



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



The International Treaty
**ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

Item 16.2 of the Provisional Agenda

NINTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

New Delhi, India, 19–24 September 2022

Cooperation with the Global Crop Diversity Trust

Executive Summary

This document provides a summary of collaboration undertaken with the Global Crop Diversity Trust (the Crop Trust) since the Eighth Session of the Governing Body, particularly with regard to the Policy Guidance provided by the Governing Body to the Global Crop Diversity Trust through Resolution 10/2019. This document should be considered in conjunction with the document, IT/GB-8/19/16.2.2, *Report from the Global Crop Diversity Trust*.

Guidance Sought

The Governing Body is invited to review the activities and cooperation reported in this document and the *Report from the Global Crop Diversity Trust*, and adopt a Resolution to provide further guidance, taking into account the elements contained in the *Appendix* to this document.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its First Session, the Governing Body entered into a Relationship Agreement with the Global Crop Diversity Trust (the Crop Trust) and recognized it as an essential element of the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty in relation to *ex situ* conservation and availability of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.
2. The Constitution of the Crop Trust¹ and its Relationship Agreement with the Governing Body² provide that the Executive Board of the Crop Trust shall recognize the authority of the Governing Body to provide overall policy guidance to the Crop Trust on all matters within the purview of the International Treaty and submit regular reports on the activities of the Crop Trust to the Governing Body.

II. INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

3. The interactions between the Bureau of the Eighth Session of the Governing Body and the Executive Board of the Crop Trust have been very positive and productive during the current biennium, as has been that between the two Secretariats. Such cooperation follows the practices already established in previous biennia. To fulfil the obligation under the Relationship Agreement, the Executive Board of the Crop Trust continued to submit its report annually on the activities of the Crop Trust to the Governing Body for its regular session, and for an intervening year to the Bureau of the Governing Body.
4. The Secretary participated in meetings of the Executive Board and the Donors' Council of the Crop Trust, and the Executive Director of the Crop Trust attended meetings of the Bureau. Such participation enabled regular flow of information and communication.
5. While the COVID pandemic prevented the holding of physical coordination meetings between the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Crop Trust, the two institutions have been regularly in contact with many joint initiatives and activities organized and implemented since the last Session of the Governing Body, as reported below.

Selection and Appointment of Members of the Executive Board of the Global Crop Diversity Trust

6. According to the Constitution of the Crop Trust, four members of the Crop Trust Executive Board are appointed by the Governing Body of the International Treaty.³ *Procedures for the Selection and Appointment of Members of the Executive Board of the Global Crop Diversity Trust*, adopted at the Fifth Session of the Governing Body by Resolution 3/2013, provides that “[t]he Governing Body, unless it otherwise decides in future, authorizes its Bureau to carry out the selection of candidates for appointment as members to the Executive Board under Article 5 of the Constitution of the Global Crop Diversity Trust”.⁴
7. The Governing Body, through Resolution 10/2019, requested “the Bureau of the Ninth Session to carry out the selection and appointment of members to the Executive Board to fill any vacancy that may arise during the 2020–2021 biennium, in accordance with the *Procedures for the Selection and Appointment of Members of the Executive Board of the Global Crop Diversity Trust*, so to ensure the continued smooth and efficient functioning of the Executive Board.”
8. While the Bureau has not undertaken any process for the renewal, selection and appointment of members of the Executive Board since the last Session of the Governing Body, it may decide to do so still prior to the Ninth Session of the Governing Body. An update on such a process will be provided, if needed.

¹ Articles 6(3).q, 7(2)(b) and (c)

² Articles 2 and 3

³ Article 5(1)(a)

⁴ B. 3.

