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3 August 2015

## NOTIFICATION

### **Strengthening the *in situ* conservation of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture through incorporation of Crop Wild Relatives under areas important for biodiversity in Protected Area Networks and other effective area-based conservation measures**

**(Aichi Biodiversity Targets 7, 11, 12 and 13)**

**(Global Strategy for Plant Conservation Targets 5, 6, 7 and 9)**

Dear Madam/Sir,

As part of their shared mandates, the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) with its Financial Mechanism – the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and its Benefit Sharing Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)'s Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA), and the Bioversity International (a member of the CGIAR Global Partnership on Agriculture Research) have identified opportunities to further strengthen the *in situ* conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), particularly through improved attention to, and coverage of, crop wild relatives (CWR) in protected area networks and other effective area-based conservation measures.

Further details are provided in the annex to this notification including: background information on the importance of PGRFA and CWR and how *in situ* conservation is addressed under the aforementioned governance mechanisms, organizations and initiatives; current information on status and trends of PGRFA, CWR and *in situ* conservation measures, that has identified the need for better coverage of CWR through protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures; other initiatives relevant to the conservation of CWR; the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA); suggested actions to strengthen the inclusion of crop wild relatives into protected area networks, including in support of related initiatives; and some potential financial resources to support the conservation and sustainable use of crop wild relatives, including as might be available through GEF-6 and the Benefit Sharing Fund of the ITPGRFA.

To : CBD National Focal Points  
ITPGRFA Focal Points  
PoWPA Focal Points  
CGRFA Focal Points



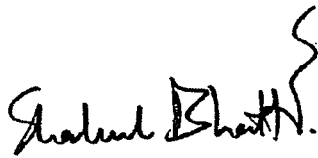
Convention on  
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We encourage you to review, develop or strengthen, as appropriate, your national strategies for the *in situ* conservation of CWR through protected area networks and other area-based conservation measures and the development of integrated approaches that link their conservation to their sustainable use. Such actions have the potential to make significant contribution to the synergistic achievement of Aichi Biodiversity Targets 7, 11, 12 and 13, as well as to Global Strategy for Plant Conservation Targets 5, 6, 7 and 9.

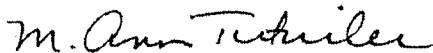
Yours sincerely,



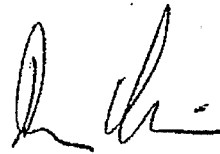
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## Annex

### Background information and suggested action to strengthen the conservation of crop wild relatives

#### *The importance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*

Biodiversity at the genetic level (genetic resources) is a key component of biodiversity as defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and “described genomes and genes of social, scientific or economic importance” is a specific category of biodiversity for identification of conservation measures (as per Annex 1 of the Convention).

Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) comprise the diversity of genetic material contained in traditional varieties and modern cultivars, as well as crop wild relatives and other wild plant species that can be used now or in the future for food and agriculture.<sup>1</sup> The sustainable use of this unique resource is crucial in feeding the world’s population, as they are the living material used by farmers and researchers to improve the quality and productivity of our crops.

Plant genetic diversity offers options for increasing the resilience of agricultural systems and for adapting to changing conditions, including the escalating impacts of climate change. Genetic diversity is also an important component of cultural heritage. Maintaining this diversity requires conservation of the many varieties of crops and traditional varieties (landraces) of domesticated plants maintained and bred by farmers over thousands of years, including their wild relatives whose traits may be essential for current and future plant breeding and thereby under-pinning food security.

Both the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the CBD strongly support the conservation and sustainable use of genetic diversity of importance to food security and sustainable agriculture. Conserving genetic diversity, particularly for food and agriculture, is the focus of Aichi Biodiversity Target 13. Maintaining this genetic diversity is also a key aspect of Aichi Biodiversity Target 7 (areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity), Target 11 (protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures) and Target 12 (enhancing status of threatened species and avoiding extinctions).

