



COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 10.3 of the Provisional Agenda

Twentieth Regular Session

Rome, 24–28 March 2025

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its Nineteenth Regular Session in 2023, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) considered the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources¹ (Global Plan of Action) and took note of the Second Report on its implementation (Second Implementation Report).² The Commission invited countries to continue implementing the Global Plan of Action, taking into account the findings of the Second Implementation Report, as appropriate.³ It also invited countries to continue monitoring the status of forest genetic resources (FGR) and the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

2. The Commission further took note of the activities FAO had undertaken to support, in collaboration with its partners, the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and recommended that FAO continue supporting countries in this regard. The FAO Council endorsed the Commission's recommendations.⁴

3. This document summarizes the activities FAO has undertaken since the Commission's last session to support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. The reported activities are grouped according to the four Priority Areas of the Global Plan of Action, for consideration by the Commission.

II. BACKGROUND

4. The Global Plan of Action was agreed upon by the Commission in April 2013⁵ on the basis of strategic priorities identified by the first report on *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*.⁶ It was subsequently adopted by the FAO Conference in June 2013.⁷ The Global Plan of Action constitutes a rolling document that can be updated in line with any follow-up that the Commission may decide upon.

5. The Global Plan of Action identifies a total of 27 strategic priorities for action at national, regional and international levels for improving FGR management. The strategic priorities are grouped into four priority areas:

- Improving the availability of, and access to, information on FGR;
- Conservation of FGR (*in situ* and *ex situ*);
- Sustainable use, development and management of FGR; and
- Policies, institutions and capacity building.

6. The Global Plan of Action is voluntary and non-binding and should not be interpreted or implemented in contradiction with existing national legislation and international agreements where applicable. The relative priority of each strategic priority and associated actions may differ significantly in different countries and regions. Relative priority may depend on the genetic resources themselves, the natural environment or production systems involved, current management capacities, financial resources or policies already underway for FGR management.

7. In 2017, the Commission adopted targets, indicators and verifiers for FGR to be used for monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Summaries of FAO activities supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action are presented to each session of the Commission and the Working Group. In February 2019, the Commission also adopted a funding strategy for the

¹ FAO. 2014. *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources*. Rome. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/i3849e>

² CGRFA-19/23/8.3/Inf.1.

³ CGRFA-19/23/Report, paragraph 69.

⁴ CL 174/REP, paragraph 33.

⁵ CGRFA-14/13/Report, *Appendix F*.

⁶ FAO. 2014. *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*. Rome. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/i3825e>

⁷ C 2013/REP, paragraph 77.

implementation of the Global Plan of Action and endorsed the *Voluntary Guidelines for Preparing a National Strategy for Forest Genetic Resources*.

III. SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

(a) Improving the availability of, and access to, information on forest genetic resources (Priority Area 1)

8. One of the key findings of the first report on *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*⁸ was that the availability of specific information on FGR was poor in many countries. The Global Plan of Action therefore calls for improving the availability of, and access to, information on FGR at national, regional and international levels. The findings of the *Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* (Second Report)⁹ show that the availability of information on FGR has increased during the past decade but that it remains inadequate, hindering efforts to improve FGR management.

Monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action

9. The Commission regularly monitors activities taken by countries to implement the Global Plan of Action in different subsectors. In the case of FGR, the Commission adopted targets, indicators and verifiers¹⁰ for this purpose at its Sixteenth Regular Session.¹¹ FAO presented the First Implementation Report¹² to the Seventeenth Regular Session of the Commission in 2019 and the Second Implementation Report¹³ to its Nineteenth Regular Session in 2023. According to the Commission's Multi-year Programme of Work, the Third Implementation Report will be considered by its Twenty-second Regular Session in 2029.

10. During the reporting period, FAO continued to provide technical support, as requested, to National Focal Points for FGR (NFPs) for gathering and reporting data for monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. This work has been carried out in the context of a global project¹⁴ supported from extra-budgetary funds made available by the Government of Germany. FAO organized regional online briefings for NFPs in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Near East and Central Asia in December 2024. The NFPs in the other regions will be briefed in early 2025 and the second round of such briefings is planned by mid-2025. The briefings aim to maintain the technical capacity of NFPs and train newly appointed NFPs on the reporting requirements. They will also support NFPs in updating FGR data for the forthcoming Third Implementation Report.

