

CGRFA HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER

Delegates to the twelfth regular session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA-12) continued to discuss issues relating to the multi-year programme of work (MYPOW), including animal genetic resources for food and agriculture (AnGR) and the Funding Strategy for the Global Plan of Action (GPA) for AnGR, forest genetic resources (FGR), micro-organisms and invertebrates, aquatic genetic resources (AGR), and biotechnology. In an evening negotiating session, delegates continued discussing proposed text on the policies and arrangements for ABS for GRFA.

ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

FUNDING STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GPA for AnGR: Chair Mozafari introduced the revised text on the draft Funding Strategy. On the aims of the Funding Strategy, BRAZIL, ARGENTINA and CUBA preferred to retain the qualifier “timely” on support to be provided to developing countries. The ERG agreed once it was specified that support would complement developing countries’ “own” efforts. On resources relevant to the Funding Strategy, GRULAC, with ARGENTINA, emphasized international cooperation while the ERG suggested that national governments first consider national capacities and resources. Delegates agreed to retain both references but placed text on international resources first. On priority setting, BRAZIL agreed to retain new text on support for indigenous and local livestock systems, on the condition that it exactly reflects the language used in the GPA. Delegates also agreed to retain “species and breed relevance” as a selection criteria for project funding. Following opposition from BRAZIL, ECUADOR, IRAN, the GAMBIA, AFRICA and ASIA to an ERG proposal to delete text on information and reporting on resources not under the FAO Trust Account, the ERG agreed to retain the text as a separate annex. The revised text will be distributed for consideration.

Throughout the day, regions elected their representatives to the Intergovernmental Technical Working Groups (ITWGs) on PGR and AnGR.

FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

PREPARATION FOR THE STATE OF THE WORLD’S FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES: The Secretariat presented the document for this item (CGRFA-12/09/12), and explained that the fifteenth session of the FAO Panel of Experts on FGR (CGRFA-12/09/Inf.13), which took place from 9-11 December 2008, in Rome, Italy, had laid the foundation for preparation of the first report on the State of the World’s FGR (SOW-FGR). The Secretariat noted that FGR represent a new sector for the Commission. Noting that the status and trends of use and conservation of FGR are inadequately understood and that FGR are threatened by climate change and by forest loss and

degradation, he said the SOW-FGR would help determine needs and priorities for conservation and food security. He explained that the report will be presented at CGRFA-14, and noted that the Commission will consider at this session, *inter alia*: establishing an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on FGR (ITWG-FGR); reviewing and adopting its draft Statutes (CGRFA-12/09/14Rev.1); and calling for budgetary support for ITWG-FGR sessions.

The ERG, the US, AFRICA, GRULAC, ASIA, AUSTRALIA, NORWAY, CANADA and others welcomed the decision to prepare the report and the country reports and thematic studies that would feed into it, and the proposed timetable. The US, AFRICA, AUSTRALIA, NORWAY, CANADA and others expressed support for the establishment of an ITWG-FGR. The US noted, however, that if the ITWG-FGR was not a financially viable option, then the Panel of Experts on FGR should take on its role. NORWAY and ARGENTINA questioned the value of having the Panel of Experts if the ITWG-FGR was established. The ERG emphasized that work done at EU-level on FGR needs to be taken into account. The NEAR EAST stressed the need for capacity building. GRULAC suggested that specific references to biotechnology not be included in the ITWG-FGR report. BRAZIL and ARGENTINA emphasized the importance of cooperation with the CBD and the UN Forum on Forests. KYRGYZSTAN stressed cooperation on FGR with the CBD and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and said technical assistance should be provided to national focal points for the preparation of country reports. GRULAC, KENYA and CANADA discussed whether there should be a reference to FGR for food and agriculture. SENEGAL highlighted the importance of drafting quality country reports and establishing databases on FGR. The CGIAR highlighted its work on agroforestry and looked forward to continued cooperation with FAO.

On the preparatory process for the SOW-FGR, the Chair highlighted that all delegations wished the ITWG-FGR to be established, while the availability of funding should be further discussed. The ERG said FAO should assess the need for the ITWG-FGR. GRULAC noted that if there is money for the Panel of Experts, the creation of the ITWG should not present budgetary implications as these resources can be made available. The US noted that the Commission has no competence to abolish the Panel of Experts. GRULAC, opposed by the ERG, stressed the need to define the scope of the work of the ITWG by referring to FGRFA rather than FGR.

In the afternoon, delegates reported back on informal consultations. They agreed to establish the ITWG-FGR and adopted its statutes (CGRFA-12/09/14 Rev.1 and Annex 1). The US, supported by GRULAC and AUSTRALIA, recommended that the FAO consider a review of the Panel of Experts in light of the ITWG’s establishment. Throughout the day, regions elected their representatives to the ITWG-FGR.

BIODIVERSITY OF MICRO-ORGANISMS AND INVERTEBRATES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

REVIEW OF SCOPING STUDY ON MICRO-ORGANISMS AND INVERTEBRATES: The Secretariat introduced the scoping studies on micro-organisms and invertebrates relevant to food and agriculture (CGRFA-12/09/15.1 and 15.2, and Inf.17 and 18). He noted that both studies consider the functions and services provided by these organisms, current policies and programmes at the international level, and options for international collaboration.

The Secretariat responded to a question by QATAR on the Commission's mandate, saying it was decided at CGRFA-11 to include micro-organisms and invertebrates in the Commission's work. Referring to the scoping study on micro-organisms, GRULAC, *inter alia*, supported its recommendations and guidelines, asked that the study reflect that not all national institutes have microbial collections, and, with BURKINA FASO, requested FAO and relevant international organizations to strengthen technical support to developing countries.

