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IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK ON AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY

Main issues related to agricultural biodiversity identified by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 4 of decision VIII/23 D, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to consult relevant international organizations in order to prepare the full review of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting.
2. The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) is the world farmers' organization representing over 600 million farm families grouped in 115 national organizations in 80 countries. It is a global network in which farmers from industrialised and developing countries exchange concerns and set common priorities. IFAP has advocated farmers' interests at the international level since 1946 and has general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (www.ifap.org).
3. In response, *inter alia*, to decision VIII/17 (on private-sector engagement), the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and IFAP collaborate through a memorandum of cooperation. This, *inter alia*, recognizes the mandate of IFAP to develop farmers' capacities to influence decisions that affect them at both the domestic and international levels and the role of IFAP as a platform or forum in which leaders of national farmers' organizations can meet to: highlight mutual interests and take co-ordinated action to further such interests; develop an understanding of world problems; exchange information, experiences and ideas; keep members informed about international events of concern to them as farmer organisations; act as a recognized spokesperson for the world's farmers, to confer with, advise, or assist, as the Federation may deem expedient, international organizations, such as FAO, on any matters affecting the interests or welfare of agricultural primary producers; bringing concerns of agricultural producers to the attention of international meetings of Governments and other bodies; promote the creation and strengthening of independent, representative organizations of farmers throughout the world.
4. Under this memorandum of cooperation, a major activity during 2007 has been the production of a summary of the perspectives of the members of IFAP on agricultural biodiversity as a contribution to

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the in-depth review of the programme of work. Accordingly, the Executive Secretary is providing herewith a summary of the main issues that IFAP has identified for the information of participants at the thirteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.

5. This contribution is the fruit of experiences received from national farmers' organizations members of IFAP. An IFAP-led consultation process was followed and a first draft document was produced by the IFAP secretariat, based on contributions from member organizations. This draft was circulated among the 115 national farmers' organizations for comment, and was discussed in IFAP meetings. Modifications and comments received after circulation and discussion were included in this final version.

II. CONTEXT

6. Linkages between agriculture (cultivated systems) and biodiversity are very strong and deserve to be highlighted, especially with the growing pressure on natural resources due partly to a growing world population. Farmers need to identify how their activities relate to biodiversity and to promote practices that improve sustainability and reduce the impact of those which constitute a threat to biodiversity, while at the same time maintaining the economic viability of their agricultural activity. This will help better understand the role of farmers and, therefore, achieve a mindset change with respect to Farmers' Rights' and responsibilities in this regard and thus reducing the pressure on natural resources.

7. The main issue for farmers from both developed and developing countries, is to clearly identify the multiple roles that agriculture is expected to fulfil and to identify appropriate mechanisms in order to achieve them; e.g., help farmers improve their current practices. For farmers, it is important to recognise the natural relationship between biodiversity and agriculture. Agriculture and biodiversity should not be segregated but rather be integrated. For this, there is a need for a proactive approach. In agricultural areas with high value biodiversity and ecosystem services, how do we rehabilitate ecosystems? What kind of mechanisms should be put in place to create markets for environmental services to benefit all farmers? Such mechanisms already exist in developed countries. However, there is a need to put in place the right mechanisms in developing countries which will need to be adapted according to the specificities of each location.

8. Farmers have their responsibility in this integration process. However, they cannot bear it on their own. This is a shared responsibility with the rest of society. Indeed, there is a need for the participation of all stakeholders', and in particular Governments on the policy side.

III. FARMERS' MAIN ISSUES FOR THE REINTEGRATION OF BIODIVERSITY INTO AGRICULTURE

A. Overview

9. The views of IFAP members, in the context of the in-depth review of the programme of work, centre on public policies, government support mechanisms to farmers and promoting stewardship programs which recognise the role of farmers in sustaining biodiversity, including landscapes, and where appropriate compensate them for this contribution. Policy development should start on the basis that farmers wish to manage better, to contribute to an improved environment for the benefit of all, and that the constraints to farmers being able to do this need to be identified and addressed.

10. Farmers in both developed and developing countries need incentive measures to encourage them to develop/invest in the use of the most environmentally-friendly production techniques and thus improve their ecological footprint. This would include stewardship programs to reward farmers for protecting and enhancing biodiversity through the adoption of agricultural practices to sustain land resources, water management, carbon sequestration, sustainable use of energy sources, sustainable management of forests and other biomes; managing marginal areas ; using traditional and local species to prevent the loss of genetic resources; establishing transparent land property rights; and the setting up of mechanisms inspired by the "carbon credit systems". Governments, both in developed and developing countries, should

co-manage wildlife with farmers including putting in place incentives to encourage farmers to conserve biodiversity and provide wildlife habitat.

