



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



The International Treaty
**ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

Item 6 of the Provisional Agenda

NINTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

New Delhi, India, 19–24 September 2022

Review of Progress Made on the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals related to Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Executive Summary

In Resolution 1/2017, by reaffirming the important role of the International Treaty in providing an effective governance framework for the management and exchange of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), the Governing Body decided to take stock, at its Ninth Session, of progress made in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 and 15, in particular the targets related to PGRFA. This document provides a brief overview of progress made, thus far, towards the achievement of SDG Targets 2.5 and 15.6 as related to PGRFA and notes some lessons learned, in order to further advance and accelerate progress in implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the achievement of SDG Targets relevant to PGRFA.

Guidance Sought

The Governing Body is invited to take note of this report and provide guidance and recommendations to accelerate progress towards the achievement of SDGs relevant to PGRFA and the International Treaty.

FAO-ITPGRFA documents can be consulted at: www.fao.org/plant-treaty/meetings/meetings-detail/en/c/1259571/

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, member governments of the United Nations (UN) have set out a highly ambitious and transformational vision, which envisages a world free of poverty and hunger by 2030 and one in which all life can thrive. This requires countries to develop sustainable food systems and new ways of managing natural resources, including plant genetic diversity, in order to build a viable future for people and the planet.
2. At its Seventh Session, in considering the theme of the session “Contribution of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, the Governing Body highlighted the importance of the effective implementation of the International Treaty in contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs – in particular SDG Targets 2.5 and 15.6, relating to conservation, and access and benefit-sharing of genetic resources – and in making an indirect contribution to SDGs 1, 12, 13 and 17. In particular, it highlighted contributions made by the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing (Multilateral System) to the achievement of SDG Target 2.5 by facilitating access to more than 4.2 million samples to breeders, farmers and stakeholders all over the world.¹
3. In Resolution 1/2017, by reaffirming the important role of the International Treaty in providing an effective governance framework for the management and exchange of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), the Governing Body decided to take stock, at its Ninth Session, of progress made in the achievement of SDGs 2 and 15, in particular targets related to PGRFA.²
4. This document provides a brief overview of progress made, thus far, towards the achievement of SDG Targets 2.5 and 15.6 as related to PGRFA.³ It also notes some lessons learned in order to further advance and accelerate progress in implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of SDG targets relevant to PGRFA.

II. REVIEW OF PROGRESS

5. Many of the findings in this document were prepared based on the information provided in relevant documentation submitted to the Governing Body at this session, in particular from the “Synthesis and Analysis of Reports Received Pursuant to Section V of the Compliance Procedures” contained in the document, IT/GB-9/22/14, *Report of the Compliance Committee*.
6. A total of 79 national reports were received under the compliance mechanism up to 15 August 2021, representing 53 percent of Contracting Parties and marking a considerable increase over recent years. Since preparation of the report considered by the Eighth Session of the Governing Body, 34 national reports have been received, of which 26 were submitted for the first time.
7. In reviewing the relevance of its work to the monitoring of progress towards achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda, the Compliance Committee (the Committee) discussed the global indicators

¹ Resolution 1/2017 *Contribution of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

² Ibid.

³ Target 2.5: By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.

Target 15.6: Promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed.

relevant to implementation of the International Treaty and how the datasets shared by Contracting Parties through their national reports effectively contributed to the monitoring of progress. Consequently, the Committee emphasized the important role of information shared by Contracting Parties through their reports under Section V of the Compliance Procedures in the context of monitoring progress in the 2030 Agenda.⁴

8. In Resolution 1/2017, the Governing Body urged Contracting Parties to continue their efforts to regularly revise and update their notifications to the International Treaty, and to further encourage natural and legal persons within their jurisdictions to include PGRFA in the Multilateral System, as appropriate.⁵

9. The analysis of the data contained in Appendix 2 of document IT/GB-9/22/9.1, *Report on implementation and operations of the Multilateral System*, shows a 5 percent increase in the PGRFA made available in the Multilateral System by Contracting Parties and International Organizations, compared to the report provided in 2019, with 1 482 503 materials available.

10. According to the *Report of the Compliance Committee*, 72 percent of the reporting Contracting Parties have notified partial or total availability of the material listed in Annex I of the International Treaty.⁶

11. Twenty-two Contracting Parties have reported measures to encourage natural and legal persons within their jurisdictions – who are holders of Annex I PGRFA – to include those resources in the Multilateral System.⁷ Those measures include the development of awareness-raising materials and the organization of workshops with stakeholder groups, such as universities, plant breeders' associations and groups.

12. Further information on the voluntary inclusion of PGRFA in the Multilateral System by natural and legal persons is contained in the document, IT/GB-9/22/9.1.2 Rev.1, *Report on possible measures to encourage natural and legal persons to include material in the Multilateral System and other reviews and assessments under the Multilateral System*.

Target 2.5

13. The conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in medium- or long-term conservation facilities (*ex situ*, in gene banks) represents the most prominent means of conservation worldwide. PGRFA conserved in these facilities can be easily used in breeding programmes and even directly on-farm.

