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Organización  
de las  
Naciones Unidas  
para la  
Alimentación y la  
Agricultura

# COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

## Item 2.4 of the Provisional Agenda

### Fourteenth Regular Session

Rome, 15 - 19 April 2013

### REPORT OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE AD HOC TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING FOR GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Longyearbyen (Svalbard), Norway, 11-13 September 2012

COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR  
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

# **First Session of the Ad Hoc Technical Working Group on Access and Benefit- Sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture**

**Longyearbyen (Svalbard), Norway**

**11 – 13 September 2012**



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

**REPORT OF THE AD HOC TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON ACCESS AND  
BENEFIT-SHARING FOR GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

**First Session**

**Longyearbyen (Svalbard), Norway, 11 – 13 September 2012**

The documents of the First Session of the Ad Hoc Technical Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture are to be found on the internet at:

<http://www.fao.org/nr/cgrfa/cgrfa-meetings/cgrfa-abs/wg-abs-1/en/>

They may also be obtained from:

The Secretary  
FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture  
Natural Resources Management and Environment Department  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla  
00153 Rome, Italy

E-mail: [cgrfa@fao.org](mailto:cgrfa@fao.org)

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## CONTENTS

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	<i>Paragraphs</i>
I. Opening of the session	1 – 7
II. Election of the Chair, Vice-Chairs and <i>Rapporteur</i>	8 – 9
III. Adoption of the agenda and timetable	10
IV. Distinctive features of the different sectors and subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture	11 – 13
V. Guiding and assisting countries in addressing possible modalities of and options for access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture	14 – 17
VI. Closing statements	18 – 22

### *Appendices*

- A. Agenda of the First Session of the Ad Hoc Technical Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
- B. Distinctive features of genetic resources for food and agriculture requiring distinctive solutions for access and benefit-sharing
- C. List of documents
- D. Members of the Ad Hoc Technical Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
- E. List of delegates and observers

## I. OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The First Session of the Ad Hoc Technical Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group) was held in Longyearbyen (Svalbard), Norway, from 11 to 13 September 2012. The list of delegates and observers is given in *Appendix E*.
2. Mr Brad Fraleigh, Chair of the Fourteenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission), opened the meeting. He welcomed delegates and observers and thanked the Government of Norway for hosting the meeting and for its hospitality in the unique environment of Longyearbyen, Svalbard. He also welcomed Palau as a new Member of the Commission.
3. Ms Ane Handsdatter Kismul, Political Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, Government of Norway, welcomed delegates and observers and highlighted the importance of holding the meeting at the location of the Global Seed Vault, where almost three-quarters of a million of seed samples from all over the world were stored. She noted that there were many tasks in genetic resources for food and agriculture that, in the future, would require intergovernmental collaboration within the framework of the Commission. In addressing access and benefit-sharing, she stressed the need to consider financial supporting mechanisms and to acknowledge the contribution of local communities, smallholder and family farmers to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture. Ms Handsdatter Kismul recognized the Commission and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Treaty) as two important governance instruments at the global level and also acknowledged other relevant international instruments, such as the 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 (Nagoya Protocol). She reiterated that the meeting of the Working Group came at an opportune time. The world needed practical and efficient systems for the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture.
4. Ms Christin Kristoffersen, Chair of the Community Council of Longyearbyen, recalled the connection between Svalbard and agriculture, as symbolized by the Global Seed Vault. She noted that the loss of biological diversity could have negative consequences for agriculture, including the irreversible inability to grow crops that can adapt to changing climatic conditions. Ms Kristoffersen noted on-going research on the “re-growing” potential of seeds stored in the Global Seed Vault. She wished participants a productive meeting for the benefit of biodiversity for food and agriculture.
5. Ms Linda Collette, Secretary of the Commission, thanked the Government of Norway for hosting and financially supporting the meeting, as well as the Governments of Spain and Switzerland for their financial contributions. Ms Collette recalled that the meeting of the Working Group was part of the Commission’s long-standing history of work on access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture, that started with the 1983 International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, later revised into the International Treaty. Ms Collette highlighted food security and rural poverty eradication as overriding objectives of policies for genetic resources for food and agriculture, including policies on access and benefit-sharing. Ms Collette noted that it was of pivotal importance to ensure that, as stated by the Commission, work on access and benefit-sharing “move in a direction supportive of the special needs of the agricultural sector, in regard to all components of biological diversity of interest to food and agriculture.”
6. Working Group Members took the floor to thank the Government of Norway for hosting the meeting and enabling the participation of delegates from developing countries. They also

stressed the importance of the meeting in addressing the special role of genetic resources for food and agriculture for food security.

7. Statements were made by International Organizations, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, CABI, the International Organization for Biological Control (IOBC), and the International Treaty.

## **II. ELECTION OF THE CHAIR, VICE-CHAIRS AND *RAPPORTEUR***

8. The Working Group elected Ms Grethe Helene Evjen (Norway) as Chairperson of the Working Group. Mr Pedro Brancante Machado (Brazil), Mr M. Khalequzzman Akanda Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Mr Graybill Munkombwe (Zambia), Mr Raj Patil (Australia), Mr Javad Mozafari Hashjin (Islamic Republic of Iran) and Mr Brad Fraleigh (Canada) were elected as Vice-Chairpersons of the Working Group. Ms Tashi Yangzome Dorji (Bhutan) was elected as the meeting's *Rapporteur*.