Conserving genetic diversity is obviously a pillar of the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation 2011-2020* (GSPC); for example its targets:

- Target 5: At least 75 per cent of the most important areas for plant diversity of each ecological region protected with effective management in place for conserving plants and their genetic diversity;
- Target 6: At least 75 per cent of production lands in each sector managed sustainably, consistent with the conservation of plant diversity;
- Target 7: At least 75 per cent of known threatened plant species conserved *in situ*; and
- Target 9: 70 per cent of the genetic diversity of crops including their wild relatives and other socio-economically valuable plant species conserved, while respecting, preserving and maintaining associated indigenous and local knowledge.

The Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second GPA), prepared under the aegis of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) and adopted by the FAO Council in November 2011, is a strategic framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the plant genetic diversity on which food and agriculture depends. The CGRFA is a Statutory Body of the FAO, established in 1983, currently having 178 countries and the EU as members. The Commission strives to halt the loss of genetic resources for food and agriculture, and to ensure world food security and sustainable development by promoting their conservation and sustainable use, including exchange, access and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use.

The Second GPA aims to:

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<sup>1</sup> FAO, 1997. First Report of the *State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. Rome, Italy.

- Promote cost efficient and effective global efforts to conserve and sustainably use PGRFA;
- Link conservation with use for a greater use of plant germplasm;
- Strengthen crop improvement and seed systems to foster economic development;
- Create capacities, strengthen national programmes and widen partnerships for PGRFA management; and
- Strengthen implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) aims at: recognizing the enormous contribution of farmers to the diversity of crops that feed the world; establishing a global system to provide farmers, plant breeders and scientists with access to plant genetic materials; and, ensuring that recipients share benefits they derive from the use of these genetic materials (in harmony with the Nagoya Protocol on ABS).

### ***Crop wild relatives:***

Crop wild relatives (CWR) are species closely related to crops (including crop progenitors). They are potential sources of traits beneficial to crops, such as pest or disease resistance, yield improvement or stability. While they are a critical component of PGRFA, they have received relatively little systematic conservation attention.

Many CWR species—and the breadth of genetic diversity they contain—are under increasing threat from anthropogenic factors such as urbanization, habitat fragmentation and intensification of farming practices, but perhaps most importantly, climate change. In order to secure this vital resource for future crop improvement, there is now a need for step change in the *in situ* conservation of CWR, as well as ensuring there is adequate *ex situ* backup of key population samples.<sup>2</sup>

### ***In situ conservation approaches under the CBD and the ITPGRFA***

Article 8 of the CBD refers to *in situ* conservation. Article 9, on *ex situ* conservation, requires Contracting Parties to adopt *ex situ* conservation measures predominantly for the purpose of complementing *in situ* measures; that is, in accordance with the CBD, *in situ* conservation is the preferred approach.

Target 7 of the GSPC refers explicitly to *in situ* conservation (“At least 75 per cent of known threatened plant species conserved *in situ*”).

The ITPGRFA, through its Article 5, calls upon Contracting Parties to promote an integrated approach to the exploration, conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic diversity. Article 5.1 section (f) of the ITPGRFA refers to the promotion of *in situ* conservation of crop wild relatives and wild plants for food production, including in protected areas, by supporting, *inter alia*, the efforts of indigenous and local communities. Article 6.2.b promotes the strengthening of research that enhances intra-specific variation for the benefits of farmers, which is the focus of many breeding initiatives that are using CWR. Different Treaty mechanisms are supporting actions and international cooperation to promote the conservation and sustainable use of CWR, including through the Benefit-sharing Fund and the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use.

Priority activity 4 of the Second GPA calls upon governments to include among the purposes and priorities of national parks and protected areas, the conservation of PGRFA, in particular appropriate forage species, crop wild relatives and species gathered for food or feed in the wild, including in their biodiversity hotspots and genetic reserves.

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<sup>2</sup> Maxted, N. and S. P. Kell. 2009. *Establishment of a global network for the in situ conservation of crop wild relatives: status and needs*. FAO, Rome, Italy. Available at the website of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture as Background Study Paper 39: <http://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/017/ak570e.pdf>

For both the CBD and the ITPGRFA “*in situ*” means both in the wild or natural environment and within managed farming systems (“on-farm”)<sup>3</sup>.

