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INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, called upon countries to continue implementing the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources¹ (Global Plan of Action) and requested FAO to provide complementary technical and policy support.²

2. The Commission requested FAO, and invited countries, to continue raising awareness on the importance of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture (AnGR) and the roles of livestock keepers and of livestock species and breeds and their production systems in the provision of ecosystem services. Moreover, it requested FAO, in partnership with relevant stakeholders and donors, to continue supporting countries, especially developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, and, considering specific regional priorities and needs, in the development and implementation of national and regional strategies and studies.³

3. This document provides a report on FAO activities since the Commission's Eighteenth Regular Session. The activities are grouped according to their relevance to the four strategic priority areas (SPA) of the Global Plan of Action. A more detailed summary of FAO projects, meetings, capacity building events and publications supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action is provided in the document *Summary progress report on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*.⁴

II. FAO SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

4. Since the last Session of the Commission, FAO continued to assist countries in the implementation of all SPAs of the Global Plan of Action, by providing institutional and technical support, facilitating research, developing collaborative partnerships and building capacity. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to restrict travel throughout most of the intersessional period, so emphasis remained on normative activities until early 2022. This section provides examples of FAO's activities in the four SPAs and some cross-cutting areas.

Strategic Priority Area 1. Characterization, inventory and monitoring of trends and risks

5. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, requested FAO to continue to provide Regular Programme and technical support to further maintain, develop and increase the user-friendliness of DAD-IS.⁵ It further requested FAO to investigate the potential integration into DAD-IS of additional data fields. The Commission requested FAO to develop a tool allowing automated translation of DAD-IS content from and into English, French and Spanish and to investigate the feasibility of translation across all official UN languages.⁶

6. In response to the Commission's requests, and with the FAO Regular Programme budget, FAO maintained and further developed DAD-IS with Regular Programme resources, while increasing its user friendliness. The activities included (i) development of DAD-IS tools for visualizing data on the diversity of managed bees for food and agriculture and broadening the scope of the respective data entry tool to allow entering of information on stingless bees; (ii) improvement of data entry of

¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/a1404e/a1404e.pdf>

² CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 70.

³ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 72.

⁴ CGRFA/WG-AnGR-12/23/3/Inf.1.

⁵ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 75.

⁶ Ibid.

DAD-IS data fields, and development of visualization tools related to ecosystem services and publicly available information on breeders, producers and breeding organizations; (iii) automatic language translation of DAD-IS content; (iv) improved interoperability with other databases; and (v) improved options for exporting metadata. Details of these activities are provided in the documents *Monitoring the diversity of animal genetic resources*⁷ and *Detailed report on the development of the domestic animal diversity information system*.⁸

7. In 2009, the Commission requested FAO to make status and trends reports on AnGR available to the Commission at each of its regular sessions.⁹ In response, FAO has prepared for each subsequent session a report providing this information. The document, *Status and trends of animal genetic resources – 2022*,¹⁰ has been made available for consideration by the Working Group. The status report is based on information in DAD-IS provided by National Coordinators for the Management of Animal Genetic Resources (NC-AnGR). As of October 2022, 175 countries had nominated a NC-AnGR.

8. Since 2020, the proportion of national breed populations for which at least one historical record of population data is available increased slightly for avian species, from 61 to 63 percent. For mammalian species, this proportion remained essentially constant at 66 percent. Among the 8 859 breeds reported in DAD-IS, 27 percent are currently classified as being at risk (excluding extinct breeds); 13 percent are classified as not at risk; 54 percent have unknown risk status and 7 percent are reported to be extinct.¹¹ As of September 2022, 25 countries had reported data in DAD-IS on 53 honey bee species or subspecies, including 14 countries that provided estimates for numbers of colonies for 26 species or subspecies.

9. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, took note of the *Draft practical guide on genomic characterization of animal genetic resources*,¹² and requested FAO to finalize and disseminate it and to encourage countries to make full use of it, according to their specific needs.¹³ The document will be published as an issue of an FAO Animal Production and Health series and will be made available online.¹⁴ For environmental and financial reasons, hard copies of the document will not be produced. The Commission also requested FAO to organize workshops to raise awareness and support regional and subregional networks.¹⁵ In December 2022, FAO presented a webinar to provide an overview of the genomic characterization guide. Additional webinars on specific topics are planned for 2023.

