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**GLOBALLY IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE SYSTEMS
(GIAHS)**

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Executive Summary

- In order to safeguard the world's threatened, unique traditional agricultural heritage systems around the world and their associated agricultural biodiversity, FAO launched the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) Partnership Initiative during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg, 2002) as a cornerstone of the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) component of Agenda 21. The GIAHS Initiative is an integrated policy and action framework that brings pride and self-confidence to the nations and rural communities through global recognition of their agricultural heritage systems and accompanying action plans for their dynamic conservation.
- The Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM) at its 97th session in October 2013 considered the working arrangements and certification procedures under the GIAHS and concurred with the recommendation that the GIAHS initiative be vested with formal status within the FAO framework and that a draft Conference Resolution be submitted to the CCLM for review and endorsement, for subsequent discussion and approval by Council, and eventual consideration and adoption by Conference in June 2015.
- The 148th session of the Council in December 2013 endorsed the initiation of a process for the development of a draft Conference Resolution which foresees that prior to the CCLM's next review of the matter, the Committee on Agriculture, the Programme Committee and the Finance Committee would be requested to discuss and advise on relevant technical, programmatic and budgetary aspects of GIAHS.
- The 24th session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) in October 2014 expressed support for the GIAHS concept and recognized the contribution of GIAHS to cultural heritage, biological diversity and sustainable development. COAG called for further work by the Secretariat on, and review by forthcoming FAO governing body meetings of the Draft Conference Resolution, in particular with regards to programme and budget implications, as well as governance arrangements.

Guidance Sought from the Programme and Finance Committees

- The Programme Committee and the Finance Committee are invited to review the information presented in the document, including the draft Conference Resolution, and provide its guidance as deemed appropriate.

Draft Advice

- **The Committees:**
- **considered the GIAHS Initiative from a programme and budgetary perspective; and**
- **concurred with the recommendation that the GIAHS initiative be vested with formal status.**

I. Introduction

1. Over centuries, generations of farmers, fisher folks and herders have developed complex, diverse and locally adapted agricultural systems,¹ managed with time-tested, ingenious combination of techniques and practices. Building on generations of accumulated knowledge and experience, these ingenious “agri-cultural” systems reflect not only in outstanding rural landscapes, maintenance of globally significant agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems and valuable cultural inheritance but, above all, in the sustained provision of multiple goods and services, food and livelihood security for millions of poor and small-scale farmers.

2. Such agricultural agro-silvo-pastoral systems can be found, in particular, in highly populated regions or in areas where the population has, for various reasons, had to establish complex and innovative land-use/management practices, for example due to the geographic isolation, fragile ecosystems, political marginalization, limited natural resources, and/or extreme climatic conditions. These systems are of great importance, even in modern societies in order to provide food and livelihood security, resilience with society through maintaining biodiversity and indigenous resource management practices, and to enhance well-being of people by preserving traditional landscape and culture.

3. Over the past ten years of implementation, it has been demonstrated in 31 designated GIAHS sites in 13 countries that their dynamic conservation can be achieved through awareness raising of the intrinsic values of GIAHS and accompanying action plans. There are prospects for many other GIAHS around the world that will serve as learning laboratories, network of knowledge sharing and in-situ conservation of biodiversity of global significance. Some countries have adopted policies for recognition of Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (NIAHS) and GIAHS policy advocacy has influenced the global biodiversity agenda resulting in adoption of Resolution X. 31 by the 10th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Wetlands; Decision X/34 by the 10th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity; and Resolution A/C.2/67/L.48 by the 67th session of the UN General Assembly.

4. The purpose of this document is to provide information on the future programming of the GIAHS Initiative.

II. Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems

Concept of GIAHS

5. As defined by FAO in 2002, GIAHS are “remarkable land use systems and landscapes which are rich in globally significant biological diversity evolving from the co-adaptation of a community with its environment and its needs and aspirations for sustainable development”.² This definition was conceptualized under a Project Development Facility (PDF) of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF),³ which was followed by a Full Scale Project Implementation also supported by the GEF.⁴

6. In this context, vision and mission statements for GIAHS were also formulated: (i) Vision: “Dynamic conservation of all agricultural heritage systems and their multitude of goods and services for food and livelihoods security, now and for future generations”; (ii) Mission: “To identify, support

¹ A broad concept of agriculture is applied, including cropping, animal husbandry, forestry, swidden agriculture, fisheries, hunting, gathering and combinations.

