

CGRFA 15 HIGHLIGHTS:

MONDAY, 19 JANUARY 2015

The fifteenth session of the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA 15) opened on Monday, 19 January 2015, at the FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. Delegates met in plenary to consider cross-sectoral matters under the Commission's Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW), including: the preparation of the report on the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (SoW-BFA); targets and indicators for biodiversity for food and agriculture; access and benefit-sharing (ABS) for genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA); and biodiversity and nutrition.

OPENING

CGRFA 15 Chair Amar Tahiri (Morocco) opened the meeting. Maria-Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General, Natural Resources, FAO, highlighted the CGRFA's role in developing and implementing policies that address growing pressure on natural resources, and affirmed FAO's support for a strong international agreement on climate change.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), reported on CBD-CGRFA collaboration, noting FAO's leading role in implementing Aichi target 13 (genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and wild relatives); the entry into force of the Nagoya Protocol; risk assessment regarding genetically modified organisms; and synthetic biology.

Linda Collette, CGRFA Secretary, reviewed changes in the policy-making context since CGRFA-14, including: formulation of goals under the post-2015 agenda; entry into force of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS; and the ongoing climate negotiations. Chair Tahiri noted that the Bureau is considering a more cross-sectoral mode of working for the Commission.

William Wigmore (Cook Islands) summarized discussions of the special event on 'Food Security and Genetic Diversity' held on Friday, 16 January, which had recognized the need to integrate nutritional aspects in crop and animal improvement programmes.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates adopted the meeting's agenda and organization of work (CGRFA-15/15/1 and 2) with minor amendments.

CROSS-SECTORAL MATTERS

PREPARATION OF THE SOW-BFA: The Secretariat introduced document CGRFA 15/15/3, highlighting that the SoW-BFA should be based on country reports and thematic studies. She noted that although guidelines for country report preparation had been developed, only five country reports have been submitted.

The EU, speaking also for Norway and Switzerland, supported including micro-organisms and invertebrates, and conducting regional exchange of experiences and additional thematic studies. The US expressed concerns on data availability, stressing that the report's conclusions should be based on hard data and scientific evidence.

GRULAC, AFRICA, NEAR EAST, AFGHANISTAN and BRAZIL requested technical and financial support, including webinars, workshops and extrabudgetary resources, to assist countries in the preparation of their reports. ASIA proposed regional consultations to finalize the reports. The Secretariat said technical support could be provided through webinars and video conferencing, if further resources are made available.

Several groups proposed extending the deadline for submitting country reports, with the EU and the US suggesting the end of June 2015, whereas CONGO, ETHIOPIA and ARGENTINA preferred the end of September 2015. Delegates agreed that countries should "preferably" submit their reports by the end of June but "no later" than the end of September, with the CGRFA Secretary clarifying that the SoW-BFA report may therefore not be fully completed for the Commission's next session.

The INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE (IPC) FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY proposed considering not only species for human consumption but also other biodiversity, such as insects and micro-organisms. The INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS (IFOAM) suggested including ecosystem services, such as pollination, and drawing on outcomes of international conferences and regional symposia on ecological agriculture.

TARGETS AND INDICATORS FOR BIODIVERSITY FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE: The Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/4. The EU said that indicators should be scientifically sound, understandable, feasible to obtain and flexible, stressing the need for ensuring consistency among the relevant international fora in the refinement of indicators for biodiversity. The US expressed concern regarding food consumption data, which are difficult to obtain. AFRICA requested support to conduct food consumption surveys.

CANADA supported strengthening cooperation with other relevant institutions. On animal genetic resources, he asked to better define breed and population classification and to add statistical tools to assess current trends and status.

The IPC stressed the importance of an indicator to monitor the capacity of farmers and indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) as custodians of biodiversity.

Plant GRFA: The Secretariat presented document CGRFA 15/15.4.1, including a proposed list of higher-order composite indicators (HCI) for each of the plant GRFA targets under the Global Plan of Action (GPA). CANADA supported the use of HCIs linked to GPA implementation. BRAZIL said delegates



should agree on a model and methodology rather than endorsing the proposed HCIs. ARGENTINA expressed concerns on data availability for the proposed model and suggested including expert opinions from national focal points to facilitate coherence, applicability and comparability over time.

The US requested replacing quantitative numerical indicators with numerical ranges. The EU expressed concern that HCIs may still require calculation based on the underlying 63 indicators. AFRICA said a pilot phase of monitoring HCIs will be valuable in ensuring the order of priorities.