9. The Chair thanked the Working Group for the confidence it placed in her. She recalled the Terms of Reference of the Working Group according to which it provides a report on the outcome of the meeting to the Fourteenth Regular Session of the Commission and, prior to that, to the Commission's intergovernmental technical working groups.<sup>1</sup>

## **III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND TIMETABLE**

10. The Working Group adopted the agenda, as given in *Appendix A*.

## **IV. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE DIFFERENT SECTORS AND SUBSECTORS OF GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

11. The Working Group considered the document, *Distinctive features of genetic resources for food and agriculture*.<sup>2</sup> It took note of the relevant background study papers.<sup>3</sup>

12. Based on the above mentioned document, the Working Group decided to agree on the list of distinctive features of genetic resources for food and agriculture requiring distinctive solutions for access and benefit-sharing, as given in *Appendix B*. The Working Group did not have time to consider the distinctive features of the various subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture. It agreed that it would be appropriate to have the distinctive features of subsectors addressed by the intergovernmental technical working groups, where they exist, as suggested by the Commission in the Terms of Reference for the Working Group.

13. The Working Group agreed that a more precise delineation of the scope of genetic resources for food and agriculture and their subsectors, in particular forest genetic resources, would be useful to the Commission's further work on access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture, and also for national authorities designing and implementing domestic access and benefit-sharing systems. The descriptions of genetic resources for food and agriculture and agricultural biodiversity by the Commission and the Convention on Biological Diversity were noted.

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<sup>1</sup> CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/Inf. 2.

<sup>2</sup> CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/3.

<sup>3</sup> Background study papers Nos. 42; 43; 44; 45; 46; 47; 48; 59.

## V. GUIDING AND ASSISTING COUNTRIES IN ADDRESSING POSSIBLE MODALITIES OF AND OPTIONS FOR ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING FOR GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

14. The Working Group considered the documents, *Possible modalities for addressing access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture*<sup>4</sup> and, *Options to guide and assist countries in developing legislative, administrative and policy measures*.<sup>5</sup> It noted that the background information referred to in paragraph 11 above was also relevant to these considerations.

15. The Working Group agreed to consider approaches and modalities for addressing access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture, in exploring options for the Commission to assist and guide countries in developing legislative, administrative and policy measures for access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture.

16. The Working Group agreed that it was premature to consider recommending to negotiate an international agreement or agreements on access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture.

17. The Working Group recommended that the Commission, taking into account the International Treaty, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Nagoya Protocol and other relevant international agreements and subject to the availability of resources, where relevant:

- (a) Encourage countries that have not done so, to ratify or accede to the International Treaty as soon as possible and promote its full implementation in regard to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and recognize the importance of providing support to developing countries for this purpose, in particular through the capacity building activities under the International Treaty;
- (b) Encourage countries to consider the option of ratifying or acceding to the Nagoya Protocol, taking into account its role in the international regime on access and benefit-sharing, as well as the importance of genetic resources for food and agriculture and their special role for food security;
- (c) Invite the Governing Body of the International Treaty, in its continued governance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, to continue to closely coordinate with the Commission in order to address in a complementary way the distinctive features and specific uses of genetic resources for food and agriculture especially in light of the development of access and benefit-sharing measures at both national and international levels;
- (d) Request the Secretary to develop, upon request from governments, targeted awareness-raising activities, including materials, with regard to access and benefit-sharing for different subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture and, in collaboration with all relevant FAO divisions and the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Convention on Biological Diversity, provide support to national, regional and international awareness-raising processes on access and benefit-sharing, including in the context of wider access and benefit-sharing initiatives implemented by other organizations and institutions;

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<sup>4</sup> CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/5.

<sup>5</sup> CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/4.

- (e) Request the Secretary to develop targeted capacity-building and technical assistance activities with regard to access and benefit-sharing for different subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture, in cooperation with the Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Treaty and with relevant stakeholders, taking into account existing regional and national institutions and the special needs of farmers and indigenous and local communities;
- (f) Request the Secretariat to work with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to ensure the former's active participation at regional and national level meetings, organized by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to discuss the Nagoya Protocol, including, as appropriate, making presentations at such meetings and providing its expertise and inputs in the preparation of documentation for such meetings, with the purpose of sharing information on access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture, taking into account the relevant provisions of the Joint Work Plan of the Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Phase 2 (2011-2020),<sup>6</sup> and the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between the Secretary of the International Treaty and the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.<sup>7</sup>
- (g) Request the Members of the Commission to report, at national and/or regional levels, on the conditions under which specific genetic resources for food and agriculture are exchanged and utilized with the engagement of relevant stakeholders, including institutions, in all subsectors; request the Secretary to compile the information obtained, for consideration by the intergovernmental technical working groups, in order that the Commission can decide on developing model contractual clauses for subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture other than plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;
- (h) Request the Secretary to invite stakeholder groups to report on voluntary codes of conduct, guidelines and best practices and/or standards in relation to access and benefit-sharing for subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture and to compile them for consideration by the intergovernmental technical working groups;
- (i) Request the Secretary to prepare, based on regional consultations as well as submissions by governments and international organizations and all relevant stakeholders from all subsectors, including farmers and indigenous and local communities, draft elements for voluntary guidelines at the appropriate level for domestic legislative, administrative and policy measures for access and benefit-sharing for different subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture, taking account of the existing different instruments and stages of international discussions on access and benefit-sharing for different subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture, and in particular the International Treaty and its Governing Body, and taking into account relevant elements from options (g) and (h) above, for future review; and
- (j) Develop a matrix illustrating international practices, initiatives and instruments of relevance to the subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture in the context of access and benefit-sharing that are or could form mutually supportive parts of the international regime on access and benefit-sharing, including recognition of the distinctive features of genetic resources for food and agriculture.

