

CGRFA 16 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2017

CGRFA 16 delegates met in plenary to hear reports from informal and contact group deliberations on the Report on the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (SOW-BFA); access and benefit sharing (ABS) and the Commission's Strategic Plan and Multi-year Programme of Work 2018-2027 (MYPOW), followed by discussions on the draft strategic plan and MYPOW. They also discussed cooperation with other international organization and agreements; other matters; and a draft resolution on the CGRFA's contribution to the SDGs.

Deliberations on ABS were held in a contact group throughout the day and in plenary in the evening.

PLENARY

REPORTS: Johanna Wider (Germany) reported on informal consultations on the SOW-BFA report, noting agreement on: submitting country reports by 30 June 2017; making the revised SOW-BFA, thematic studies and regional synthesis reports available in March 2018; and completing the final SOW-BFA during the second half of 2018. On needs and possible actions, she said the group had agreed that each region will nominate up to three focal points by 1 September 2017 to facilitate the collection of views, and to convene a meeting in June 2018. EUROPE recommended budgeting for translation of the report's summary in all UN languages, without relying on extra-budgetary funds.

Pierre du Plessis (Namibia), Co-Chair of the contact group on ABS, said that further discussions were needed on whether the issue of genetic sequence information should be mentioned in the ABS section of the CGRFA report, or in a separate section due to its cross-cutting nature. He noted that the contact group would reconvene to resolve this issue.

Médi MOUNGUI (Cameroon), Chair of the open-ended committee on the draft strategic plan and MYPOW, reported that the committee had met twice to develop the programming matrix covering the 17th to the 21st session of the Commission, addressing all issues except on matters related to ABS and biotechnologies, which were dealt with in ongoing discussions.

MYPOW: Evaluation of FAO's Contribution to the Conservation and Sustainable Use of GRFA: Bernd Bultemeier, FAO, presented the methodology and findings of the evaluation, highlighting, *inter alia*, that: GRFA work is linked to other normative and global policy work within FAO; projects have developed capacities but the long-term impacts are unclear due to the one-off nature of projects; GRFA activities compete for limited resources; and ongoing changes of FAO institutional architecture invite repositioning of GRFA work for better integration and increased synergies.

Review of MYPOW Implementation and Draft Strategic Plan 2018-2027: CGRFA Secretary Irene Hoffmann presented the draft strategic plan 2018-2027 (CGRFA-16/17/22), containing: goals and targets aligned with relevant SDGs; a draft MYPOW with suggested outputs, milestones and activities; and suggested activities in preparation of CGRFA 17 and 18. She also presented a document on funding, including a proposal to establish a multi-donor trust fund (CGRFA-16/17/23); and suggested indicators to measure progress against the strategic plan (CGRFA-16/17/Inf.24).

On the draft strategic plan, EUROPE proposed allowing members to comment, and discussing a revised plan at CGRFA 17. BRAZIL registered concern with references to ABS. The US asked to include reference to CGRFA's contribution to the FAO Strategic Framework and disagreed with targets not corresponding to SDG targets.

MEXICO wished to include a reference to "benefits and traditional knowledge be shared on an equitable basis" in the goal on ABS. CANADA asked to specify production "for food security" in the goal on sustainable use, and reference to "scientist and industry associations" in the goal on participation.

On MYPOW, EUROPE supported the inclusion of biotechnologies, climate change, and a concept note on health in the outputs and milestones. CANADA and the US called for integrating work on health and nutrition. The US supported work on climate change as a cross-cutting issue, and suggested addressing all technical aspects of genetic sequence data as part of biotechnologies, not only aspects relevant to ABS. On activities for CGRFA 17 and 18 preparation, MEXICO asked for reference to micro-organisms and invertebrates, and to "mainstreaming biodiversity and pollinators."

The US and EUROPE supported the cross-sectoral, multi-donor trust fund, with the US noting its voluntary character and EUROPE expressing concerns over fiscal rules. CANADA, with EUROPE, noted the recommendation does not exclude targeted country support. EUROPE further suggested that: FAO's increased focus on biodiversity and GRFA be reflected in regular programme allocations; FAO should be the key recipient of funding for SDG target 2.5 (conservation and sustainable use of GRFA and ABS); and projects should be developed on GRFA and climate change mitigation and adaptation, eligible for Green Climate Fund (GCF) funding. URUGUAY stressed the need to ensure participation of developing countries' representatives and experts in the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. BRAZIL suggested forwarding the issue of sectoral funds and extra-budgetary contributions to the FAO Council. SUDAN called for financial resources and technical support to establish the Green Belt and ensure rural development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

EUROPE and CANADA asked to postpone discussion on measuring progress.

IFOAM stressed that seed-related legislation should strike a balance between rights of farmers and consumers.

ABS: Elzbieta Martyniuk (Poland), Co-Chair of the ABS contact group, reported that the group had agreed on, among other issues: the process for the development of explanatory notes for subsectors of GRFA; and the process to address digital sequence information, including an exploratory, fact-finding, scoping study that will feed in the CBD's relevant work.

In plenary, CGRFA Secretary Hoffmann introduced an updated MYPOW and asked delegates whether specific outcomes of the contact group should be included in the review of the use of ABS elements.

Contact group Co-Chair Martyniuk advised delegates that the group had not discussed MYPOW, and requested retaining the original language regarding the proposed study, pending further discussion of MYPOW implementation. CANADA, with the US and EUROPE, requested addressing the issue under the biotechnologies work stream, including conservation, sustainable use and ABS implications. NAMIBIA, BRAZIL, IRAN, TUNISIA and CAMEROON proposed also discussing genetic sequence information under the ABS agenda item at CGRFA 17.

