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# COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

## Item 14 of the Provisional Agenda

### Nineteenth Regular Session

Rome, 17–21 July 2023

## COOPERATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Treaty) and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) have regularly stressed the importance of their close cooperation. The document *Report from the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*<sup>1</sup> provides more detailed information on activities under the International Treaty and on relevant outcomes of the Governing Body's Ninth Session (19–24 September 2022) relevant to the cooperation between the International Treaty and the Commission.

2. This document, prepared jointly by the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission, provides a brief update on their cooperation since the Commission's last session.

## II. BACKGROUND

3. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session in 2021, welcomed Resolution 9/2019, adopted by the Governing Body at its Eighth Session.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it welcomed the joint activities of the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission during the past intersessional period and requested the Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration and coordination with the Secretary of the International Treaty to promote coherence and synergies, while avoiding duplication, in the development and implementation of the respective relevant programmes of work of the two bodies, including on:

- (i) the preparation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Third Report), the review and possible update of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second GPA), and the revision of the reporting system of the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS);
- (ii) the organization of symposia on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA);
- (iii) the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations;
- (iv) the implementation and monitoring of the Second GPA, including technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Genebank Standards) and work on sustainable use of PGRFA;
- (v) access and benefit-sharing and digital sequence information/genetic sequence data (DSI/GSD) on PGRFA;
- (vi) joint efforts to advocate for the consideration of the objectives and relevant work and policies of the Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty in global strategies and frameworks, such as the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as to update FAO Members on progress in the implementation of their respective mandates and work programmes, for example through briefings for Permanent Representations; and
- (vii) the Global Information System (GLIS) and WIEWS, targets and indicators.<sup>3</sup>

4. At its Ninth Session, the Governing Body adopted Resolution 9/2022 on cooperation with the Commission, which is contained in *Appendix I* to this document.

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<sup>1</sup> CGRFA-19/23/14.2/Inf.2.

<sup>2</sup> IT/GB-8/19/Report, *Appendix B.9*. The Resolution is also available in AR, FR, EN, ES, RU and ZH.

<sup>3</sup> CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 118.

### III. COLLABORATION SINCE THE EIGHTEENTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

#### (i) *Preparation of The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and review of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*

5. The Secretariat of the International Treaty has been cooperating with FAO in the preparation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. Such collaboration has, so far, included:

- *Preparation of the thematic background study on germplasm exchange:* The purpose of one of the thematic background studies currently being carried out in the preparation of the Third Report, is to further explore the contribution of germplasm exchange to the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. The study considers information on germplasm exchanges, as reported by countries through the WIEWS Reporting Tool and under the Data Store of the Multilateral System of the International Treaty. The Secretariat of the International Treaty is collaborating in the preparation of the study, including through the identification of experts, the design of the methodology, the provision of data and review of drafts.

The Commission, at its last session, recommended that the thematic studies build upon existing and ongoing studies in other fora on similar subjects.<sup>4</sup> This thematic study will build upon methodologies and data arising from the collaboration between the Secretary, the Crop Trust and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), to produce the ongoing study *The Plants That Feed the World: baseline data and metrics to inform strategies for the conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*. This study identifies and systematizes baseline data of a wide range of crops and their genetic resources.

- *Elaboration of draft chapters for the Third Report:* FAO has sought inputs from the Secretariat of the International Treaty, on a need basis, at various steps necessary for preparing the draft chapters.
- *FAO provision of assistance to countries in reporting for the Third Report:* Upon request, the Secretariat of the International Treaty provided support in preparing some of the agreements established with national partners for the preparation of country reports.

6. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, requested FAO, based on the findings of the Third Report, and following regional consultations, to review and revise the Second GPA for consideration by the Commission's Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group) at its Twelfth Session, and subsequently the Commission at its Twentieth Regular Session.<sup>5</sup> The Commission will consider the involvement of the Governing Body in the finalization of the Third Report and the review of the Second GPA at the current session.<sup>6</sup> The Treaty Secretariat is committed to providing support to both, the review of the Second GPA and the regional consultations that will be conducted in this context.

#### (ii) *Organization of symposia on in situ conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*

7. As reported to the last session of the Commission, the *First International Multi-stakeholder Symposium on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture – Technical Consultation on in situ conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture* was convened virtually on 29 and 30 March 2021 by the Commission in collaboration with the Global Crop Diversity Trust and the Treaty Secretariat. It was attended by more than 800 participants.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 108.

<sup>5</sup> CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 109.

<sup>6</sup> CGRFA-19/23/7.2; CGRFA-19/23/7.3.

<sup>7</sup> CGRFA-18/21/12.2/Inf.3.

