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para la
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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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Sixth Session

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REPORT FROM THE GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURE RESEARCH TO THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) was established in 1996, with the mission to mobilize all stakeholders involved in agricultural research and innovation systems for development, and to catalyse actions towards to alleviate poverty, increase food security and promote the sustainable use of natural resources. This document presents a report on the activities undertaken by Global Forum on Agriculture Research (GFAR) in relation to agrobiodiversity between 2010 and 2012.

II. GFAR AND AGROBIODIVERSITY

2. At the Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD) in March 2010, GFAR constituencies prioritized the issue of agro-biodiversity, as one of prime global importance that should be addressed vigorously in the research for development agenda. Building on the success of the year of biodiversity (2010), GFAR with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources in Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), advocated for greater consideration of agrobiodiversity in research and innovation processes at national, regional and international level. They organized a workshop to discuss the importance of local varieties and indigenous species, at FAO, Rome 20 – 21 January 2011. The meeting brought together representatives from UN organizations, international research networks and institutions as well as civil society concerned with generating, accessing and using knowledge of these species and promoting their value and sustainable use. The formation of a collective movement tentatively named the Development Opportunity Crops Initiative (DOCs) was recommended.

3. The movement took a new form as the Diversity for Development (D4D) alliance at a new meeting in FAO, in January 2012. The Diversity for Development (D4D) alliance took a new form with collegial leadership and adopted a list of actions and deliverables for 2012-2013 which includes:

- Finalizing a literature review paper and approach a highly recognized journal for publication Critical Reviews in Plant Science (CRPS).
- Disseminating the information gathered in case studies in 2011 and turn the lessons.
- Learned into a living document for a publication or a brochure.
- Setting up an information clearing house where to find information about any relevant species. A Portal of databases carrying information sources and links, facilitated by the GFAR Secretariat should offer easy access to dedicated information and make communication/information accessible by all types of stakeholders.
- Undertaking country data surveys on a few success stories of “minor” crops to incorporate in FAO country reports contributing to the annual State of the World. AARINENA will work on a pilot of data coordination at regional level.
- Reviewing PROTA-for-use information on topics such as domestication/marketing to provide evidence of benefits (examples of Voacanga and Griffonia spp. presented by ASNAPP).
- Developing a method to characterize non-economic benefits of agrobiodiversity.
- Placing the logo of their organization on the webpage of the initiative with a small paragraph drafted by each organization, marking its dedication to the D4D alliance.
- Working on a Monitoring and Evaluation system for the benefit/added value of each organization.
- Participating through identified members in advocacy events, and meetings offering opportunities for advocacy and fund raising in 2012/2013:
 - CGIAR CRP4 (Agriculture, nutrition and health) meetings in view of engaging the CRP to in the D4D alliance.
 - Global Conference on Women in agriculture (GCWA, New Delhi, March 2012).
 - GCARD 2 (29 October - 1 November 2012, Punta del Este) where two sessions will be organized on the sustainable use of biodiversity, and sustainably managing land, water and landscapes.

- Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2013, as a venue to present the alliance and its strategy.

4. D4D is working towards convincing the international research community, policy makers and investors that species often called "underutilized" offer strong opportunities to solve major challenges like nutrition and health, the resilience of eco-friendly farming systems, and contribute to income generation. In its facilitation role for this Initiative, GFAR:

- a) a) organized a side-event at the Fourth Regular Session of the Governing Body of the ITPGRFA held in Bali, Indonesia, 14 – 18 March 2011, where national and regional partners agreed to promote -under article 6 of the Treaty- the need to expand varietal conservation, exchange and sustainable use of these species extending to them the fair share of benefits, and
- b) b) commissioned in July 2011, through Global Hort a study to document the importance of under-utilized plants and crops for achieving smallholders agro-ecosystem sustainability in addressing the MDGs. This report was presented in a session co-organized by GFAR at the CGIAR Science Forum in Beijing (17 – 19 October 2011) to make the case for development opportunity crops. It is currently transformed into a policy brief for sensitizing policy makers and investors;¹
- c) c) supported the frameworks and strategies for the conservation and use of biodiversity formulated by **Regional Fora**.