² FAO definition, <http://www.fao.org/giahs/giahs/faq3/en/>

³ The PDF had two successive phases: (i) an identification phase (PDF-A) - *United Nations Development Programme Project Document: Globally Important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)*, GLO/02/G41/A/1G/12, 2002; and (ii) a preparation phase (PDF-B) - *United Nations Development Programme/Global Environment Facility: Conservation and Sustainable Management of Globally Important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)*, PIMS 2050, UNTS/GLO/002/GEF, 2004-2008. Initially UNDP was the implementing agency while FAO served as the executing agency.

⁴ FAO/Global Environment Facility Project Document: *Conservation and Adaptive Management of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)*, GCP/GLO212GFF, 2008-2013.

and safeguard Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems and their livelihoods, agricultural and associated biodiversity, landscapes, knowledge systems and cultures around the world”.⁵

7. In this perspective, the concept of GIAHS is distinct from, and more complex than, a conventional heritage site or protected area/landscape. In essence, a globally important agricultural heritage system is “a living, evolving system of human communities in an intricate relationship with their territory, cultural or agricultural landscape of biophysical and wider social environment”.⁶ This novel approach places agriculture on a par with culture. As such, GIAHS clearly fall into the remit of FAO’s mandate.

III. The GIAHS Initiative

8. The GIAHS Initiative⁷ was launched by FAO during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 and has successfully implemented its objectives and targets through various extrabudgetary funded projects and collaborative ventures. It has developed a solid institutional mechanism including a multi-donor Global Partnership covering around 17 countries, over 35 international and national partners, and 31 designated sites⁸ supported by the GIAHS Secretariat hosted by the Land and Water Division of FAO. Many countries have expressed interest to designate their agricultural heritage as GIAHS.

9. The GIAHS Initiative operates at three levels:

- a) at global level, by identification, assessment, selection, and recognition of GIAHS;
- b) at national level, by the formation of a cross-sectorial GIAHS national committee and by capacity building in policy, regulatory and incentive mechanisms to prepare and implement a participatory action plan to safeguard these outstanding systems and use them as sustainability benchmark systems; and
- c) at local level, by empowerment of local communities and by providing technical assistance for sustainable resource management, by promoting traditional knowledge and enhancing viability of these systems through a sustainable livelihood approach.

10. The dynamic conservation approach, based on the Sustainable Livelihood Framework and agro-ecological approaches, explores and develops novel political, social and economic incentives thereby strengthening family farming management systems in order to conserve the biodiversity and cultural values of the ecosystem. It emphasizes a balance between conservation, adaptation and socio-economic development in order to assist the people who are the creators and guardians of their agricultural heritage system in addressing the challenges of today's world and allow them to take advantage of the opportunities of modern living, while conserving the functionalities of the ecosystem.

IV. Relevance of GIAHS to FAO's Strategic Framework

11. GIAHS, under the scope of FAO Strategic Objective 2 (SO2), Outcome 1⁹ primarily contribute to increased and improved provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner. The Initiative is contributing to one important output under this Outcome: Output 1.2¹⁰ which relates to ecosystem management through integrated and multi-sectoral approaches. Some of the major components of the work done under GIAHS worthy of mentioning are, through the 31 existing sites in 13 countries and more in the pipeline, the identification and safeguarding globally/locally of significant agricultural biodiversity, in-situ conservation, and enhancement of rural livelihoods; the promotion of dynamic conservation concept and dissemination

⁵ GIAHS Partnership Framework (as of 26 October 2012), GIAHS Scientific and Steering Committee Meeting, Rome, 29-30 October 2012.

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/giahs/giahs/agricultural-heritage-concept/en/>

⁷ The GIAHS Initiative was registered under the *Partnerships for Sustainable Development in 2004 and reinstated in 2012*.

⁸ As of 29 August 2014.

⁹ SO2 Outcome 1: Producers and Natural Resource Managers adopt practices that increase and improve the provision of goods and services in the agricultural sector production systems in a sustainable manner.

¹⁰ SO2 Outcome 1, Output 1.2: Integrated and multi-sectoral approaches for ecosystem valuation, management and restoration are identified, assessed, disseminated and their adoption by stakeholders is facilitated.

of the lessons learned in implementation; support provided for the expansion and upscaling of the conservation of heritage including twinning programs between developed and developing countries; and mainstreaming the GIAHS concept, including income generation at the family and community level from the dynamic conservation approaches.

