Forestry Department

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Forest Genetic Resources Working Papers

Report of the regional training workshop to support preparation of the State of the world's forest genetic resources *in the Near East*

14-16 June 2011: Hammamet, Tunisia

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Summary

This paper describes the work of the regional workshop which was held to support the preparation of the *State of the world's forest genetic resources* (SOW-FGR). The workshop was attended by 14 countries in the Near East and North Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Yemen. The primary objective of the meeting was to train national focal points in preparing work plans for the production of national reports, which will then be collated to produce the global SOW-FGR report. This exercise encompassed a session providing information on the process of preparing a report, examination of the guidelines for drawing up country reports, formulation of work plans for preparing these reports and discussion of possible sources of finance. After the group work, the focal points had an opportunity to present their work plans in a plenary session and to receive comments and suggestions with a view to their improvement.

The meeting, held from 14 to 16 June 2011 in Hammamet, Tunisia, was organized by FAO and the WWF Tunis Office in collaboration with the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment and Bioversity International. The introductory section of this report describes the context of the meeting in relation to the forthcoming SOW-FGR document. Then the proceedind sections present the work and results of the three days of presentations, the activities of the working groups and the plenary discussions.

The key issues addressed and the conclusions and resolutions of the meeting can be summarized as follows:

- Preparation of the country report for the SOW-FGR is a useful exercise for national programmes and should be carried out in relation to other international programmes in the same field.
- It is important to make sure that country reports really reflect the specific features of the countries and the region.
- A participatory approach is essential for report quality and also to ensure that the stakeholders assume ownership of its results and recommendations.
- The work plan should be appropriate to the individual country's institutional structures, capacities and experience.
- The report will be based on currently available information.
- The process will make use of existing expertise found at both the national and regional levels.
- Countries needing funding should make an effort to gather the necessary resources and then apply to the TCP fund to cover supplementary expenditure.

- The deadline for submission of reports is the end of December 2011.

Introduction

At its 11th session in June 2007, the Commission for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) recognized the urgent need to conserve and ensure the sustainable use of forest genetic resources (FGR) and requested that a *State of the world's forest genetic resources* (SOW-FGR) report be prepared and presented for examination at the commission's 14th session in 2013. The commission recommended that the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) and FAO's regional forestry commissions be involved in preparation of this document.

At the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in May 2008, preparation of the report was welcomed. Then, FAO's regional forestry commissions were also informed about the project. At its 19th session in March 2009, COFO urged member countries to collaborate with FAO and its partner organizations in preparing the SOW-FGR.

In December 2008, FAO's Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources defined the scope and also proposed the structure of the report. It was agreed upo that the main source of data for the SOW-FGR will be country reports compiled with information available at the national level. National focal points will be responsible for overall coordination during the process. However, a number of thematic cross-sectoral studies should help to back up information in the country reports.In this regard, regional workshops were held in tropical countries in 2008 and 2009 to formulate proposals and recommendations. Consultations have also been held in Europe and North America.

At its 12th session in October 2009, the CGRFA endorsed the proposed plan and the tentative list of thematic studies. The commission stressed that preparation should be based primarily on the country reports, with support of thematic studies. It called for assistance and capacity building in developing countries for the preparation of country reports and appealed to FAO and donors to provide the necessary resources. The tenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the CBD in October 2010 also invited donors to support preparation of the SOW-FGR.

The 12th session of the CGRFA set up the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on FGR (ITWG-FGR) that will review drafts of the SOW-FGR report. Intergovernmental working groups played major roles in preparing the first report on the *State of the world's animal genetic resources for food and agriculture* and the second report on the *State of the world's plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*.

Regional workshops to assist national focal points in preparing country reports for the SOW-FGR were organized for Latin America (in Colombia) in November 2010, the Pacific (in Fiji) in January 2011, Asia (in Malaysia) in March 2011 and sub-Saharan Africa (in Kenya) in April 2011. The present report is an account of the workshop organized for the Near East and North Africa, held in Tunisia in June 2011.

