

CGRFA 16 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2017

CGRFA 16 delegates met in plenary to continue discussing sectoral matters including: review of implementation of the second Global Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GPA-PGR 2); preparation of the third report on the State of the World's PGRFA (SOW-PGR 3); review of implementation of the GPA for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (GPA-FGR); and status of the Commission's work on micro-organisms and invertebrates.

The contact group on access and benefit-sharing (ABS) met at lunchtime and in the evening to discuss intersessional work on ABS elements in agricultural subsectors. The Committee on the Strategic Plan and Multi-year Programme of Work 2018-2027 met in the evening.

PLENARY

Johanna Wider (Germany) reported on informal discussions on developing a schedule for finalizing the SOW-BFA Report and identifying further needs and possible actions. Noting that no consensus on the extension of the deadline for the submission of the country reports had been reached, she announced that informal consultations would continue.

PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES: Report of the Eighth Session of the ITWG-PGR: William Wigmore (Cook Islands), ITWG-PGR Vice-Chair, presented the ITWG-PGR 8 Report (CGRFA-16/17/15). The EU stressed simplifying the reporting process to increase submissions and ensure compatibility of the reports, and requested clarification on the schedule related to the review of GPA-PGR 2.

Review of GPA-PGR 2 Implementation: The Secretariat introduced documents CGRFA-16/17/16 and Inf. 17.1, 17.2, 20 and 21. On assessment of country implementation of GPA-PGR 2, the EU called for support to improve the quality of reporting and promote country reporting. NORWAY called for strengthening support to the Global Partnership Initiative for Plant Breeding Capacity Building.

All regions supported simplifying the reporting format for the World Information and Early Warning System (WIEWS) for PGR, with ASIA noting that lack of understanding hindered reporting. GRULAC proposed revisiting the issue at CGRFA 17 and, with CANADA and GERMANY, suggested that the ITPGR Secretariat be engaged in restructuring WIEWS.

On *ex-situ* conservation, ASIA, the EU, CANADA, NORWAY, SWITZERLAND and the US supported strengthening links between different conservation strategies. ASIA and AFRICA stressed FAO support for national genebanks. The EU called

for funding for regeneration of accessions or collections at all levels. NORWAY invited backup deposits to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. CANADA said support for genebanks should also improve access to germplasm for breeding. ECUADOR and MEXICO stressed the need for characterization, in addition to accession. The US recommended collaborating with the CGIAR Consortium. SRI LANKA called for capacity building and training programmes on the legal aspects of PGRFA.

On strengthening national seed systems, the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC, AFRICA, and the NEAR EAST called for technical and scientific cooperation, highlighting, among other needs, domestication of landraces and wild species, drought-resistant crops, seed stock security policies, training, and access to seed banks. SYRIA highlighted the need for conservation of PGR for countries suffering from humanitarian crisis or war. The ITPGR highlighted the need for a toolbox to assist parties in conserving PGRFA.

On the revised draft voluntary guidelines on national-level conservation and use of farmers' varieties and landraces, as well as of crop wild relatives, NORWAY, with SWITZERLAND, suggested referring to "sustainable use" throughout the document, and, with IPC and OXFAM NOVIB, adding reference to ITPGR Article 9 (farmers' rights). BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL suggested references to mainstreaming on-farm conservation and revision of farmers' varieties. The US and CANADA called for further input from the ITWG-PGR if no consensus is reached.

On the proposed global network for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management for PGRFA, GRULAC stressed farmer participation, establishing community seed banks and, with the NEAR EAST, safeguarding farmers' rights. The NEAR EAST also urged that the network be present at regional and local levels, whereas AFRICA suggested starting with activities at the sub-regional level. AFRICA also called for feasibility studies and innovative methodologies on efforts to conserve PGR *in situ* and a review system on wild food plants and crop wild varieties. MEXICO noted the need for a compilation of relevant studies. Responding to questions, the Secretariat clarified that the global network for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management will be owned by its members, not FAO.

CANADA and INDIA said *in situ* conservation complements *ex situ* conservation, with CANADA suggesting that the respective networks remain separate. OXFAM NOVIB called on donors to address the imbalance between *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation.

SOW-PGR 3 Preparation: The Secretariat presented CGRFA-16/17/17 on the preparation of SOW-PGR 3, noting that, by March 2016, 43 countries had completed online reporting,

and eight were in the process of doing so. ASIA, EUROPE, the NEAR EAST, the US and CANADA endorsed the revised timeline providing for the report's publication in 2023.

EUROPE recommended strengthening the links between the second GPA and the sustainable development goals (SDGs), and encouraged FAO to address these linkages as part of its climate adaptation work, and to access further funds through the Green Climate Fund.

On a list of proposed thematic studies on climate change, nutrition, characterization and evaluation of germplasm, safety duplicates, and new plant breeding technologies, EUROPE prioritized those "purely related" to PGRFA, whereas ASIA said all topics are of key importance. AFRICA proposed combining some of the studies. CANADA emphasized characterization and evaluation of germplasm and the importance of taxonomy. The US asked to state the studies' relevance to PGRFA conservation and sustainable use.

