



The International Treaty

ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

New York Communiqué:

The International Treaty, Food Crops and Food Security in a Changing Climate

The International Treaty, Climate Change, and Biodiversity

Background

Climate change presents unprecedented challenges for global food production. Rising temperatures, water-scarcity and increased occurrence of droughts and floods are likely to precipitate further problems such as rising soil salinity and the emergence of new crop pests and diseases. Unless we are able to develop food crops that can tolerate these stresses we risk the breakdown of global food systems and the very serious consequences that this will have for the world's agricultural productivity and food security, particularly for the poorer sections of society.

A key element underpinning our ability to develop climate-resilient crops is the genetic diversity that already exists within and among plant varieties. We have always depended on plant genetic diversity for our food and will rely more heavily on these resources in the face of climate change. Diversity in the field helps provide resilience against changing and variable growing conditions and adaptability to pests and diseases. It is also the basis for breeding new climate-adapted crop varieties capable of producing better quality and larger quantities of more nutritious food.

The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Countries around the world have recognized their shared dependence on plant genetic diversity, and responded by establishing the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Together they have made the commitment to conserve and exchange crop genetic resources, and equitably share the benefits arising from their use. Today, the International Treaty is the foremost forum for the global governance of these crucial resources.

The International Treaty offers significant opportunities in the fight against hunger and poverty and for achieving food security for all—especially in the face of climate change. It does so by advancing the development of climate-ready crop varieties through a series of open initiatives along the entire value chain of development of germplasm, from site-specific conservation of diversity to the release of new climate-adapted seeds for cultivation.

A Challenge to the World

At today's Fourth High Level Round Table of the International Treaty Ministers and other high-level dignitaries recognise the interconnectedness of climate change, agricultural productivity and global food security.

We acknowledge that adaptation to climate change, through the development of climate adapted crops, will be critical to future food security. We also affirm the importance of global plant genetic diversity for the development of climate adapted crops and the ability of farmers around the world

to adapt to climate change. We must make every effort to conserve the diversity existing in our fields and in our genebanks as well as ensuring it is as widely available as possible for use in the future.

We recognise that multiple stages are involved in the production of climate adapted crops, starting from diversity in nature and in the field, and highlight the importance of the Treaty's multiple mechanisms and open initiatives in underpinning each stage of this development chain. The International Treaty:

- Has established the Benefit-Sharing Fund, to conserve and manage genetic diversity in developing countries that will be crucial to adapting food crops to climate change. The Fund has already benefited more than 23 000 farmers in 45 countries and is continuing to expand its initiatives;
- Has created, and maintains access to and exchange of, a vast gene pool of more than 1,5 million accessions worldwide, as a key upstream input to breeding programs, which today transfers between 600 and 800 samples of genetic material every day worldwide;
- Has established a global system to exchange information on crop diversity, with a component focussing on plant genomic data, to assess and identify new sources of genetic variation for more efficient breeding;
- Promotes private-public partnerships, especially in the use of the latest technologies for breeding new varieties e.g. through crossing crop plants with their wild relatives;
- Is launching an open platform to support technology co-development and transfer relating to the conservation and use of crop diversity, together with capacity and institution-building programmes;
- Strengthens policies and systems for multiplying and distributing high-quality seeds to farmers in all countries.

While the International Treaty has been able to make a significant impact in all these areas, there is still much to be done. Under the auspices of the High Level Task Force we are committed to working for the benefit of humanity by advancing the conservation and sustainable use of global biodiversity and, in particular, crop diversity for plant breeding, through the International Treaty.

We agree to raise awareness in our countries and regions of the valuable contribution that the International Treaty makes to climate adaptation and the development of climate-adapted crops. We also agree to consider how resources may be most effectively sought and used in supporting the Treaty and its mechanisms to contribute to climate adaptation and food security.

We call on the World's leaders, and others to make available technical and financial resources to conserve the diversity of the world's most important food crops, and in particular to support sustainable and immediate income flow into the Benefit-Sharing Fund of the International Treaty.

In recognition of the shared dependence of all nations on crop diversity, we call on all nations to adhere to the terms and conditions of the International Treaty for the exchange of crop genetic resources and to work towards enhancing the International Treaty's systems for the global interchange of germplasm and data.

We call on all nations to join the open initiatives of the International Treaty to produce climate-ready crop varieties, from conservation and capacity building through to technology transfer and information exchange through the Treaty mechanisms and initiatives.

We thank the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Wealth of Oman, H.E. Fuad Al-Sajwani, Chairman of the High-level Task Force of the Treaty Benefit-sharing Fund and the other Task Force members and co-hosts for convening this Roundtable and call on the Task Force and all countries to sustain and further raise the high-level engagement with the Treaty and the enhancement of its systems and funds.