10. FAO continued to work through its Technical Cooperation Programme and with various partners to support countries in the characterization, inventory and monitoring of AnGR, in the standardization of methods to undertake these tasks, and in the dissemination of results and related information. During the 2020-21 biennium, FAO technically and/or financially supported projects in Bahrain, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mongolia that included activities related to characterization, inventory and monitoring of AnGR. More details about these projects can be found in the *Summary progress report on the implementation of the global plan of action for animal genetic resources*.¹⁶

⁷ CGRFA/WG-AnGR-12/23/4.

⁸ CGRFA/WG-AnGR-12/23/4/Inf.2.

⁹ CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraph 39.

¹⁰ CGRFA/WG-AnGR-12/23/4/Inf.1.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² CGRFA-18/21/10.2/Inf.2.

¹³ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 74.

¹⁴ <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3079en>

¹⁵ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 74.

¹⁶ CGRFA/WG-AnGR-12/23/3/Inf.1.

11. The Joint FAO/International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Centre of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture (CJN) provided capacity building through training courses and individual fellowships undertaken at either CJN's laboratory in Austria or in the laboratory of a collaborating country. In addition, CJN provided technical support on characterization activities with IAEA Technical Cooperation Projects (TCP)¹⁷ in five countries.¹⁸

Strategic Priority Area 2. Sustainable use and development

12. At its Seventeenth Session, the Commission endorsed the *Guidelines on developing sustainable value chains for small-scale livestock producers*¹⁹ and requested FAO to publish and distribute them widely. The guidelines were published electronically in 2019, but the global COVID-19 pandemic delayed printing and distribution. Therefore, hard copies of the guidelines were distributed to NC-AnGR and other stakeholders during the reporting period.

13. FAO continued to provide technical assistance in sustainable use and development of AnGR, both directly and through cooperation with other organizations. FAO's technical support and capacity-building focused on animal identification, genetic improvement and genomic selection, breeding programmes, the application of biotechnologies, agroecology and the development of livestock value chains for smallholders.²⁰

14. During the intersessional period, CJN concluded its Coordinated Research Project (CRP) on "Application of nuclear and genomic tools to enable the selection of animals with enhanced productivity traits".²¹ The project, which supported ten countries,²² emphasized dairy production and supported the establishment of performance recording systems and the application of genomic tools for the improvement of milk productivity. A new CRP, "Improving efficiency of animal breeding programs using nuclear and related genomic information – Practical applications in developing countries," was launched in 2022. This CRP will build upon results of the previous project and cover, in addition to cattle, buffaloes and camelid species. Ten countries²³ receive support under this CRP.

15. During the 2020-21 biennium, 49 countries received support through 41 TCP or extra-budgetary projects²⁴ involving sustainable use and development of AnGR. These included projects administered by FAO (22 projects, 24 countries)²⁵ and by CJN (19 projects, 28 countries).²⁶ The projects address various issues of priority to each country, including agroecological production systems, "family" poultry production, beekeeping, livestock development, value-chain enhancement, genetic improvement, use of artificial insemination and other reproductive technologies and animal identification and traceability.

¹⁷ CGRFA/WG-AnGR-12/23/3/Inf.1.

¹⁸ Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea and Paraguay.

¹⁹ CGRFA-17/19/11.2/Inf.5.

²⁰ See FAO. 2019. Developing sustainable value chains for small-scale livestock producers. <https://www.fao.org/3/ca5717en/ca5717en.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.iaea.org/projects/crp/d31028>.

²² Argentina, Bangladesh, China, India, Kenya, Peru, Serbia, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Tunisia.

²³ Argentina, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, China, India, Kenya, Pakistan, Peru, South Africa and Sri Lanka.

²⁴ CGRFA/WG-AnGR-12/23/3/Inf.1, Tables 4 and 5.

²⁵ Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Chad, Djibouti, Gabon, Georgia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritania, Moldova, Mongolia, Pakistan, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, Suriname, Tonga, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan.

