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International Year of Pulses (2016)

Executive Summary

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2016 the International Year of Pulses (IYP 2016) and mandated FAO with implementation in collaboration with governments, other UN organizations, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders. The aim of the IYP 2016 was to raise public awareness of the nutritional benefits of pulses as part of sustainable food production aimed towards food security and nutrition.

FAO hosted the secretariat of the IYP 2016. Under the guidance of an International Steering Committee (ISC) established in April 2015, it facilitated the preparation of an action plan in collaboration with members of the ISC in order to provide a set of guidelines, activities and events to be implemented during the year.

The main activities of the Action Plan included:

- 1) regional and global consultations with pulses experts, policy-makers, producer and trade organizations;
- 2) global and regional awareness campaigns – through online fora, web and social media;
- 3) a food composition database of pulses;
- 4) research, production of documents and scientific studies – “The global economy of pulses”, “Pulses and their by-products as animal feed” and “Soils and pulses: Symbiosis for life”.

Key results of the IYP included: promotion and visibility given the many benefits of pulses for food and nutrition security, outreach, online discussions and dialogues.

Owing to the success of the IYP, there has been a strong call to keep the momentum of the IYP beyond 2016. FAO has also made proposals to define the way forward in continuing support for strengthening development programmes on pulses.

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I. Introduction

1. Following Resolution 6/2013 of the 38th Session of the FAO Conference, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2016 the International Year of Pulses (IYP 2016) to raise public awareness on the nutritional benefits of pulses for achieving sustainable food production and their contribution to food security and nutrition.
2. The International Steering Committee (ISC) established to guide the implementation of the IYP, was co-chaired by Pakistan and Turkey and composed of representatives of FAO member countries, civil society, farmers' organizations, the private sector, FAO technical divisions, research centres, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP) and Bioversity International.
3. The IYP 2016 was launched by the FAO Director-General under the slogan: “Nutritious Seeds for a Sustainable Future” accompanied by the following key messages:
 - a) Pulses are highly nutritious
 - b) Pulses are economically accessible and contribute to food security at all levels
 - c) Pulses have important health benefits
 - d) Pulses foster sustainable agriculture and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation
 - e) Pulses promote biodiversity
4. An Action Plan for IYP was prepared in collaboration with members of the IYP 2016 ISC to provide a set of guidelines, activities and events for implementation during the year. The main activities of the Action Plan included:
 - a) regional and global consultations with pulses experts, policy-makers, producer and trade organizations;
 - b) global and regional awareness campaigns – through online fora, web and social media;
 - c) a food composition database of pulses;
 - d) research, production of documents and scientific studies – “The global economy of pulses”, “Pulses and their by-products as animal feed” and “Soils and pulses: Symbiosis for life”.
5. The overarching objective of the IYP was to raise awareness on the many benefits of pulses for food and nutrition security by opening up opportunities for information exchange, improving mutual understanding through education and communication activities, promoting appropriate policies and developing the necessary skills to enhance the production and trade of pulses.

II. Awareness Raising

6. Emphasis on awareness raising highlighted the key characteristics of pulses. As nutrient-dense foods, they contain substantial amounts of micronutrients and have an important role to play in the global prevention of some deficiencies, such as iron. Pulses are also a good source of protein and dietary fibre and may contribute to a reduced risk of diet-related non-communicable diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Activities promoting the production and consumption of pulses can decisively contribute to achieve many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 1 - end poverty in all its forms everywhere; SDG 2 - end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; SDG 12 - ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; and SDG 13 - take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

7. Awareness raising activities have been carried out worldwide by FAO and its partners as well as by public and private sector entities, research centres, educational institutions and media. The IYP prompted a considerable response by governments, non-state actors, civil society and academia in terms of commitment and involvement in the organization of technical workshops, regional and national events and education programmes. Almost 150 events worldwide have been posted on the official FAO website¹ and according to the IYP Final Report of the Global Pulse Confederation (GPC), 12 countries have committed to promoting the production and consumption of pulses as part of their food security policies.

