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# COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

## Twenty-seventh Session

28 September - 2 October 2020

### Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) programme

#### Executive Summary

Following the 26th Session of COAG in October 2018, the GIAHS Secretariat carried out a number of activities, to respond to the expected objectives of GIAHS programme. Activities included capacity building and awareness-raising events, global expansion of GIAHS sites, data collection for monitoring of GIAHS' impacts, and strengthening collaboration and partnership within and outside FAO. All these activities led to positive outcomes, including an increased number of GIAHS sites, geographic expansion and enhanced visibility. The interest and opportunities generated by the programme were highlighted during many international meetings, such as the G20 Agricultural Ministers held in Japan in May 2019. This document aims to offer an overview of the main activities conducted by GIAHS since the 26th Session of COAG.

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## I. Introduction

1. After the 26th Session of COAG (October 2018), the Global Important Agriculture Heritage Systems (GIAHS) programme succeeded in aligning its work with other FAO units to strengthen the internal mainstreaming of GIAHS across the work of the Organization, aimed at strengthening its nature of a “Corporate Programme” by creating effective synergies. This is reflected in the plan of the next stage of the Programme, where activities will be extended to post-designation support for effective implementation of the action plan and collection of information to build evidence on the impact of the GIAHS programme.

### A. Overview of GIAHS Programme progress

2. Main GIAHS activities can be classified as follows:

*a) Efforts to increase GIAHS sites with appropriate geographical balance*

- Since the inclusion of GIAHS in the PWB of FAO, the main request from Members has been to increase GIAHS sites with more geographical balance. The Secretariat has focused on trainings and awareness raising activities and as a result of these, ten new GIAHS sites were recognized between the end of 2018 and June 2020: Brazil (1), Iran (2), Italy (1), Morocco (1), Republic of Korea (1), Spain (2), and Tunisia (2), which has led to a total of 62 GIAHS sites in 22 countries.
- In addition to the newly recognized sites, the Secretariat has been supporting national activities in several countries (Argentina for National GIAHS Committee, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Indonesia, Mexico, and Thailand for making proposals).
- In coordination with the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, the Secretariat is supporting activities in Eastern European countries through regional workshops (Batumi, Georgia, July 2019) and webinars.

*b) Capacity Building and Awareness-Raising activities*

- The main challenges faced by the GIAHS programme are its low visibility outside of FAO and the need for capacity development for stakeholders. The Secretariat participated in many international meetings and events to increase visibility and awareness of the wider public on the benefits and experiences arising from the GIAHS approach, and organized capacity development workshops and training courses in collaboration of Members and FAO regional and country offices. These include: Slow Food-Terra Madre (Turin, Italy, September 2018) through GIAHS products exhibition and workshop participation; GIAHS training project (Japan, November 2018); Symposium on Ethiopian Forestry Coffee (March 2019); Presentation of GIAHS to G-20 Agriculture Ministers (Niigata, Japan, May 2019); National Workshop for Spain (Madrid, Spain, May 2019); National Workshop in Colombia (September 2018); Costa Rica (October 2019 and November 2019 for local experts training and support for National Committee); 5th and 6th International High-Level Training Course in China (October 2018; September 2019); First Celebration of International Tea Day which showcased 4 GIAHS sites (May 2020); and the Webinar on sustainable agrotourism with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), (June 2020).

*c) Partnerships and Resource Mobilization*

- For an effective design and implementation of a new phase of the GIAHS programme in which activities and visibility are scaled up, good coordination with potential partners and increased budget availability are necessary. Therefore, the GIAHS Secretariat has increased collaborative activities with the partners which can create effective synergies in several technical fields such as biodiversity conservation, marketing and value chain, agrotourism and scientific data collection, among others. Formal collaborations were

established with Slow Food International; International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS); University of Florence (UNIFI); and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

- Financial resources were mobilized by the GIAHS Secretariat through voluntary contributions such as a new three-year Japanese trust fund project to support GIAHS by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, starting from summer 2020, and a financial contribution by Italy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by Spain from the Ministry of Agriculture in support of GIAHS regular activities.

*d) Communication and Outreach*

- Increased visibility, communication and outreach activities are fundamental to showcase the progress of the GIAHS programme. Communication has been enhanced for the development of Regional and Global Networks on GIAHS sites. Guidelines on the use of the new FAO-GIAHS logo block have been developed and the GIAHS website revamped. The re-establishment of GIAHS Focal points at the FAO Regional Offices has facilitated the organization of webinars to disseminate information about GIAHS' work. A number of articles and stories have been published in the FAO website.

*e) Improvement of rules and procedures for designation, monitoring of the sites*

- Following the recommendations by the 26th Session of COAG, the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)<sup>1</sup>, with support from the GIAHS Secretariat, developed the new "Guidelines for Developing a GIAHS Proposal Document" and criteria have been discussed with the aim of further refining and strengthening the rules and procedures. Short surveys were conducted at the end of 2019 on some GIAHS sites to monitor the status and the impacts of GIAHS designation, as well as for the status of agrotourism in May 2020.

*f) The plan for the next phase of the GIAHS programme*

- The Secretariat has been developing a plan for the next phase (second phase) of the GIAHS programme which strengthens the post-designation support for the activities for Dynamic Conservation<sup>2</sup> in order to respond to the needs of GIAHS sites more effectively and scale-up the programme impacts. A stabilized structure of the GIAHS Secretariat, strengthened financial basis and information collection/analysis are important factors to achieve this programme development while continuing the conventional activity to designate new GIAHS sites. The conceivable main pillars of activities in the next phase can be summarised as follows:
  1. Establishment of an organizational framework to facilitate, coordinate and manage all post designation activities for dynamic conservation of a GIAHS site;
  2. Improvement of agricultural production through incorporating new and innovative elements into traditional knowledge and practices;
  3. Elaborating market strategies such as niche market, short supply chain, branding;
  4. Promotion of agrotourism, exchange with urban residents and educational activities;
  5. Promotion of biodiversity through a combination of various means;
  6. Empowerment of rural youth and women;
  7. Promotion of cultural events and traditional cuisine using locally produced products.
- As part of the activities to launch the next stage, the Secretariat provided technical support for the establishment of a Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (NIAHS) Network in Chile and identification of new NIAHS and GIAHS sites in Peru.

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<sup>1</sup> SAG is composed of 7 experts nominated by the FAO Director General to evaluate GIAHS proposals and designate GIAHS sites as well as to provide technical inputs necessary for the GIAHS programme operation.

<sup>2</sup> Dynamic Conservation aims to simultaneously achieve conservation of a GIAHS site, adaptation to the contemporary economic and social circumstances and its development in a well-balanced manner.

## **B. Impact of the activities developed**

3. Interests have increased in sustainable agriculture, agrobiodiversity, traditional knowledge and landscapes and national activities on GIAHS have been promoted in GIAHS countries (e.g., institutional frameworks for aligning GIAHS with national or local priorities, such as national GIAHS committees and technical working groups).
4. GIAHS is now an FAO cross-cutting programme due to effective communication and collaboration with other relevant technical teams (indigenous peoples, agroecology, biodiversity, family farming, food systems, youth and women empowerment, nutrition) and has gained alignment with Regional and Sub-regional priorities.
5. Collaboration with other relevant organizations and institutions has laid a foundation for further development of the GIAHS programme.