²⁶ Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Eritrea, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

16. FAO continued its work in support of pastoralists and other small-scale livestock keepers, who maintain a large proportion of the world's AnGR. Activities mainly centred on the Sahel region²⁷ and included support for the establishment of national, regional, and local transhumance committees tasked to inform policy development in the countries, in line with the FAO technical guidelines on *Improving Governance of Pastoral Lands*.²⁸ In conjunction with this work, FAO collaborated with pastoral associations to build capacity in data collection and analysis, to facilitate an assessment of pastoral economies and their contributions to the gross domestic product in the target countries. FAO also continued its operation of the Pastoralist Knowledge Hub,²⁹ making available relevant documents and information on pastoral systems and facilitating the exchange of information among stakeholders working in this specific subsector. The actions undertaken were supported by extra-budgetary funds from the Government of Spain as well as through FAO Regular Programme funds.

17. FAO also undertook various activities to improve the sustainable use and development of the genetic resources of bees that are managed for food and agriculture. In collaboration with the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale del Lazio e della Toscana "M. Aleandri", Apimondia and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, FAO finalized guidelines on *Good beekeeping practices for sustainable apiculture*,³⁰ and the *Visual manual on good beekeeping practices for small-scale beekeepers in Africa*.³¹ The documents include some sections on breeding and genetics but mainly address other topics related to sustainable beekeeping. FAO has continued to organize events to commemorate World Bee Day³² and to raise awareness of the importance of honey bees and other pollinators for food and agriculture. In addition, FAO supported a TCP³³ in Rwanda on bee keeping and honey bee value chains.

Strategic Priority Area 3. Conservation

18. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, took note of the *Draft practical guide on innovations in cryoconservation of animal genetic resources*,³⁴ and requested FAO to finalize and disseminate it and to encourage countries to make full use of it, according to their specific needs.³⁵ For environmental and financial reasons, the document will be published in electronic format only.³⁶

19. The Commission further requested FAO to organize workshops to raise awareness about the practical guide and its content.³⁷ In addition, the Commission also called upon countries to place particular emphasis on the conservation of AnGR through either *in vivo* or *in vitro* methods, as appropriate, and requested FAO to provide complementary technical and policy support.³⁸ In response to these requests, FAO collaborated with the Nordic Genetic Resources Center (NordGen) and co-organized a series of 10 webinars to disseminate the information contained in the practical guide and build capacity for gene banking of AnGR. The webinars were held from May to December 2022 and were attended by between 40 and 90 participants, depending on the topic addressed. Participants were from all global regions. Recordings of the webinars and PDF files of all presentations have been made available on the FAO³⁹ and NordGen⁴⁰ websites.

²⁷ Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal.

²⁸ <https://www.fao.org/3/i5771e/i5771e.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.fao.org/pastoralist-knowledge-hub/en/>

³⁰ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb5353en/cb5353en.pdf>

³¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb4576en/cb4576en.pdf>

³² <http://www.fao.org/world-bee-day/en/>

³³ CGRFA/WG-AnGR-12/23/3/Inf.1.

³⁴ CGRFA-18/21/10.2/Inf.1.

³⁵ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 74.

³⁶ <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3078en>

³⁷ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 74.

³⁸ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 70.

³⁹ <https://www.fao.org/animal-genetics/events/intergovernmental-technical-working-group-on-angr/webinars/en/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.nordgen.org/en/cryo-conservation-webinars/>

Strategic Priority Area 4. Policies, institutions and capacity-building

20. FAO continued to offer support upon request to countries and regional bodies in the development of policies related to the management of AnGR, including National Strategies and Action Plans, and national laws and legislation. FAO participated in the review process of the *Genetic Resources Strategy for Europe*,⁴¹ which was developed by the European regional focal points for animal, forest and plant genetic resources as part of the European Union-sponsored GenRes Bridge⁴² project.

21. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, requested FAO to continue to support regional and subregional networks.⁴³ In this regard, FAO continued its collaboration with the Regional Focal Points for Europe and for Latin America and the Caribbean. FAO organized or contributed to 12 meetings and workshops for NC-AnGR during the reporting period.

22. FAO and its partners contributed to the development and/or implementation of three global projects and 47 regional or national projects involving 91 countries.⁴⁴ FAO organized, with partners, 20 national, regional and global capacity-building events,⁴⁵ most of which were held virtually due to the global pandemic. FAO staff have served on the advisory boards or stakeholder panels for several international collaborative research projects. FAO also serves on the editorial board of *Genetic Resources*,⁴⁶ an open-access scientific journal launched by the GenRes Bridge project.

