

CGRFA 14 HIGHLIGHTS

WEDNESDAY, 17 APRIL 2013

Meeting throughout the day and into the night, CGRFA 14 addressed issues related to forest, animal, plant and aquatic genetic resources, and micro-organisms and invertebrates, including the strategic priorities for action on forest genetic resources (FGR), draft genebank standards, and transfer of activities from the CGRFA to the ITPGR. A Friends of the Chair group on ABS met in morning and evening sessions.

FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

ITWG-FGR REPORT: Lolona Ramamonjisoa (Madagascar), Chair of the ITWG on FGR, presented the ITWG report (CGRFA-14/13/10) and the Secretariat provided an overview of the draft strategic priorities for action on FGR (CGRFA-14/13/11).

Indonesia for ASIA proposed language to ensure mobilization of adequate financial resources to support implementation by developing countries. Brazil for GRULAC emphasized the need to take into account relevant work in other fora. Ethiopia for AFRICA highlighted capacity development for *ex situ* conservation and differentiation between *in situ* and *ex situ* measures.

Strategic Priorities for Action: The EUROPEAN REGIONAL GROUP (ERG) supported the strategic priorities as agreed by the ITWG on FGR. NORWAY called for language on networking of concerned countries on diseases and pests affecting genetic resources. BHUTAN called for sustainable incentives and a sustainable financing mechanism for developing countries. ARGENTINA suggested that access to and use of FGR be consistent with the international IPR regime. Lebanon for the NEAR EAST requested reference to the evaluation and enhancement of FGR in strategic priorities on assessment of FGR and related traditional knowledge.

ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

INTERLAKEN OUTCOMES: Arthur da Silva Mariante (Brazil), Chair of the ITWG on AnGR, introduced the ITWG report (CGRFA-14/13/12) and the Secretariat presented a progress report on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action (GPA) for AnGR and the Interlaken Declaration (CGRFA-14/13/13).

The ERG, the US and CANADA endorsed the draft guidelines on *in vivo* conservation of AnGR. AFRICA supported continued FAO technical assistance for countries in their implementation efforts, with the ERG underscoring the importance of enhancing financial resource mobilization. The ARAB ORGANIZATION FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT called for more technical assistance to evaluate local breeds and wild resources.

CANADA recommended avoiding duplication of work with other international organizations in relation to the proposed technical guidelines on animal identification, traceability and performance recording; and considered it premature to explore payments for ecosystem services provided by livestock species and breeds, with AUSTRALIA recommending to first identify the nature of the services before addressing payments. Thailand for ASIA highlighted the contribution of small-scale livestock keepers and pastoralists. Delegates agreed to request FAO to identify the nature of ecosystem services provided by the livestock sector, with special consideration of the contribution of small-scale livestock keepers and pastoralists.

PREPARATION OF THE SECOND STATE OF THE WORLD'S AnGR: The Secretariat introduced the relevant document (CGRFA-14/13/15). The US, CANADA and the ERG expressed concern about the questionnaire for collecting national data. Delegates endorsed the questionnaire in principle and agreed to a period for comments and revision, with the next version to be reviewed by the CGRFA Bureau.

The ERG urged that the second report be an update of the first, with limited country reporting obligations. PRACTICAL ACTION urged that the report: be comprehensive, with focus on herders and small livestock keepers, especially women; highlight innovative mechanisms and increased corporate control over the sector; and focus on maintaining livestock diversity. The ARAB ORGANIZATION FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT proposed to add success stories on non-conventional species.

MICRO-ORGANISMS AND INVERTEBRATES

The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (CGRFA-14/13/19 and background study papers 61-65). The SOUTHWEST PACIFIC stressed the variety of functions performed by microorganisms improving soil productivity, and highlighted that intensive use of fertilizers and pesticides has depleted soil micro-organisms and reduced farmers' income in the region. The ERG underlined the unexploited potential of micro-organisms, and called for coordination with relevant initiatives to avoid overlap. He suggested that the proposed FAO review focus on the "most recent" developments in biotechnologies; and that the report on The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture address the contribution of micro-organisms to human and animal nutrition, health, pollination, soil biodiversity and crop protection, in addition to ecosystem services.

The US supported the proposed targeted assessments on the status and trends of soil micro-organisms, biological control agents and plant pathogens for major food crops, such as wheat and maize. BRAZIL suggested adding reference to soybeans. ARGENTINA proposed the assessments also address characterization of micro-organisms. Thailand for ASIA



called for encouraging studies on ruminant micro-organisms, and related funding and capacity building. The CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC stressed that assessing services from micro-organisms and invertebrates will allow the formation of more effective strategies for other genetic resources. The ARAB ORGANIZATION FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT presented examples of soil micro-organisms used as bio-fertilizers.

PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECOND GPA: Amar Tahiri (Morocco), Chair of the ITWG on PGRFA, presented the ITWG report (CGRFA-14/13/20), and the Secretariat introduced the review of implementation of the second GPA (CGRFA-14/13/21), noting that activities mentioned will also contribute to the third report on The State of the World's PGRFA. AUSTRALIA requested reference to the ITPGR where relevant in the guidance. CANADA cautioned against neglecting *ex situ* conservation, and requested avoiding duplication with the ITPGR work programme on sustainable use. South Africa for AFRICA emphasized the need to support plant breeding by public research institutions and at the community level and, with the ERG and others, commended FAO for strengthening capacities at the national level. The ERG stressed that the third State of the World's report must be fully integrated with the process of monitoring implementation of the second GPA; and called for prioritizing activities to be covered by extrabudgetary resources. The US requested the cost of the second GPA not exceed the cost of the first, and highlighted that responsibility for its implementation rests with national governments.

