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منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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**Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of
genetic resources for food and agriculture**

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Guidance sought by the Programme Committee

The Programme Committee may wish to provide its views and guidance on the key issues in the Evaluation report, and to the response to the recommendations and proposed follow-up actions by Management.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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1. FAO Management welcomes the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA), and its analytical focus on past and current trends in genetic resources work. The evaluation methodology followed by the evaluation, including: a) desk review of FAO's genetic resources work; b) interviews and focus group discussions; c) country visits for case studies; d) surveys of key actors and stakeholders; and e) bibliometric analysis, combined with frequent interaction with internal stakeholders and external referees, was appreciated.
2. Management appreciates the Evaluation's recognition of FAO as an important actor in the field of genetic resources for food and agriculture, and the decisive role that FAO plays in shaping the policy and institutional landscape for genetic resources work. Management wishes to highlight the Evaluation's conclusion that FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) provides the only global forum for governments to discuss and negotiate matters specifically relevant to biological diversity and genetic resources for food and agriculture, and that FAO's products and policy instruments in this area (especially *State of the World* reports and Global Plans of Action), as well as FAO's GRFA information and monitoring systems are widely acknowledged as crucial resources by countries, institutions and individuals dealing with genetic resources. Members' continuous involvement in the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies and the implementation of Commission's instruments at national level are indicative for country engagement.
3. Management notes that the summary report focuses on the global perspective and the Commission's work and does not adequately reflect the depth and breadth of the work of the technical divisions the development of *State of the World* reports and in supporting countries in the implementation of Global Plans of Action, as well as related and integrated technical activities to use genetic resources for improved productivity and food security. The genetic resources work within FAO is a very good example of collaboration across departments. Management agrees to assess the changing institutional landscape of genetic resources international work, within and outside of FAO, with a view to identifying new synergies.
4. The Evaluation's recommendations are accepted by Management with supporting comments. The recommendations are opportune: while it is undeniable that the Organization faces resource constraints, there is a rising demand for information on the status of the world's genetic resources following the acceptance of new international commitments and development objectives, such as the Aichi Biodiversity Target 13, and Sustainable Development Goal target 2.5(maintain genetic diversity).
5. The Organization has an obvious comparative advantage when it comes to providing a neutral intergovernmental forum for the development of policies addressing the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture, as well as access to, and the sharing of benefits derived from the utilization of these resources. It also has a comparative advantage at supporting countries in their efforts to meet reporting requirements, as indicators developed within the Commission and taken up by other international processes reduce the reporting burden for countries. Furthermore, the Organization also has a comparative advantage in supporting countries in the technical, political and administrative implementation of the Commission's Plans of Action, in partnership with other actors.
6. Partnerships with relevant institutions and instruments, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Bioversity International, Global Crop Diversity Trust, CGIAR, GFAR,¹, with relevant regional organizations and networks, as well as with donors (including France, Germany, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland) will be continued, and the Organization will strive to expand its network of partners beyond traditional boundaries. Past experiences have shown that the private sector is reluctant to financially support the conservation of GRFA. Partnerships with the private sector have to be decided on a case-by case basis and in line with FAO's guidelines for partnership and collaboration with the private sector, taking into account the politically-sensitive

¹ Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR); Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR)

nature of genetic resources, as evidenced by the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the CBD Nagoya Protocol on access and benefit-sharing, and the continuing controversies over intellectual property rights, in particular patents, in this field.

7. The Evaluation quite correctly underlines the link between maintaining and developing genetic resources as a basis for food security and climate change adaptation and mitigation; the Organization will strengthen this link with a view to better reflecting it in the work of the Strategic Programme teams, their delivery mechanisms and milestones. The important role of the Commission's work and its subsidiary bodies is reflected in the current Programme of Work and Budget as a Corporate Technical Activity.