Proceedings of Tuesday, 14 June

Opening session

The workshop's opening session started with an introductory word from Mohamed Saket, Senior Forestry Officer at FAO's Regional Office in Cairo. He welcomed the participants and presented the institutions involved in organizing the workshop – FAO, Bioversity International, WWF and the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment.

Benoît Horemans, the Coordinator of FAO's Subregional Office for North Africaspoke next, recalling the special context of celebration of the International Year of Forests this year (2011) and also the important place of FGR in national programmes for agricultural development and sustainable natural resource management. He also stressed that preparation of the first SOW-FGR report is one of FAO's priority activities for the coming years in the forestry and biodiversity sectors, reiterating FAO's commitment to supporting countries in producing their national reports.

Judy Loo, Coordinator of Forest Genetic Resources at Bioversity International, shared about the mandate of Bioversity as CGIAR Centre in conserving FGR. She highlighted the major role of the institution in the process of preparing the world report, particularly by coordinating the drafting of thematic studies.

Faouzi Maamouri, Director of the WWF Tunis Office, expressed his joy at seeing his institution involved in organizing this regional workshop, while also recalling the importance of FGR in WWF programmes.

Ridha Fekih, Director General for Forests, representing the Tunisian Minister for Agriculture and the Environment, thanked the organizers of the workshop for choosing Tunisia to host the meeting and welcomed the participants, before describing Tunisia's experience in the sphere of forest resource management. While stressing the urgent need to pursue sustainable management of forest resources, Mr Fekih recognized that the process of drafting the national report will mean that useful information will be collated and reflections to improve programmes and policies regarding FGR management be made. In conclusion, he declared the regional training workshop for the preparation of reports on the state of FGR officially open.

After the individual participants had been introduced, the day's programme was followed, with Habib Abid, Tunisia's National Focal Point, chairing the session.

Preparation of the SOW-FGR report

First, the various countries' focal points reported on the present status of the process in their countries. They told the other participants about important preliminary information on their countries' forest resources that could contribute to the national report.

Thereafter, Oudara Souvannavong presented the objectives of the workshop as follows:

- the provision of fuller information on the process of preparing the countries' reports on their FGR;
- explanation of the guidelines for preparing country reports and the provision of any necessary or useful clarification;
- development of a work plan and timetable for preparing national reports
- sharing of ideas, information and experience in the process of developing work plans;
- identification of potential sources of financial support.

He said that the Hammamet workshop on the preparation of reports on FGR of the countries of the Near East and North Africa was the last in a series of five workshops held in the various regions of the world. He added that these workshops will help in the preparation of national reports on genetic resources, which can then act as the basis for national plans of action regarding these resources. It was emphasised that the reports should be based on existing information rather than embarking on new research.

Mr Souvannavong described the timetable for production of the SOW-FGR report. He emphasised that the country reports should be ready by the end of December 2011. Then they will be analysed and synthesized along with the planned thematic studies- which should also be completed by December 2011. The resulting draft, SOW-FGR will be produced in 2012 and then reviewed and presented to the CGRFA at its 14th session in 2013. This could lead to the adoption of a Global Plan of Action for Forest Genetic Resources. In 2014, the report will be presented to COFO, CBD and the United Nations Forum on Forests.

Judy Loo presented the topics of the thematic studies that will complement the country reports in compilation of the SOW-FGR. They are as follows:

- indicators of forest genetic diversity, erosion and vulnerability;
- understanding of the genetic diversity of tropical species in natural forests;
- new technologies and approaches to support conservation of FGR;
- use and transfer of FGR;
- role of FGR in adaptation to biotic and abiotic factors, with a focus on climate change;
- use of FGR in decentralized development with a view to boosting food security, reducing poverty and improving means of livelihood;
- effects of management practices on forest genetic diversity;
- use of native species in biodiversity restoration and management;

- trends in management of FGR by the private/corporate sector.

