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منظمة  
الأغذية والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

# COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

## Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda

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

#### Second Session

Rome, 23–25 April 2018

### NATIONAL FOCAL POINT SURVEY ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT- SHARING FOR AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

#### Note by the Secretariat

At its Sixteenth Regular Session, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) agreed to prepare non-prescriptive explanatory notes to complement the *Elements to Facilitate Domestic Implementation of Access and Benefit-Sharing for Different Subsectors of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (ABS Elements).

As input for developing the explanatory notes, the Commission requested the Secretariat to collect survey-based information on:

1. use and exchange practices, relevant voluntary codes of conduct, guidelines and best practices, and/or standards and community protocols as well as model contractual clauses on ABS specifically addressing genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA);
2. how prior informed consent (PIC) or approval and involvement of indigenous and local communities is obtained under their jurisdictions and on experiences with the implementation of any relevant ABS measures in the case of GRFA;
3. experiences and views of relevant indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders regarding how countries can consider approaching PIC or approval and involvement of indigenous and local communities in the case of GRFA and associated traditional knowledge;
4. experiences with the use of the ABS Elements; and
5. existing practices in the different subsectors with regard to different uses of GRFA to which ABS measures apply.

A first survey was conducted between 2 and 28 December 2018. It was sent electronically to all National Focal Points/Coordinators (NFPs/NCs) of the Commission for the different subsectors to collect information related to numbers 1, 2 and 4. A second survey to collect information from stakeholders and indigenous people and local communities is underway. It is collecting information on use and exchange of GRFA for research and development related to numbers 3 and 5. That survey was sent electronically to a sample of 586 individuals on April 3, 2018 and will be closed on April 24.

This document reports on the preliminary results for the Aquatic Genetic Resources sector (AqGR) of the first NFP survey. The sample frame for this survey consisted of all known NFPs for plant, forest and aquatic genetic resources, the NCs for animal genetic resources, and the NFPs for biodiversity for food and agriculture and the Commission. Contact information for all NFPs/NCs was obtained from the Commission and was updated by official enquiry by the Commission to the member countries. The final list of NFPs/NCs consisted of 624 individuals from 189 countries. (Note: not all countries have designated individuals for all NFP/NC positions and some individuals serve in multiple capacities).

The survey was developed over the course of several months with input from multiple experts. It was carried out by Mr Sélim Louafi, *Centre International de recherche agronomique pour le développement* (Cirad), France, and Mr Eric Welch, Center for Science, Technology and Environmental Policy Studies, Arizona State University, the United States of America. Survey administration included an advance email notification, an official invitation and three reminder notices. As part of the administration, the survey team responded to enquiries from invited participants and assisted with troubleshooting of any problems. No significant problems were reported during administration.

## I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS FROM AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES SECTOR

In total, 280 individuals from 136 countries responded to the survey, resulting in an individual response rate of approximately 45 percent. Of these 280 individuals, only 30 individuals from the AqGR (24 current NFPs and 6 past NFPs) responded to the survey. However, not all AqGR NFPs indicated the aquatic sector as being the one they were most knowledgeable about (as compared to other subsectors). Indeed, 10 current and former AqGR NFPs indicated that they are most knowledgeable in areas other than AqGR, as for some countries the same person could serve as NFP for multiple sectors. In total, only 23 individuals indicated being ‘most knowledgeable’ about AqGR. Of the 23, 16 respondents are current NFPs for the AqGR to the Commission, 4 are former NFPs for AqGR, 2 are current Commission’s NFPs and 1 was a former NFP for PGRFA.

