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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

**WORKING GROUP ON ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE**

Second Session

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**NATIONAL COORDINATORS REVIEW OF DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR
COUNTRY REPORT PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST REPORT ON THE
STATE OF THE WORLD'S ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES**

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NATIONAL COORDINATORS REVIEW OF DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR COUNTRY REPORT PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources (Working Group) at its first session recommended that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) coordinate the development of a country-driven *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*, that would provide an assessment of in countries' animal genetic resources programmes and the state of farm animal genetic resources. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission) at its eighth session agreed with the recommendations of the Working Group. The Commission noted the urgent need for guidelines to assist country participation in the preparation of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*, and requested that the guidelines be developed in consultation with countries, and be reviewed by the Working Group.

2. A critical step in the preparation of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources* is the development of Country Reports. These Reports will provide an assessment of policy and technical issues, capacity building needs, achievements, and an analysis of the trends and demands within the farm animal sector. As recommended by the Working Group, FAO has initiated preparation of draft guidelines to assist in the preparation of Country Reports. The process for developing the initial set of the guidelines included receiving advice from: policy and technical experts; experts with experience in planning similar processes, in particular Country Reports undertaken during preparation of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources; and advice and support from relevant Departments and Divisions from within FAO.

3. To ensure that the draft guidelines are comprehensive, technically sound, and practical, FAO distributed the draft guidelines for review and comment to all 83 National Coordinators. They were provided with a questionnaire to assist their review. Also, FAO, with the generous financial support from the Government of France, coordinated an Orientation Workshop for National Coordinators in Rome, Italy 31 August – 2 September 2000, to review and examine the overall process for developing the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*, and to discuss in-country requirements and activities related to the preparation of Country Reports. The purpose of this information document is to provide a summary of the responses of National Coordinators to the proposed guidelines (36 responses were received); and to report on the outcomes of the orientation workshop, which was attended by 41 National Coordinators and 3 (Sub-) Regional Coordinators.

II. RESULTS OF THE REVIEW OF THE DRAFT GUIDELINES

A. THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF COUNTRY REPORTS

4. The primary focus or purpose of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources* and Country Reports is to provide an analysis of policy and technical issues affecting farm animal genetic resources, and the interface or inter-relationship of the policy and technical issues. National Coordinators were asked if this focus on higher-level analysis of

existing data and policy issues affecting the management of farm animal genetic resources was appropriate. Nearly all of the National Coordinators indicated that they supported the proposed policy-technical interface focus of Country Reports. Several respondents stressed that this focus should increase awareness of the roles and values of animal genetic resources, and lead to improved policy development and greater national and donor support for the management of these resources. Two respondents stated that the broader focus incorporating policy and technical issues would encourage participation of more countries than a purely technical focus, especially when technical information is not readily available in some countries. One National Coordinator indicated support for the proposed focus of Country Reports, but also suggested that greater time be allowed to further consider this focus. Only one respondent expressed concern regarding the proposed focus indicating that they felt that it was beyond what the Working Group had recommended at its first session.

B. PREPARATION TIME FOR COUNTRY REPORTS

5. National Coordinators were asked if the proposed timeline for completion of Country Reports and the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources* was achievable. Responses to the question of timing were mixed. Twenty-two National Coordinators indicated that they thought the timeline for Country Reports was achievable. However, several of these respondents indicated that the timeline would only be achievable if sufficient financial and human resources are made available so that training and other activities related to Country Report preparation could begin soon after the second session of the Working Group. Twelve National Coordinators concluded that the proposed timeline for Country Reports was not achievable, with several respondents suggesting that two-years was a more realistic period for completion of Country Reports. Various reasons were given for extending the period for completing Country Reports, these included, limited in-country capacity to prepare the report, the comprehensiveness and complexity of the questions that needed to be answered, the size of the country, and the need for extensive consultations.

C. COUNTRY REPORT OBJECTIVES

6. National Coordinators were asked if the proposed objectives of the Country Reports as described within the draft guidelines were appropriate and sufficient. Nearly all of the National Coordinators (34) indicated that they felt the proposed objectives were appropriate and sufficient. Several respondents indicated that the objectives were extremely ambitious and may not be achievable by all countries, especially developing countries. Three National Coordinators stated that while they believed all of the objectives were appropriate at the global level, all might not be applicable at the country level. One National Coordinator indicated support for the overall objectives but expressed concern for two of the specific objectives. One National Coordinator did not agree with the proposed objectives suggesting that the objectives were beyond the mandate recommended by the Working Group and the Commission.