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<sup>6</sup> CGRFA-13/11/Inf.11.

<sup>7</sup> IT/GB-4/11/22.

## VI. CLOSING STATEMENTS

18. The Working Group expressed its gratitude to the Chair for her wisdom and guidance and the manner in which she had conducted the session. It also noted with appreciation the guidance provided by the Vice-Chairs and the dedicated work of the *Rapporteur*.

19. Several representatives from developing countries expressed their appreciation for the financial support from the Government of Norway that had enabled their participation in the session.

20. A representative from the European Region announced that the Region would submit additional relevant information not contained in the report of the meeting and requested the Secretariat to make this information available to the intergovernmental technical working groups and to the Commission.

21. The Working Group thanked the Secretary and the Secretariat and all the staff from FAO for their efforts before and during the session, noting the importance of all of the staff that had made the session possible.

22. The Secretary noted that the meeting had made important recommendations to the Commission. She thanked the governments that had provided financial support to the meeting of the Working Group and expressed her deep appreciation to the Member countries, the Chair, and Vice-Chairs for their advice and support, and to the interpreters, translators, technicians, and staff for their dedication.

## APPENDIX A

### **AGENDA OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE AD HOC TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING FOR GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

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1. Election of the Chair, Vice-Chairs and *Rapporteur*
2. Adoption of the agenda and timetable
3. Distinctive features of the different sectors and subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture
4. Possible modalities for addressing access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture
5. Options to guide and assist countries, upon their request, in developing legislative, administrative and policy measures
6. Other business
7. Adoption of the Report

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## APPENDIX B

### **DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE REQUIRING DISTINCTIVE SOLUTIONS FOR ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING**

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The distinctive features of genetic resources for food and agriculture requiring distinctive solutions for access and benefit-sharing are presented below in seven clusters. They aim to reflect an equilibrium between all subsectors of food and agriculture. Not every feature is necessarily applicable to each and every genetic resource for food and agriculture and the various subsectors often have different features. Further detailing of subsector-specific features may still be developed.

The features are distinctive, but not necessarily unique to genetic resources for food and agriculture. While other genetic resources may share with genetic resources for food and agriculture some of the features listed below, the specific combination of these features distinguishes genetic resources for food and agriculture from most other genetic resources.

#### **Cluster A: The role of genetic resources for food and agriculture for food security**

A.1 Genetic resources for food and agriculture are an integral part of agricultural and food production systems and play an essential role for achieving food security and the sustainable development of the food and agriculture sector.

A.2 Plant, animal, invertebrate and micro-organism genetic resources for food and agriculture form an interdependent network of genetic diversity in agricultural ecosystems.

#### **Cluster B: The role of human management**

B.1 The existence of most genetic resources for food and agriculture is closely linked to human activity and many genetic resources for food and agriculture can be regarded as human-modified forms of genetic resources.

B.2 The maintenance and evolution of many genetic resources for food and agriculture depend on continued human intervention, and their sustainable utilization in research, development and production is an important instrument to ensure conservation.

#### **Cluster C: International exchange and interdependence for food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture**

C.1 Historically, genetic resources for food and agriculture have been widely exchanged across communities, countries and regions over often long periods of time, and a relevant part of the genetic diversity used in food and agriculture today is of exotic origin.

C.2 Countries are interdependent with regard to genetic resources for food and agriculture and act both as providers of some genetic resources for food and agriculture and as recipients of others.

C.3 The international exchange of genetic resources for food and agriculture is essential to the functioning of the sector, and its importance is likely to increase in future.

**Cluster D: The nature of the innovation process**

D.1 The innovation process for genetic resources for food and agriculture is usually of incremental nature and the result of contributions made by many different people, including indigenous and local communities, farmers, researchers and breeders, in different places and at different points in time.

D.2 Many genetic resources for food and agriculture products are not developed out of an individual genetic resource, but with the contributions of several genetic resources for food and agriculture at different stages in the innovation process.

D.3 Most products developed with the use of genetic resources for food and agriculture can in turn be used as genetic resources for further research and development, which makes it difficult to draw a clear line between providers and recipients of genetic resources for food and agriculture.

D.4 Many agricultural products reach the market place in a form in which they may be used both as biological resources and as genetic resources.

**Cluster E: Holders and users of genetic resources for food and agriculture**

E.1 Genetic resources for food and agriculture are held and used by a broad range of very diverse stakeholders. There are distinct communities of providers and users with respect to the different subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture.

E.2 The different stakeholders managing and using genetic resources for food and agriculture are interdependent.

E.3 A significant amount of genetic resources for food and agriculture is privately held.

E.4 An important part of genetic resources for food and agriculture is held and can be accessed *ex situ*.

E.5 An important part of genetic resources for food and agriculture is conserved *in situ* and on farm under different financial, technical and legal conditions.

**Cluster F: Exchange practices for genetic resources for food and agriculture**

F.1 The exchange of genetic resources for food and agriculture takes place in the context of customary practices and existing communities of providers and users.

F.2 An extensive transfer of genetic material between different stakeholders along the value chain occurs in research and development.

**Cluster G: Benefits generated with the use of genetic resources for food and agriculture**

G.1 While the overall benefits of genetic resources for food and agriculture are very high, it is difficult to estimate at the time of the transaction the expected benefits of an individual sample of genetic resources for food and agriculture.

