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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 2.1 of the Provisional Agenda

Sixteenth Regular Session

Rome, 30 January - 3 February 2017

**REPORT OF THE INFORMAL REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE
STATE OF BIODIVERSITY FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

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**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**

COMMISSION ON
GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE

Informal Regional Consultation on the State of Latin America's and the Caribbean's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture

Meeting Report

Panama City, Panama
8 – 10 March 2016

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The Informal Regional Consultation on the State of Latin America's and the Caribbean's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture was held in Panama City, Panama, from 8 to 10 March 2016. The meeting was co-organized by the Secretariat of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) and the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO RLC). The list of participants from countries and regional organizations is given in *Annex III* to this report.

2. Mr Tito Diaz, FAO Subregional Coordinator for Mesoamerica, opened the meeting on behalf of Mr Raúl Benítez, Assistant Director-General and FAO Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean. Mr Diaz welcomed participants and stressed the key role of biodiversity in agriculture, food security, nutrition and resilience in the region.

3. Ms Irene Hoffmann, Secretary of the Commission, thanked participants for attending the meeting and stressed the importance of the report on *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* (SoW BFA) for the future work of the Commission and its Members on biodiversity, including genetic resources, for food and agriculture.

4. Mr Axel Villalobos, Director of the *Instituto de Investigación Agropecuaria de Panamá* (IDIAP) and National Focal Point for Panama, welcomed participants to Panama on behalf of IDIAP.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

5. The Secretariat of the Commission presented the context for the regional consultation, and noted that in adopting its Multi-Year Programme of Work, the Commission had agreed, at its Eleventh Regular Session in 2007, to the preparation of the SoW BFA¹, and, at its Fourteenth Regular Session, had requested FAO to prepare the SoW BFA for consideration at its Sixteenth Regular Session, following a process agreed upon by the Commission. The Secretariat also noted that the Commission had stressed that the process for preparing the SoW BFA should be based on information from country reports and should also draw on thematic studies, reports from international organizations and inputs from other relevant stakeholders, including centers of excellence from developing countries.² The Secretariat further noted that following a request from the Commission at its last session in January 2015,³ a series of informal regional consultations for the SoW BFA were being held in 2016, the objective being to share knowledge and information on the state of biodiversity for food and agriculture and to discuss needs and priorities for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture in the respective regions.

6. Participants agreed on the working arrangements for the meeting. The consultation was to be divided into four sessions the four main areas identified in the *Guidelines for the preparation of the Country Reports for The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*;⁴ Sessions 3 and 4 were merged.

- i. Assessment and monitoring (Chapter 1 and 2)
- ii. Sustainable use and conservation (Chapters 3 and 4)
- iii. Policies, institutions and capacity / Regional and international cooperation (Chapter 5)

7. The agenda of the meeting is contained in *Annex I* to this report.

8. At the beginning of each of the three sessions, the main findings from a preliminary analysis of country reports submitted before 23 February 2016 were presented. Subsequently, participants identified in working groups regional needs, priorities and possible actions for each main area. The

¹ CGRFA-11/07/Report

² CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 14.

³ CGRA/15/Report, paragraph 13.

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/nr/cgrfa/biodiversity/guidelines/en/>

working groups reported their results back to the plenary for discussion. On day 3 a consolidated list of needs, priorities and possible actions was reviewed in plenary and finalized, as given in *Annex II* to this report.

III. STATUS OF PREPARATION OF THE REGION'S COUNTRY REPORTS FOR THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S BIODIVERSITY FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

9. The Commission Secretariat presented an overview of the status of preparation of the SoW BFA and introduced the draft document *Latin America and the Caribbean regional synthesis for The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* (draft regional report). This document summarizing the country reports received by the Secretariat before 23 February (five final country reports⁵, three draft country reports⁶, six brief reports⁷ and two summary notes⁸) had been circulated prior to the meeting to all participants.

