



The International Treaty

ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



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Item 15 of the Draft Provisional Agenda

INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

THIRD SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

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REPORT ON FAO ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE SUPPORTING COMPONENTS OF THE TREATY

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Part V of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture describes its supporting components as follows:
 - The Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Articles 14 and 17);
 - *Ex Situ* Collections of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture held by the International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCS) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and other International Institutions (CGIAR) (Article 15);
 - International Plant Genetic Resources Networks (Article 16);
 - Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Article 17);
 - *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Article 17.3).
2. For each of the supporting components listed, this document provides a brief review of most relevant activities undertaken by FAO in cooperation with its partners during the current biennium (2007-08)¹ and where relevant, the guidance received from the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture for further implementation. Specific activities on some supporting components carried out by other organizations are reported by the organizations themselves.

II. THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

3. The *Global Plan of Action* provides an operational framework for the development of national programmes on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and for regional and international cooperation. The twenty priority activity areas of the Global Plan of Action have been agreed by the Governing Body of the Treaty as the reference for the establishment of initial priorities of its Funding Strategy.²
4. The implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* is overseen by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The Commission at its Eleventh Session in June 2007, reviewed follow-up work in support to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and a summary of its recommendations was provided for information to the second Governing Body³. The Commission will consider a plan for the process of updating the *Global Plan of Action* at its next regular session in October 2008. The Commission agreed that the updated rolling Global Plan of Action would be considered at the Thirteenth Regular Session of the Commission, on the basis of the second Report of the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources.⁴
5. Additional information is provided on two mechanisms by which FAO provides support to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action: the Facilitating Mechanism for the

¹ An analysis of activities carried out during previous biennia, can be found in CGRFA/WG-PGR-3/05/2 Rev. 1.

² IT/GB-1/06/Report-Appendix F, Funding Strategy for the Implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Para.4.

³ IT/GB-2/07/Inf.7.

⁴ CGRFA-11/07/Report Para 41.

implementation of the Global Plan of Action and the new approach for monitoring implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

1. *Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action*

6. In Resolution 1/2006, the Governing Body of the International Treaty requested the Commission to support the development of the Funding Strategy, in the context of its work in relation to the supporting components of the Treaty, including the Global Plan of Action and its Facilitating Mechanism.⁵ It further decided that information on the mandates, policies, eligibility criteria and procedures of funding bodies will be collected and maintained by the Secretariat of the International Treaty and made available to Contracting Parties through the website of the Treaty, and that the Facilitating Mechanism could complement this activity by collecting and providing information on relevant available funds from the Parties.⁶ The Governing Body at its Second Session also recognized the Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* as an important tool that could contribute to the identification of potential resources for the implementation of the Funding Strategy.⁷

7. Within this framework and in response to the request, the Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action has been further enhanced. It is a web-based information portal that provides information on sources and availability of financial, technical and information resources, and related subjects. It includes, in particular, its database of potential funding sources for projects, studies and training, research, meetings, etc, which, at the time of the preparation of this document⁸ compiled more than 700 searchable funding programmes. The information about a single donor programme contains a summary about the donor institution (including bilateral and multilateral donors, development finance institutions, public and private foundations, etc.), the particular donor funding programme, the scope of funding of the respective programme (target subjects, target countries, target groups), the type of funding provided and information about eligibility and application process. The database is searchable by these search criteria or by free text search. In addition to the database on funding programmes, the portal also provides a database on bilateral donors. The portal, available in English, French and Spanish, is one of the four activities of the Facilitating Mechanism agreed by the Commission, and was put online last on the 1st of June 2007, with the following URL www.globalplanofaction.org.

8. The portal is also a source of other information relevant to the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, including codes of conduct and guidelines, other key documents in the field of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and searchable databases on networks and institutions, germplasm databases, national projects on PGRFA and a database on information sources. Since the last update of the new website version in September 2008, the portal also provides news about publications, congresses, exhibitions etc. in its highlights section.

2. *Monitoring the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action*

9. The Commission at its Eleventh Session expressed appreciation for the progress made in applying the new approach to monitor implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, which is a participatory, country-driven and capacity-building process, based on agreed indicators. It recognized its positive role in strengthening partnerships among national stakeholders, raising awareness on the importance of plant genetic resources among policy makers, and its value as a tool for identifying gaps and defining priorities for future collaborative action.

⁵ IT/GB/-1/06/Report, Para 17.

⁶ IT/GB-2/07/Report, Appendix F, Para 13.

⁷ IT/GB-2/07/Report, Para 79.

⁸ November 2008.

10. So far, 64 countries have established⁹ or are in the final steps¹⁰ of establishing their National Information Sharing Mechanisms on plant genetic resources. 61 of these have prepared their Country Reports on the state of plant genetic resources. The portals of the established national mechanisms, linking the database on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, as well as relevant documents, participating stakeholders and important national and international links, can be accessed from the web¹¹. The table below provides a summary by regions of the volume of some key data available through the established mechanisms.

Table 1. Number of projects related to the Global Plan of Action, cultivars and publications for which detailed information can be accessed from the NISM databases under WIEWS.

