

April 2007



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
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Agriculture  
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the  
United  
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Organisation  
des  
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pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## Item 9 of the Draft Provisional Agenda

### COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

#### Eleventh Regular Session

Rome, 11-15 June 2007

## THE MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

### COMPENDIUM OF IDEAS AND COMMENTS

1. This addendum to document CGRFA-11/07/21 compiles ideas for, and comments, on possible elements of the MYPOW. As stipulated by the Commission at its Tenth Regular Session, the list draws primarily on inputs from the Inter-governmental Technical Working Groups on Plant and Animal genetic resources, from the FAO Regional Groups, the FAO Services and PAIAs, and elements of the *FAO Strategic Framework 2000-2015*.
2. A general comment was the need to prioritize among the issues and ideas identified, within each element, and the need for flexibility in the MYPOW and for its periodic review.

#### I. SECTORIAL PROGRAMMES

##### *Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*

3. The completion of the Second *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* would provide a basis for updating the rolling *Global Plan of Action* that was agreed by the Leipzig International Technical Conference in 1996.
4. On-going issues relevant to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture that were raised included:
  - Support the implementation of the International Treaty, including through the further development of the Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.
  - Review and up-date the Code of Conduct for Plant Germplasm Collecting and Transfer.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> While the Commission in 2004, at its Tenth Regular Session, decided that in the light of other priorities in the work of the Commission and in the development of the International Treaty, it was inappropriate, at that time, to update the Code of Conduct, it also noted that consideration of the Code remained on the Commission's agenda. See CGRFA-10/04/REP, paragraph 31.

- Need to establish cooperative mechanisms between the Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty defining the responsibilities of each body and of its Secretariats, including the tasks to be addressed by the Commission in the MYPOW. Cooperation should be functional, transparent and effective, and promote synergy and efficiency.<sup>2</sup>
  - Monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*;
  - The Commission's role in the evaluation of the Programme of Work on Agricultural Biodiversity of the Convention on Biological Diversity;
  - The promotion of *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and of the sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture through breeding and seed systems.
5. Important emerging issues, include:
- Bioenergy and genetic resources;
  - Climate change;
  - Nutrition and biodiversity;
  - The need to support developing countries in coordinating and integrating their strategies for agricultural biodiversity generally with specific strategies for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

#### ***Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture***

6. There was general agreement that the MYPOW should support implementation and monitoring of the outcomes of the Interlaken International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (September 2007). The MYPOW should aim to address the priority areas of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*, as adopted, in a focused manner and should include provisions for overseeing the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*; including in areas such as:

- Sustainable breeding, particularly for developing countries, to ensure the wise and strategic use of available animal genetic resources, including both local and international breeds. Work will cover approaches to the characterisation of productive and functional traits and measures to avoid indiscriminate cross-breeding;
- The development of an Early Warning System for Animal Genetic Resources, and technical guidelines for characterization, risk-monitoring and appropriate national and regional conservation measures.
- Access and benefit-sharing, see below.
- Biotechnology in relation to animal genetic resources, see below.

#### ***Forest genetic resources***

7. The need for further work on forest genetic resources was underscored. The *FAO Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources*, in January 2007, stressed the need to strengthen cooperation with the Commission, and with the Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular its programme of work on forest biological diversity.

- A global picture on the status and trends of forest genetic diversity is lacking. There is an urgent need to provide the international community with regular and systematic

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<sup>2</sup> See also the *Report of the First Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, IT/GB-1/06/Report, para. 41 – 44.

information on the state of these resources, as the basis for policy and management decisions. This should include an assessment of genetic erosion, including for forest species important for food security;

- The preparation of a country-driven *State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* should be initiated. This would provide capacity and an information base for long-term monitoring and regular reporting on the state of forest genetic resources. It would provide an opportunity to strengthen and promote cooperation among countries, and international and non-governmental organizations involved in the management of forest genetic resources;
- *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* should draw on the extensive country reports that have been prepared in various processes during the last years, and build on existing information systems, such as REFORGEN, to avoid duplication of efforts. It should also draw on information gathered through other processes, such as the Global Forest Assessment, the Convention on Biological Diversity or relevant regional and inter-regional processes. There is an opportunity to mainstream information about genetic resources, in a step-by-step manner, into the information gathering process of the Global Forest Resources Assessment, which would reduce the reporting burden on countries, and integrate reporting on forest genetic resources into overall reporting on sustainable forest management;
- Cooperation between the Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources – which would provide overall guidance on scientific and technical matters – and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, should be strengthened;
- The review of the CBD expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity offers an opportunity to strengthen cooperation between the CBD and FAO in this field;
- The Commission should be invited to review progress in the development of *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* at its Twelfth Session, with a view to agreeing the final draft at its Fourteenth Session. COFO should be fully involved in this process.

