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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Second Session

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PROGRESS REPORT ON MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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ANNEX

Steps towards the establishment of national information-sharing mechanisms on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action

1. INTRODUCTION

1. Following the adoption of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* at the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources (Leipzig, June 1996), member countries agreed that “overall progress in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* and of the related follow-up processes would be monitored and guided by the national governments and other members of FAO, through the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture”.¹ The Commission was also asked to “set the formats for receiving progress reports from all the parties concerned and establish criteria and indicators to assess progress” in the implementation of the *Plan*.²

2. At its Seventh Regular Session, the Commission agreed to develop a transparent and efficient monitoring process and recommended that within the framework of the priority activity areas of the *Plan* a core set of indicators should be established to facilitate such a process.³

3. At its Eighth Regular Session, the “Commission noted [...] that monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* was important for efficient resource-utilization”, and it underlined the need for FAO to allocate adequate resources from its Regular Budget, to support the task of monitoring.⁴

4. In line with its mandate, the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources, at its first Session, reviewed a proposal for monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, including a list of indicators and a reporting format. The Working Group agreed that, once further refined, the indicators and reporting format would be evaluated together with the proposed country-driven monitoring approach, through pilot testing activities in selected, representative countries.⁵

5. At its Ninth Session, the Commission “highlighted the importance of monitoring the implementation of the *Plan* through a country-driven and flexible system that could respond to different and evolving national and regional needs and priorities, while ensuring the necessary level of standardization”. It emphasized “the importance of simplicity and clarity in the list of indicators, and in the reporting format,” which “would encourage the participation of all countries and stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society organizations. In this regard the Commission supported the establishment, at national level, of processes to share information among stakeholders on the implementation of the *Plan*”, and supported the proposal for testing in a number of countries the list of indicators and reporting format, developed by the Secretariat with inputs from an expert group. Such indicators and reporting format will then be further refined, based on the results from the pilot testing activities and keeping in view the work being done by other international organizations and the Working Group was asked to “continue working toward the final list of core indicators”. While recognizing the need for technical and financial support to enable the participation of developing countries in the pilot phase, the Commission appealed to donors to make such resources available.⁶

¹ ITCPGR/96/REP para. 21.

² ITCPGR/96/REP para. 22.

³ CGRFA-7/97/REP para. 19.

⁴ CGRFA-8/99/REP para. 17.

⁵ CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/REP paras. 14-19.

⁶ CGRFA-9/02/REP para. 19.

6. The Commission also agreed that the surveys to monitor the implementation of the *Plan* in 2003 and 2005 would be carried out on the basis of the methodology applied in the year 2000, integrating the lessons learned from the pilot testing activities. It stressed that the preparatory process for the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* “should be fully integrated with the process of monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*”.⁷ The Commission also agreed that the Inter-governmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources should meet to “provide further guidance on [...] the process for monitoring of the *Global Plan of Action*”.⁸

2. OUTLINE OF THE NEW MONITORING APPROACH

7. Based on the experience acquired in preparing the country reports for the FAO International Technical Conference in 1996, and in monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* during the years 1998 and 2000, a new approach for monitoring the *Plan*'s implementation was proposed at the First Session of the Working Group and, subsequently, to the Ninth Session of the Commission⁹. As recommended by the Working Group at its First Session¹⁰, this new approach implies a country-driven, participatory and capacity building process which would culminate with the establishment of national information-sharing mechanisms on the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.

8. In line with the recommendations of the Commission at its Ninth and previous regular sessions, the proposed process aims to improve the efficiency of resource utilization through a transparent and flexible information-sharing process able to respond to and reflect different and evolving national and regional needs, priorities and available resources.

9. More specifically, the main objectives are to:

- Improve countries' capacities to manage information on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;
- Increase visibility of on-going efforts, as well as access to and sharing of information about plant genetic resources for food and agriculture on national, regional and global levels;
- Promote understanding of status and dynamic of these resources;
- Allow meaningful analysis of gaps and priorities;
- Improve decision-making on and planning of available resources;
- Build stronger partnerships among stakeholders in the management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture within each country; and
- Enhance countries' capacities to meet international reporting commitments (e.g. CGRFA, CBD).

