

CGRFA 14 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 15 APRIL 2013

The fourteenth regular session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA 14) of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) opened on Monday, 15 April 2013, at the FAO headquarters, in Rome, Italy. Delegates met in plenary to consider cross-sectorial matters under the Commission's Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW), including: preparation of the report on the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (SoW-BFA); and targets and indicators, including for biodiversity for food and agriculture, plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture (AnGR).

OPENING

The session started with a video outlining the importance of the Commission's work in securing livelihoods and food security and designing future food systems. CGRFA Chair Brad Fraleigh (Canada) opened the meeting congratulating FAO on their foresight in establishing the Commission 30 years ago. Daniel Gustafson, FAO Deputy Director-General, said the CGRFA's work cuts across all strategic priorities of FAO's work, and links national and global levels by enabling country-driven assessments and conducting global assessments.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Executive Secretary, underscored long-lasting cooperation between the CBD and FAO, including their joint work programme, to ensure both protection of biodiversity and food security. Dias highlighted FAO's role in developing indicators for agriculture and global assessments, and monitoring. Regarding climate change, he pointed to opportunities for mitigation; considering agriculture in a landscape setting; and ecosystem services including reducing risks from weather-related events. He stressed the potential for complementariness and harmonious implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGR), and cooperation with the CGRFA on ABS.

Linda Collette, CGRFA Secretary, highlighted past achievements and future challenges for the Commission, including contributing to the implementation of the Rio+20 outcome document, and raising awareness on the need to invest in conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA). She provided an overview of the CGRFA14 agenda,

including the possible adoption of strategic priorities for forest genetic resources. She welcomed Belarus, Montenegro, Palau and Marshall Islands as new CGRFA members, and thanked Norway, Sweden, Spain, Germany and Switzerland for their financial support.

Chair Fraleigh reported on an informal joint consultation of the CGRFA and ITPGR Bureaus, held on Sunday, 14 April, noting that Bureau members called for more formal meetings to discuss the legal, administrative and financial implications of the transfer of activities from the CGRFA to the ITPGR Governing Body (CGRFA-14/13/23).

Chair Fraleigh announced that CGRFA Bureau member Modesto Fernández Díaz-Silveira (Cuba) was replaced by Teresita Borges Hernández (Cuba); and reported on the special information seminar on biodiversity for food and agriculture, held on Saturday, 13 April 2013. An IISD RS summary of the seminar is available at: <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/cgrfa14/html/crsvol168num3e.html>.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: The Secretariat introduced the agenda and timetable (CGRFA-14/13/1 and 2), noting it aims to facilitate review of the draft strategic plan. She highlighted the proposed introduction of a ten-year cycle for launching the State of the World reports, which would require changing the launch dates for several reports. Plenary then adopted the agenda and timetable.

CROSS-SECTORIAL MATTERS

PREPARATION OF THE SOW-BFA: The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (CGRFA-14/13/3 and Inf.23). Cuba for the LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN GROUP (GRULAC) underlined the need for technical and financial assistance at the national level. Kenya for AFRICA emphasized the need for an integrated approach and stakeholder participation.

JAPAN recommended focusing on the gap analysis, and cautioned against including elements of an action plan in the report. The US suggested the report provide lessons learnt and success stories. The Netherlands for the EUROPEAN REGIONAL GROUP (ERG): noted that the report, as the first of its kind, will offer preliminary and incomplete findings; suggested developing means to ensure participation of relevant organizations including the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES); and underscored the need to mainstream conservation of GRFA into other processes. The ERG, supported by the US, suggested prioritizing among extrabudgetary activities.



ECUADOR called for inclusion of a thematic study on the role of biodiversity in combating climate change. Australia for the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC expressed concern about additional country reports, suggesting that the CGRFA consider existing information and identify gaps instead, so that countries can provide additional information if needed. Iran for the NEAR EAST suggested the report be integrative and prioritize a cross-sectorial and regional synthesis, and requested that developing countries' centers of excellence be included in the process. Responding to questions, the Secretariat indicated that US\$20,000 have been budgeted per eligible country to participate in the preparation of the SoW-BFA and noted that the SoW-BFA will reflect the available resources and knowledge. India for ASIA asked whether financial support will be based on size of country and number of stakeholders.