8. The Commission commended FAO for convening, in collaboration with the Crop Trust and the Treaty Secretariat, the Multi-stakeholder Symposium and requested FAO to organize, subject to the availability of the necessary extra-budgetary resources, symposia and webinars on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA, at regular intervals, in collaboration with the Treaty Secretariat and other relevant international instruments or organizations, in support of the implementation of the Second GPA and relevant articles of the International Treaty.<sup>8</sup>

9. In response, a webinar on the role of the conservation and sustainable use of crop wild relatives and wild food plants was organized, in collaboration with the International Treaty on 28 February 2023.<sup>9</sup> A webinar on on-farm management of PGRFA is planned for later in 2023.

**(iii) Effects of seed policies, laws and regulations**

10. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, considered the study *Impact of implementation of seed legislation on diversity of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*<sup>10</sup> and requested FAO, in cooperation with relevant international organizations, to continue to support countries in the development or revision of their national seed policies, as appropriate and according to their specific situations, taking into account the Commission's Voluntary Guide for National Seed Policy Formulation.<sup>11</sup> The Commission also requested FAO to undertake, in collaboration with the International Treaty, further research on the impact of seed policies, laws and regulations, taking into account the variety of factors that may affect, and possibly improve, farmers' ability to access sufficient and affordable seeds and planting materials of diverse, locally adapted varieties, including farmers' varieties/landraces. Furthermore, it requested FAO to take a bottom-up, demand-driven approach to seed security and promote farmers' participation in seed-related FAO activities. It also requested the Secretariat to raise awareness of the *Inventory of National Measures, Best Practices and Lessons Learned on the Realization of Farmers' Rights*, which contains many submissions on seed policy and legislation.<sup>12</sup>

11. In response to the Commission's request, FAO developed, in collaboration with the International Treaty, a draft concept note for the conduct of further research, which is provided in the document *Further research on the impact of seed policies, laws and regulations*.<sup>13</sup>

**(iv) Implementation and monitoring of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, including technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture**

12. The Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty called for collaboration with regard to the implementation of the Second GPA, including the Genebank Standards.<sup>14</sup>

13. As requested by the Commission at its last Session,<sup>15</sup> FAO finalized and published in 2022 three Practical Guides for the Application of the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for

<sup>8</sup> CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 98.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.fao.org/cgrfa/news/news-detail/webinar-wild-plant-genetic-resources-for-food-and-agriculture-their-conservation-and-use/en>

<sup>10</sup> CGRFA-18/21/12.3/Inf.1.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/tools/toolbox-for-sustainable-use/details/en/c/1071260/>

<sup>12</sup> CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 105.

<sup>13</sup> CGRFA-19/23/7.4.

<sup>14</sup> CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 118; GB Resolution 11/22, paragraph 4(iv).

<sup>15</sup> CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 100.

Food and Agriculture covering: (i) conservation of orthodox seeds in seed genebanks;<sup>16</sup> (ii) conservation in field genebanks;<sup>17</sup> and (iii) conservation via *in vitro* culture.<sup>18</sup>

14. The Commission also requested FAO to develop additional practical guides, especially for the conservation in genebanks of species producing recalcitrant seeds, and for cryopreservation, in collaboration with relevant international and national partners, including the CGIAR and the Global Crop Diversity Trust.<sup>19</sup> The Working Group, at its last session, reviewed draft outlines for the practical guides and recommended that FAO consult a virtual expert meeting on the draft practical guides and develop them further, based on feedback received, for review by the Working Group at its next session.<sup>20</sup> The Treaty Secretariat is committed to be part of this process.<sup>21</sup>

**(v) Access and Benefit-sharing and digital sequence information/genetic sequence data**

15. The Commission, at its Eighteenth Regular Session, requested the Secretariat to hold an intersessional workshop, in collaboration with relevant instruments and organizations, to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders of the role of DSI for the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture and the sharing of benefits derived from them, address the state of the art of DSI on genetic resources, present possible implications that related technologies might have for research and development related to GRFA, and consider the challenges associated with accessing and making full use of DSI.<sup>22</sup>

16. The workshop on *Digital sequence information and genetic resources for food and agriculture* was held from 14–15 November 2022, in collaboration with the secretariats of the International Treaty and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and CABI. The webcast and presentations are available on the Commission's website.<sup>23</sup>

17. The Governing Body of the International Treaty, at its Ninth Session requested the Secretary to continue following the discussions on DSI in other fora and to continue coordinating with the Secretariats of the CBD and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in any related activities, in order to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of work. As part of these coordination efforts, a representative of the Secretariat of the International Treaty attended the Sixth Session of the Team of Technical and Legal Experts on Access and Benefit-sharing and provided inputs to documentation on access and benefit-sharing that will be presented to the Commission at the present session.<sup>24</sup>

**(vi) Joint advocacy efforts in global strategies and frameworks, such as the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**

18. The Secretariats of the Commission and the International Treaty collaborated closely in advocating the objectives and relevant policies of the Commission and the International Treaty in the

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<sup>16</sup> FAO. 2022. *Practical guide for the application of the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: Conservation of orthodox seeds in seed genebanks*. Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0021en>

<sup>17</sup> FAO. 2022. *Practical guide for the application of the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: Conservation in field genebanks*. Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0023en>

<sup>18</sup> FAO. 2022. *Practical guide for the application of the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: Conservation via in vitro culture*. Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0025en>

<sup>19</sup> CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 100.