III. PROGRAMMATIC MATTERS

A. Resource Mobilization

9. The Governing Body, at its Eight Session, recommended that the “Crop Trust continue expanding cooperation with the International Treaty on resource mobilization, in particular on joint fundraising activities with the Secretary, and encourages donors to consider initiatives, projects and programmes that are jointly designed and implemented by the Crop Trust and the Secretary”.⁵

10. Collaboration between the Crop Trust and the Secretary on resource mobilization has substantially expanded since the last session of the Governing Body. As a result, different approaches to joint design and implementation of initiatives, projects and programmes have been pursued by the two institutions. The following paragraphs summarize these developments.

Joint design and implementation of new programmes or initiatives:

11. The two institutions jointly designed and established the Emergency Reserve for Genebanks, which was launched in November of 2021 and is run by the two institutions.

12. Full details about the Reserve, its operational framework and progress in its operations are provided in the document, IT/GB-9/22/16.2.3, *Report on the Emergency Reserve for Germplasm Collections at Risk*.⁶

Joint approaches to mobilize resources for international collections that have signed Article 15 agreements:

13. The Treaty Secretariat and the Crop Trust regularly collaborate in resource mobilization for international collections that operate within the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing. In the case of CATIE, collaboration during 2020-2021 included response to immediate needs; strengthening and modernization of infrastructure and equipment and development of joint resource mobilization strategies with CATIE and other institutions.⁷ Discussions are under way to develop similar approaches with other Article 15 collections.

Treaty Secretariat as implementing partner of major programmes designed by Crop Trust:

14. The Crop Trust recently launched the Biodiversity for Opportunities, Livelihoods and Development (BOLD) Project, which is a 10-year initiative funded by the Government of Norway.⁸ The Secretariat of the Treaty is one of the key partners of the Crop Trust to support various components of the BOLD programme and also provides advice on the overall implementation of BOLD through its advisory panel.

Crop Trust partners with Secretariat and supports Funding Committee in resource mobilization related activities:

15. At its Eight Session, the Governing Body invited the Crop Trust to continue its active support to the work of the Committee on the Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilization (Funding Committee), and in particular to support the development by the Committee of a strategy to mobilize voluntary funds from food processing industries, as called for in Article 13.6 of the Treaty, and a range of initiatives to mobilize voluntary funds from innovative sources and mechanisms.

16. The Committee received briefings and provided advice on several joint resource mobilization initiatives between the Treaty Secretariat and the Global Crop Diversity Trust. The Crop Trust made significant efforts to engage with the Committee as an active observer, providing advice to the work of

⁵ Resolution 10/2019, para.8

⁶ www.fao.org/3/ni848en/ni848en.pdf

⁷ See also IT/GB-9/22/16.2.2, *Report of the Global Crop Diversity Trust to the Governing Body*, page 4. www.fao.org/3/ni847en/ni847en.pdf

⁸ See also IT/GB-9/22/16.2.2, *Report of the Global Crop Diversity Trust to the Governing Body*, page 6. www.fao.org/3/ni847en/ni847en.pdf

the Funding Committee, including with regard to engagement with the food processing industries, and regularly briefing the Committee on its collaboration with the Treaty Secretariat on a number of joint resource mobilization and communication initiatives. Collaboration between the Crop Trust and the Treaty Secretariat in the areas of engagement of food processing industry and innovative funding will continue and expand in the next biennium, and regular briefings to the Funding Committee will contribute to advancing its plans to facilitate implementation of the Funding Strategy.

B. Scientific and Technical Matters

17. At its Eight Session, the Governing Body invited the Crop Trust to continue and expand cooperation with the Secretary, in accordance with Article 15.1(g) of the International Treaty, on mobilizing technical support for the orderly maintenance of the collections of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture held under Article 15 of the International Treaty.

18. The Secretariat and the Crop Trust have continued collaboration in mobilizing technical support for the orderly maintenance of the collections of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture held under Article 15 of the International Treaty. Both institutions regularly exchange information about technical, policy and funding developments related to Article 15 collections. Such collaboration included:

- support by the Secretariat in the preparation of the CGIAR-Crop Trust System Level Review of Genebank Costs and Operations;
- resource mobilization and strategic planning in partnership with CATIE;
- development of cryopreservation to ensure the long-term conservation of germplasm of non-orthodox seeds, in particular in international collections;
- regular collaboration with ICRISAT, ICRAF and the network of coconut collections under Article 15 to mobilize resources for the maintenance of the collections.