8. With respect to decentralized offices, Management recognizes that GRFA expertise (and even awareness) is often limited, and consequently country and regional programmes often pay only limited attention to genetic resources. In the light of an increasing need not only to monitor, but also to better manage the world's genetic resources, FAO will strengthen the Organization's comparative advantage and seek support for capacity-development of FAO staff as well as of government counterparts and NGOs, in order to better deliver at country level. The conservation and sustainable use of GRFA will be mainstreamed in the development or revision of regional initiatives and CPFs.

9. FAO Management welcomes the emphasis on strengthening partnerships, including with civil society and research and development organizations, to develop synergies and to spread FAO's good practice tools and normative products to a wider range of actors. FAO will continue to collaborate with, and as appropriate, to support small-scale farmers, livestock keepers, forest dwellers and fisherfolk to achieve better recognition of their essential role in the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. The model of longer-term partnerships with knowledge and research organizations may be strengthened, depending on their staff resources and publication records.

10. Further information is provided in the Matrix.

Management response to the Evaluation of FAO's contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture

Evaluation Recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected	Management plan			
		Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
Recommendation 1 FAO should maintain its core expertise to provide key normative products and activities at the global level, given their high relevance and proven usefulness. At the same time, the Organization needs to look into new ways of integrating GRFA work within FAO, and make renewed efforts to confirm FAO's presence as a global authority on GRFA. In parallel, FAO should more pro-actively pursue partnerships to utilize external resources, whether technical or financial.	Accepted	<p>A Working Group will be established with the participation of CGRFA Secretariat, the ITWG secretariats and Strategic Programme managers to look at ways on how the Organization can strengthen GRFA work when defining the work of the Strategic Programme teams, including their delivery mechanisms and milestones.</p> <p>Steps are being planned and carried out for the more effective integration across sectors, for example a coordinated approach towards national focal points/coordinators, or the development of cross-sectoral extrabudgetary projects serving the Commission's Multi-year Programme of Work. Focusing on the development of guidelines, tools and standards that can be applied by other stakeholders, and partnerships for implementation of FAO's GRFA instruments at country level will be the preferred way of operation. The recently published voluntary guidelines² for mainstreaming biodiversity into climate change and nutrition policies and programmes are an indication for a more integrated approach. Another example are the Genebank Standards widely used by the CGIAR and the Crop Diversity Trust.</p>	DDN in collaboration with technical departments	2016-17	Y in case additional guidelines are to be prepared

² Voluntary guidelines to support the integration of genetic diversity into national climate change adaptation planning; Voluntary guidelines for mainstreaming biodiversity into policies, programmes and national and regional plans of action on nutrition

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		<p>The Working Group will also look into ways of expanding partnerships with relevant institutions, including civil society and research and development organizations, as well as the private sector, while ensuring that FAO's core functions continue to be served by FAO.</p> <p>The new strategic orientation will underline the crucial importance of maintaining and developing genetic resources as a basis for food security and climate change adaptation and mitigation work, and will pursue more effective integration and rationalization of GRFA work across sectors and offices.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 2 Regarding technical assistance and capacity development support on GRFA at the country level, FAO should refrain from one-off technical assistance provided mainly from headquarters. Instead, support should be integrated into country programmes to ensure long-term engagement and capacity development. To this end, effective</p>	Accepted	<p>The Organization's current structure offers an opportunity to develop the capacity of decentralized offices so as to enable them to identify opportunities and seek technical guidance and support on GRFA when needed while maintaining key staff resources at the headquarters-based Secretariats supporting the global programmes. FAO will strengthen the Organization's comparative advantage and seek support for capacity-development of FAO staff, as well as of government counterparts. For example, existing technical networks could be used for capacity development of decentralized offices. GRFA topics could be included in the terms of references when advertising posts particularly for decentralized offices.</p>	DDN in collaboration with technical departments	2018-19	Y (capacity development)

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collaboration and role-sharing between technical and operational units are critical, as well as capacity building of decentralized offices.		As breeding and policy development are long-term activities, TCPs are often too short for GRFA projects to gain substantial results. In line with TCP criteria, TCPs should be linked to longer-term national projects or programmes.			