

CGRFA 17 Highlights: Thursday, 21 February 2019

On Thursday, CGRFA 17 delegates met in plenary to continue deliberations on micro-organism and invertebrate genetic resources (MIGR), the Strategic Plan for the CGRFA, and cooperation with international instruments and organizations.

Highlights of the deliberations include:

- A discussion on future work on sustainable use and conservation of MIGR;
- Discussions on the draft revised Strategic Plan for the CGRFA (2018-2027); and
- A discussion on inputs received from international instruments and organizations in the Commission's work, including the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (SOW-BFA).

The Expert Group on MIGR met to discuss MIGR functional groups to be addressed in forthcoming CGRFA sessions.

Delegates agreed to hold CGRFA 18 from 1 to 5 March 2021 at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. François Pythoud (Switzerland) was elected as Chair of CGRFA 18.

Micro-organism and Invertebrate Genetic Resources

Delegates continued discussion on the work plan for the sustainable use and conservation of MIGR (CGRFA-17/19/12.2).

JAPAN cautioned against duplication of efforts with other international instruments and urged the work plan take into account available human and financial capacities. The US said there is a need for more discussion on the proposed MIGR functional groups.

The CENTRE FOR AGRICULTURE AND BIOSCIENCE INTERNATIONAL (CABI) highlighted their experience in invertebrate studies, including biological control. The INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY (IPC) urged increasing the relevance of MIGR and emphasized the need for sustainable agricultural practices.

CBD drew attention to the CBD decision on conservation and sustainable use of pollinators.

The Expert Group on MIGR met to elaborate on micro-organism and invertebrate functional groups to be addressed in the forthcoming CGRFA sessions. The meeting, chaired by Scot Miller (the US) and Johannette Klapwijk (the Netherlands), took place parallel to the plenary. Following the meeting, Expert Group Co-Chair Klapwijk presented a revised workplan on MIGR, providing for the consideration of: pollinators, including

honeybees, and biological control agents at CGRFA 19; soil micro-organisms and micro-organisms relevant for ruminant digestion at CGRFA 20; and edible fungi and micro-organisms for food processing at CGRFA 21.

Strategic Plan for the CGRFA

Progress Report and Review: The Secretariat presented the progress report and review of the draft revised Strategic Plan for the CGRFA (2018-2027), including the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) (CGRFA-17/19/13).

The US and EUROPE requested the Secretariat to provide financial implications of the different options of the work proposed for forthcoming sessions, and to consider ways of enhancing coordination and communication among the Commission's Intergovernmental Technical Working Groups (ITWGs). CANADA urged recognizing the importance of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGR) and the need to avoid duplication.

The US objected to discussions on the use of digital sequence information (DSI) and the potential implications for conservation, sustainable use and access and benefit-sharing (ABS) of genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA) in CGRFA 21. EUROPE proposed the addition of innovation opportunities and capacity challenges in the MYPOW for CGRFA 18 and CGRFA 19.

On the proposed options paper, EUROPE asked to integrate the in-depth discussions on obstacles encountered by countries while implementing global plans of action (GPA). BRAZIL suggested postponing the review of implementation of the upcoming GPA on Aquatic Genetic Resources to 2027.

On ABS, EUROPE requested that CGRFA 18 include deliverables agreed in the Elements to facilitate domestic implementation of ABS for different subsectors of GRFA.

On climate change, EUROPE asked for preparation of a draft work plan for its consideration at CGRFA 18 and 19.

EUROPE requested for CGRFA 18 to consider the role of biodiversity below species-level for nutrition.

AFRICA and ASIA lauded emphasis on MIGR. NEAR EAST and the IPC underscored the goal on participation in the draft Strategic Plan.

IPC recommended urgent work to address practices that undermine the sustainability of agricultural production. ARAB CENTER FOR THE STUDIES OF ARID ZONES AND DRYLANDS stressed the need for financial and technical support

for implementation. The CGIAR CONSORTIUM recommended identifying best practices to increase generation and sharing of non-monetary benefits of research and development.

On requesting the Secretariat to develop an options paper on the future organization of work, ARGENTINA, supported by BRAZIL, NEAR EAST, CHILE and KENYA, proposed adding a reference to ABS and DSI to a paragraph on sustainable use and conservation of GRFA for a balanced reflection of the three objectives of the CBD. ARGENTINA also stressed the need to mainstream DSI in all ITWGs noting its linkage with ABS. The US, supported by GERMANY, NORWAY, POLAND and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA proposed deleting the paragraph instead, to maintain focus on the organization of work rather than its content.