### ***Status and trends of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, crop wild relatives and in situ conservation efforts***

The FAO’s Second Report of the *State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*<sup>4</sup>, which was endorsed by the CGRFA and launched by FAO in 2010, provides the most recent global assessment of the status and trends of plant genetic resources, and CWR in particular:

- *In situ* conservation is generally the strategy of choice for CWR, backed by *ex situ*, which can greatly facilitate their use;
- In spite of the growing appreciation of the importance of CWR, as evidenced in many country reports, the diversity within many species, and in some cases even their continued existence, remains under threat as a result of changes in land-use practices, climate change and loss or degradation of habitats;
- Many new priority sites for conserving CWR *in situ* have been identified around the world over the last decade, generally following some form of eco-geographic survey;
- The distribution of reserves that include CWR remains uneven and several major regions, such as Sub-saharan Africa, are still under-represented;
- Research predicts that 16-22 percent of species in three important genera (*Arachis*, *Solanum* and *Vigna*) will become extinct before 2055 due in particular to climate change and calls for immediate action in order preserve CWR *ex situ* as well as *in situ*. Back-up samples conserved *ex situ* will become increasingly important, especially when environmental change is too rapid for evolutionary change and adaptation, or migration;
- *In situ* conservation of CWR in wild ecosystems occurs mainly in protected areas. Less attention has been given so far to conservation elsewhere. CWR have received much more attention in the last decade. While many countries have reported an increase in the number of *in situ* conservation activities, they have not always been well coordinated;
- Specific research is needed on the dynamic balance between *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation. What combination works best, where and under what circumstances and how the balance is determined and monitored;
- A problem common to many crops is the difficulty in conserving their wild relatives *ex situ*, especially perennials. As a result, they are often missing from collections. Only about 10% of the global germplasm holdings reported in the review were wild species;
- The lack of data associated to *ex situ* accessions of CWR is an acute problem. Data gaps generally extend from a paucity of basic passport and characterization data for many accessions, to a relative lack of publicly available evaluation data for many accessions, even for standard agronomic and physiological traits;
- Lack of adequate characterization and evaluation data and the capacity to generate and maintain them, remain serious constraints to the use of many germplasm collections of crop wild relatives;
- Pre-breeding was recognized in many country reports as an important adjunct to plant breeding, as a way to introduce new traits from CWR. Several examples of pre-breeding with CWR were presented in country reports; and

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Treaty “*in situ* conservation” means the conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings and, in the case of domesticated or cultivated plant species, in the surroundings where they have developed their distinctive properties.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/core-themes/theme/seeds-pgr/sow/sow2/en/>

- There appears to have been an increase in the use of wild species in crop improvement in the last decades, in part, due to the increased availability of methods of transferring useful traits from them to domesticated crops. However, in spite of their potential importance they remain relatively poorly represented in *ex situ* collections.

The conclusions of the *Fourth Edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook* regarding progress towards Target 13 included:

- There is progress in most elements of Target 13 but at an insufficient rate to meet the target;
- There is no significant progress in the conservation of crop plants in the wild;
- Few protected area management plans address crop wild relatives;
- Increased efforts for *in situ* conservation measures are required; although there are increasing activities to conserve genetic resources in their production environment<sup>5</sup>;
- The wild relatives of domesticated crop species are increasingly threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation and climate change; few protected areas or management plans address these threats<sup>6</sup>;
- Erosion of traditional crops and their wild relatives is greatest in cereals, followed by vegetables, fruits and nuts and food legumes<sup>7</sup>;
- There is currently limited support to ensure long term conservation of local varieties of crops in the face of changes in agricultural practices and market preferences that are tending, in general, to promote a narrowing genetic pool; and
- Actions to enhance progress towards Target 13 include integrating needs for Target 13 with activities with regards to Target 11<sup>8</sup>; through, for example:
  - integrating the conservation of the wild relatives of domesticated crops and livestock in management plans for protected areas; and
  - conducting surveys of the location of wild relatives and including this information in plans for the expansion or development of protected area networks.

