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Item 10 of the Draft Provisional Agenda

COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Third Session

Rome, 26 – 28 October 2005

INPUT OF THE WORKING GROUP TO THE COMMISSION'S MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK

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1. INTRODUCTION

1. In 1983, the FAO Conference adopted the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, and established the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which has since played a key role in international policy development for agricultural genetic resources. The Commission's first focus was on plant genetic resources. By 1991, it had negotiated three annexes that constituted the agreed interpretation of the Undertaking. The Commission also guided the preparation of the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, held in Leipzig, Germany in 1996, where 150 countries adopted the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilisation of PGRFA*, and welcomed the first report on *The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. These two instruments are now part of the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture ("the FAO Global System"), which the Commission has been developing and monitoring since its establishment.

2. In 1995, the FAO Conference broadened the mandate of the Commission to cover all components of biodiversity of relevance to food and agriculture.¹ As part of its evolving role, the Commission decided in 1997 to establish the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources, as a subsidiary body, and its equivalent for Animal Genetic Resources.

3. With the completion of the negotiations that lead to the adoption of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 2001, and now that the Treaty has entered into force and its Governing Body is to be established, the Commission has decided to turn its attention to other pressing issues, and plan more systematically for its future work.

The Commission's Multi-Year Programme of Work on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

4. The Commission already has some aspects of its work on plant and animal genetic resources planned on a multi-year basis, and it regularly reviews FAO's policies, programmes and projects on biodiversity for food and agriculture, as well as cooperation with other intergovernmental bodies. In the near future, it will also be necessary to develop structures for cooperation with the Governing Body of the Treaty, in particular in relation to elements of the FAO Global System that are supporting components of the Treaty. At the same time, developments in relevant international forums—in particular the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD), which has its own multi-year programme of work—will require coordination of activities over a multi-year period. In addition, FAO itself has established a multi-year planning framework, through its rolling Medium Term Plan, into which the guidance of the Commission should feed. The Commission's Tenth Regular Session marked its twentieth anniversary, and it took the opportunity to reflect on its past achievements and to lay the basis for its future activities.

5. Other United Nations intergovernmental forums have tackled complex agendas and the need for a forward-looking strategy through the development of multi-year programmes of work. Their elements are normally: a long-term overall goal; medium term milestones and objectives; and a detailed roadmap for the series of meetings, normally with a horizon of a decade. Most such planning frameworks recognize the need for flexibility and hence for continuous review, to be able to adapt to the changing policy environment and to new scientific and technical challenges.

¹ By its Statutes, adopted at that time, the Commission has a coordinating role, and develops, reviews and advises FAO on its sectorial, cross-sectorial and inter-sectorial policy, programmes and activities related to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources of relevance to food and agriculture, and the equitable sharing of benefits derived from their utilisation. It is also a forum for the negotiation of international agreements, undertakings, codes of conduct or other policy instruments relating to genetic resources of relevance to food and agriculture, and for monitoring their operation. The Commission also facilitates and oversees effective cooperation between FAO and other relevant international organizations.

6. Multi-year programming could:

- Facilitate the integration of the Commission's work into Member Countries' policy agendas;
- Enhance coordination with the International Treaty's Governing Body, particularly in the Commission's management of supporting components of the International Treaty;
- Promote coordination with the CBD and with other relevant international forums;
- Allow for streamlining the work programme and prioritization of activities, reducing the need for continuous reporting and focusing the contributions of FAO and other international organizations;
- Ensure that the Commission's work and guidance is reflected in FAO's Medium Term Programme and biennial Programmes of Work and Budget;
- Improve interaction with other important international processes such as the Millennium Development Goals, thus increasing the Commission's international visibility;
- Improve the commitment and participation of other international institutions, major groups and scientific experts in the work of the Commission.

7. At its Tenth Session, the Commission agreed to consider a draft Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW), to be submitted by FAO to the Commission at its Eleventh Session.