14. The plant component of Indicator 2.5.1.a is calculated as the number of accessions of plant genetic resources secured in conservation facilities under medium- or long-term conditions, where an 'accession' is defined as a distinct sample of seeds, planting materials or plants that is maintained in a gene bank.

15. At the end of 2020, 5.7 million accessions of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture were reportedly conserved under medium- or long-term conditions in 831 gene banks by 114 countries and 17 regional and international research centres, representing an increase of about 0.2 percent compared with the previous year. Estimates were based on updated reports from 70 countries and 14 research centres, representing 82.6 percent of the total holdings, and on reports from recent years for the remaining countries and centres.⁸

⁴ IT/GB-9/22/14, *Report of the Compliance Committee*, paragraphs 24–25

⁵ Resolution 1/2017, paragraph 6

⁶ IT/GB-9/22/14, *Report of the Compliance Committee*, Appendix 2, paragraph 31

⁷ IT/GB-9/22/14, *Report of the Compliance Committee*, Appendix 2, paragraph 35

⁸ See www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/251a/en/

16. Net increases in gene bank holdings with the highest relative increase (+22 percent) were observed in Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, followed by sub-Saharan Africa (+1.8 percent), Northern Africa (+1.3 percent) and Southern Asia (+1.1 percent). Over the year, conserved germplasm increased by more than 1 percent in 19 out of 70 countries and 4 out of 14 regional or international centres.⁹

17. Net decreases in gene bank holdings, greater than 1 percent, occurred in seven countries: three in Europe (-11.4, -3.7 and -1.7 percent), two in Western Asia (-38 and -2.7 percent), and one each in Southeast Asia (-12.1 percent) and South America (-3.5 percent). Losses were ascribed to the identification and elimination of duplicates in Europe and to insufficient human and financial resources in the remaining regions.¹⁰

18. According to the *Report of the Compliance Committee*, all 79 reporting Contracting Parties state that there are *ex situ* collections in their territories and the vast majority of the reports contain detailed lists of *ex situ* collections, with most reports listing the number of accessions. Some 65 reports state that the Contracting Parties have promoted the development of an efficient and sustainable system of *ex situ* conservation of PGRFA, mainly through national or regional programmes, and 65 Contracting Parties report that the maintenance of the viability, degree of variation, and the genetic integrity of *ex situ* collections of PGRFA have been monitored.¹¹

19. Fifty-four Contracting Parties report that *in situ* conservation of wild crop relatives and wild plants for food production has been promoted, with 48 having taken measures to promote *in situ* conservation in protected areas and 23 having taken measures to support the efforts of indigenous and local communities, in particular awareness-raising and sensitization about the importance of crop wild relatives.¹²

20. Sixty-two reporting Contracting Parties indicate that they have promoted or supported farmers' and local communities' efforts to manage and conserve PGRFA on-farm, including through rural development programmes, training activities such as capacity-building workshops, financial support, and support for the registration of varieties in plant variety registers.¹³

21. To promote the long-term conservation of PGRFA, as called for in SDG Target 2.5, the Secretariat has organized training workshops and webinars. The key objectives of these activities were to enhance individual and institutional capacities, promote knowledge exchange and sharing between and among Contracting Parties and stakeholders, i.e., civil society, farmers' organizations, private sector, research institutions, and academia, and to disseminate information resources and tools on conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA.

Target 15.6

22. Of the 79 reports received under the Compliance Procedures, 22 were from the Africa Region (equalling 49 percent of Contracting Parties of the region), 21 from the European Region (54 percent), 14 from the Latin America and the Caribbean Region (67 percent), 11 from the Asia Region (61 percent), 2 from the North America Region (100 percent), 5 from the Near East Region (42 percent) and 4 from the South West Pacific Region (40 percent).¹⁴

23. Since 2016, the International Treaty has made available, through the Convention on Biological Diversity the custodian agency for Indicator 15.6.1, the information and data provided by Contracting

⁹ See www.fao.org/sdg-progress-report/en/

¹⁰ [Ibid.](#)

¹¹ IT/GB-9/22/14, *Report of the Compliance Committee*, Appendix 2, paragraph 17

¹² IT/GB-9/22/14, *Report of the Compliance Committee*, Appendix 2, paragraph 16

¹³ IT/GB-9/22/14, *Report of the Compliance Committee*, Appendix 2, paragraph 15

¹⁴ IT/GB-9/22/14, *Report of the Compliance Committee*, Appendix 2, paragraph 4

Parties and others related to the International Treaty's implementation, to facilitate UN-led monitoring and reporting on the indicator.

24. The indicator measures progress made by countries in adopting frameworks to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. By developing their access and benefit-sharing frameworks, countries are contributing to the achievement of Target 15.6 and to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic diversity.

25. The relevant data provided by the International Treaty for Indicator 15.6.1 are:

- countries that are Contracting Parties to the International Treaty;
- countries that have reported legislative, administrative and policy frameworks or measures through the Online Reporting System on Compliance of the International Treaty; and
- total reported number of Standard Material Transfer Agreements (SMTAs) signed by recipients of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in the country.