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<sup>5</sup> FAO (2010). The Second Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Rome. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1500e/i1500e00.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Akhalkatsi, M., Ekhvaia, J., and Asanidze, Z. (2012). Diversity and Genetic Erosion of Ancient Crops and Wild Relatives of Agricultural Cultivars for Food: Implications for Nature Conservation in Georgia (Caucasus), Perspectives on Nature Conservation - Patterns, Pressures and Prospects, Prof. John Tiefenbacher (Ed.), ISBN: 978-953-51-0033-1, InTech, Available from: <http://www.intechopen.com/books/perspectives-on-nature-conservation-patterns-pressures-and-prospects/diversity-and-genetic-erosion-of-ancient-crops-and-wild-relatives-of-agricultural-cultivars-for-food>

<sup>7</sup> FAO (2010). The second report on the state of the world's plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Rome.

<sup>8</sup> "By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes".

Conclusions of the mid-term review of the GSPC<sup>9</sup> include:

- The conservation of genetic diversity through on-farm management and active *in situ* conservation in natural ecosystems is currently un-quantified;
- Maintenance of associated indigenous and local knowledge presents a particularly significant challenge and to date there is a lack of tested methodologies and limited assessments of indigenous and local knowledge associated with plant genetic diversity;
- The conservation of genetic diversity of minor crops and other socio-economically important species, including those of local importance, have received less attention (than major crops);
- Priority species to be addressed may include certain medicinal plants, non-timber forest products, local land races, wild relatives of crops, neglected and underutilized plant resources as well as major forage and tree species, which may become the crops of the future; and
- Only in some countries, have protected areas been established with a focus on conserving crop wild relatives.

***Other existing processes, organizations and initiatives relevant to the conservation of crop wild relatives:***

There are many existing national institutions, organizations and initiatives that can be relevant to improving the conservation status of crop wild relatives. It is obviously important to liaise with these when considering genetic resources and protected areas, particularly as the holders of knowledge of genetic resources are not always in the same institutions to those responsible for protected areas.

There are also national level processes relevant to many relevant international initiatives and it is important to engage with these, where appropriate through their focal points, regarding formulating plans to improve the conservation of crop wild relatives through protected area systems so as not to duplicate efforts and as a source of information and expertise at national level.

Key institutions and initiatives at the global level include:

- The *Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and the *Food and Agriculture Organization on the United Nations*, through for example:
  - The compilation of information at national government level relevant to the *State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*, and notably the periodic production of the reports on the *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*;
  - The *FAO Global Plans of Action* for plant and animal genetic resources provide frameworks for the development of national and international strategies and action plans for minimizing genetic erosion and vulnerability and safeguarding genetic diversity<sup>10</sup>;
  - Technical guidelines and mechanisms to promote the conservation and sustainable use *in situ* of PGRFA<sup>11</sup>;
  - Technical guidelines on National Level Conservation and Use of Landraces and on National Level Conservation of Crop Wild Relatives are currently under preparation;<sup>12</sup> and
  - The Commission is in the process of establishing a mechanism to improve global networking on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Plant Conservation Report 2014: a review of progress towards the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation 2011-2020. CBD Technical Series 81. <http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-81-en.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> FAO (2011). Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. FAO, Rome; FAO (2012). Synthesis progress report on the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources – 2012*. FAO, Rome

<sup>11</sup> See for example: Guidelines for Developing a National Strategy for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: Translating the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture into National Action, as adopted by the Commission at its last session (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm566e.pdf>).

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm564e.pdf>; and <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm542e.pdf>;

