

INTERLAKEN CONFERENCE ON ANGR: TUESDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2007

On Tuesday morning, a welcoming ceremony was held to officially open the first International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR) for Food and Agriculture. The ceremony included a performance of traditional Swiss alphorn music and presentations from invited speakers. The final printed version of *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* was presented, and participants welcomed and commented on the new publication. In the afternoon, discussions began on the draft Global Plan of Action for AnGR.

WELCOMING CEREMONY

Conference Chair Manfred Bötsch welcomed participants and introduced guest speakers.

Doris Leuthard, Federal Councilor and Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Switzerland, noted that agriculture has a key role to play in fighting hunger and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). She called for a focus on conserving AnGR and ensuring sustainable use, and urged delegates to adopt the Global Plan of Action and Interlaken Declaration to reflect a commitment to structured management of AnGR for food security and sustainable development.

Alexander Müller, Assistant Director-General, Natural Resources Management and Environment Department, FAO, stressed the need for wise management of AnGR to address challenges such as climate change, rapid economic and social change, globalization, diseases, socioeconomic instability and armed conflict. Noting that changes affect every country, he said AnGR are particularly important for livelihoods in developing countries, and that at least one livestock breed has become extinct each month over the past seven years. Müller called on delegates to set the basis for international efforts to promote sustainable use and improvement of livelihoods in developing countries.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), noted that parties to the CBD recognize AnGR as essential for food security and both rural and urban communities. He looked forward to the adoption of the Global Plan and Interlaken Declaration and said these would help further the objectives of the CBD. He highlighted a number of relevant issues, including ongoing work under the CBD on access and benefit sharing, the importance of indigenous peoples and traditional

knowledge, the fruitful partnership with FAO, and the significance of the 2010 biodiversity target.

André Nietlisbach, Secretary General, Direction of Economic Affairs, Canton of Bern, Switzerland, welcomed participants to Interlaken and the region. He noted the Canton's commitment to sustainable development and its unique animal breeds, observing that "once genetic material is lost, it is lost forever."

Urs Graf, Mayor of Interlaken, welcomed participants to his city and wished delegates a successful outcome.

PRESENTATION OF THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

Irene Hoffmann, Chief of FAO's Animal Production Service and Conference Secretary, launched *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, observing that this report would be an important reference tool for the next five to ten years. Highlighting that the report was the result of a process initiated in 2001, she underscored the concerted effort at the national level that had contributed towards it, including the preparation of 169 country reports. She expressed her gratitude to all involved and said the report provided an important baseline for decisions on the Global Plan.

ICARDA's Barbara Rischkowsky (formerly with FAO) outlined the content of the report, explaining that it contained five sections: the status of AnGR; livestock sector and trends; the state of capacities, institutions and stakeholders; the need for research; and needs and challenges in AnGR management. She expressed hope that a clear Global Plan would be adopted that includes implementation mechanisms, along with a strong Interlaken Declaration supporting immediate action to maintain AnGR.

Many delegates welcomed the report and called for its wide dissemination and translation into other UN languages. COLOMBIA emphasized that the Global Plan would need to contain a solid financial mechanism that addressed the needs identified in the report. The INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR ORGANIC FARMING highlighted the contribution that organic farming can make towards maintaining genetic resources through market systems.

Irene Hoffmann described the report as a "starting point" and requested that delegates keep the global breed database updated. She thanked China for producing a Chinese version and appealed for funds to facilitate other translations.

GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR ANGR

On Tuesday afternoon, Chair Bötsch introduced the agenda item on the Global Plan of Action for AnGR and invited comments from regional groups.

Sudan, speaking for the NEAR EAST region, called for financial support and capacity building for characterization, compiling inventories and monitoring the region's breeds. Uganda, for AFRICA, highlighted livestock keepers' rights and capacity building at the national level for *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation programmes, and stated that the Global Plan should include a strong agreement on implementation and financing. Ecuador, speaking for LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, detailed his region's contributions to the *State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources* report, including the establishment of a focal point based in Brazil for 2007-2009. He called for increased financial resources to implement the Global Plan, adding that any action should contribute to development and avoid distorting trade. Australia, for the SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC, provided details of actions undertaken in the region, underscored the proposition that implementation of the Global Plan is a national responsibility and suggested that funding is required to support those efforts. He added that intellectual property rights are best discussed in forums that deal specifically with those issues, such as WIPO.

India, speaking for ASIA, suggested that the Global Plan include a clear explanation of what it aims to achieve. The US, for NORTH AMERICA, noted that essential frameworks for implementation have already been identified, and called for the Global Plan to define specific priorities and actions, based on scientific and technical analysis.

