



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

5th CYCLE OF THE BENEFIT-SHARING FUND

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture make an essential contribution to increasing and safeguarding food security and nutrition, improving rural livelihoods and economies, supporting the maintenance of biodiversity and to meeting the challenges of adapting to climate change.¹
2. The objectives of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Treaty) are the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, for sustainable agriculture and food security.
3. The implementation of the International Treaty contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs recognize the critical need to conserve, exchange and invest in plant genetic resources, and to share the benefits arising from their use in a fair and equitable manner.^{2,3}
4. A new Funding Strategy for the International Treaty was adopted by the Governing Body in November 2019.⁴ It aims to ensure that sufficient financial resources are mobilized through a range of channels, for implementation of the Treaty in a long-term, coordinated and effective way. The Funding Strategy covers the entire Treaty system and the wide range of national, bilateral and multilateral channels available for funding, aiming to leverage support of Treaty partners and strengthen linkages between different funding sources. Read more about the new Funding Strategy [here](#).
5. The Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF) is an essential element of the Funding Strategy⁵ Established by the Governing Body in 2009 and under its direct control, the BSF has supported four project cycles with 80 projects funded around the world. A new Operations Manual for the Benefit-sharing Fund was adopted as part of the new Funding Strategy.⁶ This fifth project cycle of the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF-5) will contribute to the realization of the new programmatic approach for the BSF.

¹ Res 3/2019 para. 2, Annex 1: Funding Strategy of the International Treaty 2020–2025, available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/nb780en/nb780en.pdf>

² SDG Target 2.5: By 2030 maintain genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at national, regional and international levels, and ensure access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge as internationally agreed.

³ SDG Target 15.6: Promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed.

⁴ Resolution 3/2019, Funding Strategy of the International Treaty 2020–2025, <http://www.fao.org/3/nb780en/nb780en.pdf>

⁵ Res 3/2019, Annex 2: Operations Manual: Benefit-sharing Fund, para.1 <http://www.fao.org/3/nb780en/nb780en.pdf>

⁶ Ibid

II. RATIONALE AND PROGRAMME OUTCOME

6. In the last century, parts of the world's food crop diversity disappeared forever reducing coping strategies and resources needed to grow crops that are more resilient, more productive and nutritious.⁷

7. Small-scale farmers, especially those most vulnerable to climate change and food insecurity, greatly depend on PGRFA to ensure their livelihoods. The Benefit-sharing Fund gives farmers access to a wide range of seeds that are adapted to their needs. This enables farmers to grow different types of crops so that they are not dependent on only one or two, to grow crops with higher yields or varieties that are more resilient to pests, diseases and adverse climate conditions, and crops that taste better and that are more nutritious. The Benefit-sharing Fund enables small-scale farmers, scientists and breeders to tap into the Treaty's global gene pool of millions of different genetic material to undertake research and develop new crop varieties.⁸

8. Through helping farmers at local level to find solutions to climate change and other challenges, the Treaty system for agricultural diversity is strengthened. The Benefit-sharing Fund transcends the divide that is often seen between in-situ/on-farm and ex-situ conservation, and shows how different initiatives from farming communities through national and international genebanks are linked together through the Treaty. Knowledge, information and germplasm generated through the projects under the Benefit-sharing Fund feeds back into the Treaty enabling mechanisms, expanding the resources available all over the world to improve food security and sustainable agriculture.⁹

9. The Benefit-sharing Fund supports the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic diversity in order to improve the livelihoods for small-scale farmers in developing countries and promote food security and sustainable agriculture. Please refer to section V: *Overview of the BSF programme* for further details on the Results Framework of the Benefit-sharing Fund.

III. FUNDS AVAILABLE, FUND ALLOCATION OPTIONS AND TYPE OF PROJECTS TO BE FUNDED

10. The amount of funding available for grants for the Fifth Call for Proposals is expected to be at least USD 7 million.