8. This document introduces the decisions taken by the Commission at its Tenth Regular Session, and a number of issues and international processes that the Working Group may take into account in providing inputs to the preparation of the draft MYPoW. Inputs from the Working Group are sought in the last section of the document.

The preparation of the draft Multi-Year Programme of Work of the Commission

9. At its Tenth Session, the Commission took a number of decisions regarding the process for preparing the draft MYPoW². It invited inputs from its subsidiary Working Groups in the preparation of the draft MYPoW, in their fields of expertise³. FAO would also consult with the FAO Regional Groups. Within FAO, a cooperative mechanism has been established to enable coordination between the relevant services and Priority Areas for Interdisciplinary Action (PAIAs).⁴

10. The Commission also identified a number of important considerations to be taken into account in the preparation of the draft MYPoW:

² See paragraphs 83-91 of document CGRFA-10/04/REP, *Report of the Tenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, in Annex 1 of this document.

³ The Terms of Reference of the Working Group (Document CGRFA/WG-PGR-3/05/Inf.1, *Statutes of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*) state that it shall:

- review the situation and issues related to agrobiodiversity in the area of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and advise and make recommendations to the Commission on these matters;
- consider the progress made in implementing the Commission's programme of work on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture as well as any other matters referred to the Working Group by the Commission.

⁴ Document CGRFA-10/04/REP, para.83.

- the immediate priority should be to continue work on plant and animal genetic resources, and, in particular, the Commission should support the implementation of the *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (para. 85 and 87);
- within its mandate, the Commission should strengthen mutual cooperation with the CBD, and other relevant organizations (para 88);
- in the medium and longer term, the Commission should implement its full mandate, to cover all components of biodiversity of relevance to food and agriculture, as mandated by FAO Conference Resolution 3/95⁵ (para. 89); and
- the future work of the Commission should contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially Millennium Development Goal no. 1, *Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger*, and Millennium Development Goal no. 7, *Ensure Environmental Sustainability* (para 90).

2. FUTURE WORK ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

11. At its Tenth Regular Session, the Commission provided guidance on how to continue work on plant genetic resources and how its future work should support the implementation of the International Treaty.

12. The Commission considered an overview report on the FAO Global System and its potential contribution to the implementation of the International Treaty.⁶ The FAO Global System comprises a series of international instruments and global mechanisms, to promote international cooperation and reach consensus on areas of mutual interest to the Commission members. The chief components of the FAO Global System are relevant to Part V of the International Treaty, “Supporting Components”. Other components of the Global System, such as Gene Bank Standards and Guidelines, are also relevant in the implementation of the International Treaty.

13. The Commission recognized the importance of the FAO Global System in advancing work on plant genetic resources, and recommended the continuation of work related to it.⁷ It emphasized the need to avoid overlap and duplication between components of the FAO Global System, as well as between the Global System and the International Treaty.

14. The Commission suggested that work undertaken for the Commission and for the Governing Body of the International Treaty should be complementary, and optimize the potential synergy between them. The Commission highlighted that the Governing Body of the International Treaty would have a considerable workload, and expressed its willingness to develop its work on the FAO Global System in ways that would complement the objectives of the International Treaty.

⁵ Resolution 3/95 considered that broadening the Commission’s mandate would facilitate an integrated approach to biodiversity in food and agriculture and coordination with governments, which are increasingly dealing with policy issues regarding biological diversity in an integrated manner. In broadening its mandate, the Commission recognized that the approaches to plant, forestry, animal and fisheries genetic resources are different and require specialized expertise in each field.

⁶ See document CGRFA-10/04/03, *Overview of the Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and its potential contribution to the implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*

⁷ Document CGRFA-10/04/REP, para. 17-20.

Supporting Components of the International Treaty

15. The following paragraphs introduce components of the FAO Global System that are recognized in the International Treaty as Supporting Components⁸, and outline their potential future contributions.