B. Promoting payments for ecosystem services in developing countries

11. Natural resources worldwide are under pressure especially in fragile ecosystems, by area mostly located in developing countries, which urgently need to be rehabilitated; e.g., dry and sub-humid zones. Given the lack of resources of Governments in most developing countries, farmers there feel less encouraged to enhance biodiversity in their agricultural practices. Indeed, they do not perceive the direct advantage of doing so. Therefore, there is a need for political will from national Governments, donors and development agencies to identify means and effective tools that will reward farmers for their efforts to work towards the rehabilitation of ecosystems and the restoration of the relationship between agriculture and biodiversity through sustainable agricultural practices. In particular, where farmers can undertake activities that are also of benefit to others, mechanisms need to be developed and implemented that cover the incremental costs to farmers of doing so. For example, where farmers can maintain, enhance or rehabilitate other services provided by ecosystems, such as controlling land erosion, reducing chemical use or expending more on the conservation of water, most wish to do so but lack the means to do it.

C. Biodiversity enhancement through marketing and production instruments

1. Encouraging the production of quality products

12. Governments, in consultation with farmers, should promote a pricing framework in relation with the quality of products in their local territories; e.g., providing farmers with attractive prices for unusually cultivated varieties, and also in relation with the production of a wide and varied range of fruits and leaves and livestock that favour the heterogeneity of agricultural landscapes in conformity with local conditions; providing farmers with the possibility to create networks to be able to sell those local species or crops (not necessarily certified ones) hence promoting diversification through sustainable use.

2. Encouraging the production and conservation of local species

13. Farmers should be encouraged to conserve local species on their land and also reintroduce native species. Farmers should then reap the benefits stemming from such measures.

D. Laws and regulations

(a) Governments need to enhance national biodiversity strategies and action plans in partnership with farmers;

(b) Identification of national and international policies, laws and regulations that create perverse incentives through market distortions and that undermine the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is important;

(c) Governments must support, where necessary and appropriate, efforts aimed at putting in place secure land tenure systems so that farmers are in a better position to invest in long term strategies related to biodiversity enhancement; e.g., multi-cropping systems, crop rotations etc;

(d) Governments need to recognize and implement "Farmers' Rights" to save seed produced on their farms for planting their crops in the following years. Further, Governments should recognize farmers' indigenous knowledge of local resource management and conservation, as well as their contribution to landscape protection and development;

(e) Governments should give farmers the possibility to register local varieties in order to encourage their conservation locally;

(f) There is a need to consider Intellectual Property Rights issues with respect to access of farmers to some agricultural technologies (e.g., seeds, etc).

E. Knowledge sharing, information, awareness raising and training

- (a) There is a need to expand knowledge amongst farmers, and often amongst policy makers, on the multiple goods and services provided by the different functions of agricultural biodiversity; e.g., diffusion of education and information tools, user friendly tools to improve farmers' actions;
- (b) It is important to establish an inventory and gene bank of the diversity of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture at the national level, supported by the necessary resources;
- (c) Governments should promote the nutritional values of traditional or underutilised crop species for local food consumption;
- (d) There is a need to focus on the identification of the needs of farmers and rural communities in order to develop sustainable agricultural practices (in particular through partnerships with the scientific and research community) so as to make good use of and enhance local and indigenous knowledge;
- (e) There is a need to mainstream biodiversity in extension services through the development of adapted training sessions to the benefit of trainers, raising awareness and training farmers on the importance of biodiversity enhancement in the practice of their agricultural activities;
- (f) Lack of appropriate regional information is a large barrier for farmers looking to reduce the impact of farming on the landscape.

F. Capacity-building and partnerships

- (a) Farmers' participation in the formulation as well as in the implementation of projects aimed at enhancing biodiversity should be strengthened; e.g. through dialogues between diverse stakeholders on the necessity to integrate farmers in research projects and in rural development strategies;
- (b) It is critical to strengthen research on the positive synergies between biodiversity and economic activities through the mobilization of research on the roles of fauna and micro-organisms in soil fertility, pollination and pest regulation;
- (c) Partnerships between farmers and conservation groups are important to maintain and restore habitat and biodiversity. Through these partnerships, farmers can directly see how changes on their lands can positively impact the ecosystem;
- (d) In many countries, including developing countries, agriculture is subject to a plethora of environmental legislation, which lacks coordination thus contributing to bureaucratic practices. The trend often within Government is to attend these issues in isolation. There is also a lack of capacity to enforce legislation in a coordinated way. Therefore, there is a need to improve the policy environment and to integrate planning across relevant sectors.

G. North-South cooperation

- (a) Governments and farmers' organizations in developing countries lack the capacity to reward farmers for the environmental services they render; e.g., through zero tillage, reforestation, fighting desertification, carbon storage, etc.
- (b) There is an urgent need to develop north-south cooperation through partnerships between Governments from developed and developing countries as well between farmers' organizations among these countries. This north-south cooperation would aim at transferring and adapting successful stewardship mechanisms which have proved to be effective in developed countries; e.g. credit systems, extension services, to the benefit of farmers, especially small-scale farmers in developing countries.