The Secretariat advised that HCIs are based on the expert judgment of a national focal point or committee, and that countries can identify areas where particular indicators do not apply.

Forest GRFA: The Secretariat introduced document CGRFA 15/15/4.2, which includes a draft list of proposed indicators. BRAZIL, the EU and CANADA supported, and delegates agreed to, requesting FAO to coordinate a consultative process to further refine the list of verifiable indicators and to identify a set of targets for the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest GRFA for the consideration by the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group (ITWG) at its next session.

ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING: Hafad Mozafari Hashjin (Iran) presented the work of the team of technical and legal experts on ABS (ABS expert team) (CGRFA 15/15/Inf. 11 and Inf.12), stressing they were able to agree on draft elements to facilitate domestic implementation of ABS for different subsectors of GRFA. The Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/5 and other relevant information documents (CGRFA-15/15/Inf.13, Inf.13/Add.1 and Inf.14).

GRULAC preferred to “welcome” rather than “adopt” the draft elements to facilitate domestic implementation of ABS and proposed a reference to the understanding and utilization of traditional knowledge (TK). Expressing concern that further capacity development is subject to the availability of funds, AFRICA supported further review of the draft elements, noting his general support for the proposed resolution. AFRICA and the EU called for mutually supportive work among the Commission, the ITPGR and the Nagoya Protocol.

The EU, speaking also for Norway, Switzerland and Turkey, proposed that countries provide feedback on the use of the draft elements. He suggested emphasizing active management in the resolution’s preamble, and to compiling information on existing tools and voluntary codes of conduct in all subsectors of GRFA. AFGHANISTAN noted that not all FAO Member States are contracting parties to the ITPGR, and recommended seeking legal advice regarding implications of adopting the resolution.

CANADA said ABS for GRFA should be addressed by the ITPGR Governing Body, and, with JAPAN and the EU, proposed reflecting the role of the ITPGR in the draft resolution. He said it is premature to discuss an international ABS instrument, as this depends on how the Nagoya Protocol will be implemented. ARGENTINA said that where a history of human intervention makes it difficult to establish countries of origin, benefit sharing should be determined on a case-by-case basis. JAPAN stressed that the draft elements should not allow for retroactive applications of ABS requirements, and should cover only genetic resources, not biological resources and commodities. The US recommended making the draft elements available for countries to use, highlighting the need for technical assistance to ensure that ABS measures sufficiently accommodate GRFA considerations.

BHUTAN highlighted the need for legal, technical and financial support to developing countries in the implementation of national ABS regimes.

ITPGR highlighted the main developments during its last Governing Body meeting, noting that the Treaty currently has 133 contracting parties. CBD highlighted collaborative work with CGRFA and ITPGR, suggesting the CGRFA could share relevant standards and practices on ABS in the ABS Clearing-house of the Nagoya Protocol.

SEARICE called for highlighting farmers’ rights and their role in the sustainable use and conservation of GRFA. She suggested using the terminology ‘indigenous peoples and local communities’ in accordance with the CBD decision.

Delegates agreed to establish an informal group to further consider: the guidance to be given by the CGRFA; a proposed draft resolution on ABS for GRFA to the FAO Conference; and continuation of the ABS expert team.

BIODIVERSITY AND NUTRITION: The Secretariat presented document CGRFA-15/15/6. ARGENTINA highlighted the importance of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2). With the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC and BRAZIL, he proposed stating that the guidelines on biodiversity and nutrition are “voluntary.”

The EU speaking also for Norway, Switzerland and Turkey, proposed more references to aquatic resources and to additional ICN 2 recommendations, as well as the improvement of the scientific base.

The US expressed concerns that a section on raising awareness and implementation suggests scientific certainty that does not exist. The US and CANADA highlighted the need for robust scientific evidence.

CANADA said the concepts of dietary diversity and under-utilized species need to be well-defined and that recommendations in the guidelines should be consistent with relevant international obligations.

AFRICA called for additional research to improve the scientific base and asked for support to develop capacity for implementation. KENYA noted biodiversity’s potential to combat malnutrition and called for additional indicators, such as for nutrient productivity.

BRAZIL supported the call to enhance research capacity, knowledge and awareness of useful traits from the nutrition perspective; and to give special attention to native and locally-adapted species and breeds. The SOUTHWEST PACIFIC recommended targeting primary-school students and eliciting support at the highest level to promote consumption of highly nutritious indigenous crops, such as the Pacific banana.