SEARICE called for addressing the crucial role of small producers in managing GRFA and implementation of farmers' rights. The CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT requested that the SoW-BFA take a holistic view, with OXFAM calling for a cross-cutting report. The PLATFORM FOR AGRO-BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH recommended an integrated analytical approach taking into account production systems and landscapes.

Chair Fraleigh summarized the discussion noting that, in view of absence of major controversies, the Rapporteur and the Secretariat will draft the report on the item.

TARGETS AND INDICATORS: Biodiversity for food and agriculture: The Secretariat introduced the relevant document (CGRFA-14/3/4).

Uganda for AFRICA underlined indicators of relevance to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, as set out in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The ERG called for developing high-order or headline indicators, and stressed the need for feasible and reliable data to monitor progress. Responding to a question by the ERG on whether sufficient reliable data is available, the FAO responded that the FAO/INFOODS Food Composition Database for Biodiversity will not be comprehensive but is valuable in assessing nutritional adequacy and food trade. SWITZERLAND suggested including reference to Aichi Targets 3 (incentives) and 8 (pollution).

The INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE ON FOOD SOVEREIGNTY (IPC) urged emphasizing small producers' knowledge and informal seed systems. ECUADOR called for a participatory process, including farmers' expertise. The ARAB ORGANIZATION FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT noted that incorporating wild species into agricultural systems may contribute to achieving the Aichi Targets.

PGRFA: The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (CGRFA-14/13/4.1 Rev.1 and Inf. 9/Rev.1). Amar Tahiri (Morocco), Chair of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group (ITWG) on PGRFA, reported on the ITWG deliberations and tabled its recommendations.

On the draft revised indicators for monitoring implementation of the second Global Plan of Action (GPA) on PGRFA, the US sought a number of clarifications, including whether the indicators refer to work of national governments only, and noted that information may be difficult to procure, recommending broad scales or ranges rather than specific data collection. Underscoring the need for realistic and reliable targets and

indicators, the ERG called for their further revision and reduction, and said the region would propose priority indicators that could replace a longer list. ECUADOR called for developing composite indices. Commenting on the priority activity on assisting farmers in disaster situations to restore crop systems, ERITREA said it resembled food aid and preferred instead a focus on participatory plant breeding and *in situ* conservation.

SEARICE asked to highlight the contribution of small mixed farms. Stressing the need for globally applicable indicators that accommodate countries' realities, BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL called for adoption of the indicators at this session, and stressed the need for agreement on a standard to determine risk status to identify threatened GRFA. The ERG opposed adoption of the list in its current form, while ECUADOR noted the list was endorsed by the ITWG on PGRFA. Chair Fraleigh established a small group to consider the issue, noting that there were no other objections to the proposed targets and to a number of recommendations.

AnGR: The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (CGRFA-14/13/4.2 and Inf.5). The ERG suggested including other factors causing breeds to be at risk, such as demographic concentrations and levels of inbreeding. ASIA proposed including global and regional clearing-house mechanisms as sources of information for breed categorization. ETHIOPIA recommended conducting pilot studies and including the contribution of specialized organizations in relation to trends in risk status of breeds.

CANADA recommended that the proposed development of definitions of "sustainable production and consumption," and "sustainable management" in the livestock sector include elements of functionality and be tailored to each region or locality. The US urged developing definitions that recognize country, economy, time and consumer specificities. The Secretariat explained that the definitions will be developed through a technical consultation with stakeholder and CBD involvement, and then be considered by the ITWG on AnGR, which will submit recommendations to the Commission. ARGENTINA considered development of such definitions beyond the mandate of FAO and CBD.

The ARAB ORGANIZATION FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT enquired about wild AnGR, with the Secretariat explaining that the FAO definition includes currently domesticated or potentially domesticated food animals, as well as feral animals and wild relatives of current domesticated species, but excludes bushmeat which falls under forestry.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The eternal city of Rome welcomed with sunshine the delegates who arrived for the session marking the Commission's thirtieth anniversary. As many participants highlighted, what started off as a commission devoted to plants has evolved beyond predictions, to address the entire spectrum of genetic resources from forests to micro-organisms, in addition to a growing list of cross-sectorial items. With several State of the World reports in the pipeline, including the unprecedented one on biodiversity for food and agriculture, "streamlining our working methods and strengthening coordination is more urgent than ever," one participant opined. As delegates rolled up their sleeves for a busy week ahead, many identified the draft strategic priorities for forest genetic resources as the key expected substantive outcome of the session.