12. GIAHS are also relevant to a number of existing multi-lateral instruments such as the ITPGRFA,¹¹ Ramsar Convention¹² and the CBD.¹³ GIAHS supports the International Year of Family Farming 2014 – a basis for countries to join together in identifying the special needs of their family farmers and to develop ways and means to resolve ongoing challenges to rural peoples. GIAHS further support capacity development and gender equality, consider and recognize the role of women in the management of natural resources, and therefore, activities at all levels are addressing the specific role of women, as well as empowerment and capacity building of indigenous peoples, family farmers and local communities.

V. Lessons Learned and Experiences in Implementing GIAHS

13. Over the past decade of implementing the GIAHS Initiative and its innovative model of engaging communities and local and national governments in the adaptive management and conservation of agricultural heritage and their ecosystem's goods and services, the achievements and impacts are commendable.¹⁴ Some of the lessons learned and experiences are summarized, as follows:

- a) GIAHS are resilient, built and maintained through local resources and knowledge, individual and community investment and commitment.
- b) Communities at GIAHS sites conserve traditional knowledge and local socio-economic forces and networks and remain adaptable and responsive to external influences.
- c) Maintaining GIAHS sites can transform and sustain economic value.
- d) The family agriculture differentiates the roles and responsibilities in the community according to gender, age and other criteria. GIAHS resilience offers opportunities for gender-sensitive economic diversification to adapt to climate change, reduce out-migration and to face other challenges with great potential to strengthen the economic productivity and social status of women, as well as attracting youth to till land and to build their families and lives in rural areas.
- e) The 31 designated GIAHS sites in 13 countries and the awareness raised by the current, as well as prospective GIAHS have increased the world's area devoted to biodiversity conservation given the combination of cultivated varieties, landraces and plant and animal species associated with diverse agro-ecosystems and landscapes.
- f) The recognition of agricultural heritage highlights agricultural cultures and returns respect and dignifies local communities and their way of life which can provide security, peace, rural employment and sustainable development.

VI. Consideration by FAO Governing Bodies

14. GIAHS as a concept has received general support from the membership of the Organization on various occasions. Originally, GIAHS emerged from the wider SARD Initiative, whose facilitation by FAO, as Task Manager for Chapter 14 (SARD) of Agenda 21, was endorsed by COAG¹⁵ and Council.¹⁶ Subsequently, the GIAHS initiative itself and its underlying objectives have been supported

¹¹ International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Article 5.1© and (d); Article 6.2 and Article 9.1.

¹² The Convention on Wetlands, Resolution X.31 item 8.

¹³ Convention on Biological Diversity, Articles 10c and 8j; Aichi Biodiversity Targets 2, 7, 14, 15 and 18.

¹⁴ GIAHS Steering and Scientific Committee Meeting held on 28-29 April 2014, Rome, Italy.

¹⁵ *Report of the Sixteenth Session of the Committee on Agriculture, Rome, 26-30 March 2001*, CL 120/9, paras 48-56.

¹⁶ *Report of the Council of FAO, Hundred and Twentieth Session, Rome, 8-23 June 2001*, CL 120/REP, Paras 29, 32 and 35.

in principle by the same Governing Bodies in 2005, first by COAG in April,¹⁷ then by Council in June.¹⁸

15. More recently, GIAHS was considered by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 2013, which had already noted the importance of in-situ conservation through sustainable management of ingenious agricultural heritage systems.¹⁹ The Programme Committee in 2012, in considering the reviewed Strategic Framework emphasized the need to take into account joint programmes by FAO and its Members, including in relation to sustainable GIAHS.²⁰

16. The 97th session of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM) in October 2013 considered document CCLM 97/10 on “Working arrangements and certification procedures under the Globally Important Agriculture Heritage System (GIAHS)”, including the proposal contained therein to initiate a process leading to the formal approval of the GIAHS through the adoption of a Conference Resolution.

17. FAO's efforts and attention to GIAHS in the Programme of Work, brings additional opportunities to recognize the importance of smallholders, family farmers, and indigenous communities through GIAHS that constitute remarkable examples of such livelihood systems.