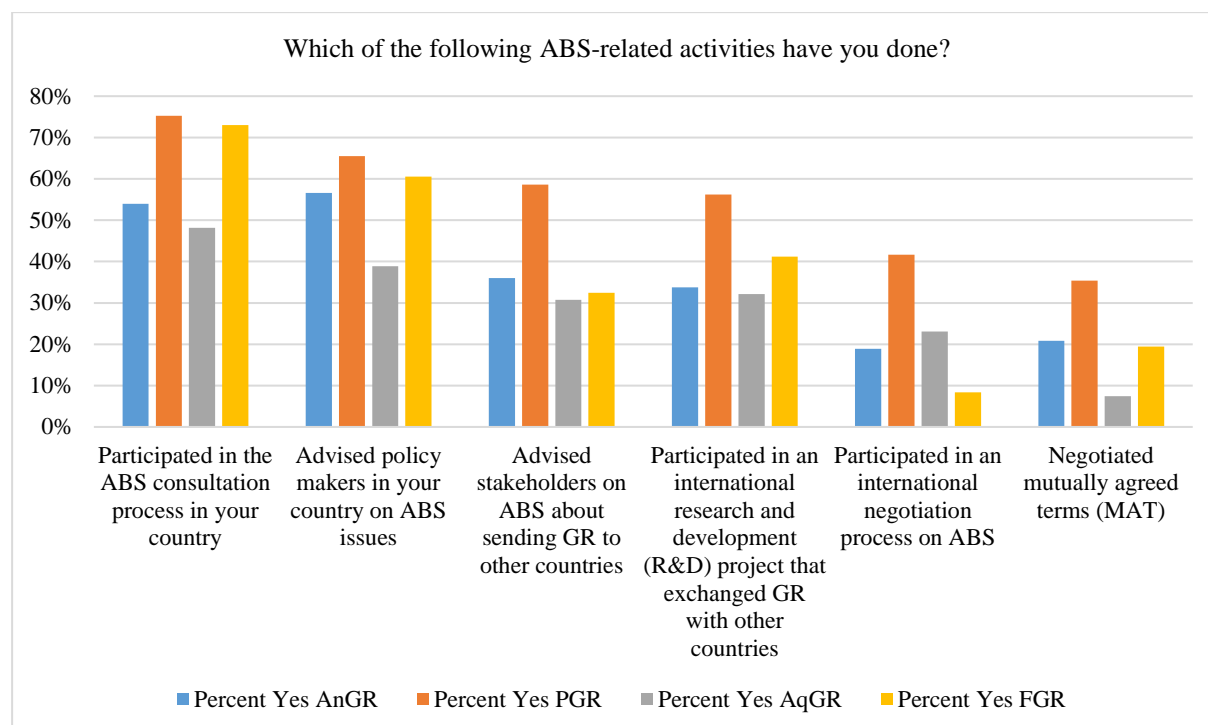
It should be noted that the AqGR sector has the lowest response rate of all GRFA sectors. This may be explained by the fact that ABS issues are still very new in this sector and not fully felt by NFPs.

## II. INFORMATION, AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT OF NFPs ON ABS

To understand the involvement of NFPs/NCs in ABS issues in their countries, the survey asked respondents to indicate if they were had undertaken a range of different types of associated activities.

There are substantial differences among sectors with regard to their level of involvement in ABS-related activities (Figure 2). Less than half of the (past and current) AqGR sector NFPs respondents have been involved in policy-related activities at national level and only one-fifth at the international level. A very low percentage of respondents have direct experience with ABS (i.e. negotiation of MAT) and less than one third have practical experience in exchanging GRFA in the context of R&D projects. Overall, these figures confirm the relative newness of ABS issues in the AqGR.