<sup>20</sup> CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 23.

<sup>21</sup> CGRFA-19/23/7.3, paragraphs 10–12.

<sup>22</sup> CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 38.

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.fao.org/cgrfa/meetings/dsi\\_workshop\\_2022/en](https://www.fao.org/cgrfa/meetings/dsi_workshop_2022/en)

<sup>24</sup> CGRFA-19/23/4.1.

development of global strategies and frameworks, such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

**(vii) *The Global Information System and FAO World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture***

19. The Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty have stressed the need to promote coherence in the development and implementation of GLIS and WIEWS. The Commission, at its last session, welcomed the jointly prepared report<sup>25</sup> clarifying the different roles of the three global information systems on PGRFA, WIEWS, GLIS and Genesys, and requested FAO to continue developing and simplifying the WIEWS portal while strengthening cooperation with the other information systems, with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts and facilitating reporting by countries.<sup>26</sup>

#### IV. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

20. Such recommendations and previous decisions of the Commission and the Governing Body of the Treaty have been taken into account in developing the guidance sought.

21. In response to the invitation of the Governing Body and the recommendations of the Working Group,<sup>27</sup> the Commission may wish to request the Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration and coordination with the Secretary of the Treaty to promote coherence in the development and implementation of the respective programmes of work of the two bodies, and in particular with regard to:

- (a) the preparation of the Third Report, including by sharing the draft Third Report with the Governing Body of the International Treaty for inputs and comments
- (b) the review of the Second GPA, including by enabling the participation of the Governing Body in the updating process, and the revision of the reporting system of WIEWS
- (c) the organization of symposia on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA;
- (d) the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations;
- (e) the implementation and monitoring of the Second GPA, including technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the Genebank Standards and work on sustainable use of PGRFA;
- (f) assembling relevant information for measuring and monitoring monetary and non-monetary benefit-sharing, within their respective mandates and existing frameworks;
- (g) ABS and DSI/GSD on PGRFA, including through participation by the Secretary of the Commission, as an observer, in meetings of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing;
- (h) joint efforts to advocate for the consideration of the objectives and relevant work and policies of the Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty in global strategies and frameworks, such as the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as to update FAO Members on progress in the implementation of their respective mandates and work programmes, for example through briefings for Permanent Representations;
- (i) the Global Information System and WIEWS, and relevant targets and indicators; and
- (j) the development and implementation of national strategies for PGRFA, in close collaboration with the Treaty and its Funding Strategy.

<sup>25</sup> CGRFA-18/21/12.2/Inf.2.

<sup>26</sup> CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 104.

<sup>27</sup> CGRFA-19/23/7.1.

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**APPENDIX I****RESOLUTION 11/2022  
COOPERATION WITH THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND  
AGRICULTURE<sup>28</sup>**

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**THE GOVERNING BODY,**

**Recalling** Resolution 9/2019 and other previous Resolutions on the cooperation with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission);

1. **Welcomes** the ongoing close cooperation between the Commission and the Governing Body and the joint activities undertaken by the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission during the past intersessional period;
2. **Agrees** to keep the matter of the functional division of tasks and activities between the Governing Body and the Commission under review and **requests** the Secretary to regularly report any relevant developments in the cooperation with the Commission;
3. **Recalling** Article 17.3 of the International Treaty, **invites** Contracting Parties that still have not done so, to cooperate with the Commission in the preparation of The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in order to facilitate the updating of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
4. **Welcomes** the joint activities of the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission during the past intersessional period and **requests** the Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration and coordination with the Secretary of the Commission to promote coherence in the development and implementation of the respective programmes of work of the two bodies, and in particular with regard to:
  - i. the preparation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, the review and possible update of the *Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, and the revision of the reporting system of the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS);
  - ii. the organization of symposia on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA);
  - iii. the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations;
  - iv. the implementation and monitoring of the *Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, including technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the *Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and work on sustainable use of PGRFA;
  - v. ABS and digital sequence information / genetic sequence data (DSI/GSD) on PGRFA;
  - vi. joint efforts to advocate for the consideration of the objectives and relevant work and policies of the Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty in global strategies and frameworks, such as the *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors* and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as to update

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<sup>28</sup> IT/GB-9/22/Report, *Appendix B11*.

FAO Members on progress in the implementation of their respective mandates and work programmes, for example through briefings for Permanent Representations; and

vii. the Global Information System and WIEWS, and relevant targets and indicators.

5. ***Further encourages*** building complementarity and collaboration in relation to the development and implementation of national strategies of PGRFA and national planning process relevant to PGRFA such as those related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, ***and*** in doing so, requests the Secretary to keep the Standing Committee on the Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilization informed.