11. This Call for Proposals would be used as the single procedure for all applications to be funded. BSF-5 will fund a project portfolio that is inclusive of all targeted Regions. As part of the Call for Proposals, those shortlisted projects that received Certificates of Excellence in BSF-4 and high performing BSF-3 projects that may consider developing a second phase proposal, would be invited to apply. 70% of the available funding would be reserved for the general Call for Proposals, including those projects issued with a Certificate of Excellence, and a maximum of 30% of funding would be available for second phase of BSF-3 projects. Priority consideration will be given to funding projects in countries that have never been funded in previous BSF project cycles while ensuring technical merit and quality.¹⁰

12. The BSF-5 programme will aim to support both multi-country projects and single-country projects, to maximize impact within Contracting Parties of the Treaty. Funding will be provided to selected applicants within developing countries that are Contracting Parties to the Treaty.

⁷Res 3/2019, Annex 2: Operations Manual: Benefit-sharing Fund, para. 12 available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/nb780en/nb780en.pdf>

⁸ Res 3/2019, Annex 2: Operations Manual: Benefit-sharing Fund, para. 13 available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/nb780en/nb780en.pdf>

⁹ Res 3/2019, Annex 2: Operations Manual: Benefit-sharing Fund, para. 14 available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/nb780en/nb780en.pdf>

¹⁰ IT/GB-9/SFC-5/22/Proceedings, paras. 12,13,16. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9206en/cb9206en.pdf>

13. Applicants preparing single-country projects for consideration are requested to submit pre-proposals for funding up to USD 250,000 and those aiming to prepare multi-country projects are requested to submit pre-proposals for funding up to USD 600,000. The duration of all projects is expected to be between 18 months and 4 years.

IV. TIMELINE AND SELECTION PROCESS

A. OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

14. The pre-proposals submitted for BSF-5 will be assessed by the Independent Panel of Experts against eligibility and screening criteria detailed in Appendix 1, including, the experience and capacity of applicant organisations to contribute towards the BSF Results Framework. Consideration will also be given to the particular strengths that applicant organisations can bring to the BSF programme and the complementarity and diversity of partners.

15. Successful applicants will enter a full project design phase of approximately 3 months. During this period applicants will be supported to produce a full project proposal that details the objectives and scope of activities, outputs and related target indicators, baseline data and budget and will further include specific plans for communication and dissemination of project results, monitoring, gender inclusiveness, institutional and knowledge management and a sustainability and exit strategy/ies.

16. Project design will be driven primarily by in-country implementing partners and they are expected to build on their existing institutional set up and networks. It is envisaged that further consultation with communities, government and other stakeholders will be undertaken throughout the full programme development and project design period. Particular attention is expected to be given to the inclusion of women farmers and vulnerable groups in the consultation process.

17. All partners funded through BSF-5 will contribute to a community of practice to strengthen knowledge management, learning and communication. During this phase, particular attention will be given to the design of mechanisms to enhance the sharing of plant genetic diversity, data and knowledge on innovations arising from projects. The establishment or strengthening of linkages between BSF-5 funded projects and other partners involved in Treaty implementation will be encouraged in this phase. Successful applicants will be resourced to attend design workshops that will bring together selected partners to build and strengthen individual project designs, as well as the programme as a whole.

18. The Standing Committee on the Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilization (the Funding Committee)¹¹ is responsible for the final approval of projects to be funded in each project cycle of the Benefit-sharing Fund, on the basis of preparatory work done by the Independent Panel of Experts¹².