19. At its Eight Session, the Governing Body invited the Crop Trust and the Secretariat to undertake joint capacity building of national partners on the Multilateral System and the Global Information System. Under BOLD, the Secretariat will be training staff of relevant partner institutions in policy matters as they pertain to compliance with and implementation of the International Treaty, including the sharing of germplasm under the terms of the International Treaty, as well as the interface of the Treaty rules with other applicable legislation in the operations of national genebanks. The Secretariat will explore the establishment of synergies between participating institutions as well as counterparts in other programmes.

20. The Treaty Secretariat and the Crop Trust also cooperated with NORDGEN in the context of BOLD to organize a call for proposals for safety duplication in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. At least forty partners in low- and middle-income countries worldwide are receiving technical and financial support for the regeneration and safety duplication in Svalbard of their crop diversity collections.

21. The Secretariat of the International Treaty and the Crop Trust joined forces to organize a series of international online panels to bring together key actors of the conservation and use of plant genetic resources, to promote capacity building and scientific and technical exchange.

22. The first international panel was sponsored by the Kingdom of Morocco in September 2020 and reflected on the impacts of the COVID pandemic on plant genetic resources programs.⁹ The second panel was sponsored by the Government of Italy and held in February 2021. It discussed the management of fruit and vegetable genetic diversity and highlighted opportunities for cooperation, in particular in the context of the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables.¹⁰ In the third international panel, which was sponsored by the Government of Belgium, the Secretariat of the Treaty and the Crop Trust called on global experts to present the current status of cryopreservation at national and regional levels as well as in CGIAR centres, and examine the challenges and benefits of the technology. Experts

⁹ www.fao.org/plant-treaty/overview/partnerships/expert-panel

¹⁰ www.fao.org/plant-treaty/overview/partnerships/international-panel/en/

also discussed the opportunity of developing and sustaining a global initiative for cryopreservation, in the framework of the International Treaty.¹¹

23. Simultaneous interpretation in French, English, Arabic and Spanish was made available for the three international panels. The full programme, presentations and recording of the events are available at the Treaty website. The two institutions plan to build on the experience gained from the international panels to continue jointly delivering scientific and technical events in the future.

24. The updating and implementation of the Global Crop Conservation Strategies is another area identified to build complementarity on scientific and technical matters. In recent years, crop strategies have been successfully developed with the facilitation of the Crop Trust for a number of important crops, but there are many other plants that contribute to global food security and sustainable agriculture and the use of current strategies can be enhanced and further systematized. The Crop Trust organized a technical meeting in May 2022 titled *Mainstreaming the Global Crop Conservation Strategies in the supporting mechanisms of the Plant Treaty*. The main outcome of the meeting will be the publication of a White Paper analysing how to enhance the contribution of crop strategies to the development and implementation of the International Treaty. The goal is to have an analysis on the role of conservation strategies as implementation tools that can support the operations of the Multilateral System, assist in funding allocation within the Funding Strategy and help implement Articles 5 & 6 of the Treaty. The White Paper will suggest options for a dynamic system for developing, implementing and updating Crop Conservation Strategies, with a view to enhancing their use by Treaty Contracting Parties and other stakeholders as practical tools to realize the implementation of the International Treaty.

25. The White Paper will also make recommendations on possible joint initiatives and collaboration between the Crop Trust and the Treaty. One area in which the two institutions have been already collaborating is improving linkages in the updating and implementation of the Global Crop Conservation Strategies by using information available from the background study assessment prepared by the Secretariat, titled, *The plants that feed the world: baseline information to underpin strategies for their conservation and use*. The aim is that this background study will become, in time, a flagship publication for the Treaty community as it can be regularly updated, and improved as new information becomes available, in order to demonstrate progress in global conservation and availability of around 350 plants used in food and agriculture. The assessment will provide standardized and reproducible metrics on interdependence and importance of the crops, as well as availability and demand of their genetic resources. Baseline information and crop metrics arising from this study is already being used in the preparation or revision of crop strategies.