18. The CCLM concurred with the recommendation that the GIAHS initiative be vested with formal status within the FAO framework and that the draft Conference Resolution be submitted to the CCLM for review and endorsement, for subsequent discussion and potential approval by Council, and eventual consideration and adoption by Conference in June 2015. The CCLM also recommended that prior to the CCLM's next review of the matter, and to prepare for it, the Programme Committee, the Finance Committee and the Committee on Agriculture would be requested to discuss and advise on relevant budgetary, programmatic and technical aspects of GIAHS.

19. The 148th session of the Council in December 2013 endorsed the initiation of a process as recommended by the CCLM.

20. The 24th session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) in October 2014 considered document COAG/2014/12 and expressed support for the GIAHS concept and recognized the contribution of GIAHS to cultural heritage, biological diversity and sustainable development. COAG called for further work by the Secretariat on, and review by forthcoming FAO governing body meetings of the Draft Conference Resolution, in particular with regards to programme and budget implications, as well as governance arrangements.

VII. Resourcing of the GIAHS Initiative

21. The GIAHS Initiative is funded from various extrabudgetary funds mainly granted by the Global Environment Facility, IFAD, and the governments of Germany and Japan, which supported the activities of the headquarters-based GIAHS Secretariat, as well as the activities conducted at different levels (global, national, and local level activities).

22. The importance afforded to GIAHS by FAO, its Members and other resource partners will continue to provide a framework conducive to sustained provision of such resources.

23. Funds of the GIAHS Programme will be administered in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the Organization.

VIII. Principles for the GIAHS Programme

24. The draft Resolution also proposes Principles for the GIAHS Programme as set out in Annex 1 to the Resolution. The formalization of status that will be conferred by the Conference's

¹⁷ *Report of the Nineteenth Session of the Committee on Agriculture, Rome, 13-16 April 2005*, CL 120/9, paras 20-27.

¹⁸ *Report of the Council of FAO, Hundred and Twenty-eighth Session, Rome, 20-24 June 2005*, CL 128/REP, para 32.

¹⁹ *Report of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Ninth Regular Session, Rome 14-18 October 2002*, CGRFA-9/02/REP, paras 39-40.

²⁰ *Report of the 112th Session of the Programme Committee (5-9 November 2012)*, CL 145/6, para 8c.

approval of the draft Resolution will serve to transform the GIAHS from a project-based initiative into a Programme of the Organization. Accordingly, drawing upon the lessons learned during the past years of operation, the Director-General may adjust certain modalities of the existing GIAHS Initiative to reflect its new status and to ensure consistency and compliance with the Organization's policies, regulations and rules.

IX. The Way Forward

Towards a formalization of the GIAHS process

25. Over the past decade, GIAHS has gained considerable recognition both globally and domestically. In the international arena, GIAHS was praised in various intergovernmental fora, such as the Conferences of the Parties of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 2008, and of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010. GIAHS was also acknowledged by the UN General Assembly in its Resolution 67/228 on 'Agriculture development and food security' adopted on 21 December 2012. Currently, in addition to the 31 designated GIAHS sites, many more candidate sites are being considered for future recognition. Also, in order to further scale up the status of their sites, several countries have adopted GIAHS-specific national policy and/or regulatory frameworks.

26. Building on the positive results and impacts of the GIAHS-supported projects, as well as the 10 years of experience gained globally and locally, the GIAHS designation should continue to be mainstreamed and sustained. FAO plays a key role in engaging its global, regional and country-level partners in identifying, supporting, safeguarding and recognizing such agricultural heritage as globally important to "giving back the pride and identity" of the family farmers, indigenous peoples and local communities.

27. FAO will ensure that mainstreaming of GIAHS will draw from already existing mechanisms and government institutions that will be used to support the process at the national level. FAO will support governments, institutions and civil society organizations that request its technical assistance in knowledge management, sharing and learning and/or up-scaling GIAHS sites. In this context, twinning of GIAHS sites and South-South Cooperation will be initiated, and project formulations are currently underway in many countries to support the dynamic conservation of their GIAHS.

Sustainability of GIAHS, Technical and Operational Implementation

28. Learnings and synthesis over the last 10 years of piloting GIAHS and innovative country experiences were summarized during the International Forum on GIAHS held in May 2013 in Noto, Japan and manifested in the Noto Communiqué.²¹ The Noto Communiqué recommends five action areas, which is complementing and supporting the policy process of GIAHS and responding to the call of many countries:

- a) GIAHS designated sites should be periodically monitored and their viability should be maintained;
- b) The progressive designation of further GIAHS sites to promote the conservation of agricultural heritage and its contributions towards global food security and economic development;
- c) The dynamic conservation of GIAHS through promotion of on-the-ground projects and activities, particularly in developing countries;
- d) The existing GIAHS support the recognition of candidatures of GIAHS areas in less developed countries; and
- e) Promote the twinning of GIAHS sites between developed and developing countries.