B. OVERVIEW OF THE KEY DATES

19. The indicative dates for the application process are:

Pre-proposal phase

¹¹ Terms of reference of the Funding Committee available at <https://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/areas-of-work/funding/en/>

¹² Res 3/2019, Annex 2: Operations Manual: Benefit-sharing Fund, section III, paragraph 34 (d) available at <http://www.fao.org/3/nb780en/nb780en.pdf>

- Submission of pre-proposals, through National Focal Points, Permanent Representatives or other official channels to FAO¹³.
Deadline for submission of pre-proposals: 29 July 2022
- Pre-proposals screened by the Independent Panel of Experts, and the Funding Committee approves the pre-proposals that would develop a full project proposal. The Secretary will invite successful applicants to prepare a full project proposal.
Period: 2022 (3rd quarter)

Full program development and project design

- Helpdesk workshops organized and delivered by the Secretariat to support applicants in the development of full proposals. Submission of full project proposals, through National Focal Points or Permanent Representatives to FAO. Final review of project proposals by the Independent Panel of Experts and final approval by the Funding Committee.
Period: 2022 (4th quarter)

C. APPLICANTS

20. Pre-proposals may be prepared by governmental or non-governmental organizations based in countries that are developing countries and Contracting Parties to the Treaty, as listed in Appendix 2. In preparing pre-proposals, these organizations should consult with the Contracting Party or Contracting Parties in question.

21. Any governmental or non-governmental organization, including farmers and farmers' organizations, genebanks and research institutions, as well as regional and international organizations, based in countries that are Contracting Parties to the Treaty, may apply for grants under the Benefit-sharing Fund. Applicants must meet the eligibility criteria established by the Governing Body and listed in Appendix 1 of this Call for Proposals.

D. SUBMISSIONS

22. All applications must be submitted through the recognized authorities of an eligible Contracting Party of the Treaty, i.e. through the National Focal Points or the Permanent Representatives to FAO or other official channels to FAO. A list of National Focal Points and Permanent Representatives to FAO of eligible Contracting Parties is included in Appendix 3.

23. All applications must be submitted using the Submission Form for pre-proposals available in Appendix 5. Pre-proposals may be submitted in any of the Treaty languages, plus, where necessary, a translation to a working language (English, French, Spanish), as stipulated by the Operational Procedures adopted by the Governing Body.

24. Applications must be sent by the national authorities of eligible Contracting Parties to the Secretariat of the Treaty at BSF-call-for-proposals@fao.org or by fax (39) 0657056347.