G.2 The use of genetic resources for food and agriculture may also generate important non-monetary benefits.

G.3 The use of genetic resources for food and agriculture may lead to external effects going far beyond the individual provider and recipient.

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## APPENDIX C

### LIST OF DOCUMENTS

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#### Working Documents

CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/1	Provisional agenda
CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/2	Provisional annotated agenda and timetable
CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/3	Distinctive features of genetic resources for food and agriculture
CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/4	Options to guide and assist countries in developing legislative, administrative and policy measures
CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/5	Possible modalities for addressing access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture

#### Information Documents

CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/Inf.1	Information note for participants
CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/Inf.2	Terms of Reference of the Ad Hoc Technical Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
CGRFA/WG-ABS-1/12/Inf.3	Members of the Ad Hoc Technical Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

#### Background Study Papers

Background study paper No.42	Framework study on food security and access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture
Background study paper No.43	The use and exchange of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture
Background study paper No.44	The use and exchange of forest genetic resources for food and agriculture
Background study paper No.45	The use and exchange of aquatic genetic resources for food and agriculture
Background study paper No.46	The use and exchange of microbial genetic resources for food and agriculture
Background study paper No.47	The use and exchange of biological control agents for food and agriculture
Background study paper No.48	The impact of climate change on countries' interdependence on genetic resources for food and agriculture
Background study paper No.59	Access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture – Current use and exchange practices, commonalities, differences and user community needs – Report from a multi-stakeholder expert dialogue

**Other documents**

CGRFA-13/11/Report	Report of the Thirteenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/X/1	Access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization

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**APPENDIX D**
**MEMBERS OF THE AD HOC TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON  
ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING FOR GENETIC RESOURCES FOR  
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**


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<i>Composition (no. of countries per region)</i>	<i>Country</i>
<b>Africa</b> (5)	Cameroon Eritrea Togo Tunisia Zambia
<b>Asia</b> (5)	Bangladesh Bhutan Indonesia Lao, People's Democratic Republic Thailand
<b>Europe</b> (5)	Netherlands Norway Spain Switzerland United Kingdom
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b> (5)	Brazil Chile Ecuador Guyana Paraguay
<b>Near East</b> (3)	Iran, Islamic Republic of Lebanon Yemen
<b>North America</b> (2)	Canada United States of America
<b>Southwest Pacific</b> (2)	Australia Cook Islands <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Palau replaced Cook Islands in this session of the Working Group.

**APPENDIX E****LIST OF DELEGATES AND OBSERVERS**

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Chair:	Ms Grethe Helene Evjen (Norway)
Vice-Chairs:	Mr Raj Patil (Australia)
	Mr M. Khalequzzman Akanda Chowdhury (Bangladesh)
	Mr Pedro Brancante Machado (Brazil)
	Mr Brad Fraleigh (Canada)
	Mr Javad Mozafari Hashjin (Islamic Republic of Iran)
	Mr Graybill Munkombwe (Zambia)
<i>Rapporteur:</i>	Ms Tashi Yangzome Dorji (Bhutan)

**MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP****BRAZIL****AUSTRALIA**

Mr Raj PATIL  
Assistant Director  
Multilateral Policy Trade and Market  
Access Division  
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and  
Forestry  
Phone: +61 2 62723058  
Fax: +61 2 62724600  
Email: [Raj.Patil@daff.gov.au](mailto:Raj.Patil@daff.gov.au)

**BANGLADESH**

Mr M. Khalequzzman Akanda  
CHOWDHURY  
Member-Director (Crops)  
Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council  
Farmgate  
Dhaka 1215  
Phone: +88 028118275  
Fax: + 88 028110924  
Email: [md-crops@barc.gov.bd](mailto:md-crops@barc.gov.bd)

**BHUTAN**

Ms Tashi Yangzome DORJI  
Programme Director  
National Biodiversity Center  
Ministry of Agriculture and Forests  
Thimpu  
Phone: +975 2 351416  
Fax: + 975 2351219  
Email: [yangzome2011@gmail.com](mailto:yangzome2011@gmail.com)

Mr Pedro BRANCANTE MACHADO  
Second Secretary, Permanent  
Representation of Brazil to FAO, IFAD and  
WFP  
Via S. Maria dell'Anima, 32  
00186 Rome - Italy  
Phone: +39 06 6789353  
Fax: +39 06 68398802  
Email: [pedro.brancante@brafao.it](mailto:pedro.brancante@brafao.it)

Mr Lidio CORADIN  
Gerente de Recursos Genéticos  
Secretaría de Biodiversidade e Florestas  
Ministry of Environment  
SEPN 505 Bloco "B" 4 andar  
70730-542 Brasilia, DF  
Phone: +61 20282029  
Email: [lidio.coradin@mma.gov.br](mailto:lidio.coradin@mma.gov.br)

Ms Marilia LOBO BURLE  
EMBRAPA  
Recursos Genéticos e Biotecnología  
Final W5 Norte  
Brasilia  
Phone: +55 6134484646  
Fax: +55 6133403666  
Email: [Marilia.burle@embrapa.br](mailto:Marilia.burle@embrapa.br)

Mr Marcio Antonio TEIXEIRA  
MAZZARO  
Legal Officer  
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and  
Food Supply  
Esplanada dos Ministérios  
Bloco "D" – Ed. Sede – Sala 635  
70043-900 – Brasilia, DF  
Phone: +55 6132182932  
Fax: +55 6199816342  
Email: [marcio.mazzaro@agricultura.gov.br](mailto:marcio.mazzaro@agricultura.gov.br)