8. Awareness was effectively raised among a variety of actors ranging from policy-makers, pulses producers, processors and traders, restaurants and catering operators, health and nutrition practitioners, and schoolchildren. The public at large has also been the focus of an intensive information and educational campaign through mass media (print, radio, TV, web), and face-to-face events and international fairs. Pulses recipes and educational materials have particularly attracted public attention and have been widely distributed. A number of advocacy events to improve awareness were held in Africa by the FAO Regional Office for Africa (RAF). The main events in the countries are highlighted below.

9. In Angola: FAO in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, organized a fair which aimed to raise awareness about the importance of pulses in sustainable food production and healthy diets. The value and use of pulses in the food chain, their benefits to soil fertility and their role in combating malnutrition and climate change were highlighted.

10. In Cabo Verde: FAO, the Government and the World Health Organization organized a series of events including an awareness raising campaign aimed at educating children and youth about the importance of healthy nutrition habits, including the regular consumption of local pulses. The importance of pulses in supporting biodiversity, mitigating climate change, preserving water, protecting soils, and providing by-products for animal feed was also discussed. In addition, FAO's Cabo Verde office adapted some of the IYP material to a local context for teachers to use as educational materials.

11. In Ethiopia, where about five million smallholder farmers are relying on the production of pulses for livelihoods, FAO, through the Agricultural Growth Programme, supported smallholder farmers in five regions to increase faba bean and other crop production. Farmers were organized into Farmer Field Schools (FFS) to practice integrated pest management (IPM), which aimed to control common insect pests affecting pulses and other crops.

12. A learning event combined with the ceremony to conclude the IYP 2016 was organized on 10 October 2016 for farmers and extension workers from different regions of Ethiopia to share the effectiveness of FFS in promoting IPM in smallholder agriculture.

13. In Mozambique: FAO in partnership with the Lúrio University in Nampula, the Agricultural Research Institute of Mozambique (IIAM), and the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition (SETSAN) with support from Austrian Cooperation, organized a seminar and fair on pulses in Mozambique. The events provided an opportunity to highlight the multiple uses of pulses and the challenge to increase the production of these crops.

14. In Senegal: the 12th session of «**Fenêtre sur l'agriculture**», an event jointly organized by FAO-Senegal and the regional think-tank *Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale* (IPAR), was dedicated to the celebration of the IYP in Senegal around the theme "Small seeds – big challenge: what are the benefits of pulses to sustain agricultural and food systems development in Senegal?"

15. In the United Republic of Tanzania: FAO and the Government organized a series of events in Arusha and Dar es Salaam. The activities provided a platform for raising awareness, stimulating

¹ <http://www.fao.org/pulses-2016/en/>

dialogue and enhancing discussions on the importance of pulses for smallholder farmers and the country. They also provided a forum for the identification of opportunities, challenges and practical solutions for export purposes, as well as the promotion of production and consumption of pulses in the country.

16. Similar events were organized in many other countries including the Congo, the Gambia, Namibia, Nigeria and Uganda. Other countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe marked the IYP together with World Food Day.

III. Promotion and Visibility

17. Within the scope of the IYP Action Plan, the International Year has been promoted worldwide through various channels, highlighting the importance and the benefits of pulses. **The IYP website**, released in March 2015, has been the main IYP communication tool. Fully translated in seven languages, the website had more than 700 000 Sessions and 1 390 000 Page Views since its launch. The corporate FAO social media channels, with over two million followers, were used to promote the IYP including through multimedia (with interviews, videos and audio files).

IV. Outreach

18. Publications, leaflets and factsheets were released publicizing the IYP key messages. Other complementary communication tools included: a blog with over 35 submissions from all around the world, weekly posts, educational materials for children, a collection of recipes, a cookbook and a variety of infographics. The GPC report reached a large global audience by the end of 2016.

19. In order to promote the IYP and draw attention to its activities, FAO appointed six **IYP Special Ambassadors (SAs)**, one for each region; Elizabeth Mpofo from Zimbabwe was appointed as Special Ambassador for the IYP for Africa. The SAs are prominent experts from various parts of the world who offered their names, talents and time to reach out to different audiences in their professional capacities, through international events and media. The SAs were also involved in activities aimed at increasing opportunities for dialogue, participation and access to information on pulses, as well as motivating relevant stakeholders to take advantage of the IYP to encourage connections throughout the food chain, further global production of pulses, promote pulse-based crop rotations and address the challenges in the trade of pulses.

