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Food and
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para la
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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda

INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Sixth Session

Rome, 14 - 16 November 2012

REPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL SEED FEDERATION (ISF) TO THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

1. The International Seed Federation (ISF) (www.worldseed.org) represents the seed industry, which plays a vital role in increasing food security, sustainable development, and the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA). Plant breeding is at the foundation of the seed industry and is based on the continuous use of plant genetic resources, be they widely used modern improved varieties or research materials, land races and wild relatives¹. For the plant breeding sector having ready access to the widest diversity of genetic resources is essential today and for the future.
2. This document presents a report on the recent activities undertaken by ISF and its members in relation to PGRFA. Members of the ISF actively steward PGRFA by ensuring that genetic resources are used in a sustainable manner and genetic variation is maintained. By incorporating and recombining novel and adapted genetic diversity into new varieties, modern plant breeding has created useful variation in crops available to growers and consumers. Increased yields and performance of crops as well as improved economic well-being of today's farmers is the hallmark of the success of plant breeding.
3. ISF represents the plant breeding sector in a range of meetings related to PGRFA, and access and benefits sharing (ABS), and by sharing information and communicating the industry's position and views it creates a better understanding of the plant breeding sector. It also engages actively in

¹ ISF members estimate that more than 95% of the genetic resources used in plant breeding are modern improved materials

raising awareness within the plant breeding sector about international regimes on PGRFA and ABS. ISF, its member national seed industry associations and individual seed companies co-operate with public authorities and research facilities to support and promote the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources. A few examples of such activities are listed below.

Support to national and international gene banks

- Evaluation, multiplication and characterization of national gene bank accessions and direct financial support
- Active participation in various forage, field and vegetable crop networks to create national collections, and support for collecting missions
- Donation of large collections to national public gene banks, e.g. radish germplasm collection to the USDA and cabbage to North Carolina State University
- Notification of 533 maize and 1784 wheat accessions to the International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Capacity building

- Establishment of a horticultural school programme in Guatemala and development of laboratories and support to conduct seed analysis in Morocco
- Financial support to Vavilov-Frankel Fellowship Programme and others on biodiversity and plant breeding
- Support to post-doctoral and visiting scientists within breeding and genetic programs
- Technical expertise for program reviews related to conservation of PGRFA

Sustainable use of genetic resources

- Participation in the Germplasm Enhancement of Maize (GEM) Project to broaden the germplasm base of maize
- In-kind support and services for the development of GRIN
- Participation in international consortia, e.g. International Maize Improvement Consortium with CMMYT in India
- Support for tomato breeding programme in Bolivia
- Training in breeding and access to high yielding lines to improve cold-tolerance in maize grown in high elevations (3400 – 4000 m) in Peru
- The provision of germplasm, breeding technologies and drought genes to projects funded by the Gates Foundation to develop drought resistant hybrids for Sub Saharan Africa

4. In conclusion, ISF member companies contribute to activities related to the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. Through new varieties they provide farmers and producers with better products and higher profitability, and offer consumers choice and reduced costs.

5. For more information contact the ISF Secretariat at isf@worldseed.org.