Main components of national information-sharing mechanisms

10. To facilitate the establishment and operation of national information-sharing mechanisms for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, four main components have been developed by FAO with the collaboration of IPGRI, and have been included in a tool-kit made available to countries participating in the pilot testing phase. These components include:

⁷ CGRFA-9/02/REP para. 20.

⁸ CGRFA-9/02/REP para. 38.

⁹ CGRFA-9/02/07, Monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*

¹⁰ CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/REP para. 14.

- a list of indicators for monitoring the implementation at country level of all priority activity areas of the *Global Plan of Action*¹¹;
- a reporting format, which is a structured questionnaire based on these indicators⁹;
- a computer application, which has been developed to facilitate and simplify recording, processing, analysis and sharing of the information addressed by the indicators and the questionnaire; and
- guidelines for initiating and coordinating this process, including guidelines for the involvement of stakeholders and for establishing a national information-sharing mechanism.

Indicators

11. As a first step towards developing the proposal for the establishment of national information-sharing mechanisms for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, a set of indicators for each of the 20 priority activity areas of the *Global Plan of Action* was developed. In general terms, an indicator is a parameter that significantly describes a certain phenomenon and can assist managers and/or policy makers in monitoring progress towards a target, or in providing an early warning of a problem. For monitoring the *Global Plan of Action*, the indicators were identified among those which best describe the degree of progress in the implementation of each priority activity area of the *Plan*. They were refined on the basis of experience acquired in preparing the first report on the *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and in monitoring the implementation of the *Plan* in 1998 and 2000, taking into consideration the likely availability and accessibility of the data required. Following the recommendations of the Working Group, the indicators were further revised and refined in an Expert Consultation Meeting organized by FAO and IPGRI in February 2002. Through the process of refining indicators, both core and complementary indicators were identified.

12. Core indicators are those providing more general information and required for exchanging information at the international level. Member countries will be asked to periodically report on the core indicators to the Commission. Complementary indicators enable countries to monitor implementation on the *Plan* in more detail and can be used at the discretion of individual countries. In all, 83 core indicators and 68 complementary indicators for monitoring the implementation of the 20 priority activity areas of the *Plan* are being pilot tested. The list of core and complementary indicators for monitoring the *Plan's* implementation is included in document *CGRFA-9/02/Inf.2 Indicators and Reporting Format for Monitoring the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action*, as they were recommended by the Commission for use in the monitoring pilot testing.¹²

Reporting Format

13. For each indicator one or more questions were developed during the 2002 Expert Consultation Meeting. These questions provide the practical and direct means to gather the relevant information corresponding to each indicator. They are directed either to the National Focal Point or to the relevant national stakeholders. The Reporting Format assembles and structures, by priority activity area of the *Plan*, all the questions related to the indicators.¹³

14. Different categories of questions are included into the Reporting Format, such as “yes/no” questions, multiple-choice questions; tabular questions, and open-ended questions, where National Focal Points and Stakeholders can provide narrative responses. In order to facilitate data-analysis, the reporting format relies heavily on the use of “yes/no”, multiple-choice and tabular

¹¹ CGRFA-9/02/Inf.2, Indicators and reporting format for monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.

¹² CGRFA-9/02/REP para. 19.

¹³ CGRFA-9/02/Inf.2, Indicators and reporting format for monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.

response questions, rather than narrative questions, which provide data that, are more costly and time consuming to analyze. The Reporting Format, as it is detailed in document *CGRFA-9/02/Inf.2 Indicators and Reporting Format for Monitoring the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action*, was recommended by the Commission for use in the monitoring pilot testing.¹⁴

Computer Application for Monitoring the Plan's implementation and for the establishment of the National Information-sharing Mechanism

15. FAO with the collaboration of IPGRI, has developed a computer application aimed, as the information-management tool, to assist countries to monitor their progress in the Plan's implementation through the establishment of a national information-sharing mechanism. The application serves to gather and exchange information, as defined by the reporting format, between and among Stakeholders and the National Focal Point. The application is presently available in Czech, English, French, German and Spanish. Versions in Arabic, Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese and Russian will be available in the coming months.