20. The commitment of the SAs spans the globe: they actively participated in major international events such as the World Food Day celebrations with Pulses Canada², the Pan-African Grain Legume and World Cowpea Conference held in Livingstone, Zambia, the International Conference on Pulses in Marrakesh, Morocco, the Regional Dialogue in Latin America, television programmes in the Near East, the Global Food Marketplace (*Salon International de l'alimentation* [SIAL]) in France and the International Consultation on Pulses in Chennai, India.

V. Online Discussions

21. **Online discussions** and webinars facilitated by FAO's Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN Forum)³ were held around the following main questions: 'Pulses are praised for their

² www.pulsecanada.com

³ <http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/en/>

health, environmental and economic benefits. How can their full potential be tapped?⁴; and ‘Pulses: innovations from the field to the cooking pot’⁵. Participants stressed the importance of promoting production and consumption of pulses by supporting seed and mixed cropping systems, facilitating access to markets and value addition, establishing stronger networks between the different actors in the pulse value chain, and highlighting the need for awareness raising on the health and nutrition benefits of pulses in addressing malnutrition and non-communicable diseases.

VI. IYP Dialogues

22. A series of face-to-face consultations were held in five regions. The IYP Dialogues highlighted context-specific issues and current challenges that the pulses sector is facing as well as provided a forum for information exchange, networking and partnership opportunities among participants.

23. The regional Dialogue for Africa was held as a side event to the **International Conference on Pulses for Health, Nutrition, and Sustainable Agriculture in Drylands** organized by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), in April 2016, with the collaboration of FAO and other stakeholders. The regional dialogue reports fed into the Global Dialogue on the IYP 2016, held from 22 to 23 November 2016, where pulses experts came together to discuss the outcomes of the Regional Dialogues, define and agree on a set of recommendations for follow-up to the IYP 2016. The recommendations of the Global Dialogue were summarized under the following three headings.

24. Recommendation 1 of the Global Dialogue: **Pulses Research**

- a) there is a need to strengthen national and international research on pulses and create synergies among ongoing initiatives (i.e. the 10-year pulse research strategy, SDGs, Follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, Global Soil Partnership, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources);
- b) training programmes on the value of pulses, particularly for schoolchildren, farmers and extension personnel, should be encouraged and supported;
- c) policy and programme development should be adequately supported by a strengthened evidence base on pulses.

25. Recommendation 1 of the Global Dialogue: **Pulses Production**

- a) policies and programmes should focus more on pulses producers, especially smallholders and youth, including support in terms of knowledge provision, improved inputs, credit, insurance, and research investment and involvement;
- b) preserve and apply indigenous knowledge production and agricultural practices;
- c) open up new markets by processing pulses into other foods (biscuits, flakes, snacks, etc.).

26. Recommendation 1 of the Global Dialogue: **Pulses Consumption**

- a) increase consumer awareness and knowledge on pulses through nutrition education, school nutrition/feeding programmes, better evidence base, public procurement schemes and pulses food labelling;
- b) include pulses in nutrition policy and programmes;
- c) promote the consumption of pulses (through celebrity chefs, restaurant chains, take-away, new recipes and pulse products).

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/resources/outcomes/summary-pulses-are-praised-their-health-environmental-and-economic-benefits-how>

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/resources/outcomes/summary-pulses-innovations-field-cooking-pot>

VII. Major Publications of the IYP

27. The major publications outputs of the IYP are as follows:
- a) two global food composition databases for pulses;
 - b) a report on the global economy of pulses (market trends, production yields, utilization, consumption, international trade and prices);
 - c) a publication on the use of pulses and their by-products as animal feed;
 - d) “Soils and pulses: Symbiosis for life”, a joint publication between the International Year of Soils and the IYP to present the important role of pulses for maintaining soil health;
 - e) the recipe publication “Pulses: Nutrition seeds for a sustainable future aim to promote pulse recipes”.