- Relevant work on *Globally Important Agriculture Heritage Systems (GIAHS)*<sup>14</sup>, an initiative of the FAO started in 2002 to promote public understanding, awareness, and national and international recognition of Agricultural Heritage systems to safeguard the social, cultural, economic and environmental goods and services these provide to family farmers, smallholders, indigenous peoples and local communities. The initiative fosters an integrated approach combining sustainable agriculture and rural development;
- *Bioversity International*<sup>15</sup>, a global research-for-development organization and part of the CGIAR Consortium, a global research partnership for a food secure future. Its mission is to deliver scientific evidence, management practices and policy options to use and safeguard agricultural and tree biodiversity to attain sustainable global food and nutrition security;
- The *Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research (PAR)*<sup>16</sup>, a voluntary, informal, mechanism aiming to support the development of knowledge needed to maintain and use agrobiodiversity optimally. It is hosted by Bioversity International;
- *The Global Crop Diversity Trust*<sup>17</sup>, an independent international organization that exists to ensure the conservation and availability of crop diversity for food security worldwide. It was established through a partnership between the FAO and the CGIAR acting through Bioversity International;
- *Botanic Gardens Conservation International*<sup>18</sup>, is a plant conservation charity based in Kew, London, England. It is a membership organization, working with 800 botanic gardens in 118 countries, whose combined work forms the world's largest plant conservation network; and
- The *Crop Wild Relatives Specialist Group*<sup>19</sup> of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, a network of crop wild relative experts around the world dedicated to working jointly to promote the conservation and use of crop wild relatives.

### ***The CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas and Aichi Biodiversity Target 11***

The CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA)<sup>20</sup> is one of its most successful areas of work and underpins actions required to achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (on protected areas). The PoWPA includes well advanced, tried and tested approaches for establishing, managing and expanding protected areas systems and networks.

The scope of the PoWPA includes all categories of protected areas, including *Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas*<sup>21</sup> (ICCAs) and a broad set of protected areas governance types. ICCAs (and governance categories) are where a close association is often found between a specific indigenous people or local community and a specific territory, area or body of natural resources, combined with effective local governance and conservation of nature. ICCAs are particularly relevant for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, including crop wild relatives.

Decision X/31, of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, provides guidance on strengthened implementation of the PoWPA at national, regional and global levels. Decision XII/24 paragraph 1(f) invites Parties to give due attention to the conservation of wild relatives of cultivated crops and wild edible plants in protected areas and in community conserved areas, in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity and national legislation, thereby also contributing to achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 13 and food security.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm537e.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.fao.org/giahs/en/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.bioversityinternational.org>

<sup>16</sup> <http://agrobiodiversityplatform.org>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.croptrust.org>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.bgci.org>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.cwrsg.org>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.cbd.int/protected/>

<sup>21</sup> for example, <http://www.iccaconsortium.org>



One of the elements of Aichi target 11 is “areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem service protected”. Areas rich in CWR fall within this element of Target 11.

GBO4 notes that whilst progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 is on track in terms of gross global area protected there are important gaps in coverage. Progress is insufficient towards protecting key areas important for biodiversity and having well connected conserved areas integrated into the wider landscape and seascape. Crop wild relatives are an important identified gap.

***Action for strengthening the inclusion of crop wild relatives into protected area networks and other effective area-based conservation measures***

Detailed suggestions for developing and implementing a strategic plan for national level conservation of CWR are provided through the CGRFA guidelines<sup>22</sup>. Strategies to support the conservation of CWR through protected area networks should support, or preferably be integrated with, these and other relevant strategies at national level.

*Protected area networks*

There are significant needs to strengthen the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources through their better incorporation into protected area networks, thereby contributing simultaneously to accelerated progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (paragraph 1(f) of decision XI/24) as well as to Targets 12, 13 and 7. Strategies to achieve this could be reviewed and established and/or strengthened (depending on national circumstances, noting there are significant variations between Parties in national capacity and existing progress regarding the protection of CWR). Strategies should include the following general outcomes that are essentially already part of recognised, practical approaches under the Programme of Work on Protected Areas:

- Strengthened cooperation and information sharing between protected area and agriculture planning and associated knowledge systems (including small-scale farmers and holders of indigenous and local knowledge);
- Strengthened information on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture through compiling relevant knowledge and data and incorporating these into existing national monitoring and information systems, including as supporting ongoing assessments of PGRFA (notably those undertaken under the CGRFA and FAO);
- The identification, as far as possible, of relevant CWR, their distribution and status; Priority should be given to CWR located in centres (or regions) of crop diversity<sup>23</sup>, especially where located in the region of origin of the crop in question (that is, where it is native); information on the distribution of CWR is often available nationally and through various partner organisations and initiatives<sup>24</sup>, including those indicated above;
- Areas supporting important, and in particular vulnerable, CWR identified as “key biodiversity areas” (or similar national level categorisation) and considered as such in planning and investment;
- Mapping of identified CWR distribution and status against existing protected area networks (including indigenous and community conservation areas) to determine gaps in coverage;
- Gaps in protected area coverage of CWR addressed through appropriate measures such as (where relevant):
  - strengthened attention to management of CWR in existing protected area networks;
  - expansion of existing protected area networks to incorporate key biodiversity areas for CWR;