Global information system on forest genetic resources (SilvaGRIS)

11. During the reporting period, FAO continued to develop the new global information system on FGR, which will be launched together with the Second Report on the occasion of the Twentieth Regular Session of the Commission. The creation of the information system was supported by another global project¹⁵ implemented with extra-budgetary funds provided by the Government of Germany. It is composed of two components: a public user interface, which allows for visualizing the reported data with dynamic dashboards and maps, and a restricted reporting interface accessible only for NFPs who manage their country's FGR data in the database. FAO also continued transferring data from the current online reporting system into the new database.

⁸ FAO. 2014. *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*. Rome.

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/i3825e>

⁹ CGRFA/WG-FGR-8/24/3/Inf.1.

¹⁰ CGRFA-16/17/20, *Appendices A & B*.

¹¹ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 74.

¹² CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.1.

¹³ CGRFA-19/23/8.3/Inf.1.

¹⁴ Building capacity for the preparation of *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources (2020–2025)*.

¹⁵ Development of a new global information system on forest genetic resources (2020–2025).

12. In December 2023, FAO organized three regional online meetings for NFPs in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Near East (together with Central Asia). Another four online meetings were organized for NFPs in Asia and Southwest Pacific in January 2024, and for NFPs in Europe and North America in February 2024. During the meetings, a test version of the information system was presented to NFPs, who were also briefed on the functionalities of both the reporting interface and the public website. NFPs were also given the opportunity to propose possible improvements to the functionalities of the information system. Following the regional meetings, three new countries reported FGR data. As of December 2024, the information system contains FGR data from 77 countries.

13. The Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (Working Group), at its Eighth Session in November 2024, recommended that FAO finalize, maintain and develop the global information system on FGR (SilvaGRIS).¹⁶ It also recommended that the Commission encourage countries that have not yet done so to provide their data for SilvaGRIS to facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.¹⁷ The Working Group further recommended that FAO continue supporting NFPs in their efforts to report FGR data and that FAO promote the use of SilvaGRIS for developing new initiatives at national, regional and international levels.¹⁸

(b) *In situ* and *ex situ* conservation of forest genetic resources (Priority Area 2)

14. The Global Plan of Action aims to strengthen *in situ* conservation of FGR in managed forests and protected areas as well as on farms, complemented by *ex situ* conservation in genebanks and collections (*in vitro* and in the field). The Second Report shows that 82 and 73 percent of the reporting countries have national *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation programmes, respectively. In terms of species, the conservation efforts target nearly 1 400 species under *in situ* and nearly 1 100 species under *ex situ*. Considering that the reported species represent only a fraction of tree and other woody plant species used by people on a regular basis across the world, there is a need to continue strengthening FGR conservation. Moreover, the existing conservation efforts do not always cover the entire distribution of the reported species.

15. Since the last session of the Commission, FAO has continued to support many countries across regions in developing national projects that aim at strengthening the conservation and sustainable management of forests, including forest and landscape restoration. In many cases, these projects contribute, directly or indirectly, to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and particularly its Priority Area 3 (sustainable use, development and management of FGR), but they often also include activities that enhance *in situ* conservation of FGR. Funding for such national projects has been predominantly provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The projects are explained below under Priority Area 3 (see II.(c)). Currently, there is no FAO-coordinated project specifically focusing on *ex situ* conservation of FGR.

16. In the future, SilvaGRIS may assist in strengthening *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation of FGR by enabling countries to demonstrate progress and identify priorities for conservation efforts.

