



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



The International Treaty
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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***Elements of Advice for the Global Environment Facility
in relation to the
International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture***

The Bureau of the International Treaty has developed these elements of advice for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) concerning the funding of the objectives and priorities of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, as requested by the Governing Body of the Treaty through Resolution 7/2015. We welcome the invitation to provide such advice to GEF and consider it an important step to support the implementation of the Treaty's Funding Strategy.

The objectives of the International Treaty are the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, for sustainable agriculture and food security.

Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture are crucial in feeding the world's population and realizing sustainable development goals. They are the living material that farmers and plant breeders constantly use to improve food security. The future of agriculture depends on international cooperation to safeguard these precious resources and on the exchange of the crops and their genes that farmers all over the world have developed and exchanged over millennia. All countries depend on crops and the genetic diversity within these crops from other countries and regions.

The International Treaty was established as a direct international response to the challenges of climate change, food security and agricultural biodiversity, and is now a fully operational global system. It facilitates the exchange of genetic material, and the sharing of benefits that arise with those who safeguard global diversity. The Treaty mechanisms under the direct control of its Governing Body have, since 2007, facilitated the exchange of more than 2.3 million genetic material and have supported 700,000 farmers and other stakeholders to strengthen their capacities to implement the Treaty. The Treaty is the only international agreement that specifically recognizes the enormous contribution of farmers to the conservation and development of the diversity of crops through Farmers' Rights (Article 9).

Achieving sustainable development: the role of the International Treaty

At the end of 2015, the international community adopted the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement. The Sustainable Development Goals acknowledge the important contribution of biodiversity to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and to promote sustainable agriculture. The Sustainable Development Goal 2 establishes targets to conserve, exchange and invest in plant genetic resources to achieve global food security. We believe that the implementation of the International Treaty will play a critical role in achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 and invite the GEF to continue giving priority to support programs, projects and initiatives that conserve and use plant genetic resources for food and agriculture to help achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2.

We emphasize the key role of crop genetic diversity to adapt agriculture to climate change and call upon GEF to take this into account in the future programming and implementation efforts that tackle climate change. The 2014 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change highlighted the need to develop and use climate-ready crop varieties as one key adaptation measure to be implemented to reduce the expected threats for food security in the coming decades. The unique attributes that cultivated plants have acquired over millennia – their ability to survive hot summers or cold winters, to thrive in dry conditions or in areas prone to flood, to withstand pests and disease – are being lost forever with the genetic erosion of our crops. The sustainable use of plant genetic diversity is one of the key – and often of the very few – options available to family farmers in many countries in their efforts to adapt their farming systems to climate change.

The GEF promotes the delivery of integrated solutions to tackle environmental and development challenges. Under GEF-6, the GEF has launched a cross-cutting integrated program on food security. *Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa* focuses specifically on the natural resources - including genetic resources - that underpin food and nutrition security.

We invite the GEF to further mainstream the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture into broad sustainable development programs which address food security, sustainable agriculture and climate change adaptation and recommend that lessons learned arising from these programs and that relate to the Treaty implementation be shared with the Governing Body of the Treaty. This advice should be taken into account in planning for GEF-7.

The implementation of the International Treaty and the GEF Biodiversity Strategy

The International Treaty promotes an integrated approach to the conservation and the sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, including through the implementation of measures specified in Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty. A number of international mechanisms, funds and bodies, provide resources in support of activities of relevance to the implementation of the International Treaty.

The cooperation with these institutions has been facilitated with the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 by the CBD Conference of the Parties. The Strategic Plan provides an overarching framework on biodiversity for the entire United Nations system and the Treaty Contracting Parties are playing an active role to achieve the Aichi Targets. The Governing Body of the Treaty has recognized the importance of the Strategic Plan to enhance synergies and improve coherent implementation of the CBD and the Treaty.

The implementation of the International Treaty is fundamental to achieve Aichi Target 13 which focuses on maintaining genetic diversity of cultivated plants in particular, and agricultural biodiversity in general. The sustainable management of crop genetic diversity makes important contributions to facilitate the management of agricultural areas in a sustainable manner and to ensure biodiversity conservation (Target 7). The implementation of the Treaty at national level needs to be supportive of achieving Target 16 which relates to ratification and implementation of the Nagoya Protocol.