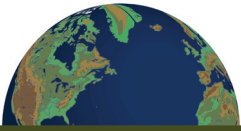
The IPC said loss of biodiversity is not a reason to invest in bio-fortified food. He called for farmers to be allowed access to public gene banks. IFOAM called for communication campaigns to introduce healthy foods, targeting children and youth. The GLOBAL FORUM FOR AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (GFAR) invited countries’ participation in efforts by GFAR, FAO and CGIAR to develop metrics and indicators of nutritious consumption, based on the nutritive quality of foods, as well as access to food.

The item will be further discussed on Tuesday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Delegates started CGRFA 15 in an upbeat mood convening in *bella Roma* after a busy weekend. Some had already met in various pre-meeting events, including a full day seminar on biodiversity and food security the previous Friday. The Seminar’s call to incorporate nutrition in crop and animal improvement programmes raised expectations that CGRFA-15 would “move from talk to action.” After the discussion, however, some felt that the proposed guidelines risked missing the mark, while others explained that a strong outcome should clearly express the links between nutrition and food security.

At lunchtime, some delegates feared that the swift pace of the morning could be bogged down by ABS discussions due to well-known polarization of views around intellectual property and farmers’ rights. As negotiations did grind to halt, proving the doomsayers right in principle, the latter had to concede that the reason for protracted discussions was procedural rather than substantive. As delegates prepared to take ABS into informal discussions, several noted that they did not see any insurmountable challenges, with one predicting that, “We’ll be over this in a few hours, if not days.”



CGRFA 15 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2015

CGRFA 15 delegates met in plenary throughout the day to consider cross-sectoral issues, including: the application of biotechnologies for the sustainable conservation and use of genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA); climate change and GRFA; biodiversity and nutrition; and access and benefit-sharing (ABS) with regard to GRFA. Delegates also discussed: animal GRFA, including preparation of the second Report on the State of the World's Animal GRFA (SoW-AnGR) and implementation of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources (GPA-AnGR); and forest GR, including follow-up to the GPA for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest GR (GPA-FGR).

CROSS-SECTORAL MATTERS

BIOTECHNOLOGIES FOR GRFA CONSERVATION AND USE: The Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/7. AFRICA, GRULAC, ASIA and the EU, speaking also for Norway, Switzerland and Turkey (the EU), supported strengthening developing-country capacities to develop appropriate biotechnologies for the characterization, conservation and utilization of GRFA at national and regional levels. BRAZIL underscored the role of triangular cooperation in fully understanding related risks and benefits.

The EU noted that field trials and contained use activities must take place under specific biosafety regulations. The NEAR EAST suggested studying trends and progress regarding the application of biotechnologies in different regions. CANADA noted that the nature of appropriate biotechnologies may differ between regions. The US encouraged enhanced coordination of work and dissemination of updated scientific information. The IPC suggested strengthening regional capacities for research on traditional knowledge of biodiversity and the appropriate use of *in situ* conservation.

AUSTRALIA, IRAN, PARAGUAY and CANADA opposed reference to risk assessment and socio-economic analysis, to avoid duplication of work with other international bodies. BRAZIL favored retaining the references to portray their importance, even if FAO is not requested to conduct similar analysis. ARGENTINA supported removing language on risks and benefits, but underscored the importance of socio-economic analysis. The EU suggested that Parties may conduct such analyses at the national level. The US proposed that members "may" highlight the importance of socio-economic analysis of certain biotechnology applications in the characterization, conservation and utilization of GRFA. AFGHANISTAN supported having the FAO undertake socio-

economic analysis. ETHIOPIA and the IPC highlighted the importance of assessing socio-economic risk. SEARICE supported that FAO work on risk assessment.

The NEAR EAST and CANADA suggested requesting FAO to periodically study trends and progress of the application of biotechnology to the conservation and utilization of GRFA. Noting that provisions for risk assessment already exist at regional and national levels, BRAZIL proposed stating that Parties "may wish to highlight the importance of conducting socio-economic analysis."

After informal consultations, delegates agreed to delete a reference to "addressing benefits and risks of biotechnology" and to add that "Parties may wish to undertake socio-economic analyses of biotechnology applications, where appropriate."

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GRFA: The Secretariat introduced documents CGRFA-15/15/6 and Inf.15. AFRICA supported the revised draft Guidelines to Support the Integration of Genetic Diversity into National Climate Change Adaptation Planning. BRAZIL and the US opposed renegotiating the guidelines. ARGENTINA and the US suggested clarifying that the guidelines are "voluntary".

AFGHANISTAN asked whether the activities included in the revised proposal of the programme of work would continue to depend on extra-budgetary sources. ASIA said that GRFA aspects should be considered within national adaptation plans, but opposed developing a separate plan for GRFA and climate change.