(c) Sustainable use, development and management of forest genetic resources (Priority Area 3)

17. Under its Priority Area 3, the Global Plan of Action aims at enhancing the sustainable use, development and management of FGR as a contribution to sustainable development, food security and poverty alleviation. Sustainable forest management aims at using forests and trees in such a way that their capacity to provide wood and non-wood products, socioeconomic benefits and environmental services does not diminish over time. Paying due attention to FGR and genetic considerations is therefore crucial for achieving truly sustainable management of forests, as well as for ensuring long-term conservation of forest biodiversity. The findings of the Second Report show that genetic aspects need to be better incorporated into the management of both natural and planted forests, and that there

¹⁶ CGRFA-20/25/10.1, paragraph 12.

¹⁷ CGRFA-20/25/10.1, paragraph 13.

¹⁸ CGRFA-20/25/10.1, paragraph 16.

is a need to increase the production of forest reproductive material and the availability of improved tree germplasm.

18. Through its Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP),¹⁹ FAO is currently supporting India to develop protocols for producing high-quality planting material of agroforestry tree species and certifying related nurseries. In 2024, two-year TCP projects were concluded in Azerbaijan to strengthen the country's technical capacity to manage major forest pests and diseases impacting FGR and in Benin to support the seed production of native and introduced forest trees species. FAO is also implementing TCP projects in several other countries to advance sustainable forest management. However, country projects contributing towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 15 only account for about 4 percent of the overall TCP expenditure in 2024,²⁰ suggesting that most countries eligible for TCP support have not prioritized sustainable forest management nor FGR in their country programming frameworks. The Working Group, at its last session, recommended that the Commission invite countries to include actions on FGR, as appropriate, into their Country Programming Frameworks and remind them of the possibility of requesting support from FAO through its Technical Cooperation Programme for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.²¹

19. The FAO portfolio of GEF projects focusing on forests and trees has remained large.²² It includes the Sustainable Forest Management Impact Programme on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes (DSL)²³ to support efforts to avoid, reduce and reverse deforestation, degradation and desertification in 11 countries²⁴ in Africa and Asia. The DSL Impact Programme is led by FAO in partnership with the World Bank, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the World Wide Fund for Nature. Most programme partner countries are planning to strengthen their tree seed systems as part of national projects. Furthermore, FAO is currently supporting several other countries²⁵ to implement GEF-funded projects that aim to enhance sustainable forest management or forest and landscape restoration. FAO's portfolio of GCF projects²⁶ also includes ongoing projects with special emphasis on forests and trees in 13 countries.²⁷ These GCF projects aim at combating deforestation and mitigating climate change with tree-planting efforts and by enhancing the management of existing forests. They often also include other forest-related activities to improve the livelihoods of local people and to conserve forest biodiversity.

20. The Working Group, at its last session, recommended that the Commission invite countries to integrate actions on FGR, as appropriate, into project proposals prepared for multilateral financing mechanisms to enhance sustainable forest management, including conservation and use of forest biodiversity and forest-based adaptation and mitigation measures for climate change.²⁸

21. Other FAO projects and programmes have also continued to contribute to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Under the framework of the Action Against Desertification (AAD) initiative,²⁹ FAO and its partners are reinforcing tree seed systems in 12 countries³⁰ as part of the efforts to restore forests and trees. The AAD initiative has also prepared many technical reports to

¹⁹ <https://www.fao.org/technical-cooperation-programme/en>

²⁰ <https://www.fao.org/technical-cooperation-programme/tcp-in-numbers/en>

²¹ CGRFA-20/25/10.1, paragraph 14.

²² Further information on FAO-led GEF projects is available at: <http://www.fao.org/gef/en/>

²³ <https://www.fao.org/in-action/dryland-sustainable-landscapes/en>

²⁴ Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malawi, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

²⁵ Algeria, Central African Republic, China, Haiti, Jamaica, Pakistan, Philippines, Sao Tome and Principe, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Türkiye and Uzbekistan.

²⁶ <https://www.fao.org/gcf/en>

²⁷ Argentina, Armenia, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Paraguay and Sudan.

²⁸ CGRFA-20/25/10.1, paragraph 15.

²⁹ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/en/>

³⁰ Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Haiti, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan.

support countries' efforts and during the reporting period it finalized a new publication³¹ on the contributions of trees and other native plant species to restoring food systems.