16. The *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (“*Global Plan of Action*”) was adopted in 1996⁹. It is mentioned in a number of places in the International Treaty – Article 14 is devoted to the *Global Plan of Action* as a Supporting Component. As it is a rolling plan, this may be a good time for the Commission to consider setting a road map to update the *Global Plan of Action*, which the Treaty’s Governing Body can take into account in planning its own work programme. The Working Group could consider recommending how to plan the preparation of the updated *Global Plan of Action*, for example by dedicating part of its next sessions to reviewing the four main groups of priority activity areas in the *Global Plan of Action*, which the Commission could then integrate in its own work programme:

- *In situ* conservation and development
- *Ex situ* conservation
- Sustainable utilization, which includes priority activity areas relating to plant breeding and seed systems; and
- Institutions and capacity-building

Guidance would continue to be needed on how in future to monitor and facilitate the *Global Plan of Action*’s implementation.

17. The *Ex Situ* Collections held by the International Agricultural Research Centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and other International Institutions (Article 15) are significant to the *Global Plan of Action*’s main group on *ex situ* conservation. The status of these collections may require periodic review.

18. International Plant Genetic Resources Networks (Article 16) are of relevance to the *Global Plan of Action*’s main group on institutions and capacity-building. The Working Group may wish to consider whether and how often the Commission should review their operations and effectiveness, and how to do so.

19. The Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Article 17) is to be developed and strengthened by the Contracting Parties. It too is pertinent to the *Global Plan of Action*’s main group on institutions and capacity-building. The Working Group may wish to provide input on the role of the Commission in developing the *World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS)* in support of the Global Information System.¹⁰

20. Article 17 of the Treaty requires the Contracting Parties to cooperate with the Commission in

⁸ Descriptions of these components and FAO’s activities in support of them are presented in document CGRFA/WG-PGR-3/05/2, *FAO’s activities in relation to the Supporting Components of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and preliminary analysis on how technical cooperation between the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Governing Body of the International Treaty may be advanced*

⁹ *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, adopted by the International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources, Leipzig, Germany, 1996. See the text at [http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/AGRICULT/AGP/AGPS/Pgrfa/Global Plan of Actioneng.htm](http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/AGRICULT/AGP/AGPS/Pgrfa/Global%20Plan%20of%20Actioneng.htm)

¹⁰ http://apps3.fao.org/wiews/wiews.jsp?i_l=EN

its periodic reassessment of the *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, in order to facilitate updating the rolling *Global Plan of Action*. Previous sessions of the Commission have adopted an outline for the second Report, and steps for its preparation. As requested by the Tenth Regular Session of the Commission, FAO has revised the time line, to complete this work for the Commission's session in 2008.¹¹ The second *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* will provide an up-to-date country-driven global assessment to inform policy making during the next decade.

Other elements of the Commission's work

21. A number of other elements of the Commission's work, which it has developed over the years in the context of the FAO Global System and the *Global Plan of Action*, will need to be coordinated within the context of the MYPoW, including where these are of relevance to other articles of the Treaty, in a way that avoids overlap and duplication between the FAO Global System and the International Treaty. The following paragraphs present some other Treaty Articles which are linked to main groups of priority activity areas of the *Global Plan of Action*.

22. The following main groups of the *Global Plan of Action* are relevant to Article 5 of the Treaty, Conservation, exploration, collection, characterization, evaluation and documentation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture:

- Characterization and evaluation are relevant to consideration of main group on Utilization of PGR;
- *In situ* conservation, exploration, and collection are relevant to the main group on *In situ* conservation and development;
- *Ex situ* conservation is pertinent to the main group on *Ex situ* conservation; and
- Documentation is linked to development of the Global Information System and the main group on Institutions and capacity-building.

23. Some parts of Article 6, Sustainable use of plant genetic resources are relevant to consideration of the *Global Plan of Action's* main group on Utilization of PGR, and other parts are linked to consideration of the main group on *In situ* conservation and development.