Region ¹²	Number of			Source (number of countries)
	Projects ¹³	Cultivars	Publications	
Africa	2,023	10,383	2,083	18
America	4,083	15,339	6,378	15
Asia and Pacific	4,714	19,108	8,490	10
Europe	674	3,930	1,148	4
Near East and North Africa	1,534	9,108	3,756	12
Total	13,028	57,868	21,855	59

III. *EX SITU* COLLECTIONS OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE HELD BY THE INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTRES OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

11. Further information is provided in document IT/GB-3/09/Inf. 15.

IV. INTERNATIONAL PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES NETWORKS

12. The International Treaty recognizes the contribution of international networks to the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA in its Article 16, encouraging cooperation all relevant stakeholders so as to achieve as complete coverage as possible of plant genetic resources for food

⁹ 59 Countries have finalized: Algeria; Argentina; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Benin; Bolivia; Burkina Faso; Cameroon; Chile; Congo-Brazzaville; Congo, Dem. Rep. of; Costa Rica; Cuba; Czech Republic; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; Egypt; El Salvador; Ethiopia; Fiji; Georgia; Ghana; Guatemala; Guinea Conakry; India; Jamaica; Jordan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kyrgyzstan; Lao, PDR; Lebanon; Malawi; Malaysia; Mali; Nicaragua; Niger; Nigeria; Oman; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Portugal; Senegal; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Tanzania; Thailand; Togo; Turkey; Uganda; Uruguay; Uzbekistan; Venezuela, Rep. Bol. of; Vietnam; Zambia.

¹⁰ 5 Countries are in the process to finalize: Angola; Côte d'Ivoire; Morocco; Mozambique; Yemen.

¹¹ <http://www.pgrfa.org/gpa/<country 3-letter ISO code>> (e.g. <http://www.pgrfa.org/gpa/ken>).

¹² Country grouping by region as per Appendix 1 of the State of the World's PGRFA (1998).

¹³ For details on contents please see CGRFA-10/04/Inf.5 pages. 92-94 and 96.

and agriculture. The importance of such networks is also underlined by the Commission and its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources.

13. Among the relevant activities carried out by international networks, it is worth noting the workshop of regional network coordinators organized in December 2007 by the Thematic Network on Inter-regional Cooperation of the European Cooperative Programme on Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR), in close collaboration with the EC funded project Diverseeds (Networking on conservation and use of plant genetic resources in Europe and Asia) and Bioversity International. The main objective was to assess the changes in the environment (FAO International Treaty, Global Crop Diversity Trust, etc.) in which the networks operate, revisiting existing network concepts and strategies, elaborate suggestions for new/revised/improved approaches of regional genetic resources networks and identify formal channels of communication and cooperation among Regional Networks.

14. A summary of the results is presented here below for information:

- a) A number of PGRFA networks, global, regional, crop-based or thematic, were promoted and supported by FAO in the past. Recently, in the context of the Global Plan of Action implementation and monitoring and of the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS), FAO has been supporting member countries in the establishment of national information sharing mechanisms on PGRFA, in collaboration with Bioversity International. The national databases that result from these activities form part of a global information network under WIEWS.
- b) From preliminary results of the Global Plan of Action monitoring, about 70% of the countries reported to be active members of PGRFA Networks, 63 PGRFA Networks were reported, of which 34 and 26 have a global and regional scope, respectively. Regional/international Networks are reportedly instrumental for sourcing parental materials used in breeding, therefore contributing to the establishment of the multilateral system (MLS) under the IT. Networks' activities address mainly information management, characterization/evaluation; capacity building; and crop improvement through breeding and germplasm enhancement.
- c) It was noted that the ongoing activities in monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action with countries in the context of developing the second State of the World Report and revising the Global Plan of Action would provide opportunities to the Regional Networks to engage more effectively in these processes and thus to ensure a more prominent role in the global system.
- d) In general, it can be concluded that Regional and national PGRFA Networks are important instruments for Global Plan of Action implementation, in particular for germplasm exchange, information sharing and technology transfer. The implementation of the GPA at national level strengthens national networks which have also a direct positive effect on regional and global Networks.¹⁴

V. THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON PGRFA

15. Article 17.1 of the International Treaty states that "Contracting Parties shall cooperate to develop and strengthen a global information system to facilitate the exchange of information,

¹⁴ J.M.M. Engels, L. Maggioni and E. Thörn, Draft Executive Summary- Joint ECPGR-DIVERSEEDS-BIOVERSITY Inter-regional Workshop on Crop Genetic Resources Networks, Bioversity International Maccaresse, Italy, 3 - 5 December 2007

based on existing information systems, on scientific, technical and environmental matters related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, with the expectation that such exchange of information will contribute to the sharing of benefits by making information on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture available to all Contracting Parties [...] Based on notification by the Contracting Parties, early warning should be provided about hazards that threaten the efficient maintenance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, with a view to safeguarding the material.”

16. The Commission stated that the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS) should be further developed in the context of developing the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in the International Treaty. It expressed its willingness to work with the Governing Body of the International Treaty for this purpose. The Commission further invited the Governing Body to consider utilizing national information sharing mechanisms established through WIEWS, as contributions to the development of its Global Information System.¹⁵

VI. STATE OF THE WORLD'S PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

17. The Commission is currently overseeing the preparation of the second Report of *The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. During its last session in 2007 the Commission noted that the Report should provide a concise and succinct assessment of the status and trends of these resources and be a high quality document, with regional and global analysis, to identify the most significant gaps and needs, in order to provide a sound basis for updating the rolling Global Plan of Action¹⁶.

18. The Commission agreed that *The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* needed to be updated with the best data and information available, including country reports, information gathering processes and thematic studies, with the largest possible participation of countries, and should focus on changes occurred since 1996.

19. The Commission stressed the importance for FAO to receive data and information from developed and developing countries in a timely manner, for the preparation of the updated State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources.

20. The Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture at its fourth meeting in July 2009, will review and guide the finalization for the draft second *The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*, which will be made available at the next Regular Session of the Commission in 2009, to consider its finalization.¹⁷

¹⁵ CGRFA-11/07/Report, Para 37.

¹⁶ CGRFA-11/07/Report, Para 39-40.

¹⁷ CGRFA-11/07/Report Para 41.