Following lengthy deliberations, delegates agreed to amend a proposal by NAMIBIA and establish a separate work stream on digital sequence information that will address implications for conservation, sustainable use and ABS.

CGRFA CONTRIBUTION TO THE SDGs: NORWAY and SWITZERLAND submitted a draft resolution to be forwarded to the FAO Conference, highlighting the Commission's contribution to achieving SDGs and other agreements.

BRAZIL requested reflecting agreement to further discuss budgetary issues. Supported by CHILE, she also proposed text on South-South and triangular cooperation.

The US proposed inviting Members to develop funding proposals consistent with their national priorities, when seeking funds from the GCF. CAMEROON proposed mentioning the private sector, in relation to pursuing extra-budgetary funds, and supporting capacity development activities in developing countries. The EU suggested highlighting GPAs as internationally agreed frameworks, recognizing the Commission as an important SDG partner, and encouraging donors to support GPA implementation as part of their SDG strategies.

In the afternoon, delegates discussed a revised draft resolution. They agreed on: referring to "national" actions in a paragraph recognizing the importance of CGRFA GPAs as a framework; and requesting FAO's support for country-led and "regional and international" projects. They agreed to only refer to "South-South and triangular cooperation" in a paragraph on capacity building.

The draft resolution was adopted with these and editorial changes.

COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS: **Cooperation with ITPGR:** Delegates considered CGRFA-16/17/25. The Secretariat noted the ITPGR Governing Body had agreed to collaborate on: monitoring of the GPA-PGR 2; ABS; guidelines on crop wild relatives; conservation and use; and global networking on *in situ* and on-farm management.

Kent Nnadozie, *Ad-Interim* Secretary, ITPGR, highlighted the proposed joint organization of an international workshop on ABS, and the proposed transfer of activities from the Commission to the Treaty with potential financial and administrative implications outlined in the document.

GRULAC supported collaboration on: global information systems; global targets and indicators; sustainable use; the MYPOW; and ABS. GRULAC, ASIA and EUROPE supported a joint workshop on ABS. CANADA encouraged close cooperation between WIEWS and the Global Information System (GLIS) under ITPGR Article 7 (National Commitments and International Cooperation), and the Genesys information gateway. EUROPE underscored ITPGR's information system to support SOW-BFA and SOW-PGR 3.

On the transfer of activities to the Treaty, GRULAC, ASIA and EUROPE noted that, due to administrative and financial implications, the item should be kept under review. CANADA noted that the Commission should continue to address PGR in the context of cross-cutting issues, and that FAO must continue to provide institutional support for transferred activities. The US preferred that the Secretariats of the Treaty and the Commission identify areas for close collaboration, rather than transferring issues.

Cooperation with International Instruments and

Organizations: Delegates considered CGRFA-16/17/25. GRULAC, with the CBD, highlighted the Cancún Declaration on mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for well-being.

The GLOBAL CROP DIVERSITY TRUST highlighted the Trust's endowment fund and invited additional investments. The CBD welcomed the FAO Platform on biodiversity and the agriculture sectors. GLOBAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (GFAR) highlighted its "Global Foresight Hub," a multi-stakeholder platform for promoting equitable agri-food systems. BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL noted that the Asia region has received the largest number of PGR transfers from the ITPGR's Multilateral System.

GRULAC, with ASIA, underscored collaboration with different organizations providing input and feedback to the SOW-BFA report. CANADA suggested that future invitations for submissions be extended to relevant industry associations. AFRICA, opposed by the US, asked to include "development" in the document's title to highlight the need for farmer participation and on-the-ground impacts. NEW ZEALAND proposed mentioning impacts of cooperation at the country level in the meeting's report.

OTHER MATTERS: Date and Place of Next Meeting:

Delegates agreed that CGRFA 17 will take place from 18-22 February 2019 in Rome, Italy.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chairs: Delegates nominated William Wigmore (Cook Islands) as CGRFA 17 Chair, and the following Vice-Chairs representing their region: Yusral Tahir (Indonesia) for Asia; Deidre Januarie (Namibia) for Africa; François Pythoud (Switzerland) for Europe; Tamara Villanueva (Chile) for GRULAC; Maen Ali Ahmed Al Jarmouzi (Yemen) for the Near East; Christine Dawson (US) for North America; and William Wigmore (Cook Islands) for the Southwest Pacific.

Christine Dawson (US) was elected as Rapporteur.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Look how wrong you can be! The expectation that ABS discussions were almost settled proved overly optimistic, as the attempt to resolve "a few small issues" morphed into extended deliberations over language regarding genetic/digital sequencing data. "This is how things are with ABS," explained an observer familiar with ABS discussions under the CBD. "Once a term becomes politically loaded, even mentioning it can cause debates."

Another point of contention was finding a "home" for this new issue. While some felt that sequencing technologies should be discussed exclusively in the realm of ABS, where they can impact the way genetic resources are used and transferred, others wanted to discuss them in the context of biotechnologies, noting that they could also unlock new methods of identifying, characterizing and conserving GRFA. Rescue came in the form of a new work stream on the implications of sequencing for both ABS and conservation and sustainable use. While most delegates were glad to have averted another late night, ABS specialists were heard mumbling that, "This is only the beginning."

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of CGRFA 16 will be available on Monday, 6 February 2017, online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/cgrfa16/>