24. International cooperation (Article 7) is relevant to consideration of the *Global Plan of Action's* main group on Institutions and capacity-building. Article 19.3 addresses cooperation with other relevant international organizations and treaty bodies on matters covered by the Treaty, including possible cooperation on policy and criteria for the Treaty's funding strategy, and is therefore relevant to the relationship between the Commission and the Treaty's Governing Body.

25. At its Tenth Session, the Commission noted that, while it was as yet inappropriate, the updating of the *International Code of Conduct for Plant Germplasm Collecting and Transfer* remained on its Agenda. In addition, the Commission may in the future decide to update the Gene Bank Standards and Guidelines.

Emerging issues

26. There are a number of emerging issues that the Commission may need to take into account in developing its MYPoW. Some relate directly to ongoing international activities, particularly those of the CBD, and to invitations by its Conference of the Parties that FAO lead international activities in this regard.

¹¹ Progress achieved in preparation of the second *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* is presented in document CGRFA/WG-PGR-3/05/3

The ecosystem approach to agrobiodiversity in the area of PGRFA

27. The *Global Plan of Action's* main group on *In situ* conservation and development is of direct importance for the management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in the wider context of the ecosystem approach.

Biodiversity and nutrition

28. At its Tenth Regular Session, the Commission welcomed FAO's innovative work on various aspects of agricultural biodiversity, including activities in nutrition linking biodiversity to food security¹². It supported FAO's contribution to the establishment of a cross-cutting initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition within the CBD's existing programme of work on agricultural biodiversity¹³. It approved carrying out a thematic background study on "The contribution of plant genetic resources to health and dietary diversity", in the context of developing the second *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*¹⁴. The Commission also asked the Working Group to provide guidance on how FAO could best support countries, on request, to generate, compile and disseminate cultivar-specific nutrient composition data, as well as indicate the relative priority of obtaining cultivar-specific dietary consumption data, in order to demonstrate the role of biodiversity in nutrition and food security.¹⁵

Indicators for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture

29. At its Tenth Regular Session, the Commission adopted revised indicators for monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. It approved carrying out a thematic background study on "Indicators of genetic diversity, genetic erosion and genetic vulnerability", for the preparation of the Second *Report on the State of the World's PGRFA*. In deciding that it would accept the invitation of the CBD's Conference of the Parties, to consider how the *Global Plan of Action* can contribute to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, in particular target 9, the Commission noted the need for, and the importance of, higher order indicators. It also supported FAO's continuing to lead the development of agricultural biodiversity indicators, including indicators on genetic resources for food and agriculture (*inter alia* domestic plants), to assist in determining progress toward the CBD's 2010 target of significantly reducing the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.¹⁶

*Interaction with other sectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture*¹⁷

30. For the preparation of the second *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, the Commission approved carrying out a thematic background study on "Interactions between plant and animal genetic resources, and opportunities for synergy in their management".

Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially Millennium Development Goal no. 1, Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger, and Millennium Development Goal no. 7, Ensure Environmental Sustainability

¹² Document CGRFA-10/04/REP, *Report of the Tenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, para. 72.

¹³ *Report of the Tenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, para. 78. See also <http://www.biodiv.org/programmes/areas/agro/food-nutrition/default.shtml>

¹⁴ Document CGRFA-10/04/REP, *Report of the Tenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, para. 23.

¹⁵ Document CGRFA-10/04/REP, *Report of the Tenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, para. 38. See also document CGRFA/WG-PGR-3/05/5.

¹⁶ Document CGRFA-10/04/REP, *Report of the Tenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, paras. 26 and 76. See also <http://www.biodiv.org/2010-target/default.asp>

¹⁷ Tentatively identified as domesticated animal, forest, fishery, and microbial genetic resources.

