



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



**International Treaty
on Plant Genetic Resources
for Food and Agriculture**

Item 9.1.3 of the Provisional Agenda

TENTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Rome, Italy, 20–24 November 2023

Report on the Emergency Reserve for Germplasm Collections at Risk

Executive Summary

The Ninth Session of the Governing Body welcomed the joint establishment of the Emergency Reserve for Germplasm Collections at Risk by the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Global Crop Diversity Trust and requested the Secretary to provide a summary report on the Reserve at this Tenth Session.

This document provides the synthesis report on the operation of the Reserve and contains information on the financial status of the Reserve, as well as on other emergency-related interventions undertaken in the period between the Ninth and Tenth Sessions of the Governing Body.

Guidance Sought

The Governing Body is invited to consider this synthesis report and the other information contained in this document, and provide any further guidance it deems necessary, taking into account the elements for a possible Resolution contained in the *Annex* to this document.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By Resolution 12/2022 on Policy Guidance to the Global Crop Diversity Trust, the Ninth Session of the Governing Body welcomed the joint establishment of the Emergency Reserve for Germplasm Collections at Risk (Reserve) with the Global Crop Diversity Trust (Crop Trust), to facilitate the rapid response to imminent threats to unique germplasm collections that fall under the framework of the International Treaty, in particular its Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-Sharing (Multilateral System).¹

2. In addition to a financial and technical report to the Bureau, the Governing Body requested the Secretary to provide a summary report at this Tenth Session.² This document constitutes such a report and also includes information on other emergency-related interventions that the Secretary was involved in.

II. FINANCIAL STATUS

3. The Ninth Session of the Governing Body thanked the Governments of Norway and Italy for the financial contributions to the Reserve, and called upon Contracting Parties, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other entities to contribute to the Reserve.³

4. The Emergency Reserve consists of resources specifically allocated and held by either the International Treaty Secretariat or the Crop Trust. In the period between the Ninth and Tenth Sessions of the Governing Body, the Secretary received two contributions into the Reserve, namely from the Government of the United States of America, for an amount of USD 150 000, and from the Government of Italy, for an amount of Euro 70 000, comprising the part of the Reserve that is held in the accounts of the International Treaty.

5. Following the contribution of USD 1 million by the Government of Norway and the expenditure of USD 10 000 in year 2022, the part of the Reserve held by the Crop Trust currently amounts to USD 990 000.

III. TECHNICAL OPERATION

6. The Reserve is designed to provide rapid, short-term and urgent support to *ex situ* collections in the Multilateral System, where there is an imminent threat to the collection and no alternative financial support is available. The Reserve addresses requests for urgent and critical support and accelerates interventions to safeguard international and national collections. Both genebank and field collections are within the scope of the Emergency Reserve.⁴

7. In the reporting period, financial resources have been utilized to complement a rescue project for the Ukrainian national collection of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA). With technical support from the International Treaty Secretariat, the FAO project “Enabling the safeguarding and rehabilitation of the Ukrainian Plant Genetic Resources System”, funded by the European Union, resulted in the relocation of the national collection in Kharkiv, an active conflict zone, to a safer location. The collection is of importance to Ukrainian agriculture and for global food security given the volume and diversity of PGRFA it contains, notably of wheat, triticale, barley, pea, chickpea, temperate forages, and sunflower. It includes PGRFA that are not available anywhere else in the world and are only partially backed-up in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault (Vault). Other partners, including the Nordic Genetic Resource Center (NordGen) and the Novo Nordisk Foundation, provided early emergency support to Ukraine’s national genebank.

8. Financial resources have supported the development of the Plan for the rehabilitation of the Ukraine PGRFA system through a workshop held in Bonn, Germany in May 2023 under the FAO project. The workshop was jointly organized with the Crop Trust and attended by the representatives of the Ukraine PGRFA system, the Secretariat of the International Treaty, FAO, as well as international experts from NordGen, Germany, Canada and the European Cooperative Program for Plant Genetic Resources.

9. In cooperation with the Crop Trust and other partners, future planned activities will consist of developing and operationalizing a plan for the long-term preservation and safe replication of Ukrainian

¹ www.fao.org/3/nk248en/nk248en.pdf, see paragraph 17.

² Paragraphs 19 and 20.

³ Paragraph 18.

⁴ www.fao.org/3/ni848en/ni848en.pdf.