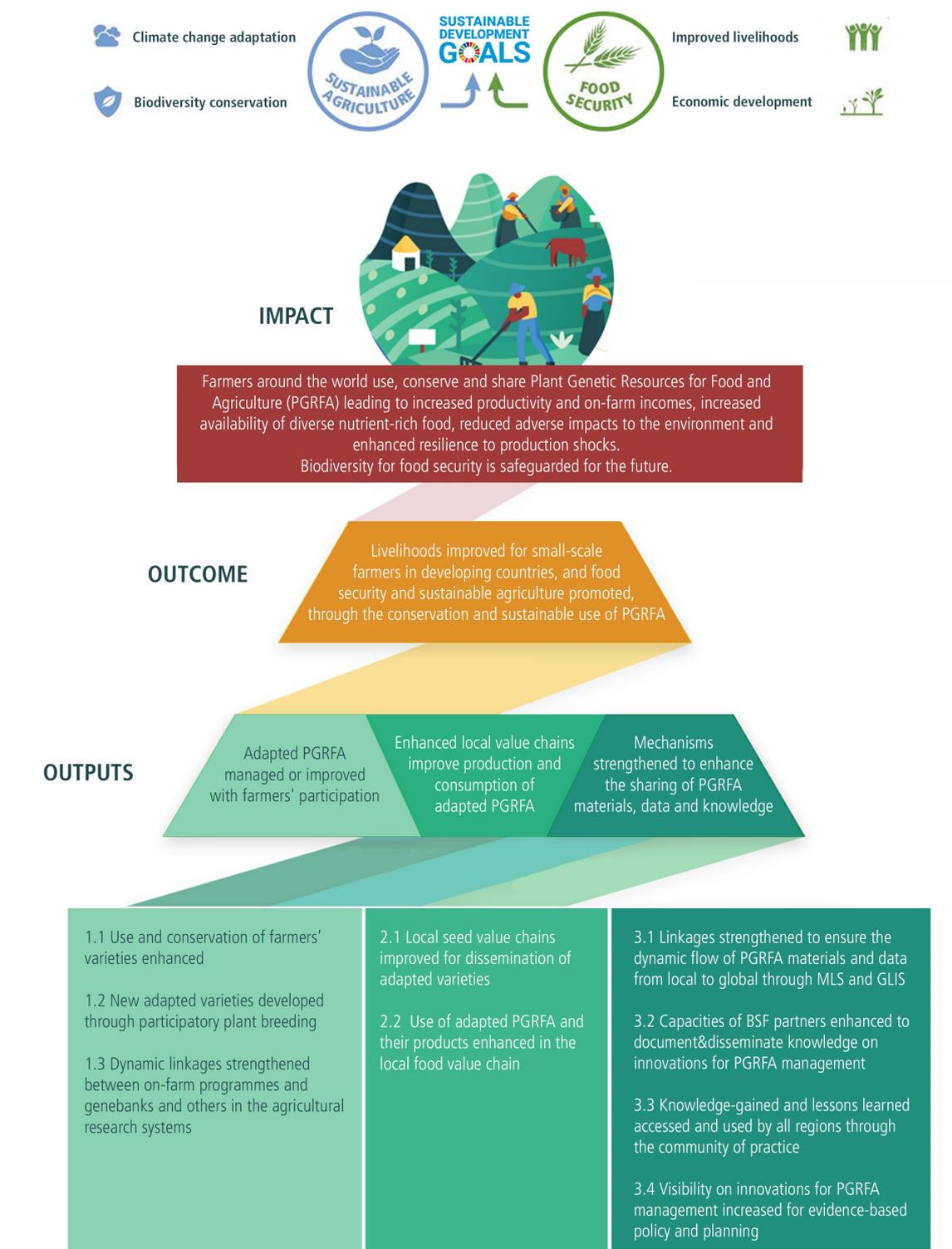
E. HELPDESK

25. To facilitate the process of preparing pre-proposals and full proposals for funding from the Benefit-sharing Fund, the Secretariat of the Treaty has established a Helpdesk. Applicants are invited to contact the Helpdesk at BSF-call-for-proposals@fao.org for further elaboration and explanation of the information contained in this document, or to seek answers to any other questions that they may have regarding the submission of pre-proposals. The Helpdesk will operate in English, French, Spanish and Arabic and may conduct workshops for partners invited to participate in the programme and full proposals development.

¹³ The official channels of submission of pre-proposals for BSF-5 are detailed in Appendix 3 to the Call for Proposals.

V. OVERVIEW OF THE BSF PROGRAMME ¹⁴

26. The Results Framework presented in Figure 1 is a visual summary of the BSF programme for the period 2020-2025. It links the achievement of outputs with the programme level outcome and is fully aligned with the Theory of Change and other elements of the BSF Operations Manual.



¹⁴ IT/GB-9/SFC-4/21/Proceedings, Appendix 3: MEL framework, paras. 4-12, available at: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7281en/cb7281en.pdf>

27. The impact level for the BSF Results Framework is the same as for the overall Funding Strategy of the Treaty:

“Farmers around the world use and conserve adapted varieties leading to increased productivity and on-farm incomes, increased availability of diverse nutrient-rich food, reduced adverse impacts to the environment & enhanced resilience to production shocks”

28. To contribute to the overall goal, the Results Framework sets one main outcome:

“Livelihoods improved for small-scale farmers in developing countries, and food security and sustainable agriculture promoted through the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA)”

29. The three main outputs of the Results Framework are:

Output 1: Adapted PGRFA managed or improved with farmers’ participation

Output 2: Enhanced local value chains improve the production and consumption of adapted PGRFA

Output 3: Mechanisms strengthened to enhance the sharing of PGRFA, data and knowledge on innovations for PGRFA management