D. IMPROVEMENTS TO THE GUIDELINES

7. National Coordinators were asked for suggestions on how to improve the draft guidelines. The vast majority of National Coordinators indicated that they did not see the need for significant changes or improvements to the guidelines. A few respondents made suggestions to improve the clarity of some of the questions contained in the guidelines, while others made suggestions to improve the structure of the guidelines. One respondent suggested additional graphics to better

illustrate the overall process for preparing Country Reports and required activities. One Coordinator stressed that providing examples and standard tables would help both the preparation of Country Reports and their synthesis. Three Coordinators suggested that the guidelines should provide for partnerships among and within regions. A few Coordinators suggested that if possible, reducing the number of questions would be desirable. One respondent thought the guidelines should encourage collection of data and information to enhance understanding of diversity at the breed and population level. Another Coordinator did not see the need to limit data and information contained in Country Reports to the avian and mammalian species. One Coordinator suggested that the guidelines would be improved if they concentrated on the specific issues on the measurement and summary of the state of the world's animal genetic resources.

E. BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

8. A detailed set of background questions was prepared to assist countries to collate the information necessary to prepare their Country Reports. National Coordinators were asked to review the background questions and provide suggestions on how to improve them. The vast majority of respondents (23) indicated that the background questions were adequate and did not provide any suggestions for improvements. Four National Coordinators identified additional topics that they felt should be addressed in preparing Country Reports, and suggested questions be developed for these topics. One respondent indicated that the focus of the questions should be reduced. Two respondents expressed concern about the large number of questions but did not provide suggestions for reducing the number of questions. Two National Coordinators requested more time to consider the background questions.

F. CAPACITY BUILDING

9. National Coordinators were asked questions regarding the need to enhance their countries' capacity in order to participate fully in the process for developing the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*. Specifically, they were asked what sort of tools they required to assist them to organize data and information on animal genetic resources, analyze their situation, and report the results. They were asked to indicate their needs in terms of communications, networking, and training. National Coordinators were also asked to describe any concerns that they have in terms of capacity for their country to participate in the overall process. Responses by National Coordinators to questions of capacity building resulted in convergence in two primary areas, funding, and training in data and information management. With respect to funding, nearly all National Coordinators from developing countries indicated the need for financial support for in-country activities, including in-country training and funding to acquire the necessary equipment and supplies to undertake preparation of their Country Report. Several developed countries indicated that they had not yet budgeted for preparation of their Country Report, and therefore did not have available financial resources to begin preparation of the Report. The vast majority of respondents indicated the need for training sessions like the Rome workshop, to be able to effectively use the data and information system that is being developed by FAO to support preparation and synthesis of Country Reports. Several National Coordinators from developing countries stressed the need for national training sessions in the use of computers, and also the need for in-country training to develop the capacity to collect and analyze the data and information required to prepare their Country Reports.

10. National Coordinators were asked if they had any key capacity concerns regarding the ability of their country to participate in the over process for developing the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*, Many National Coordinators re-emphasized the

need for financial and human resources and the need for in-country capacity building. Nearly all respondents indicated that preparation of Country Reports would require a significant allocation or reallocation of staff and financial resources. Several National Coordinators expressed a concern that understanding of members of the public and government of the roles and values of animal genetic resources was extremely poor and consequently, it would be difficult to secure the necessary human and financial resources to prepare their Country Reports. Many National Coordinators from developing countries indicated that the ability to adequately participate in the overall process was limited because of a lack of experienced in-country personnel to undertake all of the necessary activities. Also, poorly developed data and information systems and other infrastructure limitation would make it difficult to communicate, and collect data and information from all regions from within countries. A few respondents indicated that available data and information on animal genetic resources was extremely limited and out of date, and thus, using it to prepare their Country Report was not advisable. One respondent re-emphasized that their main concern about participating in the overall process was timing of the events, indicating that they felt the proposed timelines were extremely optimistic.

III. RESULTS OF THE ORIENTATION WORKSHOP

11. Approximately 60 participants, including National Coordinators and other country experts, along with FAO headquarter and regional staff and supporting consultants, attended the orientation workshop, conducted over a three-day period. The objectives of the workshop were to examine in detail the process and timeline for developing Country Reports; to obtain further advice on the proposed guidelines and background questions; to assist preparation of Country Reports; and to consider the process, timeline, and country needs associated with preparation of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*. Workshop participants provided valuable advice, especially with regard to the process for the preparation of Country Reports, as a part of the overall process for developing the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*. The main points of advice resulting from the workshop are summarized in the following paragraphs.