10. The Commission Secretariat confirmed that finalized country reports, if endorsed by The Commission Secretariat confirmed that country reports completed, endorsed by governments and submitted to the Commission Secretariat by 15 July 2016, would be reflected in the draft revised regional report, as well as in the draft SoW BFA. Whereas the draft SoW BFA would be presented to the Commission at its Sixteenth Regular Session, the finalized regional report would be published together with the final SoW BFA. Prior to its publication, the revised regional report would be submitted to the National Focal Points, for their comments and input.

IV. NEEDS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIODIVERSITY FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

11. The Commission Secretariat introduced the relevant chapters of the draft regional synthesis report, highlighting key findings from the preliminary analysis of country reports so far received. In the first session, addressing chapters 1 and 2 on monitoring and assessment in the region, topics presented included the status of submission of country reports in the region, reporting constraints, coverage of biodiversity hotspots in the region, production systems reported, examples of associated biodiversity species, the status and trends of these species, the relation between associated biodiversity and ecosystem services, examples of national information systems, and needs and priorities for monitoring and assessment of biodiversity for food and agriculture reported by countries.

12. Participants exchanged information on each of the above-listed topics and discussed problems they faced in collecting the information required for the preparation of country reports and in involving stakeholders in their countries. Participants also discussed, in some detail, the concept of biodiversity for food and agriculture, especially the concept of associated biodiversity, and the difficulties involved in sourcing and reporting relevant information according to the proposed classification of production systems across sectors.

13. During the second session, topics discussed included sustainable use, conservation, access and exchange in relation to biodiversity for food and agriculture. Examples of *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation and practices for the maintenance and use of biodiversity for food and agriculture were given and the link between associated biodiversity species and ecosystem services was further discussed. The session concluded with a discussion of the needs and priorities reported by countries.

14. The introduction to the third session presented key findings on policies, institutions, capacity and regional and international cooperation. Examples of policies for the coordinated use and conservation of genetic resources, food security, sustainable use and conservation of associated biodiversity, maintenance of ecosystem services, resilience and sustainability of production systems,

⁵ Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Santa Lucia, Suriname.

⁶ Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Nicaragua, Peru.

⁷ Antigua and Barbuda, El Salvador, Grenada, Bahamas, Jamaica, Panama.

⁸ Chile, Guyana.

and ecosystem, landscape, seascape approaches were given, including examples of regional programmes and the countries involved. The introduction concluded with a discussion of the needs and priorities highlighted in most of the country reports, for example the need for greater interinstitutional coordination.

15. During the discussions in plenary, participants noted that although conservation initiatives are in place, species and varieties of associated biodiversity were rarely identified as such. Participants highlighted that it would be of great interest to establish which species are important for food and agriculture and identify their roles and functions in a given production system. Participants discussed the importance of *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation of associated biodiversity species, and highlighted the financial challenges faced when establishing conservation activities. Among other concerns, participants noted that most national policies did not include explicit reference to the use and management of biodiversity for food and agriculture. Participants highlighted the importance of further regional cooperation on biodiversity for food and agriculture among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

16. Participants split into working groups to discuss needs and priorities. The reconvened plenary then compiled, based on the inputs from the working groups, a list of possible priorities for action for the region. Discussions highlighted commonalities among and differences between the region's countries and subregions. Elements applicable only to certain countries were identified as such. *Annex II* to this report presents the outcomes of the discussions on assessment and monitoring (Table 1), sustainable use and conservation (Table 2), policies, institutions and capacity and regional and international cooperation (Table 3). Participants used a matrix to prioritize actions related to the assessment and monitoring of biodiversity for food and agriculture, indicating whether the actions identified were essential or important, and whether they were more urgent or less urgent. In the case of sustainable use and conservation, the two themes – plus access and benefit sharing – were treated separately, both in the group discussions and during the final plenary discussion. When discussing policies, institutions, capacity and regional and international cooperation, participants also addressed the question of who should take the initiative and the kind of initiative that should be taken. The tables in *Annex II* have not been edited for content. As a result, certain actions appear in more than one main area. This is the case, for example, for the need to raise public awareness of biodiversity for food and agriculture, which appears in Table 1 on assessment and monitoring and more than once in Table 2 on sustainable use and conservation. Priority actions participants considered urgent and/or essential for certain countries and subregions but not for others are marked with an asterisk (*) in Tables 1–3.

V. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

17. Participants expressed thanks to the Secretariat of the Commission, the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Subregional Office for Mesoamerica for organizing the consultation. The Secretary of the Commission expressed thanks to the participants for their valuable contributions and encouraged National Focal Points to finalize country reports and submit them by 15 July 2016.

18. In evaluating the consultation, participants expressed the view that it had improved their understanding of the reporting process for the SoW BFA and of the concept of biodiversity for food and agriculture. Participants stated that they considered the regional synthesis report a valuable input to the regional consultation and agreed to update country reports, as appropriate, in the light of the discussions held during the consultation. Several participants stressed the important role the preparation of their country report had played in identifying gaps in knowledge on biodiversity for food and agriculture and in triggering discussions on the topic across different ministries. Various participants announced that their country report would be published.

19. In a short closing address, Ms Hoffmann thanked Mr Villalobos and IDIAP for organizing a field trip for the group and thanked all participants for the fruitful discussions. She also expressed gratitude to the Government of Germany, whose generous donation made the regional consultations possible.

ANNEX I

REGIONAL CONSULTATION *THE STATE OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN'S BIODIVERSITY FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE*

AGENDA

| Time | Title | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| DAY 1 | | |
| 8:30 – 9:30 | Registration | |
| 9:30 – 11:00 | Opening address | Subregional Coordinator on behalf of Assistant Director General, FAO Regional Office |
| | Opening address | Secretariat, Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture |
| | Opening address | Director General, Instituto de Investigación Agropecuaria de Panamá |
| | Tour de table and group photo | All participants |
| | Status of preparation of <i>The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture</i> | Commission Secretariat |
| | Presentation of the programme and objectives of the consultation | Commission Secretariat |
| 11:00 – 11:15 | Coffee break | |
| 11:15 – 12:30 | Assessment and monitoring | |
| | Key findings and recommendations of country reports – presentation and short discussion | Regional expert |
| Lunch | | |
| 14:00 – 15:30 | Identifying needs and priorities – working subgroups | All participants |
| 15:30 – 15:45 | Coffee break | |
| 15:45 – 17:00 | Priorities for action – reporting to plenary and discussion | All participants |
| Reception at the hotel | | |
| DAY 2 | | |
| 9:00 – 10:30 | Sustainable use and conservation | |
| | Key findings and recommendations of country reports – presentation and short discussion | Regional expert |
| | Identifying needs and priorities – working | All participants |

| Time | Title | |
|---------------|--|------------------------|
| | subgroups | |
| 10:30 – 10:45 | Coffee break | |
| 10:45 – 12:30 | Priorities for action – reporting to plenary and discussion | All participants |
| Lunch | | |
| 14:00 – 15:30 | Policies, institutions and capacity | |
| | Key findings and recommendations of country reports – presentation and short discussion | Regional expert |
| | Identifying needs and priorities – working subgroups | All participants |
| | Priorities for action – reporting to plenary and discussion | All participants |
| 15:30 – 15:45 | Coffee break | |
| 15:45 – 17:00 | Regional and international cooperation | |
| | Key findings and recommendations of country reports – presentation and short discussion | Regional expert |
| | Identifying needs and priorities – working subgroups | All participants |
| | Priorities for action – reporting to plenary and discussion | All participants |
| DAY 3 | | |
| 9:00 – 10:30 | Review and finalization of regional recommendations for priorities for action | All participants |
| 10:30 – 10:45 | Coffee break | |
| 10:45 – 12:30 | Review and finalization of regional recommendations for priorities for action | All participants |
| Lunch | | |
| 14:00 – 15:30 | Final discussions | All participants |
| | Evaluation of the workshop | All participants |
| 15:30 – 15:45 | Coffee break | |
| 15:45 – 17:00 | Closing remarks | Commission Secretariat |