Many supported requesting FAO to submit a concept note on a global network for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management. AFRICA and BRAZIL stressed the need for a detailed concept note, and CANADA and ETHIOPIA proposed separating the two issues.

GENEBANK STANDARDS: The Secretariat introduced the draft genebank standards (CGRFA-14/13/22), with several countries supporting their endorsement. Many delegations called for FAO to publish and widely distribute the standards, and raise awareness on the importance of their implementation among decision-makers and stakeholders; and for members to provide resources for capacity development for implementation in developing countries. The US emphasized that the standards are a source of guidance for genebanks wishing to develop standard operating procedures. The ERG emphasized the voluntary nature of the standards.

AFRICA and CANADA favored that FAO monitor the standards' implementation and report on their impact at a future CGRFA meeting. The US considered inappropriate, and the ERG premature, for FAO to monitor and evaluate the standards' implementation, with the US suggesting that FAO rather survey experiences of genebanks with regard to the utility of the standards. AUSTRALIA recommended that the standards be kept updated in light of technological developments.

Chair Fraleigh congratulated delegates on the "very significant achievement" of endorsing the standards, and delegates agreed that FAO survey experiences of genebanks in using the standards, as well as survey their impact, relevance and efficacy, so that information be reported back to the Commission with a view to deciding whether and how to further update them.

AFRICA and the ERG considered it premature for FAO to initiate work on species-specific standards. CANADA proposed that crop-specific networks develop crop-specific standards. IRAN proposed that FAO consider updating as appropriate and developing subsector-specific standards in collaboration with appropriate international organizations.

TRANSFER OF ACTIVITIES TO THE ITPGR: ITPGR Secretary Shakeel Bhatti highlighted common areas of interest between the ITPGR Governing Body (GB) and the CGRFA;

presented examples on sharing of experiences; and underlined that close cooperation may lead to a functional division of tasks and assist decision making. FAO Senior Legal Officer Annick van Houtte presented the document on legal, administrative and financial implications of a potential transfer of activities from the CGRFA to the ITPGR GB (CGRFA-14/13/23). CGRFA Secretary Linda Collette highlighted continued relevance of the CGRFA 13 document on policy coherence and complementarity of the work of the CGRFA and the ITPGR GB (CGRFA-13/11/7).

A number of delegations requested more information on cost implications and asked to keep the issue under review. The ERG did not support transfer of tasks at this stage, pointing to governance and financial implications. GRULAC called for postponing discussions to CGRFA 15. AFRICA said the implications require further consideration. IRAN noted that key information was lacking and any transfer should be gradual. The US opposed any transfer of activities, and, with ARGENTINA, opposed the development of a draft timetable for the transfer of tasks.

CANADA supported very close collaboration between the two bodies as a minimum, as well as transfer to the ITPGR GB, subject to appropriate review, of: preparation of the report on The State of the World's PGRFA; updating and monitoring of the implementation of the GPA on PGRFA; operation of the World Information and Early Warning System; and, with JAPAN, activities related to the Code of Conduct for Germplasm Collecting and Transfer. AUSTRALIA supported a transfer of all PGRFA-related activities following a step-by-step approach.

ECUADOR urged focus on cooperation and, opposed by the US, proposed that the CGRFA and ITPGR Secretariats draft a vision document to ensure coherence of their work.

AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES

The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (CGRFA-14/13/16 and 17). On the preparation of the first report on The State of the World's aquatic GR, JAPAN and the ERG suggested focus on aquaculture. The US, with the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC, recommended inclusion of information from all marine areas. The US opposed a study of policies and legislation on aquatic GRs in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The ERG supported the creation of an advisory working group on GRs and technologies in the areas of fisheries and aquaculture under the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI). AFRICA and several countries supported the establishment of an ITWG on aquatic GR, with GRULAC stressing that the ambit of its work should be limited to areas within national jurisdiction, given ongoing work on marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction under the UN General Assembly. AUSTRALIA indicated it would only support an ITWG if it did not duplicate work of the COFI advisory working group and, along with others, requested further information on budgetary implications.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Delegates made steady progress on Wednesday, with an additional evening session becoming necessary to catch up on the meeting agenda. Many hailed the relatively swift approval of the strategic priorities for action on forest genetic resources, as well as the genebank standards, as early, concrete outcomes of this CGRFA session. Others, however, noted there was no time for celebration: work on animal, plant and aquatic genetic resources, along with micro-organisms and invertebrates, was waiting around the corner. One delegate commented, "we're still lagging half a day behind despite night sessions. Hopefully we will not run into any major disagreements," with her last words vanishing as she rushed into an evening session exploring the relationship with the ITPGR. With discussions on aquatics continuing into the night, several weary participants wondered whether the Commission could find alternative ways to tackle its ever-increasing workload.