A. ENABLING NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

12. Workshop participants emphasized the need for an effective National Focal Point to enable preparation of their Country Report and to undertake other activities in relation to the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*. They underlined the importance of a well balanced, strong Coordinating Committee, to work throughout the process, and stressed that preparation of Country Reports could only be achieved if National Focal Points were provided with the enabling support and tools. National Coordinators indicated that in many instances their role as National Coordinator for Animal Genetic Resources was a part-time function, and it would be impossible to simply add coordination of Country Reports to their long list of duties. Several workshop participants noted that there had not yet been any allocation of financial resources within their country to undertake preparation of the Country Report. Given the part time function of many National Coordinators and the need to secure adequate financial resources, workshop participants emphasized that the first critical step in the overall process would be to have a strong commitment by each participating country's national government to the preparation of the Country Report. They clearly recognized that Country Reports will be an official government document, and that the commitment by their government to prepare an official report on the state of their animal genetic resource would need to be followed with the provision of essential human and financial resources to undertake the necessary activities. Without a strong commitment from senior policy-makers, National Coordinators felt that they

would not have the mandate or the resources to empower the National Focal Point to undertake the necessary coordinating and communication functions. Workshop participants appreciated that for some developing countries external assistance would be required to prepare the Country Report.

13. Workshop participants stressed the need for a strong Global Focal Point within FAO to support preparation of Country Reports. They felt that this was necessary to further develop DAD-IS, to enable comprehensive regional training of country trainers and other activities, and to ensure the necessary synthesis of Country Reports and the preparation of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*. Many workshop participants stressed that FAO would need to play a strong role in initiating the process for Country Reports. They suggested that a letter be sent from FAO to all member national governments inviting them to participate in the development of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*. They thought that the letter should stress the essential need for each country's assessment and report on the state of animal genetic resources, to support management and policy development at the country, regional, and global levels. Some workshop participants felt that the invitation letter should be sent to all relevant Ministries within a country, Agriculture, Rural Development, and Environment Ministries. They also suggested that FAO establish an effective means to communicate with, and engage each countries' FAO Permanent Representative in the overall process for the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*. Workshop participants stressed FAO's essential role in engaging donors and stakeholders to mobilize financial and human resources, and ensure opportunities for international organizations to be involved in preparation of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*. Many workshop participants also indicated that they believed that FAO had an extremely important role in communications to enhance understanding of the roles and values of animal genetic resources, and to support national and regional communication efforts.

B. COUNTRY REPORT FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

14. The proposed focus and objectives for Country Reports were reviewed by workshop participants. They agreed that Country Reports should be at a strategic level and should address both technical and policy matters. They also agreed that it would be important to consider the interface and relationship between technical and policy issues affecting the management of animal genetic resources. Some participants stressed the need to ensure that the strategic directions contained within Country Reports were consistent with national policies and objectives. Workshop participants generally supported the objectives providing a few suggested wording changes. Participants, while supporting the objectives, indicated that they felt that the overall objective of Country Reports, improved food security and economic development, could be further stressed within the guidelines. There was strong support for using the guidelines to provide a common framework for reporting, but participants also noted the need for flexibility, as countries would likely place greater emphasis on certain objectives, depending on their circumstance and priorities.

C. TIMELINE FOR COUNTRY REPORTS

15. Workshop participants reviewed the proposed steps and timeline for completing both Country Reports and the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*. Most workshop participants stressed that they felt they could complete their Country Report according to the proposed timeline, provided they received a strong commitment from their government, and the necessary human and financial resources. They indicated that they thought that there was

support and momentum for addressing the better management of animal genetic resources and this may be lost if the Country Report preparation phase was extended. Also, they noted that the proposed timeline for Country Reports took into consideration future biennial Regular Sessions of the Commission, and the FAO Conference, and that delays in preparing Country Reports would delay acceptance of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*, by the Commission by two years. A few workshop participants expressed a view that the timeline was not feasible for them, indicating that their countries' capacity and networks for animal genetic resources was extremely weak and thus, communication, and data and information collection and analysis would take more time than was being proposed. One country expressed concern for meeting the timeline, indicating the need for more time than one year to ensure proper communication and consultation with stakeholders.