ANNEX II

Table 1. Possible actions for the assessment and monitoring of biodiversity for food and agriculture as identified at the Informal Regional Consultation for Latin America and the Caribbean (Panama City, 8-10 March 2016)

| | Urgent | Can wait |
|------------------|--|--|
| Essential | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanism to inform and sensitize decision makers (e.g. note to cabinets) • Inventories to assess biodiversity • Policy and legislation to assist with monitoring and information systems • Baselines on biodiversity for food and agriculture (BFA)-relevant species at national level, with emphasis on <i>in situ</i> conservation • Systematization of existing information on BFA • Clarification of the current definition of associated biodiversity • Inventory and sustainable management of “culturally relevant” foods (as opposed to wild foods) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmonization of national information systems on biodiversity in the region |
| Important | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking to address gaps in technical capabilities • Research on assessment and monitoring of BFA • Institutional agreement on the concept of BFA • Definition of institutional roles and responsibilities around BFA • Socio-economic and environmental characterization of production systems • Characterization of ecosystem services • Mobilization of resources/finances • Public awareness/sensitization on BFA approach • Assessment of existing BFA systems • Coordination of monitoring process • Discussion of the need for a national information system on BFA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building • Discussion of the need for a regional information system on BFA |

Table 2: Possible actions for the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity for food and agriculture, and its access and benefit sharing mechanisms, as identified at the Informal Regional Consultation for the Latin America and the Caribbean (Panama City, 8-10 March 2016)

| Area | Possible actions |
|--------------------|---|
| Sustainable use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take stock of BFA assets and associated management practices ^(*) • Incorporate sustainable practices in training programmes at national level • Monitor land-use changes • Create awareness and communicate on the importance of the sustainable use and conservation of BFA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Functions of biodiverse ecosystems ◦ Traditional practices of rural communities ◦ Adaptation to global changes, including climate • Promote agricultural practices that enhance the sustainable use and conservation of BFA, such as good agricultural practices, agroecology, organic agriculture and biodynamic farming. • Add value to products and services that depend on BFA (labels, certification, traceability, denomination of origin, geographic identification, branding, gastronomy, tourism, etc.) • Provide state support to smallholder family farming that promotes BFA • Promote state policies and actions for the promotion and use of BFA at national and local levels that are mid to long term and not affected by changing administrations • Promote public awareness and sensitization of consumers (nutritious and local diets) • Promote regulatory measures and their enforcement • Promote biodiverse markets and value chains • Promote wider participation by stakeholders (hunters, fisher folk, etc.) |
| Conservation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize public-awareness campaigns • Incorporate conservation in national programmes • Identify priority areas for training • Sensitize political authorities on the importance of BFA conservation • Increase and maintain national funding of <i>ex situ</i> conservation facilities hosting existing collections (infrastructure, services, regeneration) • Fund the characterization of conserved and new material via national funds and international cooperation • Increase knowledge on BFA, particularly associated biodiversity, to identify priorities for its conservation • Promote <i>in situ</i> conservation, currently misbalanced with respect to <i>ex situ</i> programmes • Promote conservation of associated biodiversity, which is a new concept and so needs urgent attention – capacity building, etc. • Build capacity for the conservation of genetic resources • Identify priority conservation areas • Improve the use of modern technologies for conservation • Widen the crop/animal base for existing conservation techniques • Better organize <i>in situ</i> conservation initiatives • Increase characterization to the molecular level of existing gene banks • Improve information systems for documenting and managing existing information on gene banks • Promote basic and applied research on BFA conservation • Implement and manage collections of associated biodiversity following biological, socio-economic, cultural and demographic criteria • Strengthen community gene banks and knowledge centres • Promote public policies for the conservation of production systems associated with BFA • Promote complementary conservation strategies (<i>in situ-ex situ</i>) |
| Access and benefit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop national laws that directly address access and benefit sharing of BFA ^(*) |

