

CGRFA 16 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2017

CGRFA 16 delegates met in plenary to continue discussing cross-sectoral matters, including: access and benefit-sharing (ABS) for genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA); review of the work programme on climate change and GRFA; and review of implementation of targets and indicators for GRFA.

Delegates also addressed sectoral issues, including: the outcomes of the first meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Inter-governmental Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources (ITWG-AQGR) and the draft of the first report on the State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources (SOW-AQGR); the outcomes of the ninth meeting of the ITWG on Animal Genetic Resources (ANGR) and the review of the Global Plan of Action (GPA) for ANGR.

The open-ended Committee on the Commission's Strategic Plan and Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2018-2027 met in the evening.

CROSS-SECTORAL MATTERS

ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING: On developing subsector-specific ABS elements, the US suggested inviting regions to participate in the process, while cautioning against overstepping the CGRFA's current scope, or being too prescriptive. BRAZIL requested FAO support for developing national ABS measures on GRFA, and cautioned against interfering with the implementation of other instruments. She suggested preparing questions and step-by-step instructions to guide discussions in the subsector ITWGs. MEXICO supported cooperation with the CBD Secretariat.

BRAZIL and the US supported convening an international workshop, with the US suggesting inviting the CBD Secretariat to attend, rather than co-organizing it. CHILE supported having the ITWGs review the workshop's outcomes.

The US supported a study on utilization of GRFA. She proposed that the ITWGs review it before sending it to the Team of Technical and Legal Experts on ABS (TTLE-ABS), and that the Secretariat communicate outcomes to the CBD. BRAZIL asked that the study also address access to GRFA.

On genetic sequencing, the US noted that "genetic sequence data," are a non-physical resource with characteristics that differ from those of genetic resources. BRAZIL requested that CGRFA 17 discuss the use and misuse of GRFA enabled by technological development. The CBD invited the Commission to provide comments and input on GRFA to its intersessional work.

SAUDI ARABIA proposed a center to manage exchange of genetic material among countries. CHILE stressed capacity building, national and regional initiatives, and joint activities. The CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC called for financial and technical support.

Chair Cho Chang Yeon established an open-ended contact group, chaired by Poland and Namibia, to further discuss the issue on Wednesday.

CLIMATE CHANGE: Delegates considered document CGRFA-16/17/8. Cautioning against overlaps with the UNFCCC and the CBD, ASIA and AFRICA requested further support to mainstream genetic diversity in national adaptation planning. AFRICA and the NEAR EAST emphasized projects with tangible impacts on the ground, calling for climate finance mobilization for GRFA conservation and sustainable use. The NEAR EAST urged FAO to conduct technical work on implementation in addition to policy development.

On conducting a country-driven global assessment of climate change effects and GRFA adaptation measures, the EU and BRAZIL called for introducing simple questionnaires and accelerating the process to keep up the momentum from the Paris Agreement. BRAZIL suggested further integrating the Commission's work in FAO's organizational strategy on climate change.

The US, CANADA and the EU, said the global assessment of climate change effects and GRFA adaptation measures, and the voluntary guidelines for integrating GRFA into national adaptation planning, should also address mitigation. CANADA said implementation of the guidelines should be a national responsibility. ECUADOR said the CGRFA's work will improve regional planning. NEPAL asked to address linkages between global, regional and local perspectives. ETHIOPIA prioritized technical assistance for countries most affected by climate change. EGYPT emphasized financial support for preserving GRFA and climate change adaptation.

BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL called for strengthening capacities and bringing together relevant stakeholders. The IPC highlighted farmers' seed exchange practices, and called for agro-ecology practices that contribute to building resilience. The Secretariat highlighted opportunities to collaborate with the climate community, including through national-level proposals to the Green Climate Fund.

TARGETS AND INDICATORS: Delegates considered CGRFA-16/17/9 on FAO's role in the development and use of indicators in the SDGs monitoring and reporting process. ASIA highlighted regional efforts to harmonize data collection, noting that FAO could help with ensuring consistency and coherence in using international targets. The EUROPEAN REGIONAL GROUP (EUROPE) and NORWAY stressed the need for continued support on implementation of the GPAs and the role of the Commission in monitoring SDG target 2.5 (GRFA conservation, sustainable use and ABS). NORWAY suggested acknowledging the "indispensable competence" of the CGRFA as a partner.

AFRICA underscored the need for guidance and support in collecting data for SDGs reporting and monitoring. BRAZIL proposed "inviting countries to actively engage" in voluntary reviews for annual SDG reporting and monitoring, rather than "requesting" them to "collect data." She suggested welcoming the important contribution of the Commission's existing system to data gathering.

CANADA called for harmonizing reporting against the SDG targets and indicators and the GPAs. The US suggested requesting FAO to continue contributing relevant methodology and indicators to the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). The Secretariat said that data for SDG target 2.5 will be generated through GPA monitoring, noting that information can be reported at any time to FAO's information systems on plants and animals.

AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES

ITWG-AQGR REPORT: Mohd Fariduddin Othman (Malaysia), Chair of the *Ad hoc* ITWG-AQGR, presented the report of the group's first meeting (CGRFA-16/17/10), noting its work on: preparing the SOW-AQGR; considering the report of the first session of the Committee on Fisheries Advisory Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources and Technologies; and considering the review of implementation of the MYPOW and draft strategic plan (2018-2027).