The EU highlighted the relevance of addressing both mitigation and adaptation to climate change in the different sectors, such as animals, plants and forests. The COOK ISLANDS highlighted efforts to address food security concerns in relation to climate change, including research on plant GRFA for resilience. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) highlighted the interdependence between climate change and land systems and the synergistic implementation of plans and programmes to address climate change efficiently. BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL stressed the relevance of agricultural biodiversity in national climate change adaptation planning. SEARICE highlighted the contribution of indigenous peoples to climate change adaptation and supported raising their awareness to develop location-specific climate change policies.

BIODIVERSITY AND NUTRITION: The US reported back from informal discussions, saying that delegates had agreed to refer to "voluntary" guidelines and to qualify language on research, implementation and awareness as "examples of how mainstreaming could be implemented, depending on each country's needs and capabilities, as appropriate."

Delegates agreed to the compromise text.

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ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING: Bert Visser (the Netherlands) reported that the Friends of the Chair group had agreed on text relating to the ABS draft elements, including a proposal to reconvene the ABS expert team. He noted that the group had not agreed on whether to adopt a draft resolution to present this outcome to the FAO Conference, or to forward the CGRFA 15 report without a resolution.

CANADA, supported by the EU, preferred a draft resolution to give greater visibility and recognition to the draft elements. He noted this would provide a source of information to governments who may be considering national action, given the Nagoya Protocol's recent entry into force.

AFRICA expressed reluctance to adopt a resolution, saying the draft elements have not been finalized.

Informal consultations will continue on Wednesday.

ANIMAL GRFA

Drago Kompan (Slovenia), speaking for Harvey Blackburn (US), Chair of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal GRFA (ITWG-AnGR) introduced the report of the group's eighth session (CGRFA-15/15/9). The EU suggested that FAO continue implementation of the GPA-AnGR, seeking financial resources through, *inter alia*, partnerships. AFRICA emphasized conservation and sustainable use of indigenous breeds and their genetic improvement.

SOW-ANGR: The Secretariat introduced the second SoW-AnGR (CGRFA-15/15/10) and related information documents (CGRFA-15/15/Inf.17.1, Inf.17.2 and Inf.17.3) highlighting: the importance of livestock diversity for adapting production systems to future changes; new challenges caused by increased demand for meat; and an increasing proportion of livestock at risk, from 15% to 17% since 2005.

Hungary, for the EUROPEAN REGION (EUROPE), supported by AFRICA, suggested preparing a report summary and translating both documents into all UN languages. The US expressed concern over data availability regarding livestock breeds classified at risk.

CANADA called for the application of statistical tools to accurately reflect the current status of animal populations and breeds. BRAZIL recommended providing further information on locally adapted breeds.

IMPLEMENTATION AND UPDATING OF THE GPA-ANGR: The Secretariat introduced documents CGRFA-15/15/11, Inf.18, Inf.19 and Inf. 20 and background study paper no.66, underscoring the stepwise approach to reviewing the second GPA-AnGR. Most regions supported the stepwise approach.

AFRICA called for financial and technical support for GPA-AnGR implementation. EUROPE prioritized inviting donors to contribute before discussing maximum budgets or threshold levels for implementation.

ASIA and AFRICA welcomed the draft guidelines for the development of integrated multipurpose animal recording systems, with AFRICA requesting that they be characterized as "voluntary."

EUROPE and AFRICA called for updating information and breed classifications in the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS) to ensure informed decisions, as well as maintaining DAD-IS as the global clearing house mechanism. CANADA expressed concern over the DAD-IS' lack of connection to other databases. CHINA underscored the importance of DAD-IS and called for allocation of funds to ensure full geographic representation.

Opposed by ARGENTINA and BRAZIL, the US expressed concern that the use of the terms "exotic" or "locally adapted" may lead to inflation of the number of breeds. Before taking further budget decisions, the US suggested waiting for the results of currently funded projects. The Secretariat clarified a distinction between breeds and national breed populations, noting that a breed may be spread over several countries and

may consist of several national breed populations some of which may be classified as "locally adapted" in one country, and "exotic" in another.

AUSTRALIA and the US questioned references to specific sustainable development goals (SDGs), noting that the post-2015 development agenda is still under negotiation. The Secretariat responded that specific SDGs were mentioned to maintain continuity as the GPA-AnGR had previously supported the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on environmental sustainability and poverty. Delegates nonetheless agreed to the US' request to delete the reference.