AFRICA called for capacity building and technical assistance for online monitoring. GRULAC proposed aligning WIEWS's design with reporting requirements under SDG 2.5 (GRFA conservation and sustainable use and ABS). The US supported collaboration with the FAO Statistical Division.

FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES: ITWG-FGR 4 Report: Sibidou Sina (Burkina Faso), Chair of the ITWG-FGR, presented the report of the group's fourth session (CGRFA-16/17/18), noting the key outcomes included: requesting FAO to develop a funding strategy to support the implementation of the GPA and encourage donors to provide support; adopting the indicators to monitor the implementation of the GPA; and requesting FAO to prepare voluntary guidelines for developing a national strategy for FGR.

Review of GPA-FGR Implementation: The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents on the status of GPA implementation (CGRFA-16/17/19) and monitoring of implementation (CGRFA-16/17/20), drawing attention to: the draft voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for FGR; proposed targets, indicators and verifiers; and the draft schedule, including steps for preparing the Second SOW-FGR. AFRICA said the guidelines should be in harmony with existing national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) under the CBD, and called for a strategy for funding for implementation. SUDAN requested adding rangelands to forestry resources. EUROPE welcomed combining GPA monitoring with SOW-FGR preparation, and called for strengthening the role of regional networks in GPA implementation, with BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL calling for political and financial support to assist them. IPC expressed concern that the definition of "forests" currently includes mono-cropping plantations for timber and paper production, and called for consultations with indigenous and farmer communities on regional network initiatives.

EUROPE, ASIA and GRULAC recommended adopting the proposed set of targets, indicators and verifiers in their present form. EUROPE stressed that country reports and data submitted to FAO should be processed and made available. The US proposed that countries identify the indicators most relevant to their own progress, and supported a recommendation to seek extra-budgetary support and voluntary contributions from FAO members.

On a set of reporting guidelines, EUROPE suggested working in consultation with the ITWG-FGR and national focal points, and producing a glossary of terms and concepts. GRULAC and the NEAR EAST said reporting should be simplified, with the NEAR EAST expressing concern that monitoring places a burden on countries. The US encouraged cooperating with other

organizations to collect data and reduce countries' reporting burden. ZAMBIA called for financial support for quality and timely data collection for the submission of national reports.

MICRO-ORGANISMS AND INVERTEBRATES: Status of the Commission's Work: The Secretariat introduced documents on the status of the Commission's work on the conservation and sustainable use of micro-organisms and invertebrates (CGRFA-16/17/21, INF 22 and 23). EUROPE, AFRICA, BRAZIL, CANADA and ECUADOR supported requesting FAO to prepare a draft work plan for future work on the sustainable use and conservation of micro-organisms and invertebrates for CGRFA 17. The US preferred to await the completion of the SOW-BFA before commenting on the need for additional work.

ASIA suggested the Secretariat establish a platform on country information systems related to honeybees, and to consider other types of pollinators. THAILAND proposed considering micro-organisms involved in ruminant digestion. The Secretariat drew attention to a report on this issue published in 2012. AFRICA emphasized the role of micro-organisms in climate change adaptation and food security.

COMMITTEE ON THE STRATEGIC PLAN AND MYPOW 2018-2027

Delegates debated, among other matters, options for frequency of review of the MYPOW, which previously had been treated as a rolling plan that was updated at every Commission session. Some favored conducting a mid-term review of the MYPOW four years after adoption of the strategic plan. Delegates addressed whether the scope of the invertebrates and micro-organisms subsector should also include pollinators. Discussions continued into the evening.

CONTACT GROUP ON ABS

The contact group, co-chaired by Pierre du Plessis (Namibia) and Elzbieta Martyniuk (Poland), discussed, *inter alia*: work on ABS for GRFA to raise awareness and assist countries in reflecting, in their ABS measures, the importance of GRFA; assistance to countries in developing legislative, administrative and policy measures for ABS for GRFA; the modalities for holding an international workshop on ABS for GRFA; and how to name the outcome. They agreed on the title "non-prescriptive explanatory notes describing, within the context of the ABS Elements, the distinctive features and specific practices of different sub-sectors of GRFA." Delegates also discussed: the purpose of the explanatory notes and the process to develop them; the type of information that will be gathered; collaboration with the ITPGR; and the issue of genetic sequence information and potential implications for the conservation and sustainable use of GRFA, including the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their utilization.

Discussions continued into the night.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the Chair declared his goal that all delegates should successfully get on their flights at the end of the week, discussions stayed right on schedule on Wednesday. Deliberations were successfully completed on PGR and ABS, typically the largest and potentially most contentious issues. "Once we get through these two, the rest is a breeze," predicted a veteran of Commission discussions.

This proved to be the case. Ironically, discussions about reducing the frequency of MYPOW reviews, to free up space at future sessions, took up significant time in the evening, as one delegate reflected on the difficulty of specifying when the mid-term review of an indefinite rolling plan should take place.