30. The three main outputs are based on the BSF Operations Manual. For each major output, the BSF Results Framework includes a set of contributory outputs as follows:

Output 1: Adapted PGRFA managed or improved with farmers’ participation

- 1.1 Use and conservation of farmers’ varieties enhanced
- 1.2 New adapted varieties developed through participatory research
- 1.3. Dynamic linkages strengthened between on-farm programmes and genebanks and others in the agricultural research systems

Output 2: Enhanced local value chains improve the production and consumption of adapted PGRFA

- 2.1. Local seed value chains improved for dissemination of adapted varieties
- 2.2. Use of adapted PGRFA and their products enhanced in the local food value chain

Output 3: Mechanisms strengthened to enhance the sharing of PGRFA materials, data and knowledge

- 3.1. Linkages strengthened to ensure the dynamic flow of PGRFA materials and data from local to global through the Multilateral System and Global Information System
- 3.2. Capacities of BSF partners enhanced to document and disseminate knowledge on innovations for PGRFA management
- 3.3. Knowledge-gained and lessons learned accessed and used by all regions through the community of practice
- 3.4. Visibility on innovations for PGRFA management increased for evidence-based policy and planning

31. All BSF-5 projects will contribute to the realization of output 3 on knowledge-sharing and learning but may decide to focus on a limited number of contributory outputs for outputs 1 and 2.

A. PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES AND PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

32. The primary beneficiaries of the Benefit-sharing Fund are farmers, especially in developing countries, and countries with economies in transition, who conserve and sustainably utilize plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, as stated in Art. 13.3 of the International Treaty.
33. The BSF targets in particular small-scale farmers, and indigenous and local communities, especially those most vulnerable to climate change and food insecurity, that greatly depend on PGRFA to ensure their livelihoods. The BSF-5 will implement responsive and inclusive PGRFA strategies that cater to diverse needs of farmers, including women and youth.
34. All projects funded will demonstrate the benefits that PGRFA bring to farmers, with a special emphasis on support to on-farm/in situ management, farmer-to-farmer exchanges, local seed value chains, and a better flow of PGRFA from ex-situ collections to farmers and back.¹⁵
35. The Benefit-sharing Fund is demand driven and responsive to the different needs and interests of farmers and other PGRFA providers and users. Funded projects result in strong consortia of Treaty enabling partners collaborating to enhance the implementation and visibility of the Treaty. The partnerships established under the Benefit-sharing Fund are inclusive, dynamic and multiple level between a wide range of PGRFA institutions and stakeholders so as to create a sense of ownership of results and promote social inclusiveness.¹⁶
36. Through the partnerships established, the BSF-5 is expected to benefit a wide range of PGRFA stakeholders involved in governance, R&D for conservation and breeding, seed delivery e.g. researches, breeders, genebank curators, governmental officials, students, both MSc and PhD and lectures.

B. TARGETED CROPS AND PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

37. The sustainable management of plant genetic diversity is at the core of each project funded by the Benefit-sharing Fund. Throughout project design and implementation, the information and knowledge about targeted PGRFA will be essential.
38. The Benefit-sharing Fund is not only an essential element the Treaty's Funding Strategy but also of its [Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing](#) (MLS).
39. Proposals are expected to focus on PGRFA listed in *Annex I* of the Treaty. Other plant genetic resources within the scope of the Treaty and that are significant for local food security and adaptation to climate change can be included if they are important for the development of adaptation and diversification strategies.
40. With over 2.2 million accessions of plant genetic material, the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing is currently the largest global mechanism to ensure regular and facilitated access to plant genetic resources by farmers, breeders and researchers. All projects will be encouraged to access material from the Multilateral System to support the realization of the BSF Results Framework.
41. All *Annex I* materials developed through projects funded by the Benefit-sharing Fund must be made available to the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing through the use