#### *Aquatic genetic resources*

8. Information on fisheries genetic resources for aquaculture and capture fisheries is presently incomplete, scattered and held in non-standard formats. A short-term priority activity of the MYPOW is to improve content, and access to such information, as a foundation for other activities.

9. The *FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries* is a major international instrument, with several articles relating to fisheries genetic resources. In the short to medium term, a comprehensive analysis of the Code and other international policies and instruments is proposed in order to strengthen its implementation, and compliance by Member Countries, and to facilitate synergy and cooperation with other relevant processes.

- The policy analysis would also identify gaps and opportunities within the *Code* and other instruments. Work programmes on priority articles in the *Code* would aim at improving the understanding of conservation and sustainable use of fish genetic resources in aquaculture and capture fisheries. Programmes on genetic improvement in aquaculture, broodstock management; dissemination of genetically improved stocks, improved fishery statistics, and assessment and capacity building in genetic technologies, could be developed.
- Beginning in the medium term – drawing on recent progress in the characterization of fisheries genetic resources, genetic improvement of farmed fish and genetic technologies, including genomics – improved information and policy analyses should form the basis of a *State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources*, within the MYPOW.

- The Commission, in this process, would be informed by the deliberations of existing fishery sector bodies, with adjustments made to the MYPOW as necessary. Milestones include:
  - Eighth Meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, New York, 25 to 29 June 2007.
  - The fourth Session of the Committee on Fisheries Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI:AQ), Chile, 2008
  - The FAO Advisory Committee on Fisheries Research made recommendations on genetic resource management at their last two sessions. Its next meeting will be in Rome, in 2008.
  - The 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), Rome, 2009.

10. Such a programme would include, *inter alia*, workshops, commissioned desk studies, expert consultations, and the formation of an *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Fish Genetic Resources (as it was the case for Animal Genetic Resources) which could progress to more a more formal Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Fish Genetic Resources. In this context, consideration must be given to the current shortage of relevant human and financial resources within the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. The Commission may therefore wish to encourage the Department to develop proposals for extra-budgetary funding, and to identify partner organizations, as an immediate priority, as well as to call upon donors to make resources available in a predictable manner, over the timeframe of the development of *The State of the World's Fisheries Genetic Resources*. It will be necessary to keep COFI informed at all stages of this process.

#### ***Micro-organisms and insects for food and agriculture***

11. The biological impact of micro-organisms and insects of relevance to food and agriculture on sustainable agriculture and quality food production is an emerging issue.
- A programme of work on micro-organisms and insects for food and agriculture (including soil biodiversity, bio-fertilizers, pollinators, biological control, micro-organisms for food and feed processing, micro-organisms in ruminants and those for bio-ethanol and biogas production in rural areas) should be developed. Work in this field should enhance cooperation and partnerships at international level, avoiding duplication.
  - The Commission's expertise would be useful in conducting an analysis of key issues regarding micro-organisms for food and agriculture. As a first step, a scoping study could inform the Commission of current scientific knowledge, ongoing and proposed activities and the policy implications, and propose a set of background studies on emerging issues. An assessment could be prepared of the status of relevant national and international culture collections. In order to enhance the provision of ecosystem services by micro-organisms and insects in agro-ecosystems (such as biological control, pollination or soil functioning), effective guidance should be developed for the application of the ecosystem approach in agriculture. The Government of Italy has offered to support the establishment of a working group on micro-organisms.

## **II. CROSS-SECTORIAL MATTERS**

### ***The application of the ecosystem approach in food and agriculture***

12. It was suggested that the Commission develop guidance for the application of the ecosystem approach to biodiversity management with the aim of integrating the various sectors, and maximizing the role of biodiversity in providing ecosystem services. This could strengthen countries' ability to mainstream biodiversity in national planning, provide a framework for cooperation with the CBD, and assist the Commission in addressing cross-sectorial matters and environmental sustainability concerns.