PGRFA, including a future deposit in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. As part of such a plan, the National Academy of Agrarian Sciences of Ukraine has recently approved the Development Strategy of the Ukrainian Plant Genebank.

10. In addition to the activities supporting Ukraine, the Secretariat of the International Treaty brought an emergency project to successful conclusion in the reporting period, namely the project “Foundations for Rebuilding Seed Systems Post Cyclone Idai”, with financial support from the Governments of Germany and Norway. The project served the national genebanks of Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, which collaborated with farmers to rescue, regenerate and return seed to affected communities and to strengthen national and regional planning for the protection of local seed systems in the future. Among the achievements of the project are the inclusion of seed system protection and restoration in national and regional strategies, the rescue of crop varieties that were at risk of becoming lost, and the multiplication and distribution of varieties that respond to farmers’ needs and preferences, and adaptable to current and future climate conditions. The project also strengthened the capacities of multiple stakeholders to benefit from and contribute to the mechanisms of the International Treaty. Significantly, this led to Mozambique becoming a Contracting Party to the International Treaty in December 2020. Furthermore, participating countries enhanced their National Strategies on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to better manage PGRFA in emergency situations.

11. In the reporting period, the Secretary built on the success of establishing the Reserve, in order to mobilize support to Article 15 collections, jointly with the Crop Trust and in line with Resolution 12/2022 of the Governing Body. The Secretary has reported on such cooperation with the Crop Trust in document GB-10/23/16.2, *Cooperation with the Global Crop Diversity Trust*.

12. At its seventh meeting held in May 2023, the Standing Committee on the Funding Strategy commended the joint efforts of the International Treaty and the Crop Trust in working with FAO’s emergency team on the initiative for Ukraine. Furthermore, it requested the Secretariat and the Crop Trust to look into possible support through the Reserve for Sudan, should it be needed, and to also consider providing support to areas affected by natural disaster, such as the recent cyclone in Malawi. It welcomed the proposal to undertake a lessons learned exercise based upon the experiences from Yemen, which was reported to the Governing Body at its Ninth Session, Ukraine and Cyclone Idai emergency project to further inform the operations of the Reserve and responses to emergency disaster situations affecting PGRFA more generally.⁵

13. As at the publication of this document, three new requests for support by the Reserve were received from Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Sudan. The Secretary will provide an update on the consideration of these requests either through a revised version of this document or during the Tenth Session of the Governing Body.

IV. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

14. The Governing Body is invited to consider the above report and provide any further guidance it considers necessary, taking into account the elements for a possible Resolution as contained in the *Annex*. In the light of the joint operation of the Emergency Reserve with the Crop Trust, it is proposed that the text, as may be adopted by the Governing Body, be integrated into the draft Resolution on *Policy Guidance to the Global Crop Diversity Trust*.

⁵ www.fao.org/3/cc5920en/cc5920en.pdf, paragraph 30.

DRAFT ELEMENTS FOR A RESOLUTION

(to be integrated into DRAFT RESOLUTION **/2023 on policy guidance to the Global Crop Diversity Trust)

THE GOVERNING BODY,

Recalling the importance of cooperation with the Global Crop Diversity Trust (Crop Trust) on resource mobilization, including for national genebanks in developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

1. **Welcomes** the continued availability and operation of the Emergency Reserve for Germplasm Collections at Risk (Reserve) to facilitate the rapid response to imminent threats to unique germplasm collections that fall under the framework of the International Treaty, in particular its Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-Sharing;
2. **Thanks** the Governments of Italy, Norway and the United States of America for the financial contributions to the Reserve, and **calls upon** Contracting Parties, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations and other entities to contribute to the Reserve;
3. **Further thanks** the donors that have supported projects for the rapid response to imminent threats to unique germplasm collections, including those that fall under the framework of the International Treaty, in particular its Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-Sharing;
4. **Requests** the Secretary to communicate the availability of the Reserve and the related eligibility criteria more widely, including through the website of the International Treaty;
5. **Requests** the Secretary to provide the Bureau of the Eleventh Session with a financial and technical report on the joint operation of the Emergency Reserve, including on the lessons learned exercise that the Secretary and the Crop Trust will undertake, at the request of the Standing Committee on the Funding Strategy, in order to further inform the operations of the Emergency Reserve and responses to emergency disaster situations affecting plant genetic resources for food and agriculture more generally;
6. **Further requests** the Secretary to provide a summary report on the Reserve and on other emergency assistance and interventions to the Eleventh Session.