16. The application has been developed with license-free, open-source software, to facilitate its use by all FAO member countries. Upon request to FAO all the software code is made available to the National Focal Points. During the ongoing pilot testing process of the new monitoring approach, FAO is ensuring the development of new features, based on feedback from the countries, as well as debugging and maintenance of the computer application.

Guidelines

17. Guidelines for managing and coordinating a country-driven participatory process, such as facilitating the involvement of stakeholders in monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, and a guide for the establishment of a national information-sharing mechanism on the implementation of the *Plan*, including a user's manual for the computer application, have been developed by FAO and IPGRI.

National Focal Point and Stakeholders

18. In 2000, FAO officially requested member countries to re-confirm or, if they had not yet done so, to designate a National Focal Point for reporting to the Commission on the implementation of the *Plan*. Official replies confirming or appointing 177 National Focal Points were received from 151 countries¹⁵. In view of the planned monitoring activities, as well as the preparatory activities for the development of the second report on the *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*¹⁶, the same request was made in 2003.¹⁷

19. A key element for the successful establishment and sustainable development of this country-based information-sharing process is the involvement and participation of a wide range of national stakeholders. This critical task depends greatly on the ability of the National Focal Point to co-ordinate this participatory process and on the stakeholders' capacity to use it as a means to effectively enrich the National Plant Genetic Resources Programme.

20. The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders is essential to the success of a national information-sharing mechanism on the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. Stakeholders may contribute to:

¹⁴ CGRFA-9/02/REP para. 19.

¹⁵ The full list of appointed National Focal Points can be found under WIEWS at the following Internet address: http://apps3.fao.org/wiews/contacts_rep13.jsp?query_OFFICES=13. Note that some countries appointed more than one National Focal Point.

¹⁶ CGRFA/WG-PGR-2/03/6, Progress Report on Elements of the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

¹⁷ Replies to the 2003 request are being received.

- Expanding the knowledge base on the conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;
- Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the information exchange process;
- Ensuring real ownership in the establishment and evolution of a national information-sharing mechanism on the *Plan*'s implementation; and
- Generating support from institutions and building awareness in the country on matters related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

3. PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONITORING PILOT TESTING ACTIVITIES

21. During 2002 and part of 2003, FAO and IPGRI collaborated in the development of the main components for the establishment of national information-sharing mechanism (as described in paragraphs 10-17). Following this, FAO and IPGRI developed a process to be implemented in selected countries for testing the new monitoring approach and establishing a national information-sharing mechanism on the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. The activities foreseen at the country level for the pilot testing include a preparatory phase, an implementation phase and a reporting phase.

22. The preparatory phase entails a review by the National Focal Point of all documents and software, the establishment of a steering committee to guide the process, identification of stakeholders, translation of materials (if needed), assessment of stakeholders' capacities, basic information gathering and convening an initial stakeholders' meeting to gain the understanding and commitment of stakeholders in the monitoring process. During the implementation phase, stakeholders report on relevant activities to the National Focal Point, who prepares an official consolidated report. A second stakeholders' workshop is planned to enable sharing of data among stakeholders and an assessment by stakeholders of the strengths and weaknesses of the pilot testing process. During the reporting phase, reports of the pilot testing are prepared and submitted to FAO and plans are developed for the sustainability of the national information-sharing mechanism within the country. More detail on each phase is provided in the Annex to this document.