FOREST GRFA

Pierre Bouillon (France), Chair of the ITWG on Forest GR, introduced the report of the ITWG's third session CGRFA-15/15/12. CANADA and the US emphasized the intersessional consultation process to further review the proposed indicators of the implementation of the GPA-FGR, with the US suggesting the need to reduce the number of indicators. The EU proposed that material produced in the process of creating the Report on the State of the World's Forest GR (SoW-FGR), such as the thematic studies, be widely disseminated, including by publishing it on the FAO website. BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL stressed that articles drawn from these thematic studies are published in magazines with open access and that the thematic studies that contain further information are available on the FAO website.

GPA-FGR FOLLOW-UP: The Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/13. BRAZIL, supported by the US, suggested that the strategy for the implementation of the GPA-FGR take into account and be consistent with the work of the relevant international instruments and processes related to forests. She also proposed that indigenous peoples and local communities be involved in the process for developing technical standards, where possible.

The EU encouraged regional collaboration on GPA-FGR implementation, and called on FAO to develop information systems to ensure dissemination of information produced during GPA-FGR implementation. ARGENTINA highlighted priority setting for implementation at the country level. AFRICA called for technical support to foster experience sharing, and community involvement in GPA-FGR implementation. The EU and the US supported seeking extra-budgetary funding and donor support for GPA-FGR implementation. The EU and JAPAN suggested careful consideration of a funding strategy.

On coordinating and avoiding duplication of efforts in implementing the GPA-FGR, FAO highlighted collaboration with existing regional networks referenced in the report.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The threat of an evening plenary motivated delegates to catch up with the agenda so that by the end of the day the meeting was fully on track again. Not only did participants complete all of today's tasks, but they also resolved outstanding issues on biodiversity and nutrition and biotechnologies. Some, however, attributed the swift progress to other reasons, such as slimmed down mandates. One delegate explained that agreement on climate change and genetic resources, for example, is easier to come by, now that mitigation is off this agenda.

Finding agreement on the right way to communicate the Commission's guidance on access and benefit-sharing to the FAO Conference remained nonetheless elusive. While some said a resolution would send a clear message regarding the CGRFA's contribution to implementing the Nagoya Protocol, others cautioned that it could prejudice possible future negotiations on specialized ABS regimes under the Commission. One delegate recommended that the Secretariat should uphold the threat of night sessions to ensure that ABS discussions will be resolved on time.

CGRFA 15 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2015

CGRFA 15 delegates met in plenary throughout the day to consider: plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (plant GRFA), including the review of implementation of the second Global Plan of Action for Plant GRFA (GPA-PGR 2) and preparation of the third report on the State of the World's Plant GRFA (SoW-PGR 3); aquatic genetic resources (aquatic GR), including preparation of the first SoW report on aquatic GR and the establishment of an *Ad hoc* Intergovernmental Working Group (ITWG) on Aquatic GR; and micro-organisms and invertebrates. Delegates also considered the composition of ITWGs and reconsidered outstanding issues relating to ABS with regard to GRFA.

PLANT GRFA

Luis Salaiques Sanchez (Spain), Chair of the ITWG on Plant GRFA, presented the report of the group's seventh session (CGRFA-15/15/14). The EU, with the US, noted the importance of technical support for the implementation of genebank standards for PGRFA, with the US underscoring their voluntary character. The US welcomed the recommendation regarding on-farm management of plant GRFA, stressing the need to consider related costs and technical demands.

REVIEW OF GPA-PGR 2: The Secretariat introduced documents CGRFA-15/15/15 and Inf. 21-25. On GPA-PGR 2 implementation, several developing countries called for FAO to build countries' capacities for implementation. The US stressed that implementation is a national responsibility not that of FAO. CANADA noted duplications with ITPGR work.

In situ conservation and on-farm management: CANADA suggested addressing *in situ* conservation and on-farm management separately, while ensuring complementarity and balance between both strategies. The EU said it is premature to decide whether these strategies should be supported by a single or two different networks. AFRICA highlighted the role of smallholders in *in situ* conservation. ARGENTINA highlighted that *in situ* conservation networks should respect countries' sovereignty. The IPC called for strengthening support to on-farm activities.

Ex situ conservation: CANADA, the EU, BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, CHILE and ETHIOPIA said that gene bank standards should be voluntary. On collaboration, delegates decided that the Commission should work synergistically with "relevant international organizations, especially the ITPGR."

Sustainable use: CANADA and BRAZIL said the draft technical guidelines on national conservation of landraces and wild relatives should be further revised by the ITWG-

PGR. BRAZIL stressed the discussion should include relevant stakeholders, in particular small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples and local communities.