D. NETWORKING

16. Establishment and maintenance of networks for animal genetic resources was one of the key themes at the workshop. The importance of a strong global network for plant genetic resources was highlighted as an important resource that assisted in the successful preparation of Country Reports for plant genetic resources, and also assisted preparation of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources. There was strong agreement among workshop participants that enhanced networking for animal genetic resources at the country, region, and global levels, should be key outcomes of Country Reports, and the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*. Participants stressed that networking needed to link all stakeholders and that in the past networking had focused within certain communities, for example, within scientific or producers associations, but was weak in terms of networking all important stakeholders. Workshop participants enjoyed a presentation on the establishment and operation of the Nordic Gene Bank, and concluded that creative cooperative arrangement like the Nordic Gene Bank would be essential for the better management of animal genetic resources in other regions. Participants emphasized the need for creative solutions to enhance networking of animal genetic resources interests, for example, establishing regional networks for certain breeds or species. Several workshop participants stressed the need to enhance the involvement of the private sector and consumer organizations in establishing networks for animal genetic resources. Several National Coordinators stressed that their country had benefited from existing regional networks emphasizing the importance of cooperation and collaboration within and among regions as they often share common animal genetic resources. Many of these Coordinators saw enhanced regional collaboration as a key outcome of Country Reports and the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*.

E. CAPACITY BUILDING

17. Capacity building was a major theme of the workshop, both in terms of capacity to undertake preparation of Country Reports, and in terms of how the process for the developing the Country Reports, and the Report itself, could contribute to long-term enhanced country capacity to manage animal genetic resources. Participants felt that the Country Report must provide an objective and comprehensive assessment of country capacity to manage animal genetic resources, both an assessment of technical and policy capacity. This would provide a foundation for countries and international donors and organizations to strategically address capacity building in terms of the better management of animal genetic resources.

18. Throughout the workshop, participants emphasized that capacity building to achieve the better management animal genetic resources should be viewed as a sound investment. Better

management of animal genetic resources will enhance agricultural production and productivity and thus, increase the contribution of livestock to food security, economic development, and sustainability of countries. Workshop participants stressed that preparation of Country Reports and the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*, should contribute to both immediate and long-term capacity building.

19. Effective data and information management systems are essential to ensure the cost-effective preparation of Country Reports and to undertake a synthesis of these Reports. National Focal Points are responsible for determining how best to collect and analyze data and information in their countries. They are also responsible for providing their Country Report to FAO in an agreed electronic format to enable regional and global synthesis. Some potential tools were examined at the workshop to assist countries undertake preparation of their Country Reports, including further development of DAD-IS, and a software programme that is being developed and examined as a potential tool to assist preparation of Country Reports. Workshop participants, particularly National Coordinators, stressed the importance of the development of data and information management tools by FAO in aiding the preparation of Country Reports. Several participants indicated that they could not rely solely on electronic based data and information tools in the preparation of their Country Report. However, they felt that even though they did not have full capacity to use electronic data and information tools at this time, provision of such tools would provide immediate assistance to prepare their Country Reports, add capacity building opportunities, and enhance the long-term capacity to manage animal genetic resources. One workshop participant suggested that the long-term utility of the tool and the cost of its development, were essential criteria that should be applied in developing tools to assist preparation of Country Reports.

F. SUMMARY REMARKS

20. The purpose of the workshop was to share experiences and information, to generate understanding of the overall process for preparing the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*, and to exchange views on how to enhance this process. While the intent was not to reach a set of conclusions or specific recommendations, several summary points emerged from the discussion. Workshop participant indicated their support for undertaking preparation of Country Reports and the first *Report on the State of the World's animal Genetic Resource*, and their willingness to be involved. They stressed the need for Country Reports to be initiated with strong governmental commitment to ensure that resources are made available to undertake all necessary activities. Workshop participants felt that Country Reports should be strategic documents that provide an assessment of where each country is in terms of the management of animal genetic resources, where it needed to be, and how best to get to where it needed to be. There was acknowledgement that answering these questions would be difficult, but that answering them was essential to gain a full understanding of the state of each countries animal genetic resources, and the state of capacity to management them now, and in future. Such an analysis is necessary to identify gaps and priorities and to cost-effectively and strategically address these gaps and priorities. Workshop participants concluded that the process for developing the Country Report must be consultative, empower stakeholders, and increase awareness of the roles and values of animal genetic resources among all stakeholders, including consumers, business interests, and senior levels of government. There was a general enthusiasm amongst the participating National Coordinators to initiate the required work.