29. The implementation of the five key action areas would require and rely on proactive management and strengthening of the GIAHS secretariat, to manage and operate a GIAHS programme within the FAO framework.

²¹ http://www-test.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/giahs_assets/Information Resources Annexes/Japan Forum/Noto Communiqué - GIAHS_30Mayv2.pdf

Partners

30. GIAHS partners are international and national, governmental and non-governmental, public and private. They form an open and flexible group of institutions with different mandates and constituencies, which share the vision of GIAHS and contribute to the realization of its objectives²². They comprise a wide range of entities, including: (i) UN agencies and other global and regional institutions, such as UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, United Nations University (UNU), GEF, IFAD, Biodiversity International, World Conservation Union (IUCN), Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), and Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO); (ii) academic and research institutions such as the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier, Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research, University of California at Berkeley (USA), University of Kent (UK), University of Tuscia (Italy), and Wageningen International (the Netherlands); (iii) farmer organizations, youth organizations, cooperatives, producer groups, farming communities, etc. Besides in-kind assistance provided by international and national institutions, the GIAHS Initiative is financially supported by various resource partners which include: GEF, Germany (Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection), IFAD, and Turkey (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs).²³

²² *GIAHS Partnership Framework* (as of 26 October 2012) /

²³ Detailed information on partners is available on the GIAHS website at <http://www.fao.org/giahs/giahs-partners/en/>. A "Consultative Group" for policy advice was initially established under project GCP/GLO/212/GFF with membership comprising UNESCO, Biodiversity International, World Bank, UNDP, UNEP, Convention on Biological Diversity, IUCN and other key partners. The Consultative Group was to communicate electronically and to meet "as project resources may allow". Its functions are presently carried out by the International Steering Committee and the Scientific Advisory Committee.

Appendix I: Draft Conference Resolution on the establishment of a Programme on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)

THE CONFERENCE,

Acknowledging that communities of farmers, herders, fishers and forest dwellers have developed, for millennia, locally adapted ingenious agricultural systems that have led to food and livelihood security as well as the maintenance of natural and cultural diversity and that, in addition to providing multiple goods and services, such systems have resulted in the preservation of significant agro-biodiversity, resilient ecosystems, outstanding landscapes, and valuable knowledge systems and cultural heritage;

Recognizing that many of these remarkable land use systems and landscapes, which are rich in globally significant biological diversity evolving from the co-adaptation of a community and its needs and aspirations for sustainable development with its environment, constitute Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS);

Recognizing further the resiliencies and time-tested adaptability of such systems to shocks, disasters and environmental changes and their potential contributions to in-situ conservation of biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations;

Appreciating the importance of GIAHS as outstanding examples of family farming, small holders and indigenous peoples' livelihood systems to contribute to food security and the recognition and celebration of the International Year of Family Farming in 2014;

Noting with concern that GIAHS are threatened by several factors such as inadequate policies and management models and unsustainable technological changes that undermine family farming and traditional agricultural systems;

Affirming the need to identify, support and safeguard GIAHS, including related forestry, fishery and pastoral systems and their livelihoods, agricultural and associated biodiversity, landscapes, knowledge systems and cultures around the world;

Mindful that GIAHS call for the safeguarding of threatened national and local food and agricultural legacies by mobilizing world-wide recognition and support, enhancing local, national and global benefits derived from their dynamic conservation and economic viability;

Recalling paragraph 40(r) of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development which called for actions to promote the conservation, sustainable use and management of traditional and indigenous agricultural systems and the strengthening of indigenous models of agricultural production²⁴;

Recalling further that GIAHS were specifically acknowledged in UN General Assembly Resolution 67/228 on "Agriculture development and food security"²⁵, in Resolution X.31 of the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands²⁶, and in Decision X/34 of the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity²⁷;

Recalling also the International partnership initiative on dynamic conservation of GIAHS launched by FAO, in its capacity as Task Manager for Chapter 14 of Agenda 21 on "Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development" (SARD) at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the successful implementation of GIAHS as part of the efforts intended to achieve SARD objectives;

Recalling further that, at its 148th Session, the Council agreed that the GIAHS initiative should be vested with formal status within the FAO framework, in the light of its accomplishments and its

²⁴ Resolution 2 adopted by the Summit in 2002, A/CONF.199/20.