23. FAO has collaborated with the European Federation of Animal Science (EAAP) and the European Regional Focal Point (ERFP) in the organization of special sessions related to AnGR at EAAP annual meetings. Topics of the sessions included (i) the use of genomic data for conservation activities, (ii) joining forces in the use and conservation of genetic resources, (iii) crossbreeding and conservation of local breeds, (iv) coordination of local and transboundary breed conservation; and (v) the role of *in situ* and *ex situ* strategies. FAO also participated in an ERFP capacity building session (organized under the GenRes Bridge project), and in ERFP *ad hoc* actions on transboundary breeds and on improving interoperability of the databases used in management of AnGR. FAO collaborated with the Iberoamerican Network for Conservation of the Biodiversity of Local Domestic Animals (Red CONBIAND)⁴⁷ to develop capacity in the management of AnGR in Latin America and the Caribbean.

24. FAO provided support to CJN in organizing the IAEA *International Symposium on Sustainable Animal Production and Health – Current Status and Way Forward*.⁴⁸ The symposium originally planned as an in-person event for June 2020, had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was finally held virtually from 28 June to 2 July, 2021. The symposium included several sessions that addressed issues related to the management of AnGR. More than 3 000 people from 169 countries registered for the event and the number of simultaneous participants exceeded 600 people.

25. FAO continues to maintain the Domestic Animal Diversity Network (DAD-Net) and regional subgroups as an informal forum for the discussion of issues relevant to the management of AnGR. As of October 2022, nearly 3 400 people from 156 countries were subscribed to the network. During 2021 and 2022, an average of more than 300 messages per year were exchanged through DAD-Net. DAD-

⁴¹ <http://www.genresbridge.eu/fileadmin/templates/Genres/Uploads/Documents/GRS4E.pdf>

⁴² <http://www.genresbridge.eu>

⁴³ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 74.

⁴⁴ CGRFA/WG-AnGR-12/23/3/Inf.1.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ <http://www.genresbridge.eu/resources/genetic-resources-journal/>

⁴⁷ <https://conbiand.site/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.iaea.org/events/aphs2021>

Net continues to be a unique and effective means of sharing experiences, disseminating information and facilitating informal discussions among individuals involved in the management of AnGR.

26. FAO continues to increase its social media presence with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of AnGR. Since 2020, when FAO began posting messages on the @FAOLivestock Twitter account⁴⁹, the number of followers rose to more than 35 000. Content includes regular quizzes on livestock breeds and facts about AnGR.

27. The first session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) Sub-Committee on Livestock (Sub-Committee), was held in March 2022 as a virtual event. The session included an information document entitled *Progress in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*⁵⁰ and informed delegates about the purpose and activities of the Working Group.

III. COLLABORATION

28. FAO continued to strengthen its interactions with scientific and non-governmental organizations, Regional Focal Points and regional networks. As described throughout this document, FAO maintains its recognized technical competence in the management of AnGR through participation in various scientific endeavours, including by undertaking in-house research and contributing to research and development projects, organizing and leading sessions at international scientific conferences and publishing scientific publications.

29. During the 26th World's Poultry Congress (WPC), held in August 2022, FAO, in collaboration with the French Branch of the World's Poultry Science Association, supported the organization of a session on "Diversity of production systems and services they deliver to humans: towards an agroecological perspective" and another session focusing on "Poultry production for insuring food security". FAO was also involved in presented two papers at the 12th World Congress on Genetics Applied to Livestock Production.

IV. THE FUNDING STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

30. The Commission, at its Twelfth Regular Session, adopted the *Funding Strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*⁵¹ (Funding Strategy) and requested FAO to implement it.⁵² The Funding Strategy covers "all known and potential sources of financial resources" that support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, including bilateral and multilateral support, domestic support, Regular Programme resources of FAO and voluntary contributions to the FAO Trust Account established for supporting national and regional projects for implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

Status of the FAO Trust Account

⁴⁹ <https://twitter.com/FAOLivestock>

⁵⁰ <https://www.fao.org/3/ni079en/ni079en.pdf>; <https://www.fao.org/3/ni079fr/ni079fr.pdf>;
<https://www.fao.org/3/ni079es/ni079es.pdf>; <https://www.fao.org/3/ni079zh/ni079zh.pdf>;
<https://www.fao.org/3/ni079ar/ni079ar.pdf>; <https://www.fao.org/3/ni079ru/ni079ru.pdf>

⁵¹ CGRFA-12/09/Report, Appendix C.