CANADA proposed endorsing the draft guide on national seed policy formulation. BRAZIL proposed stating that farmers' rights should be acknowledged and respected. CANADA cautioned against renegotiating the ITPGR and suggested inserting reference to ITPGR Article 9 (farmers' rights). The US, with CANADA, the EU and JAPAN, cautioned against renegotiating the draft guide. ARGENTINA suggested that the ITWG-PGR further consider the draft guide.

After informal consultations, delegates agreed to adopt the draft guide without changes, while noting in the CGRFA 15 report that nothing in the guide should be interpreted as limiting farmers' rights to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seed.

Building sustainable institutions and human capacities: CANADA endorsed the guidelines for developing national plant GRFA strategies and, with the EU and BRAZIL, proposed that they be "voluntary," and that extra-budgetary funding for their implementation be "invited" rather than "called for."

PREPARATION OF THE THIRD SOW- PGR:

The Secretariat introduced the proposed outline, timeline, thematic studies and budget for preparation of the third SoW-PGR (CGRFA-15/15/16). The EU proposed waiting for the assessment of the GPA-PGR 2 before determining what thematic studies to conduct, and recommended that priorities for extra-budgetary support focus on global-level activities.

CANADA said the SoW-PGR should focus on providing information needed for the GPA, but not engage in measures for implementation. CANADA and the US noted the difficulty of reporting on the extent of plant GRFA use in crop improvement and the relationship between access to germplasm and national crop and variety diversity. The US proposed that report preparation and GPA monitoring be fully integrated and that sections on intellectual property rights be authored by recognized specialists.

AFRICA called on FAO to support the organization of meetings, data collection and assessment.

AQUATIC GR

PREPARATION OF THE SOW-AQGR: The Secretariat introduced CGRFA-15/15/17. EUROPE said the report should complement the FAO's regular assessment of aquatic resources and improve implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. AFRICA requested support for establishing harmonized information systems, relevant benchmarks and translation.



Regarding a proposal to develop elements related to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to maintain a broad genetic basis, the US preferred referring to “follow-on activities, which could include development of elements related to the Code of Conduct.”

ITWG-AQGR: The Secretariat presented document CGRFA-15/15/18, including: the terms of reference for the Advisory Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources and Technologies to be established under FAO’s Commission on Fisheries (COFI’s Advisory Group) and draft statutes for a proposed ITWG-AqGR under the Commission.

Responding to questions raised, the Secretariat clarified that COFI’s Advisory Group has no specific mandate to contribute to the SoW –AqGR Report. He added that if the Commission decided that the SoW –AqGR Report should draw on advice by COFI’s Advisory Group it would be able to do so only at CGRFA 16. He also explained that COFI’s Advisory Group will address COFI’s urgent concerns, including on invasive alien species, modern biotechnology and aquatic GR databases.

AUSTRALIA and the US opposed the establishment of the proposed ITWG-AqGR under the Commission, noting concerns over duplication of work and budgetary considerations. JAPAN considered its establishment premature. EUROPE, BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, AFRICA and the NEAR EAST supported establishing the ITWG-AqGR, noting the field’s special features, complexity and social importance. The NEAR EAST underscored the practicality of having a single forum deal with aquatic GR.

Responding to a concern raised by Australia and Japan noting that the proposed statutes for the ITWG-AqGR’s extend beyond providing input to SoW-AqGR Report, he explained that while the Report would be the ITWG-AqGR’s immediate task, any follow-up action would be the Commission’s prerogative.

A Friends of the Chair Group was formed to further discuss the issue.

MICRO-ORGANISMS AND INVERTEBRATES

The Secretariat presented document CGRFA-15/15/19 on how microbial and invertebrate diversity is being considered in the preparation of the report on the State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (SoW-BFA), as well as document CGRFA-15/15/Inf.28 on progress on the international initiative for the conservation and sustainable use of pollinators.

EUROPE noted that bacteria, yeast and fungi should be included in future work. BRAZIL suggested portraying the ecosystem functions of pollinators, especially bees, and reflecting them in the SoW-BFA Report. AFRICA requested technical and financial support, especially for culture collections.

The guidance was adopted with these changes.

COMPOSITION OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

The Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/23. The NEAR EAST requested an increase in the number of representatives from his region. AFRICA and BRAZIL supported the proposal, but cautioned against compromising the number of members from their own regions.