²⁵ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N12/615/90/PDF/N1261590.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁶ http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/res/key_res_x_31_e.pdf

²⁷ <http://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=12300>

growing relevance at the global, national and local levels, in order to secure its international status and to provide for its operational framework;

Desiring to give formal recognition to GIAHS;

Requests the Director-General:

1. to further review and pursue how the potentials offered by GIAHS may contribute to the Strategic Objectives of FAO and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals;
2. to establish a Programme on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (“the GIAHS Programme”) based on the existing GIAHS Initiative, and in accordance with the Principles for the GIAHS Programme and Selection Criteria for GIAHS Sites set forth in Annex 1;
3. to establish and maintain working arrangements for the GIAHS Programme so as to ensure consistency and compliance with the Organization’s policies, regulations and rules; and
4. to afford the GIAHS Programme the priority and profile needed for its effective operation.

Annex 1: Principles for the GIAHS Programme and Selection Criteria for GIAHS Sites

1. Principles for the GIAHS Programme

1.1. The GIAHS Programme shall identify, recognize, support and safeguard Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems and their livelihoods, agricultural and associated biodiversity, landscapes, knowledge systems and cultures around the world.

1.2. The following general principles shall guide the work of the GIAHS Programme:

1.2.1. The major custodians of the world's GIAHS – their primary stewards – are those people who have developed and maintained the agricultural heritage systems, and continue to depend upon them for their livelihoods;

1.2.2. The overarching objective of the GIAHS Programme is to enhance their adaptive capacity to provide crucial products and services at the local, national, regional and global levels;

1.2.3. The disruptive forces that erode the viability of GIAHS must be tackled through their recognition by the international community and national governments, by appropriate policies, laws and practices, participatory action plans for their dynamic conservation and other concerted action to address the negative drivers and support the resilience of these systems.

2. Selection Criteria for GIAHS Sites

2.1. Food and livelihood security

The proposed agriculture system should contribute to food and livelihood security of local communities (often indigenous), representing the majority of their livelihood provisions. This includes provisioning and exchange among local communities to create a relatively stable and resilient food and livelihood system.

2.2. Biodiversity and ecosystem function

Agricultural biodiversity and genetic resources (species, varieties and breeds), as well as other biodiversity such as wild relatives, pollinators and wildlife associated with the agricultural system and landscape. The system/site should be endowed with globally (or nationally) significant biodiversity and genetic resources for food and agriculture (e.g. endemic, rare, endangered species of crops and animals).

2.3. Knowledge systems and adapted technologies

Maintain invaluable knowledge, ingenious technology and management systems of natural resources, including biota, land, water; and social organizations and institutions, including customary institutions for agro-ecological management, normative arrangements for resource access and benefit sharing, etc.

2.4. Cultures, value systems and social organizations (Agri-Culture)

Cosmo-vision, value systems and agri-cultural practices associated with environment and agricultural calendar; festivities and rituals as knowledge transfer. Local institutions play a critical role in balancing environmental and socio-economic objectives, in creating resilience and in the reproduction of all elements and processes critical to the functioning of the agricultural system. Some may ensure conservation of and promote equity in the use and access to natural resources; some transmit traditional knowledge systems and critical values that promote custodianship of biodiversity, land and water; some facilitate planning, cooperation and innovation/ adaptation. Such institutions may take the form of ceremonial and religious beliefs and practices, including taboos, ceremonies and festivities; of customary law and conflict resolution, including on resource tenure; of kinship, marriage and inheritance systems; of forms of leadership, decision-making and cooperation; of oral and written traditions; of games and other forms of education and instruction; of division of roles and distribution of labour, including gender roles and specialized functions; etc. (intangibles).

2.5. Remarkable landscapes, land and water resources management features

Landscape features resulting from human management that provide particularly ingenious or practical solutions to environmental or social constraints, such as land use mosaics, irrigation/water management systems, terraces, particular ecosystem adaptive architecture, which might provide for resource conservation/efficiency or provide habitats for valued biodiversity, recreational values collective or non-commercial valuable uses (aesthetic, artistic, educational, spiritual, and/or scientific values of ecosystems).