The ERG said micro-organisms and invertebrates must be considered at CGRFA-14, and that the cost implications must be agreed on as highlighted in agenda item 9 on "emerging issues" of the MYPOW. YEMEN hoped for a report on micro-organisms and invertebrates at CGRFA-13 and, with the PHILIPPINES, supported the recommendations contained in both studies. CANADA noted the need to inform the CBD of the Commission's ongoing work in this area; called for a brief update on status and trends at CGRFA-13; and, with the US, supported strengthening technical support to developing countries. The US noted that assessments on soil micro-organisms, biological control agents, and plant pathogens should be reported at CGRFA-14, with progress reported on at CGRFA-13.

FURTHER PREPARATION FOR FUTURE SESSIONS

AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES: The Secretariat introduced the follow-up to recommendations regarding aquatic genetic resources for food and agriculture (CGRFA-12/09/16), highlighting, *inter alia*, the development of technical guidelines for the conservation and sustainable use of AGR and the preparation of the State of the World's AGR.

AFRICA, ASIA, BRAZIL and others welcomed the "guidance sought," as contained in the document. The ERG emphasized the need to agree on the cost implications of the guidance before committing to it. The US underscored the importance of harmonizing the work of the Commission with other bodies. BRAZIL and ARGENTINA underscored the need to avoid overlap between the work of the Committee on Fisheries and that of the UN General Assembly on marine genetic resources. IRAN stressed the need for transboundary cooperation on AGR. PRACTICAL ACTION called for the involvement of small-scale fisher organizations in the preparation of the SOW-AGR, while the PHILIPPINES noted the willingness of the Network of Aquaculture Centers for Asia Pacific to cooperate.

APPLICATION AND INTEGRATION OF

BIOTECHNOLOGIES IN GRFA: The Secretariat introduced the FAO's policy and technical assistance on biotechnology for food and agriculture (CGRFA-12/09/17), highlighting, *inter alia*, the preparation of a scoping paper on biotechnologies applied to the conservation and utilization of GRFA.

AFRICA, SRI LANKA, ECUADOR and others supported the guidance on the Commission's future work on biotechnology. Countries agreed on the preparation of a scoping paper describing the range of available biotechnologies for food and agriculture, to be examined by the ITWGs on PGR and AnGR. ECUADOR stressed that his country is free of transgenic crops in accordance with its new Constitution. The ERG said that they have implemented a comprehensive legal framework on genetically modified organisms, which takes into account environmental risks and the freedom of choice of farmers and consumers. The ERG, supported by CANADA, also proposed postponing to the next session of the Commission

the identification of the areas in which FAO should support the Commission's work on biotechnology. EGYPT hoped there would be support for the participation of developing countries' representatives at the FAO Conference on Agricultural Biotechnologies in Developing Countries (ABDC-10) to be held in Mexico. BRAZIL supported the FAO definition of biotechnology, which is broader than "genetic modification." PRACTICAL ACTION considered investing in the ABDC-10 conference "a waste of scarce resources" and argued that it would have been better to invest in a follow up to the *International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development*, co-sponsored by FAO, and that prioritizes agro-ecological approaches.

ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING FOR CGRFA: In an evening session, delegates continued discussing proposed text on the policies and arrangements for ABS for GRFA. To facilitate negotiations, the Chair emphasized that this is a "message" and not a "legally-binding document." On text reiterating the need for FAO, the Commission and the ITPGR to contribute "through technical support" to further work on ABS "within the auspices of the CBD," GRULAC agreed to remove the former phrase and retain the latter.

On text recommending international instruments on ABS to take into account the specific nature of agricultural biodiversity, SWITZERLAND, preferred specifically inviting the "CBD COP and its Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on ABS (ABS-WG)" to consider it. The EU and SWITZERLAND allowed for GRULAC's request to mention both "agricultural biodiversity," and "in particular genetic resources for food and agriculture."

On text concerning ABS policy development by the CBD and OEWG-ABS, SWITZERLAND, with the EU, KENYA, ETHIOPIA, and GRULAC, and opposed by CANADA, urged for condensed text. CANADA agreed to consider a shortened paragraph on "sectoral approaches, allowing for differential treatment of GRFA." While SWITZERLAND, the EU and others proposed deleting a paragraph on willingness to cooperate with the CBD and its ABS-WG, CANADA objected and stressed that it is important to indicate that the Commission can interact with the CBD in different ways. Delegates agreed to reflect some of the deleted provisions in the meeting's report.

IN THE CORRIDORS

After last night's long session on ABS for GRFA, delegates continued to move steadily through their agenda. Today featured a grand tour of genetic resource (GR) sectors, with stops to consider animal, forest and aquatic GR, and micro-organisms and invertebrate GRFA. Asked to reflect on the milestones achieved and preparatory work undertaken by the Commission for this session, most delegates commended the good progress made. In particular, consensus seemed to be building around the idea that the Commission's excellent evidence-based work on the various GR sectors and the amount of knowledge generated on GRFA would prove very useful in addressing cross-sectoral policy issues, especially in the context of the ongoing international ABS regime negotiations under the CBD. Some participants only wished the documents had all arrived in good time for this session, and not, in some cases, just days before.

In the evening, delegates returned to their lengthy discussions on ABS, struggling to agree on the Commission's fundamental message to CBD negotiators. One disgruntled participant left the room saying "countries will do what they want anyway, especially when it comes to the domestic implementation of international agreements." But, most were satisfied with their progress and agreed to come back tomorrow for more.