### ***The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture***

13. It was suggested that the development of a synthesis report on *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* would be an important long-term goal, to show the overall status of biodiversity within agriculture and the role of agriculture within the wider environment. It was suggested that such report deal with cross-sectorial and common themes, including the management of biodiversity in complex agricultural ecosystems, and the ecosystem approach.<sup>3</sup>

#### ***Access and benefit-sharing***

14. At its last session, the Commission "recommended that FAO and the Commission contribute to further work on access and benefit-sharing, in order to ensure that it move in a direction supportive of the special needs of the agricultural sector, in regard to all components of biological diversity of interest to food and agriculture". This is timely, in the light of the process underway in the CBD to negotiate an international regime on access and benefit-sharing, with a target date of 2010.

15. The need for the Commission to address access and benefit-sharing was stressed. This will inform considerations of FAO Members and other international forums, to ensure that these move in a direction supportive of the special needs of the sector, and that the current global arrangements for food and agriculture research and development activities are not inadvertently affected. In this context, the Commission should conduct an analysis of access and benefit practices across the various communities of use for food and agriculture.

#### ***Effects of intellectual property rights on the availability and sustainable use of genetic resources***

16. It was suggested that the Commission consider, as appropriate, the effects of intellectual property rights on the availability and sustainable use of genetic resources. In this context, it is recalled that, at the request of the Commission, WIPO has been carrying out a study of the impact of patents on access to, and the use of, plant genetic resources relevant to the International Treaty and the Centres of the CGIAR. Progress reports were given to the Commission's tenth session and the first session of the Treaty's Governing Body.<sup>4</sup>

#### ***Biotechnologies in relation to genetic resources for food and agriculture***

17. At its last session, the Commission decided to refer the document, *Progress in the draft Code of Conduct on Biotechnology as It Relates to Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: policy issues, gaps and duplications*<sup>5</sup> to the current session, for decision on which issues should be taken forward and in what form (a code or codes of conduct, guidelines or other approaches) when designing the Multi-Year Programme of Work. It identified various fields that should be taken into consideration, as the most appropriate for further work: conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture in the centres of origin and *ex situ* collections; appropriate biotechnologies that apply to genetic resources for food and agriculture; access and benefit-sharing issues related to biotechnologies that apply to genetic resources for food and agriculture; national capacity-building and international cooperation; biosafety and environmental concerns; genetic use restriction

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<sup>3</sup> See also CGRFA-11/07/15.4.

<sup>4</sup> Document IT/GB-1/06/Inf.17, *Progress report on work towards the assessment of patent data relevant to availability and use of material from the international network of ex situ collections under the auspices of FAO and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: a draft patent landscape surrounding gene promoters relevant to rice*, at <ftp://ftp.fao.org/ag/cgrfa/gb1/gb1i17e.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> CGRFA-11/07/13; this document was presented to the last session as CGRFA-10/04/10, and referred to the current session.

technologies (GURTs); GMO gene flow and the question of liability; and incentives to promote appropriate biotechnologies.

18. Recent developments in biotechnology could be explored in detail, including genomics, to provide balanced information to FAO Members and other international organisations.

19. The document prepared by Bioversity International, *Draft Guiding Principles for the Future Harvest Centres to Address the Possibility of Unintended Presence of Transgenes in Ex Situ Collections*,<sup>6</sup> will be reviewed at this session. The Commission's Inter-governmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture recommended that relevant sections of these Guiding Principles be considered in due time in the development of the draft *Code of Conduct on Biotechnology*.<sup>7</sup>

#### ***Goals, Targets and Indicators***

20. The CBD has requested FAO to assist in the development of indicators and targets for biodiversity for food and agriculture. The MYPOW provides an opportunity to ingrate this matter into the work of the Organization.

#### ***Cooperation with international agreements and organizations***

21. As part of ongoing cooperation with the CBD, the Commission could help steer the development of international initiatives, such as biodiversity and nutrition.

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<sup>6</sup> CGRFA-11/07/14.

<sup>7</sup> CGRFA11/07/10, for its full recommendations, see paragraphs 33-39.