**Figure 1. Involvement in ABS-related activities (by sectors)**



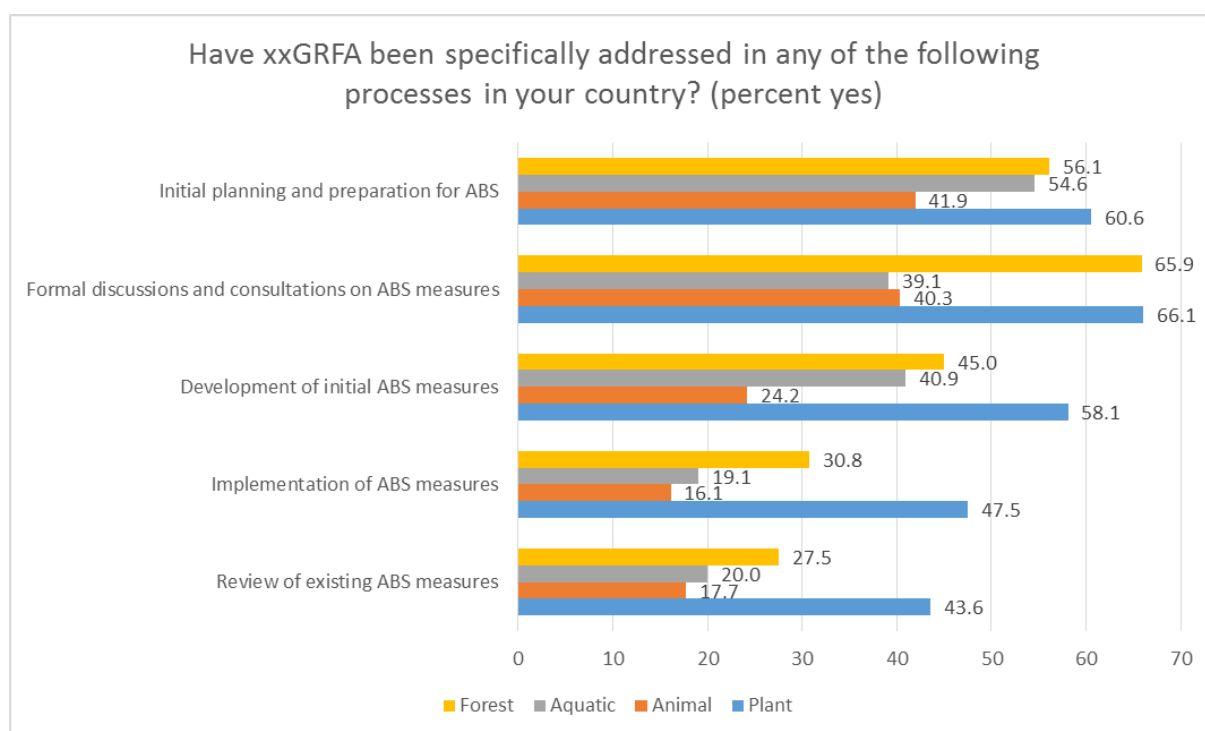
A majority of AqGR sector NFP respondents (16) indicated that their country had initiated planning and preparation of ABS activities and only three indicated that ABS measures had been adopted in their country. Of these 19 individuals, only six reported being involved or very involved in ABS development, revision or implementation in their country.

The survey sought to understand whether NFP/NCs recalled receiving information about ABS and what the source of the information was. Further, given the objectives of FAO's ABS Elements to facilitate the development of ABS measures, NFPs/NCs were asked whether they were familiar with the Elements. Overall, the main source of information for current AqGR sector NFP respondents is their own government and FAO (Note: respondents were able to check multiple categories.) However, only 7 respondents were aware of the existence of the ABS Elements.

### III. SUBSECTORS CONSIDERATIONS IN ABS POLICY PROCESS

As shown in Figure 2, all subsectors for food and agriculture report a fair level of specific consideration of their subsector in the initial phase of the ABS policy process (planning and discussion). The animal and aquatic sector respondents report the least subsector consideration at most stages of the ABS policy process. The level of subsector consideration for AqGR drops, sometimes by half, at the stage of review or implementation of ABS measures. In part, this may be because many counties are in an earlier stage of ABS policy development. However, subsector consideration may also be eliminated as part of the policy process.

**Figure 2. GRFA considerations in ABS policy process (by subsectors)**



### IV. SUBSECTOR SPECIFICITIES

The survey collected subsector-level responses to several agree/disagree questions about the characteristics of GRFA. Respondents were first asked to identify the subsector with which they were most familiar. All respondents were then asked three sets of agree/disagree questions with the specific subsector embedded within the question text (here noted as xxGR). Findings are presented in Figures 3, 4 and 5. The scale for all three sets of questions is: strongly disagree = 1; disagree = 2; neither agree nor disagree; agree = 4; strongly agree = 5.

The first set of general questions (Figure 3) shows relatively consistent question-level responses across subsectors: the AqGR sector is not significantly different from the other subsectors regarding the fact that GR are of exotic origin, have been shaped over generations and are essential for achieving food security.

