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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

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

Fourth Session

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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its Eighteenth Regular Session, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) highlighted the need for the development of quantifiable indicators for the monitoring of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Aquatic Genetic Resources* (Global Plan of Action)¹ and requested that these be incorporated into the global information system for aquatic genetic resources (AqGR) under development by FAO, as appropriate.²
2. This document reports on the status of development and implementation of FAO's Aquatic Genetic Resources Information System (AquaGRIS) established by FAO for farmed types of AqGR. In addition, the document proposes resource and process indicators which National Focal Points for AqGR should report on, at regular intervals, with a view to (i) address the recognized lack of information on AqGR and (ii) effectively monitor the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. The proposed draft indicators are presented in the document *Draft indicators for monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the conservation, sustainable use and development of aquatic genetic resources for food and agriculture* (CGRFA/WG-AqGR-4/23/4/Inf.1).
3. Furthermore, this document proposes a timeline for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, which should be integrated with the preparation of *The Second Report on the State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.

II. STATUS OF THE AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES INFORMATION SYSTEM (AquaGRIS)

4. According to the report on *The State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (SoW-AqGR), monitoring and reporting of AqGR are currently insufficient, especially below the level of species. While countries monitor, and report to FAO, aquaculture production by species or species groups, there are inconsistencies in these reporting systems. When reporting for the SoW-AqGR, for example, many countries listed farming of species that they do not record in the country production data routinely reported to FAO, and vice versa. As a result, access to standardized and authoritative information on AqGR is difficult. One of the key priorities of the Global Plan of Action is therefore to maintain and/or develop, promote and institutionalize national, regional and global standardized information systems for the collection, validation and monitoring of, and reporting on, AqGR below the level of species.
5. As reported to previous sessions of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group),³ AquaGRIS has been developed to address the recognized lack of information on AqGR globally. The information system makes critical information available for key stakeholders, including policy makers, resource managers, researchers, aquaculturists and international/regional organizations. AquaGRIS provides the user with access to a searchable registry of primary and secondary farmed types which will include information on more than 600 aquaculture species across six taxonomic categories. Users of AquaGRIS can analyse the diversity of farmed types at national, regional and global levels and identify the status of management of these resources.
6. A prototype of AquaGRIS⁴ was launched in May 2022 and enables access to information, entered by species' level experts, presently covering 114 species with data from over 41 different countries. Development of the full version of AquaGRIS is on-going with the main additions being the inclusion of information on wild relative genetic resources and the development of new, expanded and improved interfaces for data collection, data validation and data query.
7. Data collection for AquaGRIS will be coordinated through National Focal Points and involves the collection of data at the level of the species, farmed types and wild stocks. Data entry will be via a

¹ <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb9905en>

² CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 59.

³ CGRFA/WG-AqGR-3/23/3.

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/fishery/aquagris/home>

web-based data entry interface or alternatively via an MS Excel-based questionnaire for off line data collection.

8. The data gathered and stored in AquaGRIS are focussed on and specific to the status of sustainable management of farmed types and wild relatives of aquaculture species. While AquaGRIS is comprehensive and relatively broad in scope, it currently does not cover all issues relevant to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, particularly those under priority area four (policies, institutions and capacity building).

III. INDICATORS FOR MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

9. In line with the Global Plan of Action and to effectively monitor its implementation, it is necessary to collect information relevant to all four of its priority areas. In developing the indicators for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, FAO reviewed the four priority areas and considered how progress could realistically be assessed against the long term goals of each priority area and the more specific goals related to the 21 strategic priorities. In doing so, FAO took into consideration data collected through AquaGRIS and data available from other existing information resources, with a view to avoiding double-reporting and minimizing the reporting burden for National Focal Points. Information relevant to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and currently not covered by AquaGRIS will therefore be sourced through an additional questionnaire.

10. With the proposed set of resource and process indicators, a dual monitoring system is suggested: countries will report on farmed types and wild stocks of AqGR through AquaGRIS, on the one hand, and on any relevant activities taken to implement the Global Plan of Action through the questionnaire, on the other. Thus, the proposed indicators fall into two different categories: resource indicators measuring the status of AqGR at national, regional and global level, as reflected in the data contained in AquaGRIS; and process indicators that relate to national, regional and global processes concerning the management of AqGR. Indicators for the high level long-term goals are referred to as headline indicators. Priority areas 2 (conservation and sustainable use) and 3 (development of genetic resources for aquaculture) each have two headline indicators covering key aspects of their long term goals. For some strategic priorities, multiple indicators are proposed.

