in global strategies and frameworks, such as the *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors* 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; and,
 - vii. the GLIS and WIEWS and targets and indicators.

5. ***Further encourages*** building synergies and collaboration in relation to the development and implementation of national strategies of PGRFA and national planning process relevant to PGRFA such as those related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, and in doing so, ***requests*** the Secretary to keep the Standing Committee on the Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilization informed.