23. Activities for pilot testing the new monitoring approach were initiated in 2003 in Ecuador, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Ghana, Kenya, Germany, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. With the exception of Germany, which is using its own resources, financial support to carry out the pilot testing has been provided by FAO through its Regular Programme and through the FAO/Netherlands Partnership Programme. Both FAO and IPGRI are providing in-kind support (in terms of staff salary and travel) through their Regular Programme budgets.

24. Pilot testing is also scheduled to take place in seven South and South-East Asian countries, namely Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam, as part of the activities of a three-year Japanese-funded FAO project, which became operational in June 2003.

25. As of August 2003, pilot testing activities including identification of national stakeholders, establishment of a national steering committee, preliminary data-gathering and organization of in-country stakeholders' meetings, have been successfully conducted in Ecuador, Cuba, Kenya and Ghana. Technical assistance for facilitating the implementation of the process is being provided by staff from FAO, IPGRI, including its regional offices.

26. Pilot testing activities should be completed by the end of 2003 and a report on the results of the testing will be submitted to the Tenth Regular Session of the Commission. Such results will provide a factual base upon which further refine the indicators and the reporting format for their utilization on a global scale in future monitoring activities of the *Plan*. Both the experience derived and the data collected through the pilot testing activities are also expected to set the basis

for the development of higher-order indicators in order to streamline a more general analysis of the state of genetic resource conservation and use, and the sharing of such information with other forums, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

27. The capacity building process implied with the new monitoring approach, and in particular, the establishment of national information-sharing mechanisms on the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, based on agreed indicators, is expected to facilitate countries' contributions to present and future assessments of the *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and to improve the quality and relevance of these assessments. The ongoing process for the preparation of the second report of the State of the World's PGRFA, particularly those activities related to the preparation of the country reports, may therefore benefit from the progressive application of the new monitoring approach to remaining countries, integrating lessons learned during the pilot activities.

28. The overall budgetary needs for the pilot testing and roll-out to further countries were provided to the Commission at its Ninth Regular Session.¹⁸ Substantial extra-budgetary resources¹⁹ were made available for the pilot testing phase, which, added to Regular Programme provisions for this purpose, are adequate. The remaining extra-budgetary needs are, as reported earlier, estimated at US\$ 20,000 per country for 80-120 countries, that is between US\$ 1,600,000 and US\$ 2,400,000 from now until 2007.

4. GUIDANCE REQUESTED FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

29. The Working Group may wish to provide guidance on action to be taken by the Secretariat in relation to:

- i) the ongoing pilot testing activities of the monitoring of the *Global Plan of Action*;
- ii) the application of the new monitoring approach to the remaining countries and the integration of the monitoring activities with the preparation of the second report on the *State of the World's PGRFA*;
- iii) the mobilization of the necessary extra-budgetary funds to apply the monitoring process to the remaining countries between now and 2007.

¹⁸ CGRFA-9/02/7 para. 32.

¹⁹ By the Netherlands and Japan; see paras. 23-24.

ANNEX

Steps towards the establishment of national information-sharing mechanisms on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action

The activities foreseen for the establishment of the national information-sharing mechanism on the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, during the pilot testing activities, are grouped into three phases, a preparatory, an implementation and a reporting phase, which are described in the following paragraphs.

National Focal Points in carrying out/coordinating these activities will receive technical assistance from FAO and/or IPGRI when needed, and upon request of the National Focal Point, FAO and IPGRI staff may participate to the consultations as observers and facilitators.