11. Presently, indicators of the status of AqGR are generally not considered in monitoring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) agenda. On-going review and development of SDGs and the development of global biodiversity indicators, in particular for Target 4 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework,⁵ may provide opportunity for these indicators to be aligned with the indicators developed for monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and for greater consideration of the status of AqGR within these international instruments.

Resource indicators

12. The resource indicators can be reported directly through AquaGRIS. Questions in the AquaGRIS questionnaire used for data collection on aquaculture species and their farmed types and wild relatives will be adapted such that the data entered into AquaGRIS can be aggregated/quantified to provide indicators of the status of AqGR at the respective levels. In the final development of the full version of AquaGRIS, the online data query interface will allow for the generation of reports on the status of the resource indicators.

13. Resource indicators are proposed applicable to strategic priorities within priority areas 1, 2 and 3 (“inventory, characterization and monitoring”, “conservation and sustainable use” and “development of AqGR”, respectively) and include 3 headline indicators.⁶

14. Once the full version of AquaGRIS is released, the National Focal Points on AqGR will be able to generate reports on resource indicators through AquaGRIS. Training in the use of AquaGRIS

⁵ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf>

⁶ CGRFA/WG-AqGR-4/23/4/Inf.1.

will be conducted following the release of the full version in 2023, through a series of virtual webinars and, where feasible, in-person workshops.

Process indicators

15. National Focal Points will be invited to report on the process indicators by completing a qualitative questionnaire that will be developed upon finalization of the indicators. The questionnaire will allow for scoring (e.g. “yes, exists already” – “yes, under development” – “no, but development is planned” – “does not exist and is not planned”) and will be accompanied by guidance notes. Prior to its first use, it will be tested by National Focal Points to identify any issues with regard to ambiguity and specific difficulties in answering the question. As requested by the Commission,⁷ the questionnaire will be complemented by questions related to climate change.⁸

16. Process indicators, including 3 headline indicators, are proposed covering strategic priorities in all four priority areas.⁹

IV. TIMELINE FOR REPORTING

17. In the case of the resource indicators, it is suggested that National Focal Points be invited to update national information in AquaGRIS every two years. Based on the data submitted through AquaGRIS, FAO will compile reports on the status and trends of AqGR and report to the Working Group and the Commission at their biennial sessions.

18. In the case of process indicators, it is suggested that National Focal Points be invited to complete the questionnaire every five years. Based on responses received to the questionnaires, FAO will compile progress reports on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action every five years to the Working Group and the Commission. Every second report on process indicators (i.e. once per decade) will feed directly into the next global assessment.

19. Given the timeline for finalization of the indicators and monitoring system, *The Second Report on the State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* may need to be postponed and the MYPOW¹⁰ adjusted accordingly.

20. In addition, FAO will report on its activities in support of the implementation of the Global Plan of Action by countries to every session of the Working Group and the Commission.

V. NEXT STEPS

21. Following the review by the Working Group, the indicators and their related means of verification will be reviewed by the COFI Advisory Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources and Technologies. National Focal Points will also be invited to provide feedback on the indicators and means of verification, via a written feedback procedure and regional virtual workshops.

22. The review and refinement period will also present an opportunity to review the indicators for the monitoring of the Global Plan of Action in the context of the indicators endorsed for the monitoring of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework of the CBD.

23. Following the above consultation process, a finalized set of indicators, a time-table for monitoring and reporting and a questionnaire will be presented to the next sessions of the Working Group and the Commission, for their consideration.

⁷ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 19.

⁸ CGRFA/WG-AqGR-4/23/5, *Appendix I*.

⁹ CGRFA/WG-AqGR-4/23/4/Inf.1.

¹⁰ CGRFA/WG-AqGR-4/23/8

VI. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

24. The Working Group may wish to:

- i) review and revise, as needed, the indicators and timeline proposed for monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, for consideration by the Commission;
- ii) recommend that the Commission request the Secretariat to hold further consultations, including virtual consultations of National Focal Points, on the proposed indicators and a time-table for country reporting, with a view to provide the documents to the fifth Session of the Working Group, for its consideration; and
- iii) recommend that the Commission request FAO to prepare guidelines for the preparation of national reports on resource and process indicators.