| | |
|--|---|
| sharing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search for balance between access and benefit sharing, as current legal mechanism are more centred on access than on benefit sharing • Implement farmers' rights • Promote effective implementation of national laws on access and benefit sharing (genetic resources and derivatives, traditional knowledge) and development of these laws in countries where they are not yet in place • Let the Caribbean Agricultural Research & Development Institute (CARDI) facilitate the introduction of germplasm in the region (*) • Establish international mechanisms for enforcing benefit-sharing regulations • Train rural communities on legal aspects of access and benefit sharing • Promote organization and capacity building among indigenous communities (to know their rights) • Strengthen human and financial resources of institutions to enforce the laws on access and benefit sharing • Build capacities on legal aspects of genetic resources (lawyers, specialists) |
| (*) Only applicable in countries of the Caribbean subregion. | |

Table 3. Possible actions relevant to the policies and programmes, capacity development, cooperation and institutions relevant to biodiversity for food and agriculture as identified at the Informal Regional Consultation for the Latin America and the Caribbean (Panama City, 8-10 March 2016)

| Dimension | What | Who | How |
|---------------------|---|--|---|
| Policies/programmes | Food and nutrition security | The relevant ministries and civil society bodies | - |
| | Land-use zoning/physical planning or enforcement of existing laws | Leader – state agency responsible for planning | Consultations with major pertinent actors/stakeholders, followed by legal framework for implementation and monitoring |
| | Integrated water management or enforcement of existing laws | Leader – state agency responsible for water management | Consultations with major pertinent actors/stakeholders followed by legal framework for implementation and monitoring |
| | National legislation on the sustainable use and conservation of BFA | Countries | Legal process Consultation with interested stakeholders |
| | Rescue and maintenance of agriculture and food patrimony and ancestral knowledge, and promotion of peer-capacity building | - | - |
| | <i>In situ</i> and <i>ex situ</i> conservation programmes and information systems in all sectors concerned | - | - |
| | Policies and regulations on access and benefit sharing | - | - |
| | Basic and applied research on BFA, especially associated biodiversity | - | - |
| | Farmers' rights regulations | - | - |
| | Inclusion of BFA knowledge in education (all levels) and rural extension programmes | - | - |
| Capacity | Re-establishment of key regional networks | - | - |
| | Increase of skillsets in pertinent areas related to biodiversity – plant breeding, molecular biology, biosafety, waste management | Technical and managerial; postgraduate personnel | Inventory of present skills, desktop research/literature review to determine what is required, prioritize needs for funding |
| | Regional capacity building on the sustainable use and conservation of BFA | Regional networks (Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute – CARDI; Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture – IICA) and universities | Consultancies; regional workshops; educational programmes to MSc/MPhil levels |
| | Inventory of existing capacities and development of courses, | Universities, research | Incorporate BFA in |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | basic to postgraduate, specialized in BFA | institutes | university curricula |
| Cooperation | Regional Clearing House Mechanism <i>(Centro de Intercambio de Información)</i> | GRULAC member states upload national information on National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans for BFA c/o FAO | Virtual information sharing |
| | Identification of themes for capacity building | South–South collaboration and inclusion of donor countries | Complying with existing international treaties |
| | Unify efforts for common ecosystem types | South–South collaboration and inclusion of donor countries | Establishment of new international treaties and conventions |
| | Intra and interinstitutional cooperation at different levels and with relevant stakeholders | - | Networking |
| Institutions | Establishment of national councils of biodiversity ^(*) | Lead – state agency with responsibility for the environment | Coordinate all work related to biodiversity management Multisectoral membership of Council |
| | Interministerial and institutional cooperation | Ministries of agriculture and fisheries, environment, and regional institutions (CARDI, IICA) | - |
| | Strengthening and institutionalization of existing networks to reach other sectors | Reactivate IICA to take back its regional leadership | Stable funding over long periods of time |
| | - | Reactivate networks such as TROPIGEN, REDANFIR, REMERFI, CARGERNET, NORGEN, REGENSUR and ensure stable funding | Permanent budget for networks within IICA |
| ^(*) Only applicable in countries of the Caribbean subregion. | | | |

ANNEX III
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