Preparation of the SOW-FGR: main discussion points

Answering questions on indicators, Judy Loo explained that the thematic studies are to be based not only on genetic indicators but also on indicators specific to certain ecosystems and species.

Other questions were raised concerning the results of the thematic studies on the Mediterranean region and the specific features of forest resources for each region, such as arid zones, oasis, mangroves and rangelands.

It was agreed that each country is free to include its unique forest resources in its report. It was also pointed out that the thematic studies are not to be seen as research topics but rather will help to (a) identify shortcomings and needs in terms of the world's FGR and (b) support research efforts. It was also explained that the thematic studies are not part of the country reports but will be carried out by voluntary groups of experts. However, these groups of experts are open to the participation of more people who could come from countries in the Near East and North Africa region. Ms Loo mentioned that contributors are still sought for the thematic studies, especially the one on the conservation of FGR in the context of climate change.

Other concerns were also raised, for example the need to harmonize definitions of the technical terms used, with the term "ecosystem" as a particular example: Concern about it was that this term is used both in a very broad sense (for example at the global level as in FAO's guidelines) and also in a specific national or regional context (for example in the presentation of Morocco's focal point). Nevertheless, the workshop agreed that countries should use the terminology and ecological classifications to which they are accustomed, while giving references wherever possible.

Guidelines for preparing country reports

Oudara Souvannavong explained the guidelines to be followed in drawing up national reports on FGR. He explained that the guidelines are intended to help countries to make a strategic evaluation of their FGR in the context of their national forest programmes and also to identify shortcomings and needs for the formulation of national programmes. He added that the guidelines will also allow information to be inserted into a common framework that will in due course allow analysis and synthesis that will lead to regional and global conclusions.

With a view of ensuring that their reports provide a good basis for planning the conservation, use and sustainable development of FGR at the national level and contribute to the execution of regional and global lines of action, Oudara stressed that countries should carry out a careful and exhaustive evaluation of the following:

- the state of FGR in the country and their role in production systems, including the associated biodiversity and factors leading to change;
- the current contribution of FGR to sustainable forest development;
- how the contribution of FGR to sustainable forest development can be increased, identifying opportunities and obstacles, and also strategies that could provide opportunities and overcome all the obstacles;
- needs and priorities for capacity building in order to allow the conservation, sustainable use and development of FGR.

The country reports should follow the structure of chapters indicated in the guidelines (http://www.fao.org/forestry/fgr/64585/en/):

Chapter 1. The current state of forest genetic resources

Chapter 2. The state of *in situ* genetic conservation

Chapter 3. The state of *ex situ* genetic conservation

Chapter 4. The state of use and sustainable management of forest genetic resources

Chapter 5. The state of national programmes, research, education, training and legislation

Chapter 6. The state of regional and international collaboration

Chapter 7. Access to forest genetic resources and sharing of benefits arising from their use

Chapter 8. The contribution of forest genetic resources to food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

The *recommended steps* for the production of country reports are given in Part IV of the guidelines, while details of the information sought are given in the annexes to the guidelines. It was also pointed out that for many countries, the available information will be insufficient to answer all the questions raised in the details of the guidelines, but they were asked to provide all the information they can.

The steps suggested for the production of country reports are as follows:

- appointment of a national focal point;
- appointment of a national committee;
- establishment of working groups;

- holding of an information workshop to assist the various actors and stakeholders;
- gathering of information and drafting of the report;
- review by the stakeholders;
- finalization of the report by the national committee.

Oudara mentioned that the appointment of a national focal point- responsible for supervising the process, is a vital step in the preparation of country reports, while the other steps will depend on the individual country. FAO's experience of similar initiatives indicates that the appointment of a national committee responsible for overseeing the work undertaken by subject-specific working groups can be an effective manner of proceeding.

Guidelines for country reports: main discussion points

The focal points all endorsed the steps proposed in the guidelines for the preparation of national reports.