Ms Paula RASSI BRASIL  
Subsecretaria-Geral de Meio Ambiente,  
Ciência e Tecnologia  
Ministério das Relações Exteriores  
70170-900 Brasília, DF  
Phone: +55 6134116377  
Fax: +55 6134116365  
Email: [paula.rassi@itamaraty.gov.br](mailto:paula.rassi@itamaraty.gov.br)

Ms Carolina RIZZI STARR  
Ministry of Agrarian Development  
International and Commercial Promotion  
Advisory  
Esplanada dos Ministérios  
Bloco A 1 andar, Sala 109  
Brasília, DF  
Phone: +61 20200126  
Fax: +61 20200128  
Email:  
[Carolina.starr@consultor.mda.gov.br](mailto:Carolina.starr@consultor.mda.gov.br)

#### CANADA

Mr Brad FRALEIGH  
Director  
Multilateral Science Relations  
International Engagement  
Science and Technology Branch  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada  
Phone: +1 6137731838  
Fax: +1 6137731833  
Email: [brad.fraleigh@agr.gc.ca](mailto:brad.fraleigh@agr.gc.ca)

#### CHILE

Ms Teresa AGÜERO TEARE  
Encargada Ambiental, Recursos Genéticos  
y Bioseguridad  
Oficina de Estudios y Políticas Agrarias  
(ODEPA)  
Ministerio de Agricultura  
Santiago  
Phone: +56 2 3973039  
Fax: +56 2 397 3044  
Email: [taguero@odepa.gob.cl](mailto:taguero@odepa.gob.cl)

#### ECUADOR

Mr Álvaro MONTEROS ALTAMIRANO  
Estación Experimental Santa Catalina  
Instituto Nacional Autónomo de  
Investigaciones Agropecuarias (INIAP)  
Panamericana Sur Km 1, Via Tambillo  
Quito  
Phone: +593 023006089  
Fax: +593 023006089  
Email: [Alvaro.monteros@iniap.gob.ec](mailto:Alvaro.monteros@iniap.gob.ec)

#### ERITREA

Mr Amanuel MAHDERE  
Ministry of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Research Institute  
Head, Plant Genetic Resources Unit  
Asmara  
Phone: +291 18600001/48  
Fax: +291 18600004/181415  
Email: [amanuelmaz@yahoo.com](mailto:amanuelmaz@yahoo.com)

#### GUYANA

Mr Mahendra PERSAUD  
Plant Breeder/Chief Scientist  
Guyana Rice Development Board  
Ministry of Agriculture  
D3 Rice Research Station Burma  
Mahaicony  
East Coast Demerara  
Guyana  
Phone: +592 2321301  
Fax: +592 2321304  
Email: [mahendra21@gmail.com](mailto:mahendra21@gmail.com)

**INDONESIA**

Mr Muhamad SABRAN  
Deputy Director  
Research Cooperation Public Relation  
Division  
Indonesian Agency for Agricultural  
Research and Development  
Ministry of Agriculture  
Jl. Ragunan No. 29  
Pasar Minggu  
Jakarta Selatan  
Phone: +62 8125131958  
Fax: +62 2178831114  
Email: [msbran23@yahoo.com](mailto:msbran23@yahoo.com)

**IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF)**

Mr Javad MOZAFARI HASHJIN  
Head of National Plant Gene Bank of Iran  
Seed and Plant Improvement Institute  
(SPII)  
Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture (MOJA)  
Mahdasht Avenue  
P.O. Box 31585  
4119 Karaj  
Phone: +98 261 2701260  
Fax: +98 261 2716793  
Email: [jmozafar@yahoo.com](mailto:jmozafar@yahoo.com)

**LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC**

Mr Bounthong BOUAHOM  
Director General  
National Agriculture and Forestry Research  
Institute  
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry  
P.O. Box 1086  
Vientiane  
Email: [bounthong@nafri.org.la](mailto:bounthong@nafri.org.la)

**LEBANON**

Mr Lamis CHALAK  
Plant Genetic Resources Advisor  
Professor at the Lebanese University  
Dekwaneh  
Beirut  
Phone: +961 3 211855  
Email: [lamis.chalak@gmail.com](mailto:lamis.chalak@gmail.com)

**NETHERLANDS**

Mr Hans SMOLDERS  
Policy Advisor - genetic resources and  
phytosanitary research  
Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture  
and Innovation  
Directorate-General for Agro, Plant Supply  
Chain and Food Quality  
Prins Clauslaan 8  
2595 The Hague  
Phone: +31 070 3785016  
Fax: +31 070 3786123  
Email: [j.w.j.smolders@mineleni.nl](mailto:j.w.j.smolders@mineleni.nl)

Mr Bert VISSER  
Director of the Centre for Genetic  
Resources  
Wageningen University and Research  
Centre  
P.O. Box 16  
6700 AA Wageningen  
Phone: +31 317 480993  
Fax: +31 317 438094  
Email: [bert.visser@wur.nl](mailto:bert.visser@wur.nl)

**NORWAY**

Mr Peer BERG  
Section Leader Farm Animals  
NordGen, Nordic Genetic Resource Center  
Box 41  
SE-230 53 Alnarp  
Sweden  
Fax: +47 64942980  
Email: [Peer.Berg@nordgen.org](mailto:Peer.Berg@nordgen.org)

Mr Erik COCKBAIN  
Adviser  
Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
P.O. Box 8007 Dep., N-0030  
Phone: + 47 22249072  
Fax: + 47 22242753  
Email: [erik.cockbain@lmd.dep.no](mailto:erik.cockbain@lmd.dep.no)