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm542e.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> “Centre of crop diversity” means a geographic area containing a high level of genetic diversity for crop species in situ conditions (ITPGRFA)

<sup>24</sup> For example, The Crop Wild Relatives Global Portal, <http://www.cropwildrelatives.org>, provides information on the distribution of CWR including a number of national inventories and guidance on conservation approaches.

- establishment of new protected areas where necessary;
- strengthened recognition of, and support for, indigenous and community conservation areas; and
- the setting of national targets for the conservation of crop wild relatives (for example, as sub-targets of nationally set targets for Aichi Biodiversity Targets 11 and 13);
- Crop wild relatives incorporated into relevant capacity building to support protected area networks and sustainable farming systems;
- Monitoring and reporting of trends in the status of CWR strengthened; and
- Programmes and projects to support crop wild relatives adequately financed and implemented.

*Other effective area-based conservation measures*

Indigenous peoples and local communities have played a critical role in conserving a variety of natural environments and species for millennia for a variety of purposes, economic as well as cultural, spiritual and aesthetic. There are today many thousands of Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) across the world, including forests, wetlands, and landscapes, village lakes, water catchments, rivers and coastal stretches and marine areas.

ICCAs are natural and/or modified ecosystems containing significant biodiversity values, ecological services and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities, both sedentary and mobile, through customary laws or other effective means. ICCAs can include ecosystems with minimum to substantial human influence as well as cases of continuation, restoration, revival or modification of traditional practices or new initiatives taken up by communities in the face of new threats or opportunities. Several of them are inviolate zones ranging from very small to large stretches of land and waterscapes.

Values and benefits of ICCAs:

- They help conserve critical ecosystems and threatened species, biological and genetic diversity, maintain essential ecosystem functions (e.g., water security), and provide corridors and linkages for animal and gene movement, including between two or more officially protected areas;
- They are the basis of cultural and economic livelihoods for millions of people, securing resources (energy, food, water, fodder, shelter, clothing) and income;
- They help synergize the links between agricultural biodiversity and wildlife, providing larger land/waterscape level integration;
- They offer crucial lessons for participatory governance of official protected areas (PAs), useful to resolve conflicts between PAs and local people;
- They are based on rules and institutions “tailored to the context” (biocultural diversity) skilled at adaptive management and capable of flexible, culture-related responses;
- They are built on sophisticated collective ecological knowledge and capacities, including sustainable use of wild resources and maintenance of agro-biodiversity, which have stood the test of time; and
- They are typically designed to maintain crucial livelihood resources for times of stress and need, such as during war, severe weather events and other natural disasters.

***Financial resources to support the conservation and sustainable use of crop wild relatives***

In most countries, national financial resource allocations for supporting the conservation of CWR may need to increase.

In addition, relevant projects and programmes could be developed for donor support. These can often be more successful when clearly designed to achieve multiple objectives, including in this case the objectives of the CBD, ITPGRFA, CGRFA, the FAO and its initiatives, and Bioversity International and explicitly contributing to plant conservation in the context of sustainability of food and agriculture.

Your attention is drawn to the following opportunities for further support:

- Allocations under GEF-6, including with regards to support for protected area networks and other investment areas such as the Food Security Initiative for Africa<sup>25</sup>; and
- Current and potential opportunities in the implementation of the ITPGRFA to develop integrated approaches to the conservation, in particular *in situ*, and the sustainable use of crop wild relatives, including through the Benefit-sharing Fund and the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use.

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<sup>25</sup><https://www.thegef.org/gef/node/10548>