GEF provides funding to help countries implement the Strategic Plan, and achieve the Aichi Targets. The GEF's project portfolio for biodiversity, including agricultural biodiversity, is currently the largest within the institution. Under GEF-6, two programs are of particular relevance to the implementation of the International Treaty:

- *Program 7: Securing Agriculture's Future: Sustainable Use of Plant and Animal Genetic Resources; and,*
- *Program 8: Implementing the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing*

The program *Securing Agriculture's Future* recognizes that the conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture is central to achieving food security and nutrition of a growing world population. The GEF Biodiversity Strategy recognizes that the results of this program may generate important co-benefits for the International Treaty. We invite the GEF to consider continuing providing support for activities under this program under GEF-7. We also recommend that results from this program be made available to the Governing Body of the International Treaty for dissemination amongst the Treaty stakeholders, and in order to build synergies with other initiatives and programs in support of Treaty implementation.

In relation to access and benefit-sharing, the Governing Body and the CBD Conference of the Parties have acknowledged the need for continued capacity-building support to Parties, especially developing countries, for the mutually supportive implementation of the Treaty, the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol. We recommend that on-going and future efforts to support access and benefit-sharing activities at national level consider, where relevant, support for initiatives that promote the mutually supportive implementation of the Treaty, the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol.

Finally, we believe that national focal points of the International Treaty should play an active role in the implementation of GEF projects relevant to the Treaty implementation.

The Funding Strategy of the International Treaty

The Funding Strategy of the Treaty (Article 18) seeks to enhance the availability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the provision of financial resources to implement activities under this Treaty. Pursuant to this strategy, the Contracting Parties shall take the necessary and appropriate measures within the Governing Bodies of relevant international mechanisms, funds and bodies, including GEF, to ensure that due priority and attention is given to the effective allocation of predictable and agreed resources for the implementation of plans and programs under this Treaty.

At its first meeting, the Governing Body adopted the Funding Strategy for implementation of the International Treaty. In doing so, it encouraged all funding bodies that provide resources in support of activities of relevance to the Treaty implementation to ensure that due priority and attention will be given to the effective allocation of predictable and agreed resources in support of the implementation of the International Treaty. They were invited to use, as appropriate, the priorities identified at Annex 1 of the Funding Strategy when allocating resources in support of the implementation of the Treaty, within the context of their mandates.

The priorities identified in the Funding Strategy take into account the rolling FAO's *Global Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* as presented below. We invite GEF to take these priorities into account, as appropriate and within the context of its mandate, in the design of GEF-7:

1. Information exchange, technology transfer and capacity-building:

a. Building strong national programmes is essential for capacity-building in developing countries and furthering the implementation of the Treaty. It is a prerequisite for sustainability of efforts to strengthen and develop national capacities in the conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

b. Expanding and improving education and training in developing countries is a sine qua non, in order to build capacity. Education and training is a long lasting investment in the sustainable management of the diversity of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in developing countries.

2. Managing and conserving plant genetic resources on farm:

a. Supporting on-farm management and conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture is the most direct way of reaching farmers, indigenous and local communities in developing countries to whom benefits should flow. It forms a strong contribution to the

maintenance of on-farm diversity of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Only by strengthening these efforts can on-farm management of diversity complement ex situ conservation.

3. The sustainable use of plant genetic resources:

a. Expanding the characterization and evaluation of collections is necessary to promote and facilitate their use. More complete characterization and evaluation will increase the relevance of germplasm held ex situ and on farm for breeding.

b. Diversification of crop production, genetic enhancement and broadening the genetic base of crops will directly contribute to increasing the sustainability of agricultural production. This will lessen dependence on external inputs, increase productivity, and respond to the challenge of climate change.

8 September 2016,

The Bureau of the Seventh Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty

Mr Muhamad Sabran (Asia Region)

Chairperson of the Seventh Session of the Governing Body.

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Ms Svanhild-Isabelle Batta Torheim (Europe Region);

Mr Antonio Otávio Sa Ricarte (Latin America and the Caribbean Region);

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