CANADA, AUSTRALIA, the US, and EUROPE supported maintaining the current composition of regional representation in the WGs. CANADA suggested that decreasing the number of representatives per region could result in improved efficiency and effectiveness. EUROPE said representation, as addressed in an *ad hoc* manner in each WG’s terms of reference, had been effective and provided flexibility. Many developed countries requested information on financial implications of possible changes. KUWAIT suggested that adding one representative from the Near East would not have financial implications because participation is not financially supported by FAO.

On the participation of alternates, delegates discussed two options: option 1 providing for the ITWG to select an alternate member from the same region, provided that the ITWG members from the same region agree; and option 2 providing for the Commission to elect a list of alternates at each regular session, which would replace ITWG members in the order in which they appear on the list. AFRICA, CANADA, AUSTRALIA and the US supported option 1. ASIA, BRAZIL and ARGENTINA supported option 2.

BRAZIL added that once the Commission’s list of alternates has been exhausted, the ITWG members could choose a member among countries participating as observers. IRAN proposed notifying the Secretariat through the Bureau member of the relevant region, who would be able to identify a replacement.

On observers, BRAZIL, supported by the IPC, called for increasing stakeholder engagement in the Commission’s work and creating a funding mechanism for stakeholder participation in ITWG meetings. ARGENTINA said observer admission should be subject to the consensus of member countries, noting that this issue is under consideration in the FAO Council.

Negotiations continued in an informal group into the evening.

CROSS-SECTORAL ISSUES

ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING: Bert Visser (the Netherlands) presented revised text on the draft elements to facilitate ABS implementation in GRFA subsectors, noting no consensus on whether to forward the information to the FAO Conference as a regular report or in the form of a resolution.

GRULAC, AFRICA and the NEAR EAST, opposed by CANADA and ASIA, said that it is premature to present a resolution to the FAO Conference, as the issue is still being discussed. They proposed welcoming the draft elements on facilitating domestic implementation of ABS for different subsectors of GRFA in the CGRFA 15 report instead.

After further informal consultations, delegates agreed to reflect the ABS elements in the CGRFA 15 report. CANADA then explained that the Commission welcoming the ABS elements as a milestone in its work on ABS for GRFA implies that they are no longer “draft” elements and that the FAO Conference can therefore be advised of future work to be done in specific sub-sectors.

Delegates agreed to this interpretation and adopted the ABS elements.

IN THE CORRIDORS

“Let a hundred contact groups bloom,” could have been the motto on Wednesday, as new informal groups were established to resolve sticky issues around national seed systems and ITWG participation, and previously established groups reported their results. The long-standing discussion on geographical representation in the working groups and the Commission’s possible launch of technical work on aquaculture fisheries were among the issues that kept delegates working late into the evening.

On the bright side, the two groups that met the previous day achieved “some” consensus, even if the outcome did not go as far as some had hoped: the informal group on ABS had to go back into retreat several times before it was literally saved by the gavel, with an end-of-the-day decision to “welcome” the ABS elements in the Commission’s report. “You can say that the Commission is definitely in full swing,” reflected a delegate, while others observed that despite the long list of issues remaining to be tackled, the Commission may have found its own “*modus operandi*” to continue making modest but steady progress.



CGRFA 15 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 22 JANUARY 2015

CGRFA 15 delegates met in plenary throughout the day to finalize discussions on aquatic genetic resources (GR) and the composition of intergovernmental technical working groups (ITWGs). They also considered the implementation of the Commission's Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW), establishment of networks of national focal points to the Commission, cooperation with international instruments and organizations, the status of the Commission, and other business.

AQUATIC GR

ITWG ON AQUATIC GR: Reporting back from informal consultations, NAMIBIA presented consensus text on the establishment of an *Ad Hoc* ITWG on Aquatic GR. In order to facilitate the preparation and review of the first report on the State of the World's (SoW) Aquatic GR, Parties agreed to establish the ITWG with the statutes proposed in document CGRFA-15/15/18. The Commission will consider at its next session whether the ITWG will continue after this initial period. Parties further requested the Secretariat to ensure complementarity between the work of the CGRFA and FAO's Commission on Fisheries (COFI) and invite its Advisory Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources and Technologies to contribute to the SoW Report on Aquatic GR.

PREPARATION OF THE SOW ON AQUATIC GR: ARGENTINA said that, following informal deliberations, she agrees with Canada's proposal to invite "regional and international organizations and institutions" rather than "relevant stakeholders" to contribute to the preparation of the SoW on Aquatic GR.

THE COMMISSION'S MODE OF OPERATION

COMPOSITION OF ITWGS: In the morning, BRAZIL reported that the informal group decided to increase the number of representatives from the Near East from three to four in all sectoral ITWGs, noting that further discussion on the composition of the ITWGs should take into account fundamental discussions on the methodology and the criteria utilized for composing the Commission's ITWGs.