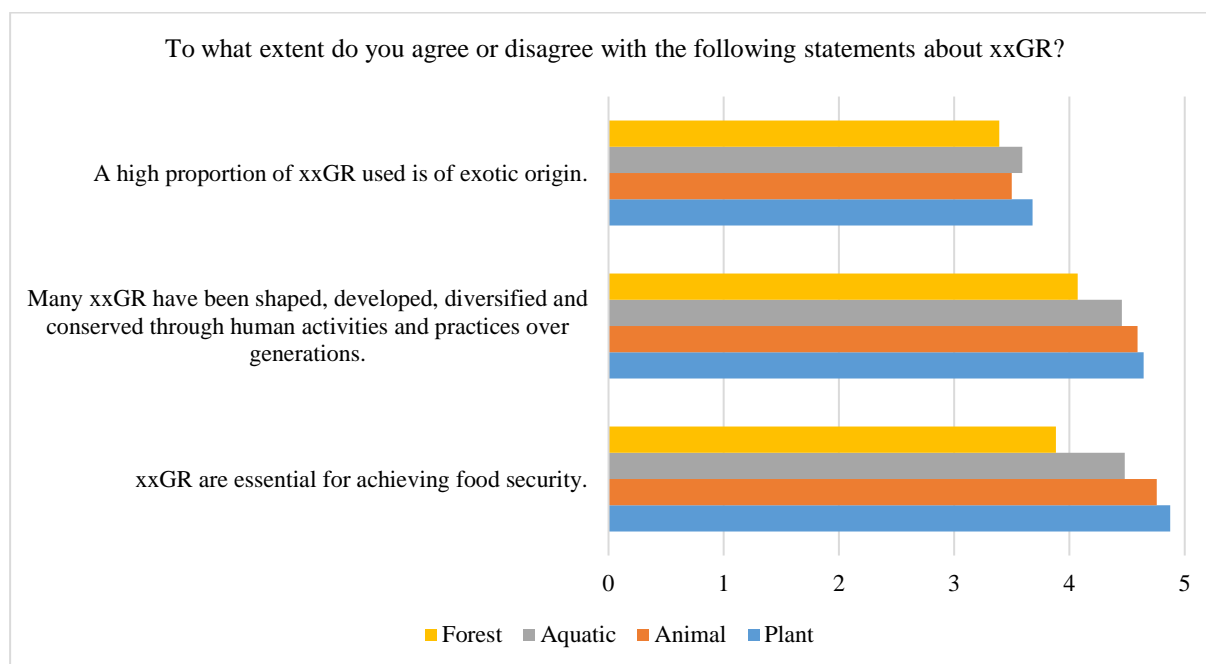
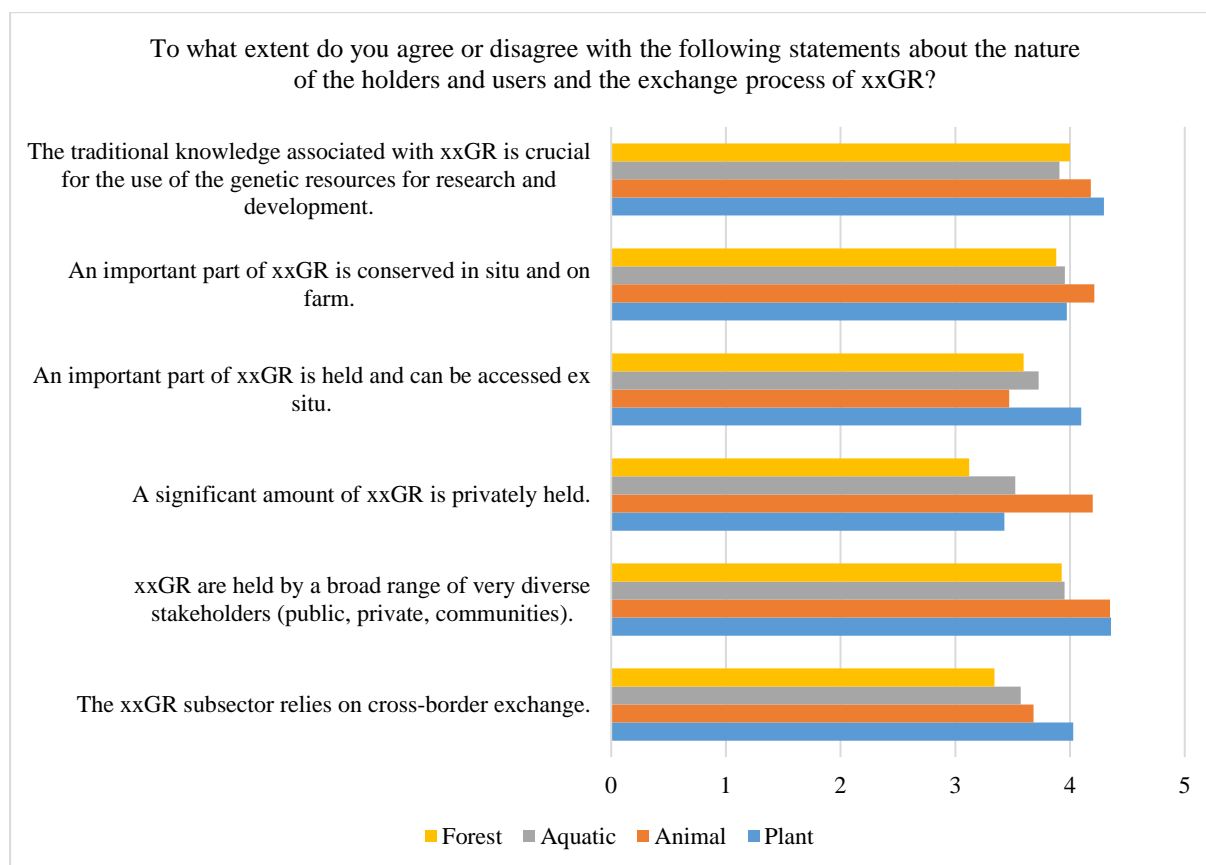
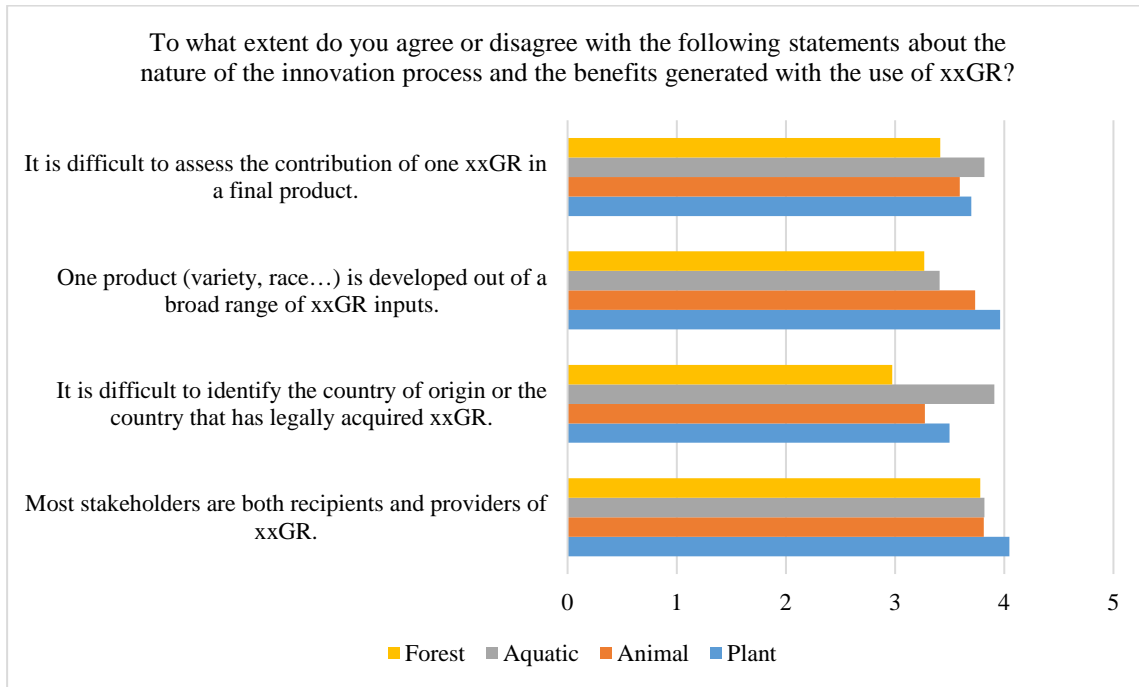
**Figure 3. General agree/disagree statements about GRFA by subsector****Figure 4. General agree/disagree statements about GRFA by subsector**

Figure 4 shows responses to a set of questions concerning the holders, users and exchange process of the particular subsector. Overall, there are no marked differences regarding the importance of *in situ* and on-farm conservation, of *ex situ* conservation and access. AqGRs are less likely to be held by a broad

range of stakeholders and the AqGR respondents are less likely to agree that the subsector relies on cross-border exchange than the plant sector.

Respondents were also asked about the innovation process and benefit-sharing at the subsector level. Findings, presented in Figure 5, show that AqGR experts are more likely to find it difficult to assess the contribution of one AqGR in a final product and to identify the country of origin.

**Figure 5. Agree/disagree statements about use and exchange of GRFA by subsector**



## V. CONCLUSION

Overall, the results tend to show a relatively low level of awareness of AqGR NFPs on ABS and involvement in ABS policy-related activities. However, respondents reported a fair level of specific consideration of their subsector in the initial phase of the ABS policy process (initial planning and consultation). This level of subsector consideration for AqGR drops substantially at the stage of review or implementation of ABS measures, which shows that the development of explanatory notes to complement the ABS elements would be timely for the AqGR sector.