Poland, for the EUROPEAN REGIONAL GROUP (ERG), called for further cooperation with other treaty organizations to better define traditional rights of livestock keepers, and supported the inclusion of a section on implementation and financing in the Global Plan. She noted that livestock keepers' rights are not clearly defined and called for more work with the intergovernmental committee under WIPO and the CBD Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge) working group.

Kuwait, for the G-77/CHINA, said a mechanism on implementation and financing of the Global Plan was imperative, and called for the Interlaken Declaration to reflect the commitment of all governments to implementation and financing.

TEXTUAL DISCUSSIONS: Chair Bötsch thanked regional groups for their input and invited delegates to begin considering text containing draft outputs from this conference (ITC-AnGR/07/3). This document contains three Annexes: a draft Global Plan of Action for AnGR (Annex I); draft text on implementation and financing of the Global Plan (Annex II); and the draft Interlaken Declaration (Annex III). Noting previous discussions on this text, he expressed hope that delegates would build on these rather than returning to "point zero."

BRAZIL noted that the document had not been finalized, and that the entire text should be considered bracketed. He also expressed concern about the definition of AnGR contained in the footnote on the first page of Annex I, and suggested adding a reference to "farm" AnGR. Irene Hoffmann, FAO, noted previous discussions on this topic and explained the rationale behind the current formulation.

National Species and Breed Development Strategies and Programmes: Chair Bötsch asked delegates to consider bracketed text under the sections of the draft Global Plan outlining priorities. Regarding text relating to national species and breed development strategies (Strategic Priority 4), delegates discussed bracketed text relating to cooperation among countries. The text as formulated noted that, while plans and programmes are formulated at the national level, cooperation among countries may be needed.

Delegates agreed to delete text referring to some issues being "transboundary in nature" in favor of language noting that "in some cases cooperation with other countries may be required."

National Conservation Policies: Regarding the section on conservation policies (Strategic Priority 7), delegates debated reference to "non-trade distorting" incentives to support conservation of AnGR. Delegates were divided over this reference. While INDIA, PAKISTAN, AFRICA, and others preferred to remove the text, CANADA, ARGENTINA, AUSTRALIA, BRAZIL and others supported retaining it. With no clear agreement, Chair Bötsch said the issue would be revisited later in the conference.

In Situ Conservation Programmes: Regarding text on the rationale for *in situ* conservation programmes (Strategic Priority 8), discussion focused on text suggesting that, in cases where market-based approaches to *in situ* conservation are not possible, "non-trade distorting" direct payments may be necessary. Delegates were divided on the inclusion of reference to "non-trade distorting." CANADA, AUSTRALIA, IRAN, ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, and the NEAR EAST region preferred inclusion of this reference. However, INDIA, SWITZERLAND, the ERG, AFRICA and others sought its deletion. Some delegates also supported the deletion of a reference to "agro-environmental services," claiming that the term is new and its implications not clearly defined. After extensive debate, delegates agreed to alternative text from AUSTRALIA stating that in cases where market-based approaches are not possible, support for *in situ* conservation of animal resources may be necessary.

Participants also discussed one of the action items on regional and national *in situ* conservation programmes. Again, a reference to "non-trade distorting" measures was the subject of disagreement, with participants adopting similar positions to those taken earlier. CANADA, supported by SYRIA, PAKISTAN, INDIA, ECUADOR and others, proposed text clarifying that "such support is consistent with international trade obligations," while the ERG, supported by CAMEROON, suggested text noting the need for consistency "with existing relevant international rights and obligations." This text remained bracketed at the close of the session.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As delegates left negotiations on the draft Global Plan of Action late on Tuesday afternoon, some noted that the expected differences over financing had yet to emerge, as trade-related issues instead took center stage. One delegate described the initial engagement as "opening volleys," as regional representatives felt their way toward textual clarification and the removal of brackets. Meanwhile, a number of delegates expressed surprise or concern at the apparent disagreements over the definition of AnGR: "I would have thought that we could have reached agreement on this by now," one said.

Most participants seemed to feel that the discussions had started positively, however, with the most challenging issues still ahead. Observers also noted that the Interlaken Declaration, as well as the Global Plan, still needs finalizing. Some expected text on incentives and intellectual property to occupy delegates' attention when the Declaration comes up for discussion.

Meanwhile, some participants were commenting on Tuesday evening's side event involving civil society groups and government delegates. Civil society is holding its own meetings in Interlaken in parallel with the government-focused conference. Some labeled the interactive discussions on Tuesday evening as "productive," "positive" and "substantive," although several noted comments from civil society calling for more "participation," more time for discussions, and even more "equality" in this process in the future.