⁵² CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraph 43.

31. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, invited donors to contribute to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, including by contributing to the Funding Strategy. No funds were received during the intersessional period. No call for proposals was therefore issued.

Contributions from the Regular Programmes of FAO and IAEA

32. During the 2020-21 biennium, work on AnGR, including the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, contributed to four outcomes of the FAO's *Medium Term Plan 2018-21*⁵³ primarily relating to: Strategic Objective 2 - *Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable*. For 2020–21, the portion of FAO's Regular Programme resources allocated for work on AnGR was around USD 1.7 million. As indicated previously, due to the global pandemic and associated travel restrictions, the work emphasized core activities, namely the intergovernmental process, DAD-IS and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and finalization of publications, but also included inputs to cross-cutting initiatives, particularly those involving biodiversity on a cross-sectoral level.

33. For the 2022-23 biennium, work on AnGR will contribute to all four “Betters” and nine different Programme Priority Areas (PPA) within the *Medium Term Plan 2022-25*,⁵⁴ indicating the multi-factorial contribution of AnGR to food and agriculture. The greatest contribution by far is to the PPA *Better Environment 3: Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture*. Other PPA receiving substantial contributions are *Better Production 1: Green innovation* and *Better Production 5: Digital agriculture*.

34. During the 2020-21 biennium, the value of FAO TCP contributing to this work amounted to approximately USD 1.0 million, and from the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme through CJN approximately USD 2.2 million. CJN also contributed approximately USD 0.25 million through its CRP programme.

Voluntary contributions to FAO

35. FAO received funds from Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (total of approximately USD4.6 million) to support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action by means of regional and country projects. For some of these projects, countries provided financial support for domestic activities, with FAO providing technical support. In some instances the financial support involved funds the countries had received from donors, specifically the European Union and the Global Environment Facility. The funds under these programme cooperation agreements helped FAO provide catalytic funds for special activities for all four SPAs.

Resources not under FAO control

36. The Funding Strategy lists four different types of relevant resources, including resources that are not under FAO control. For most countries, FAO does not have detailed information about these resources. However, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, the Commission requested FAO to invite countries to report on projects that contribute to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, for consideration by the Working Group and the Commission.⁵⁵

37. In response to this request, in July 2022, FAO sent an informal message to all 175 NC-AnGR and their alternates inviting countries to report on their projects related to the Global Plan of Action.

⁵³ C 2019/3

⁵⁴ <https://www.fao.org/3/ne576en/ne576en.pdf>

⁵⁵ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 72.

Reminders were sent in August and September 2022. Responses were received from 17 countries.⁵⁶ Information about 49 country projects that were active during the intersessional period are summarized in the document *Summary progress report on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*.⁵⁷ The countries responding represented a wide range of levels of economic development. In general, higher income countries reported greater expenditure on AnGR projects. Some countries reported having single projects addressing all aspects of AnGR, whereas other countries reported multiple projects with each of them addressing single species and specific activities. Most projects reported were related to SPA2 (33), followed by SPA3 (16), SPA1 (12), and SPA4 (9).

V. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

38. The Working Group is invited to review the progress made in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. It may wish to recommend that the Commission:

- call upon countries to continue to implement the Global Plan of Action with a view to contribute to global food security, sustainable rural development and the achievement of SDGs 2 and 15;
- request FAO to continue to support countries in implementing the Global Plan of Action;
- invite donors to contribute to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, including by providing funds to the FAO Trust Account; and
- request FAO and all relevant stakeholders to continue raising awareness on the importance of AnGR and the roles of livestock keepers and of livestock species and breeds and their production systems in the provision of ecosystem services.

⁵⁶ Argentina, Brazil, Ethiopia, Finland, Gabon, Italy, Kenya, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Serbia, Spain, Togo, Tonga, United States of America, Uruguay, and Yemen.

⁵⁷ CGRFA/WG-AnGR-12/23/3/Inf.1.