31. The Working Group may wish to consider whether the Commission may contribute to the development of targets and indicators for achievement of these goals, which take into account the specific role and nature of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

3. INPUT SOUGHT FROM THE WORKING GROUP

32. In the light of the above, and in line with the request of the Tenth Session of the Commission, the Working Group is asked to provide input, within its field of expertise, to be taken into account by FAO in preparing a draft Multi-Year Programme of Work for consideration by the Commission at its Eleventh Session. In particular, it is requested to provide its advice on:

- a) the issues related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in the area of agrobiodiversity, that the Commission may wish to consider at one or more of its five next meetings;
- b) how these might be considered and whether the Commission should focus on different elements of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture at successive meetings;
- c) a possible timetable proposing which issues should be addressed at successive meetings of the Commission and in what order;
- d) the priority it attaches to each issue; and
- e) how often the Commission should revisit its planning relating to plant genetic resources issues, and their timing, as set out in the MYPoW.

33. The Working Group may also recommend the timing for delivery of expected outputs and suggest milestones to be included in the roadmap.

34. The following indicative table may be of use to the Working Group in its deliberations.

<i>Meetings of the Commission</i>	<i>Possible issues as regards plants</i>	<i>Priorities</i>	<i>Expected outputs</i>	<i>Milestones for the FAO</i>
CGRFA-12 (2008)	Focus on sustainable utilization		Adopt the Second <i>Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture</i>	Launch the process to update the <i>Global Plan of Action</i>
CGRFA-13 (2010)	Focus on <i>in situ</i> conservation and development, and environmental sustainability			
CGRFA-14 (2012)	Focus on <i>ex situ</i> conservation, and institutions and capacity-building			
CGRFA-15 (2014)	Focus on sustainable utilization			
CGRFA-16 (2016)	Focus on <i>in situ</i> conservation and development, and environmental sustainability		Adopt the updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i>	

ANNEX 1

**FUTURE WORK OF THE COMMISSION, EXTRACTED FROM THE REPORT OF
THE COMMISSION'S TENTH REGULAR SESSION¹⁸**

83. The Commission agreed that the Secretariat, in cooperation with the relevant services and PAIAs in FAO, should submit a Multi-Year Programme of Work to its Eleventh session, for consideration. The Secretariat should consult with the Regional Groups about their ideas, in the preparation of the first draft of the Multi-Year Programme of Work, which should take into account inputs from the Inter-Governmental Technical Working Groups on Plants and Animals, in their fields of expertise. A second draft should then be prepared by the Secretariat, for consideration by Regional Groups. In the light of comments from the Regional Groups, a final draft will be prepared for submission to the Eleventh Session of the Commission.

84. The Secretariat was requested to prepare a succinct analysis of the human and financial resources available within the FAO, to support work on the various sectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture, and identify gaps. This should be provided to members well in advance of the Eleventh Session of the Commission.

85. The immediate priority should be to continue work on plant and animal genetic resources, giving appropriate emphasis to work on animal genetic resources for food and agriculture, including strengthening national and regional levels.

86. There was a need to mobilize the Regular Programme of Work and Budget and human resources of FAO, in support of the programme of work of the Commission. The Commission recognized the need to match priorities to available financial and human resources. If required, FAO was invited to mobilize extra-budgetary resources for this purpose.

87. The Commission should support the implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

88. Within its mandate, the Commission should strengthen mutual cooperation with the CBD, and other relevant organizations.

89. In the medium and longer term, the Commission should implement its full mandate (Conference Resolution 3/95). The Secretariat was requested to prepare a document on the status and needs of sectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture, other than plants and animals, including the various areas of biodiversity for food and agriculture, and the agro-ecosystem approach to genetic resource conservation and cross-sectorial matters, identifying the responsibilities of relevant FAO Services and PAIAs in these fields, and submit this to the Eleventh Session of the Commission. The Eleventh Session of the Commission would then decide on the Commission's Programme of Work.

90. Within its Mandate, the future work of the Commission should contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially Millennium Development Goal no. 1, *Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger*, and Millennium Development Goal no. 7, *Ensure Environmental Sustainability*.

91. The Secretariat and the Bureau should consider and report to the Commission on ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Commission's operations.

¹⁸ CGRFA-10/04/REP, para. 83-91.