¹⁵ Res3/2019, Annex 2: Operations Manual: Benefit-sharing Fund, paras. 4-5 available at <http://www.fao.org/3/nb780en/nb780en.pdf>

¹⁶ Res3/2019, Annex 2: Operations Manual: Benefit-sharing Fund, para. 17 available at <http://www.fao.org/3/nb780en/nb780en.pdf>

of the Standard Material Transfer Agreement.¹⁷ Information generated by the projects must be made publicly available within one year of project completion through the information system provided through the Treaty's [Global Information System](#).¹⁸

C. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT, LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION

42. Building on knowledge and lessons generated in the first four cycles, the BSF-5 has a strong focus on knowledge management, learning and communication. A new Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework has been recently finalized for the Benefit-sharing Fund which will serve as a practical tool in BSF-5 to monitor and evaluate the achievements of the Results Framework and enable knowledge management and learning. Read more about the new MEL Framework [here](#).

43. The purpose of BSF knowledge management is to contribute to supporting the implementation of the Treaty. This involves contribution to the enhancement of the cyclical and mutually enhancing relations between the MLS and the BSF; whereby PGRFA materials and knowledge are accessed and adapted contributing to the generation of more PGRFA and knowledge into the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing.¹⁹ As part of knowledge management, learning within BSF-5:

- will be enabled within and between projects and programmes and the external environment;
- lessons learned and continuous learning will be regularly provided to all Regions so to increase commitment to the Fund;
- will occur on a continuous basis so that knowledge and lessons learnt can be applied and facilitated through a community of practice of enabling partners.²⁰

44. Learning within the BSF takes place at individual and organizational levels. Knowledge management entails the process of generating, sharing, validating and applying knowledge towards problem solving and enacting change.²¹

45. Lessons learned, knowledge and evidence from local, national, regional and global levels will be translated into a compelling and tailor-made narratives to increase the visibility and influence of the Treaty - towards supporting the Contracting Parties and stakeholders of the Treaty to access and generate PGRFA for food and nutrition security and climate resilience.²²

46. The MEL framework outlines the following key objectives for communication and raising visibility of the International Treaty²³:

- Communicating and giving visibility to results, impact and positive changes in the livelihoods of the targeted communities and describing to the general public the value of the implementation of the International Treaty.
- Developing accessible and attractive communication materials that relate the significance of PGRFA, the BSF and the Treaty to the SDGs, local and global resilient food systems and sustainable livelihoods.

¹⁷ Resolution 4/2015, para. 3, <https://www.fao.org/3/bl143e/bl143e.pdf>

¹⁸ Resolution 2/2013, para. 9 <https://www.fao.org/3/be595e/be595e.pdf>

¹⁹ IT/GB-9/SFC-4/21/Proceedings, para. 51, Appendix 3: MEL framework, available at: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7281en/cb7281en.pdf>

²⁰ Res3/2019, Annex 2: Operations Manual: Benefit-sharing Fund, para. 42.j. available at <http://www.fao.org/3/nb780en/nb780en.pdf>

²¹ IT/GB-9/SFC-4/21/Proceedings, para. 50, Appendix 3: MEL framework, available at: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7281en/cb7281en.pdf>

²² IT/GB-9/SFC-4/21/Proceedings, para. 52, Appendix 3: MEL framework, available at: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7281en/cb7281en.pdf>

²³ IT/GB-9/SFC-4/21/Proceedings, para. 64, Appendix 3: MEL framework, available at: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7281en/cb7281en.pdf>

- Reaching out to a wider set of institutions and ensure that the benefits of the BSF, in terms of knowledge, information and problem-solving, are not limited to funded projects but applicable to the International Treaty community at large.
- Sharing knowledge, and lessons learnt and promote PGRFA best-practices and innovations for broader uptake.²⁴

²⁴ IT/GB-9/SFC-4/21/Proceedings, Appendix 3: MEL framework, para. 65, available at: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7281en/cb7281en.pdf>