



The International Treaty
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



Introduction to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture





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Foreword

Humanity is facing the interconnected challenges of food security, climate change and the loss of agricultural biodiversity. Over one billion people are suffering from chronic hunger and malnutrition. At the same time, world population continues to grow and climate change is causing new pressures on agriculture. World food production has to increase by 70 percent by 2050 to meet this increasing demand, while relying on a natural resource base that is about to reach its limits. Plant breeding will be essential to meet the food security challenge in the context of climate change. Crop varieties that achieve significantly higher yields and that are able to withstand new diseases and extreme weather events will have to be developed. For this, it is crucial to conserve the existing crop diversity, and to allow agricultural researchers, breeders and farmers access to it.


With the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (hereafter “International Treaty”) the international community has created a powerful tool to tackle this triple challenge. The International Treaty provides national authorities with the legal framework to take action for the conservation and the sustainable use of their crop diversity. Moreover, it has established a mechanism that facilitates international exchanges of crop genetic material, and a fund that supports projects for the conservation and the sustainable use of crop diversity worldwide.

The translation of the provisions of the International Treaty into effective measures at the national level is fundamental for the International Treaty to live up to its full potential. The need for capacity building and training to that end has been voiced by a large number of Contracting Parties and various stakeholder groups. This educational module is one means by which the Secretariat seeks to strengthen capacities on the operation of the International Treaty.

This introduction module is the first in a series of a total of five educational modules. Its lessons are aimed at a broad target learner group, especially at learners that are new to the International Treaty. The subsequent modules (which are currently under development) will enter into detail about the main components of the International Treaty. Each of these modules will be built up by several self-contained lessons which are designed for specific target learner groups.

This module is the result of a participatory process involving a broad range of experts. A support group has provided guidance in shaping the outline of the different lessons through an electronic consultation process. Its lessons have been prepared by the Secretariat with the help of peer reviewers of different stakeholder groups. The lessons of the subsequent modules are being both written and reviewed by external experts, under the overall coordination of the Secretariat. The final series will include additional support material, including exercises and customizable presentations for trainers.

We are confident that these training materials will substantially contribute to the effective implementation of the International Treaty.



Shakeel Bhatti

Secretary

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Overview

LESSON 1

A Global Treaty for Food Security in an Era of Climate Change

Page 1

This lesson exhibits the importance of the International Treaty as a policy vehicle to tackle some of the major global challenges humanity is currently facing: climate change, food security and the loss of crop diversity. It provides up-to-date overviews of trends and scenarios for all three challenges, and shows how the main components of the International Treaty contribute to cope with these.

LESSON 2

Objectives, Scope and Basic Concepts

Page 27

Lesson 2 is especially designed for learners that are completely new to the International Treaty. It lays down the basics of the International Treaty, including the main advantages of being a Contracting Party. The second part of the lesson provides a glossary of key terms and concepts. This glossary will be useful for the full comprehension of the learning module and the International Treaty, in particular to learners who do not have a technical background in the biodiversity policy area.

LESSON 3

History of the International Treaty

Page 57

For those learners that are interested in a little more background on the origins of the International Treaty, this lesson goes back to the middle of the 20th century. It presents the socio-economic factors that led to the adoption of a first instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of crop diversity in the early 1980s. The lesson then shows how negotiations on this instrument were reopened in the 1990s, in order to culminate after seven long years in the adoption of the International Treaty.

LESSON 4

Main Components and Governance of the International Treaty

Page 89

Lesson 4 provides learners with a solid knowledge base on the four main components of the International Treaty: (1) Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, (2) Farmers' Rights, (3) the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing and (4) the Funding Strategy. The lesson thereby also provides the starting point for the subsequent modules of this series, each of which will be dedicated to the in-depth study of one of those main components.

LESSON 5

The Legal Architecture Governing Crop Diversity and Partnerships for Implementation

Page 123

This lesson illustrates the broader international legal framework within which the International Treaty operates. It introduces other international agreements of relevance to the policy area of crop diversity and the International Treaty that deal with conservation and sustainable use, access and benefit-sharing and intellectual property rights. The lesson also presents some of the major partnerships that the Governing Body of the International Treaty and its Secretariat maintain with other international institutions and bodies.

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Patrick Mink from the Secretariat was the lead author and editor of the entire module.

Shakeel Bhatti, Secretary of the International Treaty, had the overall responsibility for this publication.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABS	Access and benefit-sharing
AGP	Plant Production and Protection Division (FAO)
Bonn Guidelines	Bonn Guidelines on Access to Genetic Resources and Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising out of their Utilization
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CGIAR Centres	International Agricultural Research Centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
Code of Conduct	International Code of Conduct for Plant Germplasm Collecting and Transfer
Commission	Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (FAO; until 1995 “Commission on Plant Genetic Resources”)
Crop Trust	Global Crop Diversity Trust
CWR	Crop Wild Relatives
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GIPB	Global Partnership Initiative for Plant Breeding Capacity Building
Global Plan of Action	Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
Governing Body	Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
International Treaty	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
International Undertaking	International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights

Joint Programme	FAO/Bioversity International Joint Programme for Capacity Building
MAT	Mutually agreed terms
Multilateral System	Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing (of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture)
Nagoya Protocol	Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity
NordGen	Nordic Genetic Resource Centre
PBR	Plant Breeders' Right
PIC	Prior informed consent
PGRFA	Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
Secretariat	Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
SMTA	Standard Material Transfer Agreement
State of the World Report	Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
Strategic Plan	Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Benefit-sharing Fund of the Funding Strategy
TRIPS Agreement	Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UPOV	International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants
UPOV Convention	International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WIPO IGC	WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore
WTO	World Trade Organization