During discussions, the participants raised the issue of the different definitions used to designate forest resources **and the species to be considered in order to guarantee comparable data**. Amendments to the titles of Tables 5 and 6 were therefore proposed in order to harmonize the terms used in the guidelines to designate FGR. It was therefore suggested that the term "forest, trees and other woody plants" should be used. Other suggestions were made, particularly concerning the choice of species to be included in the forest ecosystem and the need to consider not only trees but also other species such as bamboos and orchids.

A recurrent question raised was that of whether rangelands, shrubs, grasslands, bushy species and other fruit trees should be included in the report. Consequently, the recommendation was that there should be flexiblity with regard to the priorities that countries wish to adopt and that countries are free to include the species they judge appropriate.

Presentation of the draft reports of some countries in the region

With a view of updating participants on progress in the preparation of country reports, the focal points of five countries in the region spoke in a plenary session, reporting on the current status of their national reports on FGR:

- Hassan Sbay described the state of conservation of FGR in Morocco.

- Jean Stephan spoke about FGR in Lebanon, the research carried out and threats to the sector.

- Murat Alan described progress on the management of FGR in Turkey, the institutions and bodies involved, and the opportunities and challenges facing the sector.

- Mostafa Jafari presented the state of FGR, government strategies for biodiversity conservation and the challenges facing this sector in Iran.

- Lastly, Alisher Shukurov described the current status of preparation of the national report on FGR in Uzbekistan.

The challenges mentioned by the focal points differed from country to country, but included desertification, pollution, climate change, attack by insects and disease, forest fires, urbanization, lack of information on forest species and many other issues that should be taken into account when designing conservation strategies for the world's FGR.

Proceedings of Wednesday, 15 June

Silva Mediterranea's *activities regarding forest genetic resources* by Fulvio Ducci (CRA, Italy)

Fulvio Ducci presented the activities of *Silva Mediterranea* regarding FGR. He highlighted that in 2010 this Mediterranean network published a book on these resources in the Mediterranean zone and established a database that should provide information about countries involved in preparing the SOW-FGR.

Group work: development of work plans for the preparation of country reports

The facilitator of the day's discussions, Amr Rafaat Rabie of Egypt, explained that the remainder of the day would be devoted to group work. Three groups were formed, each supported by a resource person:

- a French-language group: Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, with Albert Nikiema (FAO);

- an English-language group: Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, with Judy Loo (Bioversity International);

- an Arabic-language group: Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan and Egypt, with Fady Asmar (Consultant).

Each group produced a summary of conclusions of its work in a report that was presented in plenary session.

Proceedings of Thursday, 16 June

Draft work plans for the preparation of country reports

The draft work plans were presented in plenary session by representatives of the three working groups – North Africa, Near East and Central Asia.

North Africa group

Hassan Sbay (Morocco) presented the results of his working group. The group advocated for the establishment of a national committee to act as a steering committee. The committee will be made up of the institutions involved in FGR. This committee will be created in June 2011. Then, before the end of July 2011, it will set up a working group that will start to draw up the report.

The three countries of North Africa decided to; apply for the TCP fund to support national programmes, recruit a national consultant as soon as possible and prepare an application for funding for the organization of meetings and workshops to support the process of drawing up the report.

The focal points then examined the content of the guidelines drawn up by FAO, making various comments and recommendations:

- The countries recommended use of the concept of ecosystem as described in the bioclimatic zoning (vegetation series, for example the cork oak ecosystem) proposed in Emberger's classification. This classification includes steppe ecosystems (for example the alfa ecosystem) in types of forest.

- The group stressed the need to have national- and regional-level systems to manage data on FGR.

- Inasmuch as the three countries already participate in the same international networks, programmes and agreements, it is recommended that they should discuss this issue among themselves.

- With regard to access to FGR and the sharing of benefits arising from their use, the Nagoya Protocol should be taken as the basis in drawing up specific laws and defining conditions for access and the sharing of forest genetic material.