VIII. Way forward and FAO Proposals

28. A major success of the IYP was the huge number of outreach activities, including educational and promotional events, organized worldwide in different languages and for different types of audiences. These have significantly contributed to raise the awareness and profile of pulses among all sectors of the population as well as increase the level of collaboration and partnerships among key players.

29. As a result of the success achieved from the IYP, there has been a strong call to keep the momentum of the IYP 2016 alive and continue its awareness raising activities. At the 2016 sessions of the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG) and the FAO Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP), members acknowledged the contribution of pulses to food security, nutritional health, environmental protection and climate change adaptation and mitigation. They encouraged governments to engage in public awareness events and to develop and implement appropriate policies for promoting the improved production and consumption of pulses. The FAO Council in December 2016 endorsed the COAG and CCP reports and requested FAO, members and all relevant stakeholders to take advantage of this “momentum” to continue the work on pulses beyond 2016 as well as put forward proposals for concrete actions.

30. Governments and FAO are therefore encouraged to continue promoting the messages and themes of the IYP beyond 2016. Drawing on the outcomes of the International Year, (particularly the issues identified during regional and international consultations), it is recommended that governments and other key pulses actors (farmers’ organizations, agricultural research, academia and private sector), establish multi-stakeholder fora to strengthen information exchange and policy dialogue at national and regional levels on pulses production, consumption and trade.

31. The closing ceremony of the IYP was hosted by the Government of Burkina Faso and held in Ouagadougou, on 10 and 11 February 2017. The participants presented a draft declaration for the Institutionalization of a World Pulse Day to be celebrated on 10 February. The proposal was endorsed by the 156th Session of the FAO Council in April 2017 and the FAO Conference at its 40th session in July 2017 and sent officially to the United Nations General Assembly.

32. In line with the recommendations of COAG and the FAO Council related to the IYP, FAO will be strengthening the programme on pulses as part of the regular work of the FAO Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP), and exploring joint initiatives with the other Rome-based agencies to provide policy advice and support to their Members, on the production, consumption and trade of pulses. FAO will also facilitate linkages and partnerships with ongoing programmes that promote sustainable pulses value chains such as the “Mountain Partnership Product Initiative” supported by the Italian Development Cooperation and the Slow Food movement.

33. In response to the 155th FAO Council recommendations and based on the results of the consultations held during the IYP 2016, FAO put together a number of proposals that were endorsed by the 40th Session of the FAO Conference. Key proposals are summarized below:

- a) ***Pulses Action Network*** – among the activities included in the work programme of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025, is the establishment of thematic networks aimed at accelerating and aligning efforts around specific topics linked to one or more of the proposed action areas of the nutrition decade. Proposals were made to establish a network of “Pulses”, under the leadership of one or more FAO member countries that have been instrumental in the implementation of the IYP. The network led by countries may be regional or global and may involve civil society, academia and the private sector, particularly the Global Pulse Confederation.
- b) ***Compilation of agricultural practices including pulses crops in Sub-Saharan Africa*** – pulses have a long history in Africa and provide multiple benefits, but the crops suffer from under-investment and a narrow focus on high-yielding varieties. There is a growing propositional and practical knowledge; however, this information is often dispersed or has never been published. FAO’s Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP) and RAF will compile information about promising strategies to support pulses cultivation and utilization on smallholder farms in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- c) ***Publication on under-utilized pulse species*** – there are a number of pulse species of minor relevance at the international level, which can be used for specific niches because of their adaptation to marginal environmental conditions. Pulses such as Bambara Beans (*Vigna subterranea*), have an important social value in promoting indigenous, under-utilized pulses, especially in Africa. In addition to contributing to local economies, they can also help in preserving culturally appropriate foods while contributing to balanced diets. The publication also under the responsibility of FAO’s Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP), will compile information on agronomy, nutrition and trade of under-utilized pulse species such as African yam bean and winged bean.
- d) ***Revision of FAO’s pulses statistics***: FAO’s pulse classification system includes eight cases of unique species and three aggregated classes (dry bean, lupins and pulses). The revision will improve the classification by disaggregating classes and differentiating between distinct genera, with different environmental and market niches, as is the case for dry beans.