Preparatory Phase

1. Preparation for the establishment of a national information-sharing mechanism on the *Plan's* implementation by reviewing all materials, briefing and raising awareness of authorities and getting necessary permissions to undertake a collaborative information-sharing process that includes the national plant genetic resources programme, the private sector, civil society organizations and other public sector organizations and cross-ministerial collaboration. Discussions should be held with officials to establish guidelines for information-sharing and intellectual property protection, as needed. An informal steering committee of key stakeholders should be formed to help guide the pilot testing and monitoring process.
2. Translation of the indicators and reporting format for monitoring the *Plan's* implementation in the official national language (applies only if national official language is different from Arabic, Chinese, English, French or Spanish).
3. Identification of stakeholders to be involved in the establishment of the national information-sharing mechanism. This should be conducted for all 20 activity areas of the *Plan* in the context of the country and its information needs.
4. Identification of stakeholders' needs in term of computer equipment components for the establishment of the national information-sharing mechanism, finding solutions to meet minimum requirements for the information-management process based on available resources.
5. In collaboration with stakeholders, the National Focal Point will have to complete to the greatest extent the "Common tables" used throughout the reporting format in the computer application, namely, the "Organization table", the "Contact Person table", the "Project table", the "Taxon table", the "Cultivar table", the "Reference table", and the "Agreement table" ("Common tables" are fully described in document CGRFA-9/02/Info2). This task is an essential requirement for preparing/customizing the computer application for its delivery to the national stakeholders.
6. Preparation of a 2-5 day national workshop (or several smaller sub-national workshops) of the identified stakeholders to discuss and agree on plans for collecting, managing and sharing data. The workshop agenda should include:
 - presentation and agreement on a defined strategy for the establishment of the national information-sharing mechanism;
 - definition of stakeholder roles and responsibilities in the establishment of the national information-sharing mechanism;

- define role and responsibilities of the national information-sharing mechanism manager(s);
- review and revision of information in the “Common tables”;
- introduction to the computer application for the collection of information from Stakeholders;
- agreement upon a plan for completing the reporting format including a timetable for the delivery of the stakeholders’ contributions to the information-sharing mechanism and agreement upon technical assistance and capacity development needs.

The workshop plan should include any necessary preparatory document needed to implement the workshop in an efficient manner, for example, report of “Common tables”; draft timetable with expected milestones; expected institutional capacity development needs and solutions.

Implementation Phase

7. Conduct workshop as planned, agree on a plan of action including responsibilities and timetables for information reporting. Once completed the revision of the “Common tables” (see point 5 above), the National Focal Point will be able to create a CD through the computer application, which will be delivered to each of the participating stakeholders for them to record the information on their own activities related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Information reporting by stakeholders should take no more than 2-3 months to complete.
8. After the workshop, follow-up activities with national stakeholders during the data gathering and delivery process, assisting them in data recording. National Focal Points or WIEWS National Correspondents may visit key stakeholders and those who need special assistance.
9. Compilation of data received from stakeholders and preparation of a draft report of data and findings from the testing process. This data and report will be the basis for a second stakeholders’ workshop.
10. Organization of a second stakeholders’ workshop to review and finalize the report, distribute to the stakeholders the compiled database, and agree upon follow-up actions for information updating and sharing among information providers. The agreement should include resources commitment and responsibilities for the follow-up, assuming that the system must operate within the limitations of funding and resources available in the country. The second workshop should also assess the monitoring process and its strengths and weaknesses, drawing upon the experiences of the stakeholders involved.
11. Development of a web site on the national information-sharing mechanism on the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, describing the establishment process, listing participants and making accessible the information so far gathered.

Reporting Phase

12. Translation into one FAO working language of the information on core indicators collected through the computer application, in case the official national language differs from the FAO working languages.
13. Drawing upon the data collected and recorded in the country and the findings and agreements from the second workshop, produce a report on the establishment or strengthening of the national information-sharing mechanism. The report will deliver the information collected on core indicators using the computer application.
14. The report should also include sections on:

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- Achievements and constraints encountered during the monitoring process and the establishment of the national information-sharing mechanism;
 - Utility of indicators, reporting format and computer application, as well as suggestions for improving them;
 - Usefulness of the guide for establishing and operating a national information-sharing mechanism, the user's manual for the computer application and the guidelines for stakeholder involvement in the implementation and monitoring of the *Global Plan of Action*;
 - Strength and weakness of the technical assistance received;
 - Plans by the National Focal Point and stakeholders for the establishment of an on-going information-sharing mechanism, including expected obstacles and national plans for overcoming them.