Ms Elisabeth KOREN  
Senior Adviser  
Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
Box 8007 Dep., N-0030 Oslo  
Phone: + 47 22249132  
Fax: + 47 22242753  
Email: [elisabeth.koren@lmd.dep.no](mailto:elisabeth.koren@lmd.dep.no)

Ms Liv Astrid EIKELAND  
Senior Adviser  
Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
P.O. Box 8007 Dep., N-0030 Oslo  
Phone: + 47 22249493  
Email: [liv-astrid.eikeland@lmd.dep.no](mailto:liv-astrid.eikeland@lmd.dep.no)

Mr Tore RIISE  
Special Adviser  
Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs  
P.O. Box 8118 Dep., N-0032 Oslo  
Phone: + 4722246454  
Fax: +47 22 24 9585  
Email: [tr@fkd.dep.no](mailto:tr@fkd.dep.no)

Ms Grethe Helene EVJEN  
Senior Adviser  
Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
P.O. Box 8007 Dep., N-0030  
Phone: + 47 22249311  
Fax: + 47 22242753  
Email: [Grethe-Helene.Evjen@lmd.dep.no](mailto:Grethe-Helene.Evjen@lmd.dep.no)

Mr Roland VON BOTHMER  
Professor  
NordGen, Nordic Genetic Resource Center  
Phone: +46 70 676 44 18  
Fax: +46 40 53 66 50  
Email: [Roland.von.Bothmer@ltj.slu.se](mailto:Roland.von.Bothmer@ltj.slu.se)

Ms Nina HOVDEN SAETHER  
Director  
Norwegian Genetic Resource Centre,  
P.O. Box 115, N-1432 Ås  
Phone: +47 64949055  
Fax: +47 64948001  
Email: [nhs@skogoglandskap.no](mailto:nhs@skogoglandskap.no)

## PALAU

Ms Aurora G. DEL ROSARIO  
Researcher  
Palau Community College  
Phone: +680 4882746  
Fax: +680 4883307  
Email: [aderose929@yahoo.com](mailto:aderose929@yahoo.com)

Ms Ane JØREM  
Researcher  
Fridtjof Nansen Institute  
Phone: +4767111900; +4797796246  
Fax: +47 67111910  
Email: [aej@fni.no](mailto:aej@fni.no)

## SPAIN

Ms Ane Hansdatter KISMUL  
Political Adviser  
Ministry of Agriculture and Food  
P.O.Box 8007 Dep., N-0030  
Phone: + 47 22249104  
Fax: + 47 22249558  
Email: [ane.kismul@lmd.dep.no](mailto:ane.kismul@lmd.dep.no)

Mr Fernando LATORRE GARCÍA  
Técnico Superior Especializado de OPIS  
Instituto Nacional de Investigación y  
Tecnología Agraria y Alimentaria  
Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad  
Madrid  
Phone: +34 918819286 ext. 25  
Fax: +34 91 819287  
Email: [latorre@inia.es](mailto:latorre@inia.es)

Mr Luis SALAICES  
Jefe de Área de Registro de Variedades  
Subdirección General de Medios de  
Producción Agrícolas y Oficina  
Española de Variedades Vegetales  
Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y  
Medio Ambiente  
Madrid  
Phone: +34 913476712  
Fax: +34 913476703  
Email: [luis.salaices@magrama.es](mailto:luis.salaices@magrama.es)

Dr Manthana MILNE  
Deputy Director General  
Department of Agriculture  
Phone: +66 2 5790582  
Fax: +66 2 9407460  
Email: [manthana2011@yahoo.com](mailto:manthana2011@yahoo.com)

Ms Chutima RATANASATIEN  
Senior Agricultural Scientist  
Plant Variety Protection Office  
Department of Agriculture  
Phone: +66-2-940-7214  
Fax: +66-2-940-7214  
Email: [chutima\\_ratanasatien@yahoo.com](mailto:chutima_ratanasatien@yahoo.com)

## SWITZERLAND

Ms Catherine MARGUERAT  
Secteur Produits animaux et élevage  
Office fédéral de l'agriculture  
Mattenhofstrasse 5  
CH-3003 Bern  
Phone: +41 31 3223814  
Fax: + 41 31 3235142  
Email: [Catherine.marguerat@blw.admin.ch](mailto:Catherine.marguerat@blw.admin.ch)

Mr François PYTHOUD  
Responsable  
Secteur Agriculture Durable  
Internationale  
Office fédéral de l'agriculture  
Mattenhofstrasse 5  
Phone: +41 31 3234445  
Fax: +41 31 3222634  
Email: [francois.pythoud@blw.admin.ch](mailto:francois.pythoud@blw.admin.ch)

## THAILAND

Ms Sopida HEAMAKOM  
Secretary/Head of the Legal Office  
Department of Agriculture  
Phone: +66 2 5792445  
Fax: +66 2 9405527  
Email: [sopida\\_doa@yahoo.com](mailto:sopida_doa@yahoo.com)

## TOGO

Ms Hadyatou DANTSEY-BARRY  
Chef, Unité des Ressources  
Phytogénétiques pour l'Alimentation et  
l'Agriculture  
Institut Togolais de Recherche  
Agronomique (ITRA)  
Phone: +228 22252148  
Fax: +228 22251559  
Email: [itra@cafe.tg](mailto:itra@cafe.tg); [hadyabarry@yahoo.fr](mailto:hadyabarry@yahoo.fr)