GERMANY said ABS and DSI are different agenda items that should not be added to a request concerning the Commission's future organization of work. POLAND supported the ITWGs' collaboration on sustainable use and conservation, but not on ABS.

Delegates considered a revised MYPOW. They agreed to EUROPE's proposal to add an item on follow up to the SOW-BFA for CGRFA 18. Opposed by ARGENTINA, the US requested deleting an item on considering DSI and implications for GRFA conservation and sustainable use from the agenda of CGRFA 21. Delegates eventually agreed to EUROPE's proposal to "review the Commission's work on DSI" instead.

Secretary Hoffmann clarified that the options paper for the future organization of work will include the financial implications of activities, including establishment of potential new ITWGs.

EUROPE requested clarifying that the main product on ABS will be the survey of domestic legislative, administrative and policy measures, including best practices and lessons learned. Delegates then approved the MYPOW and session planning as amended.

Cooperation with International Instruments and Organizations

The Secretariat presented relevant documents (CGRFA-17/19/14 and 14/Inf.1-4). The ITPGR presented its report and areas of collaboration with the Commission (14/Inf.5 and 6).

CBD noted that the Joint Work Plan 2011-2020 of the secretariats of the CBD and CGRFA provides guidance for collaborative work, and drew attention to intersessional work on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

THE NORDIC GENETIC RESOURCE CENTRE reported that its tenth-year anniversary in February 2018 was marked by records of contributions of over one million specimens to the Global Seed Vault. NORWAY said the upgrade of the Seed Vault, aimed at enhancing security, will be completed by 2020. THE GLOBAL CROP DIVERSITY TRUST noted communications outreach and resource mobilization efforts in collaboration with the Commission, and CGIAR CONSORTIUM reported collaborative actions with 13 of its centers. ARGENTINA urged for information on FAO's projects funded through the seventh replenishment cycle of the Global Environment Facility. EUROPE encouraged

strengthening of collaboration with CBD on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. ECUADOR underscored joint activities on ABS and DSI.

CANADA lauded the work of the CGIAR Genebank Platform, which operates under the Global Crop Diversity Trust, under the auspices of the ITPGR in order to conserve and avail accessions of crops and trees.

The US requested regular reporting on joint activities between the Commission and the ITPGR. CANADA also requested a specific mention of the need for coordination between the Commission and the Treaty on the two international symposia and towards the completion of the third report on plant GRFA.

CANADA, BRAZIL and ARGENTINA objected to the involvement of the ITPGR and the Commission in monitoring the performance of genebanks, saying this task should be carried out by countries.

Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture

In the afternoon, contact group Co-Chair Renata Negrelly Nogueira (Brazil) reported that the group had agreed to state that the issue of BFA calls for timely and clear cross-sectoral follow up at the global, regional and national level; and that such follow up should be complementary to other processes, voluntary, contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2020 biodiversity framework, and build on partnerships among multiple stakeholders. On developing a GPA on BFA, the contact group proposed an intersessional process to revise the draft needs and actions "with the motivation to" submit them to the 42nd session of the FAO conference in 2021 for adoption as a GPA.

"Digital Sequence Information"

DSI contact group Co-Chair Marliese von den Driesch (Germany) reported that the group agreed on the need to further review DSI of GRFA at the Commission's next session, including innovation opportunities and challenges of capacity to access DSI technologies and use them for the conservation and sustainable use of GRFA, and share the benefits arising from DSI of GRFA. The group also agreed to recognize ongoing efforts under the CBD and the ITPGR and that some members have adopted measures to regulate DSI of GRFA under their domestic ABS frameworks.

In the Corridors

As delegates strolled into the meeting on Thursday, many peered longingly at the warm clear weather outside, hoping for an opportunity to go around Rome in the day. Deliberations on cooperation and collaboration with other international organizations saw much praise for the work of the Commission. Discussing the outputs of this work, one delegate said, "we can never have enough money or human capacity, and collaboration is the only way." Another delegate, leafing through the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture report, commented on the great teamwork required to produce what many are referring to as one of the Commission's "greatest milestones." As the day's agenda progressed, the head start from Wednesday's work and delegates' diligence through the day paid off, as the meeting ended an hour early, granting their wish to see Rome in the daylight.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of CGRFA 17 will be available on Monday, 25 February 2019 at <http://enb.iisd.org/biodiv/cgrfa17/>