22. The Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM)³² is currently supporting large-scale restoration initiatives in 20 countries.³³ Its projects are increasingly exploring ways to also enhance the management of FGR and to restore genetically diverse forests. In 2023, FLRM released a report³⁴ to promote the use of FGR in forest and landscape restoration and a policy-brief³⁵ on strengthening institutional capacities for delivering tree germplasm for forest and landscape restoration. Additionally, FLRM released an online course³⁶ on planning seed and seedling supply for forest and landscape restoration as part of the FAO e-Learning Academy. In the context of the FLRM work, FAO, the Society for Ecological Restoration and the International Union for Conservation of Nature also prepared standards of practice to guide ecosystem restoration, including genetic aspects.³⁷

23. FAO has also continued to promote collaboration among concerned countries to combat invasive species, as well as diseases and pests, affecting FGR as part of its work on forest health.³⁸ Since July 2023, the regional forest invasive species networks³⁹ have trained over 250 experts from over 70 countries worldwide on key topics, such as forest pest surveillance, early-warning tools and biological control. In December 2023, a new regional forest health and invasive species network was also launched for Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2024, FAO released an updated guide to the implementation of phytosanitary standards in forestry.⁴⁰ FAO is currently preparing, in collaboration with relevant networks, regional assessments on the status of forest health and invasive species in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Near East.

24. In 2023, FAO released a new publication⁴¹ on the use of agricultural biotechnologies in developing countries in the aquaculture, crop, forestry and livestock sectors. It presents 15 case studies covering different regions, production systems and a range of species, including forest trees.

(d) Policies, institutions and capacity building (Priority Area 4)

25. National policies and regulatory frameworks for FGR are often partial, ineffective or non-existent. This situation results from the fact that FGR are not well understood, and that awareness of their importance is low in many countries. The Global Plan of Action calls for establishing and

³¹ Sacande, M. & Muir, G. 2023. Restoring food systems with nutritious native plants: Experiences from the African Drylands. *Food and Nutrition Bulletin*, 44(2S) S58–S68. DOI: 10.1177/03795721231190779

³² <http://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/en/>

³³ Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Fiji, Guatemala, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Guinea, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Uganda and Vanuatu.

³⁴ Gaisberger, H., Jalonen, R., Vinceti, B., Elias, M., Kettle, C.J., Thomas, E., DeRidder, B. *et al.* 2023. *Delivering tree genetic resources in forest and landscape restoration – A guide to ensuring local and global impact*. Forestry Working Paper, No. 40. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc8955en>

³⁵ Jalonen, R. Vinceti, B., Gaisberger, H., Thomas, E., Ekué, M., De Ridder, B., Besacier, C. & Kettle, C.J. 2023. *Sectoral capacities need strengthening to deliver sufficient tree seed for forest and landscape restoration*. Rome, FAO. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cc9069en>

³⁶ <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=998>

³⁷ Nelson, C.R., Hallett, J.G., Romero Montoya, A.E., Andrade, A., Besacier, C., Boerger, V., Bouazza, K. *et al.* 2024. *Standards of practice to guide ecosystem restoration – A contribution to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030*. Rome, FAO, Washington, DC, SER & Gland, Switzerland, IUCN CEM. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9106en>

³⁸ <https://www.fao.org/forestry-fao/pests/en/>

³⁹ Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (<https://apfisn.org/>); Forest Invasive Species Network for Africa (<https://www.fao.org/forestry-fao/fisna/en/>); Forest Invasive Species Network for Europe and Centra Asia (<http://www.reufis.org/>); Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (<https://www.fao.org/forestry-fao/51295/en/>)

⁴⁰ FAO. 2024. *Guide to implementation of phytosanitary standards in forestry*. Second edition. FAO Forestry Paper No. 164. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3046en>

⁴¹ Ruane, J., Mba, C., Boettcher, P., Koskela, J., Mair, G. & Ramasamy, S., eds. 2023. *Case studies of the use of agricultural biotechnologies to meet the needs of smallholders in developing countries*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc8940en>

reviewing relevant policies and legal frameworks and strengthening institutional and human capacity for enhancing FGR management. It also recognizes the need to reinforce regional and international collaboration to achieve this. The findings of the Second Report show that relevant policies of many countries continue to pay insufficient attention to the conservation and sustainable use of FGR. The Second Report also identifies considerable limitations of and gaps in the relevant institutional framework of many countries, especially in terms of human and financial resources.