## TUNISIA

Mr Mohamed NEFFATI  
Institut des Régions Arides de Médnine -  
Tunisie  
Phone: +216 75633839  
Fax: +216 75633006  
Email: [Mohamed.neffati@yahoo.fr](mailto:Mohamed.neffati@yahoo.fr)

## UNITED KINGDOM

Ms Clare HAMILTON  
Department for Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs  
Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 2AL  
Phone: +44 2072380533  
Email: [clare.hamilton@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:clare.hamilton@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Mr Julian JACKSON  
Department for Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs  
Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 2AL  
Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 2AL  
London  
Phone: + 44 2072386813  
Email: [julian.jackson@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:julian.jackson@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## ZAMBIA

Mr Graybill MUNKOMBWE  
Senior Agricultural Research Officer  
Zambia Agriculture Research Institute  
Mount Makulu Central Research Station  
Private Bag 7  
Chilanga  
Phone: +260 211278130  
Fax: +260 211278130  
Email: [munkombwegraybill@yahoo.com](mailto:munkombwegraybill@yahoo.com)

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA -

Ms Margaret SHARPS CATON  
Deputy Director  
Office of Ecology and Conservation  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW, Rm 4333  
Washington, DC 20520  
Phone: +1 202-647-4268  
Fax: +1 202-736-7351  
Email: [catonms@state.gov](mailto:catonms@state.gov)

Mr Peter TABOR  
Director, Plant Division  
Office of Agreements & Scientific Affairs  
Foreign Agricultural Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture - South  
Building, Room 5957  
Phone: +1 (202) 720-0765  
Fax: +1 (202) 690-0677  
Email: [peter.tabor@fas.usda.gov](mailto:peter.tabor@fas.usda.gov)

**OBSERVERS FROM COUNTRIES  
MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION****ALGERIA**

Mr Abdelhamid HEMDANI  
Sous-Directeur de la Protection des  
Patrimoines Génétiques  
Ministère de l'Agriculture et du  
Développement Rural  
Bvd. Colonel Amirouche  
Algiers 16000  
Phone: +213 021743290  
Fax: +213 0211743290  
Email: [hemdani@yahoo.fr](mailto:hemdani@yahoo.fr)

Mr Salah CHOUAKI  
Chargé de Recherche  
Coordinateur des Activités Scientifiques  
"Agrobiodiversité"  
Institut National de la Recherche  
Agronomique d'Algérie  
Phone: +213 021521281  
Fax: +213 021521283  
Email: [chouaki\\_salah@yahoo.fr](mailto:chouaki_salah@yahoo.fr) ;  
[chouaki.s@gmail.com](mailto:chouaki.s@gmail.com)

**DENMARK**

Ms Helle PALMØ  
Special Advisor  
Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries  
The Danish AgriFish Agency  
Nyropsgade 30  
DK-1780 Copenhagen V  
Phone: +45 3395800  
Email: [hpa@naturerhverv.dk](mailto:hpa@naturerhverv.dk)

**EUROPEAN UNION (MEMBER  
ORGANIZATION)**

Ms Simona GUEORGUEVA  
Political administrator at the Council of the  
European Union  
Council of the European Union  
General Secretariat  
DGB 2A Financial and Agri-monetary  
Questions, Rural Development, Plant  
Generic Resources  
Phone: +3222817166  
Email:  
[simona.gueorgueva@consilium.europa.eu](mailto:simona.gueorgueva@consilium.europa.eu)

**FRANCE**

Mr Didier BOUCHEL  
Bureau du lait, des produits laitiers et de la  
sélection animale  
Ministère de l'agriculture, de  
l'agroalimentaire et de la forêt  
Phone: +33 1495546 03  
Fax: +33 149554590  
Email: [didier.bouchel@agriculture.gouv.fr](mailto:didier.bouchel@agriculture.gouv.fr)

Mme Elise LECLERCQ  
GNIS - Relations Internationales  
44, rue du Louvre  
F 75001 Paris  
Phone: +33 142337697  
Fax: +33 140284016  
Email: [elise.leclercq@gnis.fr](mailto:elise.leclercq@gnis.fr)

**GERMANY**

Mr Frank BEGEMANN  
32 Sustainability international affairs  
Federal Office for Agriculture and Food  
(BLE)  
Phone: +49 0228996845-3239  
Fax: +49 02286845-3105  
Email: [frank.begemann@ble.de](mailto:frank.begemann@ble.de)

Ms Barbara KOSAK  
 Head of Division Biological Diversity and  
 Biopatents  
 Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and  
 Consumer Protection  
 Bonn  
 Phone: +49 0228995294353  
 Fax: +49 0228995294332  
 Email: [barbara.kosak@bmelv.bund.de](mailto:barbara.kosak@bmelv.bund.de)

Ms Ursula MONNERJAHN  
 Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and  
 Consumer Protection  
 Desk Officer, Div. Biological Diversity and  
 Biopatents  
 Rochusstrasse 1  
 53123 Bonn  
 Phone: +49 228995294776  
 Fax: +49 228995294332  
 Email: [ursula.monnerjahn@bmelv.bund.de](mailto:ursula.monnerjahn@bmelv.bund.de)

## JAPAN

Mr Akira NAGAOKA  
 Coordinator, Environment Policy Division  
 Minister's Secretariat  
 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and  
 Fisheries  
 Kasumigaseki 1-2-1  
 Chiyoda-ku  
 Tokyo, 100-8950  
 Phone: +81 335028458  
 Fax: +81 335926640  
 Email: [akira\\_nagaoka@nm.maff.go.jp](mailto:akira_nagaoka@nm.maff.go.jp)