FIRST REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES (SOW-AQGR):

Delegates considered the draft SOW-AQGR (CGRFA-17/17/Inf.13) and an update on status and activities (CGRFA-16/17/11) with a view to finalize the report.

GRULAC and EUROPE encouraged countries to submit national reports, including revised versions, to address knowledge gaps and achieve a globally representative final report. AFRICA requested extending the deadline to 30 June 2017. EUROPE supported preparing a revised draft report, based on submissions received by 30 March 2017, thematic studies and ITWG advice.

EUROPE also questioned the feasibility, timeline and budget implications of a second session of the ITWG-AQGR. ASIA proposed making the ITWG-AQGR a regular rather than an *ad hoc* ITWG. The US noted that the Working Group should continue on an *ad hoc* basis, recalling that delegates agreed to convene a second session.

On budget implications, the Secretariat clarified that holding a second session of the ITWG will require approximately US\$115,000, and noted that the decision on whether a review meeting of the ITWG takes place will determine the final timeline.

BRAZIL asked for a reference to the recommendations of the ITWG-AQGR Report in the SOW-AQGR.

ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

ITWG-ANGR REPORT: Deidre Januarie (Namibia), Chair of the ITWG-ANGR, presented the report of the group's ninth session (CGRFA-16/17/12). EUROPE highlighted the importance of developing a common understanding of the technical terms used in the context of ABS. AFRICA raised the need to further consider breed improvement and its impact on the livelihoods of livestock keepers and pastoralists on the continent. GRULAC asked for references to ecosystem services of ANGR including for smallholders and indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC) and women. ASIA supported the term "gene editing" in the context of emerging technologies.

The US supported the funding strategy recommendations and proposed the monitoring of honeybees as important pollinators. SUDAN called for technical and financial support for access to biotechnology and gene banks.

REVIEW OF THE GPA-ANGR: Status of implementation:

Delegates reviewed the status of ANGR and GPA-ANGR implementation (CGRFA/16/17/13 and Inf. 15) and considered proposed guidance. AFRICA, with EUROPE, noted the importance of the GPA-ANGR to achieve SDGs 2 (zero hunger) and 15 (life on land).

On the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS), AFRICA, EUROPE, BRAZIL, CANADA and the US supported its linkage to other national and regional databases, and encouraged countries to continue updating and harmonizing national databases. The US called on the ITWG to recommend uniform criteria for mapping country data, and

for a "science-based evaluation" of the provision of ecosystem services. EUROPE asked to revise and modernize DAD-IS in this biennium. ASIA called for technical assistance to regularly update data in DAD-IS. AFRICA, ASIA and EUROPE supported including information on domesticated honeybees and potentially other insect pollinators.

On incentives, CANADA stressed they should be voluntary, avoid market distortions and be consistent with relevant international commitments. AFRICA welcomed the establishment of assessment methods for the valuation of ecosystem services.

On the funding strategy, EUROPE called for mobilization of financial resources through partnerships with other organizations and mechanisms, and proposed the establishment of a cross-sectoral, multi-donor trust fund. She also suggested developing indicators and monitoring concepts to better evaluate, document and characterize ANGR and associated traditional knowledge. YEMEN, with SUDAN, called for support to developing countries for classification of ANGR, and for a new mechanism to follow up on the implementation of the GPA.

Review of the GPA-ANGR: Delegates considered suggested guidance for the review and possible update of the GPA-ANGR contained in CGRFA-16/17/14, including a draft resolution for the FAO Conference. ASIA, AFRICA and EUROPE supported sending a draft resolution to the FAO Conference. GRULAC preferred addressing all GRFA in an integrated resolution to be prepared at a future CGRFA session. The Secretariat explained that a general resolution on all GRFA will be prepared on MYPOW implementation.

On small-scale livestock keepers and pastoralists that provide ecosystem services, EUROPE and SUDAN debated whether to delete a reference to "small-scale," agreeing eventually to refer to "livestock keepers and pastoralists, especially small-scale ones." CANADA suggested considering the distinctive features of the ANGR subsector in ABS legislation "where appropriate."

The US requested substituting "globally agreed" instruments and frameworks that are linked to biodiversity with "global" ones. On a paragraph highlighting the integration of animal genetic diversity for adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of climate change, the US requested to add "and other efforts to address climate change, as applicable."

Delegates agreed to submit a revised draft resolution to the FAO Conference.

IN THE CORRIDORS

On Tuesday morning, delegates feared delays in the agenda after arduous discussions on the appropriate scope of ABS in the GRFA context could not be concluded on Monday, contrary to the expectations of some who had anticipated swift progress on a rather procedural decision. Several delegations nonetheless insisted on staking out their claims regarding two major areas of disagreement.

The need to elaborate "subsectoral" ABS elements – that is: guidance for ABS implementation that considers the specific characteristics and practices in the conservation and sustainable use of plant, animal, forest and aquatic genetic resources – is contested. Some are wary of unnecessary proliferation of guidance, whereas others insist the elements are necessary to reconcile ABS principles with GRFA realities.

Digital genetic sequencing, which could fundamentally alter the way genetic resources are accessed and transferred, could become another stumbling block. Many fear that recent tensions under the CBD will spill over to the Commission, foreshadowing many difficult late-night discussions.

To the surprise of many, Tuesday's discussions on other items finished early, after ABS discussions were shifted to a contact group. Some did not trust the peace, however, since, as one seasoned Commission member noted, "putting it off does not mean putting it to rest."