26. Since 2015, the number of Contracting Parties has increased from 135 to 149. As of February 2022, 79 countries had submitted their national reports with information on their implementation of the International Treaty's provisions, including on access and benefit-sharing measures; this represents a substantial increase from 12 countries in 2016. The number of SMTAs has also risen, from 55 551 in 2015 to 85 934 in 2022, indicating that more users are benefiting from accessing plant genetic resources for research, breeding and training.

27. In Resolution 1/2017, the Governing Body requested the Secretary to support Contracting Parties, upon request and subject to the availability of resources, in their efforts to mainstream International Treaty implementation into national programmes and strategies relevant to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.¹⁵

28. The Secretariat disseminates information about measures and practices leading to the realization of Farmers' Rights, as provided by Contracting Parties and stakeholders. The realization of Farmers' Rights is essential to the achievement of not only SDG 2.5, but also of other SDG targets, including SDG 2.3 on small-scale producers, 2.4 on sustainable food systems, and 15.6 on fair and equitable benefit-sharing arising from genetic resource utilization.

29. The newly approved [Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning \(MEL\) framework](#) for the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF) is a practical tool for assessing the impact of BSF projects and enabling monitoring at outcome level. Outcome level monitoring aims to assess and demonstrate the benefits that PGRFA bring to small-scale farmers in developing countries and track how key medium-term achievements of projects contribute to the long-term goals of PGRFA management in the context of International Treaty implementation.

30. The learning and knowledge management component of the MEL framework aims to support and improve the mainstreaming of PGRFA in national planning/programming and SDG implementation and will monitor the policy changes and institutional transformation to harness plant genetic resources for climate-resilient food and agriculture systems.

31. The updated Funding Strategy and its Results Framework illustrate how implementation of the International Treaty contributes to the achievement of relevant SDGs.

32. The Operational Plan of the Funding Strategy supports implementation by setting out the major milestones and outputs. It includes a workstream on national budgets and priorities, under which a milestone has been set for Contracting Parties to integrate PGRFA into national development plans,

¹⁵ Resolution 1/2017, paragraph 9

national budgets and priorities for increased financing. This includes the development of tools and best practices for better integrating PGRFA into national development plans, including SDG plans.

33. A draft Food Processing Industry Engagement Strategy has been prepared, with inputs from a range of stakeholders, including from the agribusiness sector. It recognizes that the SDGs include a robust role for the private sector in global development and that there is a clear opportunity to engage with the food processing industry to develop strategic partnerships for implementation of the Treaty to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

34. The draft Food Processing Industry Engagement Strategy will be implemented in relevant global policy frameworks such as the SDGs and would further enable the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, contributing to increasing and safeguarding food and nutrition security, improving rural livelihoods and economies, meeting the challenges of adapting to climate change and achieving the SDGs.

III. LESSONS LEARNED

35. Based on the synthesis report, analysis is provided in the *Report of the Compliance Committee* (IT/GB-9/22/14) in Appendix 2.¹⁶ Some excerpts from the analysis are provided below as lessons learned for further progress in the achievement of SDGs, in particular Targets 2.5 and 15.6.

36. While 72 percent of reporting Contracting Parties have made available PGRFA material in the Multilateral System and communicated it through notifications to the Secretary, the Compliance Committee has identified the notification of material that is in the Multilateral System as one area where additional support and capacity building is needed. The respective national reports enumerate the main reasons, which are of a legal, policy, technical or financial nature.

37. Concerning the Multilateral System, raising awareness about its benefits, operations and modalities is highlighted as an important measure to support its functioning. Several Contracting Parties pointed out that this will help to overcome hesitancy among some stakeholders at the national level about the Multilateral System and its use. They also propose the development of guidelines on how to include material in the Multilateral System.

38. More than 80 percent of reporting Contracting Parties have cooperated with other Contracting Parties in the conservation, exploration, collection, characterization, evaluation or documentation of PGRFA. This suggests the importance of collaboration and partnerships between Contracting Parties in their efforts to maintain plant genetic diversity and to further advance progress related to relevant SDGs.

39. In Resolution 1/2017, the Governing Body highlighted the importance of the effective implementation of the International Treaty in contributing to achieving the SDGs relating to conservation, and access and benefit-sharing of genetic resources. In this regard, the national reports submitted, as well as updated, under the Compliance Procedures provide important information related to the implementation of the Treaty by Contracting Parties, which is pertinent to assessing progress made in achieving relevant SDGs. In addition, Contracting Parties are also encouraged to provide relevant information to the *FAO World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS)*.

¹⁶ IT/GB-9/22/14, *Report of the Compliance Committee*, Appendix 2, paragraph 80

IV. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

40. The Governing Body is invited to take note of this report and provide guidance and recommendation to accelerate progress and the achievement of the SDGs relevant to PGRFA and the International Treaty, with the next review of progress to be scheduled at its Twelfth Session in 2027.¹⁷

¹⁷ Draft MYPOW 2022-2027 (IT/GB-9/22/17.1)