



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



International Treaty
on Plant Genetic Resources
for Food and Agriculture



सत्यमेव जयते
Government of India

Concept Note

CELEBRATING FARMERS AS GUARDIANS OF CROP DIVERSITY
Ninth Session of the Governing Body
International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

SPECIAL EVENT

Saturday, 17 September 2022, from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm

Pullman Convention Centre

New Delhi, India

Introduction

The Ninth Session of the Governing Body (GB-9) of the International Treaty is being hosted by the Government of India in New Delhi from 19 – 24 September 2022, inclusively, and will be preceded by two days of regional and inter-regional consultations and a Special Event.

The Special Event will focus on “*Celebrating Farmers as Guardians of Crop Diversity*,” and will be held on Saturday, 17 September 2022, before the start of regional and inter-regional consultations.

Theme

Farmers and other custodians of crop diversity are champions and saviors of seeds and other plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), and the GB-9 theme is a recognition of their tremendous contribution as guardians of the plants that feed the world.

Agricultural biodiversity contributes to meeting people’s survival and needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed our common vulnerabilities, further underscoring our dependence on these natural resources and our interdependence on one another when it comes to our food. As the world population grows, from 7.6 billion to 8.6 billion in the next 10 years, and on to 9.8 billion by 2050, it is clear that farmers and genebanks will continue to play a crucial role in feeding the world.

Farmers as guardians of the world’s crop diversity have been largely unsung heroes in the overarching goal of feeding the world, and of ensuring that the plants that feed us are sustainably used and conserved for future generations. The GB-9 theme of “*Celebrating the Guardians of Crop Diversity*” recognizes the contributions of the world’s smallholder farmers and genebanks towards safeguarding the PGRFA that feed the world.

Programme

Holding a Special Event on the eve of GB-9 provides an opportune occasion to recognize, thank and celebrate farmers as guardians of crop diversity.

The Special Event will highlight the role of farmers in taking care of the seeds and other PGRFA that feed the world. Part of this Special Event will include the Indian government “Genome Saviour” awardees, farmer who have made a particular contribution to PGRFA.

The programme will feature:

1. National experiences acknowledging farmers as guardians of crop diversity
2. Showcasing Indian experiences recognizing farmers as “Genome Saviours”
3. The role of farmers in celebrating the International Year of Millet (2023)¹

International Day of Millets 2023

Sorghum and millets were among the first plants to be domesticated and still serve as a traditional staple in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. In fact, the vast majority (over 90%) of millet production is in Africa and Asia.

Millets are often called "nutri-cereals" because of their high nutritional content, which includes protein, fiber, micronutrients and phytochemicals. They are also very resilient crops, highly suitable for cultivation under adverse and changing climatic conditions. Despite these clear advantages – of climate resilience and nutritional benefits – millets remain relatively undervalued, and millet production has been on the decline.

The proposal for an International Year of Millets was put forth to the UN General Assembly by the Government of India and endorsed by Members of the Governing Bodies of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), including the 160th Session of FAO Council and the 41st FAO Conference. The hope is that placing a spotlight on the multiple advantages of growing this potential super-food will help boost its production and consumption around the globe.

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¹ The 75th Session of the UN General Assembly declared 2023 as the “International Year of Millets,” based on resolution initiated by India with the support of several Contracting Parties to the International Treaty, including Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal and Senegal.