Ms Fumiko YAGIHASHI  
 Section Chief, Research Policy Planning  
 Division  
 Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
 Research Council Secretariat  
 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and  
 Fisheries  
 Phone: +81 35028111 (Extn.86388)  
 Fax: +81 335078794  
 Email: [fumiko\\_yagihashi@nm.maff.go.jp](mailto:fumiko_yagihashi@nm.maff.go.jp)

## LIBYA

Mr Abdulhakim A. DEGHAYES  
 Libyan Gene Bank  
 240 Mailbox  
 Tripoli  
 Phone: +218 923062805  
 Email: [a\\_deghayes@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:a_deghayes@hotmail.co.uk)

Mr Ali Ahmed EL-MAGTUF  
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 Tripoli  
 Phone: +218 213403011

## NAMIBIA

Mr Pierre DU PLESSIS  
 Multi-media, appropriate technology and  
 natural products consultant at the Centre for  
 Research, Information, Action in Africa,  
 Southern Africa-Development and  
 Consulting  
 (CRIAA SA-DC)  
 Phone: +264 61220117  
 Fax: +264 61232293  
 Email: [pierre@criaasadc.org](mailto:pierre@criaasadc.org)

## NIGERIA

H.E. Yaya A.O. OLANIRAN  
 Permanent Representative of Nigeria to  
 FAO  
 Permanent Representation of Nigeria to the  
 United Nations  
 Rome-based Food and Agriculture  
 Agencies  
 Email: [nigeriapermrep@email.com](mailto:nigeriapermrep@email.com)

**PANAMA**

Mr Alberto ARJONA A.  
Secretario General  
Ministerio de Desarrollo Agropecuario  
Apartado Postal 0879-07512  
Email: [aarjona@mida.gob.pa](mailto:aarjona@mida.gob.pa)

**POLAND**

Ms Elzbieta MARTYNIUK  
National Coordinator for Animal Genetic  
Resources  
National Focal Point for Animal Genetic  
Resources  
National Research Institute of Animal  
Production  
Phone: +48 22 6231714/6231056  
Fax: +48 2262310 56  
Email: [elzbieta\\_martyniuk@sggw.pl](mailto:elzbieta_martyniuk@sggw.pl) ;  
[Elzbieta.Martyniuk@minrol.gov.pl](mailto:Elzbieta.Martyniuk@minrol.gov.pl)

**REPRESENTATIVES OF UNITED  
NATIONS AND SPECIALIZED  
AGENCIES**

**CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL  
DIVERSITY**

Mr Lyle GLOWKA  
Senior Legal Advisor  
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological  
Diversity  
United Nations Environment Programme  
Phone: +1 5142877022  
Fax: +1 5142886588

**INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON  
PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR  
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

Mr Kent NNADOZIE  
Treaty Support Officer  
International Treaty on Plant Genetic  
Resources for Food and Agriculture  
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla  
00153Rome  
Italy  
Phone: +39 06 57052465  
Fax: +39 06 57053057  
Email: [Kent.Nnadozie@fao.org](mailto:Kent.Nnadozie@fao.org)

Mr Clive STANNARD  
Consultant  
International Treaty on Plant Genetic  
Resources for Food and Agriculture  
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla  
00153Rome  
Italy  
Fax: +39 06 57053057  
Email: [PGRFA-Treaty@fao.org](mailto:PGRFA-Treaty@fao.org)

**OBSERVERS FROM  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL  
ORGANIZATIONS**

**CABI**

**INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION  
FOR BIOLOGICAL CONTROL**

Mr Matthew COCK  
Chief Scientist  
CAB International (CABI)  
Bakeham Lane  
Egham, Surrey  
Phone: +44 1491829037  
Fax: +44 1491829100  
Email: [m.cock@cabi.org](mailto:m.cock@cabi.org)

Ms Johannette KLAPWIJK  
IOBC  
Koppert B.V.  
Veilingweg 14  
P.O. Box 155  
2650 AD Berkel en Rodenrijs  
Netherlands  
Phone: +31 105140444  
Email: [jklapwijk@koppert.nl](mailto:jklapwijk@koppert.nl)

**CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON  
INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL  
RESEARCH**

**BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL**

Mr Ronald VERNOOY  
Genetic Resources Policy Specialist,  
Policy Group  
Conservation and Availability  
Programme  
Bioversity International  
Via dei Tre Denari  
Maccarese – Rome, Italy  
Phone: +39 066118280  
Fax: +39 0661979661

**INTERNATIONAL RICE RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE**

Mr Ruairaidh SACKVILLE HAMILTON  
Head, T.T. Chang Genetic Resources  
Center  
International Rice Research Institute  
Los Baños  
Laguna  
Philippines  
Phone: + 63 2 5805600  
Fax: +63 2 5805699  
Email: [r.hamilton@irri.org](mailto:r.hamilton@irri.org)

**OBSERVERS FROM NON-  
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**INTERNATIONAL SEED FEDERATION**

Ms Radha RANGANATHAN  
Director Technical Affairs  
International Seed Federation  
Ch. du Reposoir 7  
1260 Nyon  
Switzerland  
Phone: + 41 22 3654420  
Fax: +41 22 3654421  
Email: [r.ranganathan@worldseed.org](mailto:r.ranganathan@worldseed.org)

**THE THIRD WORLD NETWORK**

Mr Edward HAMMOND  
P.O. Box 660  
Mason TX76856  
United States Of America  
Phone: +1 3253472829  
Email: [eh@pricklyresearch.com](mailto:eh@pricklyresearch.com)