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Продовольственная и
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Alimentación y la Agricultura

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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

TEAM OF TECHNICAL AND LEGAL EXPERTS ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING

Sixth Session

Rome, 2–4 May 2023

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL SEQUENCE INFORMATION: COMMENTS ON AND INPUTS TO THE DRAFT STUDY

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission), at its Eighteenth Regular Session, requested the Secretary to prepare a document reflecting key practices and experiences on how digital sequence information (DSI) is generated, stored, accessed and used for research and development related to GRFA, including relevant information on intellectual property protection, for review by the intergovernmental technical working groups (Working Groups) and the ABS Expert Team at their next sessions.¹
2. The Secretariat prepared the document *Digital sequence information and genetic resources for food and agriculture*,² which provides information on the generation, storage, access to and use of DSI for research and development related to genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA). It further reports on the intersessional global workshop on DSI and GRFA held in November 2022, summarizes relevant developments in other fora and discusses options to regulate ABS for DSI that are currently under debate.
3. In addition, the Secretariat commissioned a study on *The role of digital sequence information for the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture: opportunities and challenges*,³ for review by the Working Groups and the Team of Technical and Legal Experts on Access and Benefit-sharing.
4. This document compiles comments on and inputs to the draft study provided by the Commission's intergovernmental technical working groups on animal, aquatic and forest genetic resources and by individual members of the working groups.

II. COMMENTS AND INPUTS BY THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS ON ANIMAL, AQUATIC AND FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

5. The Working Groups took note of the draft study on *The role of digital sequence information for the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture: opportunities and challenges*.
6. The Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WG AnGR) provided detailed technical comments on the draft study, including its structure, for further consideration, and noted a lack of balance between the sections on animal and plant genetic resources; it recommended that applications of DSI in the development and use of AnGR be featured more broadly.⁴
7. The Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WG AqGR) recommended that the study provide additional information on the relevance of DSI for the conservation, sustainable use and development of AqGR.⁵
8. Similarly, the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (WG FGR) recommended that the information on the application of DSI for use and development within the different sectors of GRFA be more balanced.⁶

III. OTHER COMMENTS AND INPUTS RECEIVED

9. During the Working Group sessions and afterwards the following comments were made by Members of the Working Groups:
 - The study is difficult to follow and should be reorganized to improve clarity and continuity of the flow of the narrative.
 - Material and methods section (currently under description: 1.2 Resources used in this study),

¹ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 35.

² CGRFA/TTLE-ABS-6/23/3.

³ CGRFA/TTLE-ABS-6/23/Inf.3.

⁴ CGRFA/TTLE-ABS-6/23/Inf.5, paragraph 44.

⁵ CGRFA/TTLE-ABS-6/23/Inf.6, paragraph 37.

⁶ CGRFA/TTLE-ABS-6/23/Inf.7, paragraph 31.

starts at page 14 while it would be better to have it at the beginning, so the reader will understand the scope of the work done and resources used to prepare the study. Number of records in the CAB abstracts at page 10 describes a part of work performed by the authors. It would be better to have material and methods at the beginning.

- The description of the application of DSI in the management of AnGR is insufficient and unbalanced (10 lines only to address AnGR and 2,5 pages on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture [PGRFA]).
- The importance and an extensive application of DSI in development and use of AnGR, based on the state of the art, should be presented in the study.
- The source of Table 4 (page 12), which is very useful and informative, is not provided in the study.
- The source of Box 1 on biofoundries, page 17 is combined with the new para, and should be rather located in the subsection on infrastructure.
- Chapter 4. The state of management of DSI, rather describes application/use of DSI in management of GRFA (characterization, use and development and conservation).
- Moreover, an alphabetical order of the GRFA subsector is not helpful here; it may be better to use a traditional order, reflecting development of the work of the Commission (PGRFA, AnGR, FGR, AqGR ...).
- Figure 5 should be adjusted to add the Option 6.
- Some editorial changes, like differentiated size of the font, and other means for visualization, would improve readability of the study.