Central Asia group

Judy Loo (Bioversity International) presented the draft work plan proposed by the English-language group, highlighting comments made on the guidelines:

- The participants wondered whether national strategies should concern only FGR or be rather broader.

- Botanical gardens, arboreta etc. will be included in the report with a view to improving their use.

- The focal points discussed the ecological zoning to be adopted and considered whether they should use the FRA or other classification.

The group outlined the work plan and timetable to be followed in drawing up country reports on FGR:

- Finance should be acquired to recruit consultants and obtain advice on specific subjects. The group members indicated that all the countries need support.

- The types of threat in Table 7 should be examined and a reference document provided if possible. Footnotes could be provided to guide experts in interpretation of the various threats.

- In Table 8a-b, the quantities will be approximate and references should be provided.

- The focal points wondered about the utility of bringing up the sustainable management of FGR in Chapter 4, which concerns their use, and recommend that a question should be added concerning regulations and the limits established in order to avoid overexploitation.

Lastly, the countries concerned established a timetable of work which started with selection of the national committee and working groups in July/August 2011. It also included the examination of guidelines, establishment of terms of reference for the consultant who will work with the stakeholders and other experts, and review of the report drawn up by the national committee. The focal point and the national institution will be responsible for the implementation of all these. The timetable will end with submission of the report on FGR by the ministry in December 2011.

During discussions, the workshop reaffirmed the need to have the report validated and submitted officially to FAO by the government.

The discussions also focused on the classification to be used. Nonetheless, the participants agreed that the indications given in the guidelines should be referred to, making especially sure to retain the flexibility of the classification.

Near East group

Fady Asmar (Consultant) presented the work plan proposed by the Arabic-language group, which pointed out the need to include not only sites typical of the region, but also

traditional practices of forest resource management. The group stressed the constraints linked to the lack of solid statistical data and suggested that this should be taken into account in drawing up plans of action for the sustainable management and protection of forest resources.

With regard to how the process is to be carried out, all the focal points in the group agreed that consultants should be recruited and national or regional seminars and workshops should be organized during the process of preparing the report in order to involve the main actors and stakeholders.

The group proposed a timetable for the work plan, which starts in July 2011 with gathering of the necessary funding, appointment of the national consultant, identification of stakeholders and meetings of the working groups. The process will continue with the holding of the first workshop, the gathering of data by the working groups and meetings with the consultant. Once the first draft report is ready, a second workshop will be held to validate the final report and submit it to the official institution concerned.

The group stressed that the process of drawing up the reports in the various countries needs to receive financial support to allow data to be gathered and workshops to be held.

Oudara Souvannavong complimented the working groups on what they had achieved and on the complementarity of their plans of action. He recognized present difficulties over raising finance and reaffirmed the readiness of the FAO team to support countries in their search for the necessary funding. The participants then agreed that the possibilities presented by TCP funds should be explored by the focal points with the support of their governments. Applications for TCP resources should be addressed to FAO's national representatives in the various countries. A region can apply for a total of of US$10 000 from TCP. Search for funding needed to carry out the project should be broadened to other sources.

Draft work plans for the preparation of country reports: main discussion points

- The participants as a whole endorsed the steps proposed in the guidelines for drawing up reports in the various countries.
- With regard to the classification or ecological zones to be used, the participants agreed that the suggestions given in the guidelines should be observed, although not withholding the flexibility of individual country or regional classification .
- Focal points expressed some concerns concerning the raising of funding, which is likely tobe difficult in certain cases. It was then stressed that apart from countries' own efforts, support could be requested from FAO and other partners.