26. The Thirtieth Session of the FAO Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC), held in Sydney, Australia, in October 2023, considered the topic of forests and biodiversity and invited its Members to consider the genetic conservation value of primary forests and to integrate actions to conserve, restore and sustainably use this diversity into broader conservation programmes, including through collaboration under the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (APFORGEN).⁴² APFORGEN also briefed APFC on its activities, including the updated regional strategy on FGR for 2023–2030⁴³ building on the experiences in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. During the reporting period FAO continued its collaboration with the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, Botanical Gardens Conservation International, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and World Agroforestry in preparing the Second Report.

27. In July 2024, the Twenty-seventh Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) considered FAO's work in mainstreaming biodiversity in forestry, including the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, and recommended that FAO continue collaborating with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in advancing biodiversity mainstreaming in forestry.⁴⁴ FAO also briefed COFO on the forest-related outcomes of the Commission's Nineteenth Regular Session and the key findings of the Second Implementation Report of the Global Plan of Action.⁴⁵

28. In response to the recommendation of the Twenty-sixth Session of COFO,⁴⁶ FAO continued developing a global programme on biodiversity mainstreaming in forestry to enhance the role of sustainably managed forests and trees outside forests in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. The programme contributes to the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and its Action Plan for 2024–2027,⁴⁷ as well as to the Global Plan of Action. The objective of the planned programme is to promote the integration of biodiversity considerations at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels into relevant policies, strategies and practices in the forest sector to create win–win situations for both conservation and production. The programme will provide an overarching framework for FAO's work on forest biodiversity under which global, regional and national projects can be supported by different resources partners. In July 2024, FAO and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity co-organized a regional workshop in Los Baños, Philippines, for selected countries, partners and donors to discuss the state of forest biodiversity mainstreaming in the Asia-Pacific region and to identify potential priorities for the programme.

29. FAO updated the Annual Meeting of the Forest Seed and Plant Scheme of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, held in Paris, France, in October 2024, on the monitoring of the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and the preparation of the Second Report. Moreover, FAO presented the Global Plan of Action and efforts to monitor its implementation to a workshop on enhancing the adaptive capacity and resilience of Mediterranean forests to climate change held in Brussels, Belgium, in December 2024. The workshop was organized by the European Commission in the context of its Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) instrument, in collaboration with the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Forest Institute and was targeted to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries.

⁴² APFC/2023/REP, paragraph 13d.

⁴³ <https://www.apforgen.org/about/strategy-2023-2030>

⁴⁴ COFO/2024/REP, paragraph 17d.

⁴⁵ COFO/2024/6.6.

⁴⁶ COFO/2022/REP, paragraph 22.

⁴⁷ FAO. 2020. *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors*. Rome.

<https://doi.org/10.4060/ca7722en>; FAO. 2024. *Action Plan for the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity Across Agricultural Sectors 2024–2027*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd0709en>

IV. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

30. The Commission may wish to take note of the activities undertaken in support of the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and:
- (i) welcome the launch of SilvaGRIS as a key source of information on the global status of forest genetic resources and essential tool for monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action;
 - (ii) encourage Members that have not yet done so to provide their data to SilvaGRIS to facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of the Global Plan of Action;
 - (iii) remind Members of the possibility of requesting support from FAO through its Technical Cooperation Programme for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, and invite Members to include relevant activities in their Country Programming Frameworks;
 - (iv) invite countries to integrate activities related to the conservation and sustainable use of FGR, as appropriate, into project proposals prepared for multilateral financing mechanisms to enhance sustainable forest management, including conservation and use of forest biodiversity, and forest-based adaptation and mitigation measures for climate change; and
 - (v) encourage donors to contribute to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.