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STATUS OF PREPARATION OF THE REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S BIODIVERSITY FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Conference of the Parties, at its twelfth meeting, welcomed the preparation of *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*, currently being prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) under the guidance of FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission).¹ The present document, prepared by the Secretariat of the Commission, provides some information on the report, including on the status of its preparation.

II. BACKGROUND, SCOPE AND MANDATE

2. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was established by the FAO Conference in 1983. It provides the only permanent forum for governments to discuss and negotiate matters specifically relevant to biological diversity for food and agriculture. The Commission's vision is "conserving biodiversity for food and agriculture and promoting its use in support of global food security and sustainable development, for present and future generations". As of 1 March 2016, 178 countries and the European Union are Members of the Commission. Membership is free and open to all FAO Members and Associate Members, upon request.

3. The Commission recognizes that biodiversity for food and agriculture is among the earth's most important resources. Crops, livestock, aquatic organisms, forest trees, microorganisms, and invertebrates – thousands of species and their genetic variability – make up the web of biodiversity that the world food supply depends on. Biodiversity contributes to food security and nutrition, and to sustainable livelihoods, and it underpins natural potential to adapt to changes in socioeconomic and environmental conditions caused by factors such as population growth, changing nutritional needs and climate change.

4. At its Thirteenth Regular Session in 2011, the Commission adopted its Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) for the period 2013-2021, and requested FAO to present the first ever report on the state

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¹ Decision XII/6.

of the world's biodiversity for food and agriculture to the Commission's Sixteenth Regular Session, which will be held from 30 January to 3 February 2017.²

5. The objectives of the report are:

(a) To describe the current contributions made by biodiversity for food and agriculture to food security and nutrition, sustainable production and the provision of ecosystem services;

(b) To identify ways of improving the use of biodiversity for food and agriculture so as to support sustainable intensification and help realize the multiple benefits obtained from agriculture;

(c) To improve recognition of the continuing role of farmers, pastoralists, forest dwellers and fisherfolk around the world in the maintenance of biodiversity for food and agriculture, and of the contribution that it makes to their livelihoods.

6. The report will contribute to achievement of Strategic Objective 2 of the reviewed Strategic Framework of the FAO, that is, to increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner. It will contribute to increasing the knowledge and understanding of the options to make a transition towards more sustainable production systems in the agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries sectors. Meeting environmental challenges, moving towards a greener economy, ensuring distributional equity, economic resilience and sustainability of production systems are the foundation for FAO Strategic Objective 2.³ The report also contributes to the efforts towards mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services in the agriculture sectors. The improved understanding of the role of the biodiversity related to food and agriculture in production systems will be especially useful in this respect.

7. Biodiversity for food and agriculture includes the biological diversity present in or of importance to agricultural, pastoral, forest and aquatic production systems. It encompasses the variety and variability of animals, plants and microorganisms, at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels, that sustain the structure, functions and processes of production systems. This diversity has been managed or influenced by farmers, pastoralists, forest dwellers and fisherfolk for hundreds of generations and reflects the diversity of both human activities and natural processes.

8. The preparation of the report is a country driven process. Guidelines⁴ have been structured to help National Focal Points for the preparation of Country Reports on biodiversity for food and agriculture to assess and report on the national status of biodiversity for food and agriculture and its use and conservation for food security and nutrition, ecosystem functioning and sustainability. Countries have been invited to provide information on associated biodiversity, the provision of supporting and regulating ecosystem services, the use of wild foods, and the implementation of the ecosystem approach.

9. In addressing all biodiversity relevant to food and agriculture and the ecosystem services it provides, the report presents a broader perspective compared to sectorial assessments of genetic resources. The preparation of country reports may inspire countries to analyse how conservation and use of biodiversity for food and agriculture can be improved with a view to enhancing its contributions to food and nutrition security, ecosystem functioning, sustainability and improving the livelihoods of farmers, pastoralists, forest dwellers and fisherfolk.

² See CGRFA-13/11/Report. *Report of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Thirteenth Regular Session*. Rome, 18–22 July 2011, paragraph 107 and Appendix F.

³ See Reviewed Strategic Framework, C 2013/7, paragraph 91.

⁴ The Guidelines for the Preparation of Country Reports are available at <http://www.fao.org/nr/cgrfa/biodiversity/guidelines/en/>.

III. STATUS OF PREPARATION

10. As of March 2016, 120 National Focal Points for the preparation of Country Reports on biodiversity for food and agriculture have been nominated by countries.⁵ These National Focal Points, who are responsible for compiling the Country Report through a national consultation process involving different stakeholders, belong to different sectors, including agriculture, biodiversity and genetic resources.

11. National Focal Points are presently preparing their reports, in many cases in close collaboration with the Commission Secretariat. Following the Commission's request, the Secretariat of the Commission is presently organizing a series of informal regional consultations on the state of biodiversity for food and agriculture in the following regions:

- (a) Latin America and the Caribbean, Panama City, Panama, 8-10 March, 2016;
- (b) Near East, Rome, Italy, 5-7 April 2016;
- (c) Europe and Central Asia, Bonn, Germany, 18-20 April 2016;
- (d) Asia, Bangkok, Thailand, 26-28 April 2016;
- (e) Pacific, Nadi, Fiji, 3-5 May 2016;
- (f) Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 24-26 May 2016.

12. The main objective of the regional consultations is to consider regional issues and identify priority needs for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture in the different regions.⁶ The regional consultations will provide an opportunity for countries to identify strategic priorities related to biodiversity for food and agriculture for their respective regions.

13. In parallel with the country reporting process, FAO is using information from other global assessments, and overseeing the preparation of a number of thematic studies addressing specific topics relevant to the report,⁷ including on the perspectives of small-scale food providers, the contribution of biodiversity for food and agriculture to the resilience of production systems, and the contributions of biodiversity for food and agriculture to the sustainable intensification of food production.

IV. CONCLUSION

14. The report will provide the first integrated global assessment and overall synthesis of biodiversity for food and agriculture. It will go far beyond the scope of other assessments prepared under the aegis of the Commission that targeted specific sectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture, as it addresses associated biodiversity, ecosystem services and wild foods across sectors. The report will improve the scientific basis of decision-making on the integrated management and use of genetic resources, improve the visibility of biodiversity for food and agriculture, and facilitate rational decision-making on the allocation of resources. It will contribute to the development of policy measures that take into account both the linkages between the different sectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture and wider perspectives on biodiversity use and conservation, including the support of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 2.4 and 2.5 and of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the achievement of relevant Aichi Biodiversity Targets 7 and 13. The Report will also inform other assessment processes, such as the global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services approved by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services at its fourth session in February 2016.

⁵ The list of National Focal Points nominated for the preparation of Country Reports on biodiversity for food and agriculture is available at <http://www.fao.org/nr/cgrfa/biodiversity/nationalfocalpoints/en/>.

⁶ CGRFA-14/13/3, paragraph 17.

⁷ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 14.

15. Countries are invited to take advantage of the information contained in the country reports, as well as of the national experts' networks established for their preparation, to support the implementation of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans. The Commission has invited countries to reflect the findings of their country reports as well as any follow-up activities in their national biodiversity strategies and action plans.⁸

⁸ CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 12.