Conclusion and next steps

Oudara Souvannavong thanked the participants for their efforts during the workshop with a view to developing work plans for the preparation of country reports for the SOW-FGR. He summarized the main points touched on during the workshop:

- Drawing up the report on FGR is a national exercise useful for national programmes and will provide a link with other international programmes.
- It is important to make sure that species typical of the Near East and North Africa region are included in the country reports.
- A participatory approach should be adopted for the process of drawing up the country reports.
- The work plan should be appropriate to the individual country's institutional structures, capacities and experience.
- The report will be based on currently available information.
- Use should be made of existing expertise found at both the national and regional levels.
- Countries needing funding should make an effort to gather the necessary resources and then apply to the TCP fund to cover supplementary expenditure.
- The deadline for the transmission of reports is the end of December 2011.

To reiterate, participants were invited to finalize the work plan for their countries by 30 June 2011 at the latest and to identify synergies and potential assistance in their countries. TheThey were reminded of taking into accout the possibilities of assistance from FAO (national office, subregional office and headquarters) when seeking finance.

Future plans included the next CGRFA meeting to be held on 19-23 July 2011 whichwill provide an opportunity to examine progress on FGR national reports. For this purpose, it was proposed that FGR focal points should be members of the various countries' delegations.

Mohamed Saket from FAO's regional office encouraged countries to adopt a regional approach in drawing up their national reports and reiterated the readiness of the regional office, together with his colleagues from headquarters, to support the process.

The workshop closed with an invitation to all the participants to start drawing up and/or to finalize this initial report, which will then be improved as the established work plan is carried out, despite the relatively short timeframes.

Lastly, Oudara Souvannavong thanked the participants and the partners present for their contributions and also the WWF Tunis Office for organizing the workshop.

Conclusion and next steps: main points addressed during the discussions

- The countries should develop initiatives to gather the funding needed to carry out the various activities.
- The possibilities of assistance from FAO (national office, subregional office and headquarters) should be taken into account in the search for funding. Applications could be made in the framework of TCP funds.
- The deadline for the transmission of reports is the end of December 2011.

REGIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP TO SUPPORT THE PREPARATION OF THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES IN THE NEAR EAST
Hammamet, Tunisia, 14-16 June 2011

Programme

Tuesday	**14 June**
8.30 – 9.00	Registration
9.00 – 9.30 (FAO)	Opening - Programme and Objective of the Workshop , facilitated by M. Saket Welcome addresses by Representatives of FAO, Bioversity International and WWF Opening address by the Director-General of Forests, Tunisia
9.30 – 10.30	Plenary session – Chair: Mr Habib Abid (Tunisia) Update on SOW-FGR preparation process - O. Souvannavong (FAO) Thematic studies – J. Loo (Bioversity)
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee break
11.00 – 12.30	Plenary session – Chair: Mr Habib Abid (Tunisia) Preparation of country reports – O. Souvannavong (FAO)
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 16.00	Plenary session – Chair: Mr. Mostafa Jafari (Iran) Presentation of drafts country reports and problems/constraints encountered in their preparation. Discussion.
16.00 – 16.30	Coffee break
16.30 – 18.00	Plenary session on the Presentation of drafts country reports and problems/constraints encountered in their preparation. Discussion. (Cont.)
Wednesday	**15 June**
8.30 – 9.00	*Silva Mediterranea* activities in forest genetic resources – Fulvio Ducci (Italy)
9.00 – 18.00	Working groups focus on country reports with the support of resource persons.
Coffee breaks from 10.30 to 11.00 and from 16.00 to 16.30	
Lunch break from 12.30 to 14.00	
Thursday	**16 June**
8.30 – 10.30	Plenary session – Chair: Mr. Amr Raafat Rabie (Egypt) Presentation of results of working group sessions (status of preparation of country

	reports and plans for their completion).
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee break
11.00 – 12.30	Presentation of results of working group sessions (status of preparation of country reports and plans for their completion). (Cont.)
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 16.00	Plenary session: Conclusion, follow-up and next steps

Regional Training workshop to support the preparation of the State of the World Forest genetic Resources in the Near East region
Hammamet, Tunisia, 14-16 June 2011
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