III. GFAR'S REGIONAL INITIATIVES

5. In the **Asia-Pacific region** "The Suwon Agro-biodiversity Framework" adopted in October 2010 at a symposium organized by APAARI to review, identify and redefine the role and directions of agricultural R&D, in the context of conservation through use of valuable agro-biodiversity for sustainable agricultural development. The Suwon framework recognizes that the reservoir of genetic resources remains the biggest source for food security, and is equally important for improving nutrition, product quality, product diversification and food safety. The region has prioritized:

- Studies to enhance the use of genetic resources through manageable sub-sets, using appropriate methods/approaches to sample germplasm collections, to help quickly evaluate/characterize (phenotypic/genotypic) genetic resources so as to select useful accessions for use in pre-breeding. Approaches will include enhancing research efforts on underutilized crops and their wild relative.
- Pre-breeding and participatory breeding work: a) to enhance utilization of genetic resources in crop improvement programs and encouraging the use of underutilized species; their relatives and other useful species such as non-timber forest products (NTFPs), medicinal plants, etc.] to exploit untapped genes, broaden the genetic base of existing cultivated varieties and develop the new ones; b) to better cope with the challenges of increasing productivity, improving quality, managing new pests and diseases, and adapting to climate change and abiotic stresses, developing partnership with farmers and other stakeholders for exploring alternative approaches for genetic improvement such as participatory plant breeding and community based conservation.
- Strategies and technologies to enhance *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation through use.
- Assessment of the agro-biodiversity richness and the status relative to economic, social and cultural (traditional knowledge) factors.

6. In **Sub Saharan Africa**, FARA General Assembly in Ouagadougou in July 2010 adopted a declaration expressing a sense of urgency to halt the further deterioration in PGR, and unleash the potential of agricultural biodiversity for development in SSA.

¹http://www.sciencecouncil.cgiar.org/fileadmin/templates/ispc/documents/Mobilizing_science/Science_Forum/S_F11_Summary_Final_15Dec.pdf

7. It launched the Agricultural Biodiversity Initiative in Africa (ABIA) to champion issues of agricultural biodiversity on the continent. ABIA is primarily supporting efforts of regional organization (ROs), SROs, NARS and Partners in R&D in this domain in Africa: building partnerships for action, seeking resources, and commissioning research; it has engaged in advocacy for appropriate policies and investment for R&D in agricultural biodiversity. Bioversity International is a technical partner with FARA in the implementation of ABIA. The key products to be generated through ABIA include:

- Political level policy intervention (nationally, regionally, AU/NEPAD, donors), advocacy and public awareness to promote proper management and sustainable use of genetic resources in Africa;
- Strategic studies and analysis on key ABD issues (Policy Briefs);
- Support to Africa's negotiators in international policy fora on genetic resources and agricultural biodiversity;
- Mainstreaming ABD into tertiary education, universities;
- Support to the establishment of Farmer/Community platforms in ABD use;
- Knowledge management in Africa's ABD, including capturing indigenous knowledge.

8. In the **Near East and North Africa**, the collaboration between ITPGRFA and GFAR, in partnership with Bioversity International and ICARDA has helped revamping the Plant genetic resources network in the AARINENA region and the formulation of a new strategy which has been endorsed at a General Assembly in Kuwait (16 – 18 November 2011). The most recent of the meetings sponsored by ITPGRFA and GFAR to raise awareness for the implementation of the Treaty took place in Izmir/Menem (27-29 September 2011) under the auspices of the NENA PGR Network, co-organized with the European Cooperative Program on Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR) Network at the Aegean Agricultural Research Institute. The Coordinating Board of NENA-PGRN met for its second meeting in Cairo (18 – 20 September 2012) to review the feedback received by country members on the implementation of the new strategy, review the report of activities provided by members.

9. AR4D activities facilitated by GFAR are implemented by NARS, CSOs, NGOs, and a number of communities of practitioners operating at national, sub-regional and regional levels, supported by regional fora (CACAARI, AARINENA, APAARI, EFARD, FARA, FORAGRO) as well as the CGIAR building on respective comparative advantage for generating agricultural knowledge and innovation and meeting agriculture and food-related development needs.

10. The **GFAR Secretariat** mobilized funding for 2011-2012 from a few donors in complement of regional fora budgets to support selected activities in agrobiodiversity. It has facilitated the organization of consultations/meetings on agrobiodiversity, biotechnology and crops for the future in the different regions, and increased awareness on operational possibilities offered by the ITPGRFA, notably in Capacity building and in accessing the Benefit-Sharing Fund. GFAR continues to promote greater CSO involvement, Inter-regional Partnerships (North-South and South-South) leveraging collaborative actions and networking in this domain.

11. Finally GFAR participated in the fourth Agriculture and Rural Development Day 2012 "Lessons in Sustainable Landscapes and Livelihoods", June 18 - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and **co-signed the Final ARDD Communiqué** which echoes the new vision for sustainable development that emerged from the Rio+20 Earth Summit. This vision recognizes the role of biodiversity and sustainable use of plant genetic resources through harmonized forest and agriculture policies, scaled up investment, and the role of smallholders farmers -especially women- in economic growth, food security, poverty reduction and in improving long-term environmental sustainability.