C. Global Information System

26. In the context of the implementation of the Programme of Work on the Global Information System (GLIS), under Article 17 of the Treaty, the Secretariat has continued collaborating with the Crop Trust on Genesys. The two Secretariats met regularly to exchange information and plan joint activities, mainly on the connection of Genesys to the Global Information System, and on training on documentation of PGRFA. The Crop Trust also participated in meetings of the Scientific Advisory Committee of GLIS. Genesys and GLIS are now connected and both systems exchange information automatically on new records and on incomplete information. Thanks to the use of Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) they also share and display links and pointers to other PGRFA datasets.

27. As part of the collaboration on training and capacity development activities, the Secretariats of the Treaty and the Crop Trust have participated in meetings on information systems and PGRFA documentation organized by the other in various regions, both physically and by electronic means. Most of the joint activities focused on the use of Digital Object Identifiers, the identification of material available in the Multilateral System through the Global Information System, the use of Easy-SMTA, the documentation of complex phenotypic datasets and the management of PGRFA catalogues.

¹¹ www.fao.org/plant-treaty/overview/partnerships/international-expert-panel/en/

28. The Crop Trust and the Treaty Secretariat collaborated with the Secretariat of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to prepare the document “Strengthening cooperation among global information systems on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture”, which was made available to the last Session of the Commission.

D. Outreach and Communication

29. As a follow up to Resolution 10/2019, collaboration with the Treaty continued and strengthened on outreach and communications during the biennium, for example, through coordinated outreach efforts including for the launch of the Emergency Reserve for Genebanks and the call for proposals for safety duplication in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Joint press releases were also produced in the context of the Panels of Experts organized together. The Crop Trust promoted the launch of the Fifth Call for Proposal of the Benefit-sharing Fund and social media support was provided by the Crop Trust for the International Day for Biological Diversity and other events. Two high-level joint opinion pieces are planned for late 2022, as well as a joint side event at the Ninth Session of the Governing Body. Collaboration will be further systematized and strengthened in the next biennium.

IV. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

30. The Governing Body is invited to review the activities and cooperation reported in this document and in the document, IT/GB-9/22/16.2.2, *Report from the Global Crop Diversity Trust*, and adopt a Resolution to provide further guidance, taking into account the elements contained in the *Appendix* to this document.

DRAFT RESOLUTION **/2022**POLICY GUIDANCE TO THE GLOBAL CROP DIVERSITY TRUST**

THE GOVERNING BODY,

Recalling that the Global Crop Diversity Trust (the Crop Trust) is an essential element of the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty, in relation to the *ex situ* conservation and availability of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;

Recalling that pursuant to Article 1(5) of its Constitution the Crop Trust shall operate in accordance with the overall policy guidance to be provided by the Governing Body of the International Treaty;

Taking note of the Report from the Crop Trust, which addresses matters requested by Resolution 10/2017;

1. PART I: POLICY GUIDANCE

1. *Thanks* the Executive Board of the Crop Trust for having regularly submitted its annual report on the activities of the Crop Trust to the Governing Body and its Bureau;
2. *Requests* the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Secretary to inform the Executive Board of the Crop Trust on the decisions made by the Governing Body and *provides* policy guidance to the following key areas:

A. Resource Mobilization

3. *Thanks* governments and other donors that have provided funds for the Crop Trust Endowment Fund in particular towards enabling to secure long-term funding for collections held pursuant to Article 15 of the Treaty, with contributions paid into the endowment, as reported by the Crop Trust, currently at USD 298 million;
4. *Welcomes* the steps being taken by the Crop Trust to implement a more diversified fundraising strategy to engage traditional public sector donors and private foundations while highlighting the complementary role of innovative finance and private sector fundraising, and *emphasizes* the importance of clear and effective communication of the Crop Trust's mission, goals and impact in support of the global agenda on crisis and climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, food security and rural livelihoods.
5. *Invites* the Crop Trust to provide information, at the Tenth Session of the Governing Body, on progress made with resource mobilization during the next biennium for the Crop Trust Endowment Fund as well as in relation to mobilization of project-based funds, including to support selected national genebanks in developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
6. *Welcomes* and *commends* the substantial increase in cooperation on resource mobilization by the Executive Director of the Crop Trust and the Secretary of the International Treaty and *thanks* donors, such as the governments of Norway and Italy, that have given priority to support implementation of joint initiatives;
7. *Recommends* that the Crop Trust continues expanding cooperation with the International Treaty on mobilizing resources, and further *encourages* donors to give priority to initiatives, projects

and programmes that are jointly designed and implemented by the Crop Trust and the Secretariat;

8. **Recommends** the Crop Trust to further engage the Secretariat of the International Treaty to fulfil the important role of both institutions to mobilize support for the maintenance of Article 15 collections, and in doing so **encourages** them to engage the wide range of donors and partners that host or support these international collections.
9. **Thanks** the Crop Trust for its active support to the work of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilization (Funding Committee), and in particular in the development by the Committee of a strategy to engage the food processing industries, and **invites** the Crop Trust to continue strengthening its support to the Funding Committee;

B. Scientific and Technical Matters

10. **Welcomes** the support provided by the Crop Trust during the current biennium to enable the long-term conservation and availability of crop diversity within collections held pursuant to Article 15 of the International Treaty, and **invites** the Crop Trust to continue and expand cooperation with the Secretary, in accordance with Article 15.1(g) of the International Treaty, on mobilizing technical support for the orderly maintenance of the collections of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture held under Article 15 of the International Treaty;
11. **Welcomes** the range of initiatives promoted by the Crop Trust to support national genebanks that are part of the Multilateral System and **encourages** further collaboration with the Secretariat to undertake joint capacity building of national partners on Treaty implementation;
12. **Welcomes** the organization of a series of international panels of experts by the Crop Trust and the Secretariat to bring together key actors in the conservation and use of plant genetic resources, to promote capacity building and scientific and technical exchange and **encourages** the two institutions to build upon the experience gained to continue jointly delivering scientific and technical training and expertise, including by taking advantage of on-line mechanisms.
13. **Recommends** the Crop Trust to further enhance its collaboration and complementarity with the International Treaty on scientific and technical matters, in particular in the area of Crop Conservation Strategies, and in this context **invites** the Crop Trust to make available the White Paper, when finalised, to elaborate a dynamic system for developing, implementing and updating Crop Conservation Strategies and enhance their role as practical tools to realize the implementation of the International Treaty, to enable the Governing Body to provide policy guidance at its Tenth Session;

C. Global Information System

14. **Welcomes** the close collaboration of the Crop Trust with the International Treaty and FAO in the area of information of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and **invites** them to continue collaborating on training and capacity development activities in the area of information systems and documentation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.
15. **Further invites** the Crop Trust to continue participating in the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Global Information System and provide regular updates on the implementation of its activities relevant to the Global Information System;

D. Communication and Outreach

16. ***Recommends*** the Crop Trust to continue and strengthen cooperation with the International Treaty to jointly develop outreach and communication products and to further systematize and strengthen such cooperation in the next biennium;

2. PART II: OTHER

17. ***Requests*** the Bureau of the Tenth Session to carry out the selection and appointment of members to the Executive Board to fill any vacancy that may arise before the Tenth Session of the Governing Body, in accordance with the Procedures for the Selection and Appointment of Members of the Executive Board of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, so as to ensure the continued smooth and efficient functioning of the Executive Board.