In the afternoon, after further informal consultations, BRAZIL presented a compromise on the selection of alternate representatives. She said the group had decided to amend the statutes of all ITWGs to state that the Commission shall elect at each regular session a list of up to two alternate members

for each region, which will replace, in the order in which they appear on the list, any member who has resigned. Both elected and alternate members will be eligible for re-election.

The amended statutes further require delegates to confirm their participation in an ITWG meeting. A member who is not able to attend, will be replaced in a timely manner by one of the elected alternate members from the same region. In case a member does not attend the meeting, the ITWG, in consultation with the regional group, may replace this member, on an *ad hoc* basis, by a member of the Commission from the same region that is present at the meeting.

In response to a request by the US, it was confirmed that the new rules will apply also to the ITWG on Aquatic GR. Delegates accepted the proposal.

STATUS OF THE COMMISSION: The Secretariat introduced CGRFA-15/15/22 on recent developments with regard to observers attending meetings of FAO, noting that the existing rules date from 1957 and limit participation to international NGOs, whereas in practice, civil society is increasingly involved in FAO meetings on an informal, no-objection basis. She explained that the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM) had prepared a 2013 study including proposed rules and procedures that were submitted to the FAO Council, and that regional consultations are ongoing.

EUROPE pledged to contribute to these consultations so as to reach agreement without undue delay. The Chair observed that the Commission needs to await the decision of the FAO Council, and delegates meanwhile took note of the document.

MYPOW

MYPOW IMPLEMENTATION: The Secretariat presented document CGRFA-15/15/20.1, which provides information on human and financial resources available for implementing the Commission's Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) and outlines the Commission's work in the context of FAO's Programme of Work and Budget. She noted that document CGRFA-15/15/Inf.29 includes an updated implementation plan for the Commission's MYPOW to be annexed to the Commission's Strategic Plan 2014-2023.

BRAZIL, with EUROPE and ARGENTINA, proposed the inclusion of an item on the Commission's agenda to reflect the important role of GRFA for food security and nutrition, and encouraged the Commission to further work on raising awareness. AFRICA and EUROPE suggested that the role of GRFA be recognized in all of FAO's strategic objectives.



The Secretariat noted that revising the MYPOW to include food security would mean several years of delay. She suggested instead engaging with the narrative linking biodiversity to food security and cooperating with the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), for example, by organizing side events during CFS Week and developing guidelines on the importance of GR and national food security policies.

AUSTRALIA stressed that the Commission and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGR) should play an important role in raising awareness and understanding regarding the role of plant GRFA for food security. He added that all efforts should be made on a sound technical and scientific basis. BRAZIL highlighted awareness raising and collaboration with the ITPGR and the CFS.

AFRICA suggested inviting donors to continue providing extra-budgetary resources. EUROPE underlined the need for detailed information on future funding priorities, noting that while a single trust fund for all sectors may be more efficient and visible, other options should be explored to accommodate sector-specific donors.

The US suggested preparing a follow-up document to the SoW Report on Aquatic GR, which may include the development of elements related to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, aiming to maintain a broad genetic basis and ensure the sustainable use and conservation of aquatic GR.

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS: The Secretariat presented document CGRFA-15/15/20.2 on the establishment of National Focal Points (NFPs) to the Commission to facilitate its future work.

Many regions and countries noted that the establishment of NFPs will enhance the collaboration between the Commission and the Parties. The US asked for clarification regarding the role and structure of the suggested network of NFPs, and the Secretariat explained that the network will support the exchange of related information. NAMIBIA called for clearly defined terms of reference for the NFPs.

COOPERATION

The Secretariat introduced the document CGRFA-15/15/21. International and intergovernmental organizations presented on their collaborative activities with CGRFA and their activities related to the protection of GRFA (CGRFA-15/15/Inf.30-34).

BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL highlighted its support to CGRFA to prepare the SoW reports, as well as its collaborative activities for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action on Forest GR. The WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION (WIPO) underscored current negotiations in the WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore on an international legal instrument that is expected to address traditional knowledge and ABS related to GR.

The GLOBAL CROP DIVERSITY TRUST presented initiatives to ensure the conservation and availability of plant diversity for food and agriculture, including by supporting some of the world's most important genebanks. With NORWAY, he provided updates on the Global Seed Vault initiative. UNCCD noted that 2015 is the international year of soils, pointing to the need to acknowledge the relevance of soils for sustainable development. The GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH highlighted work on farmers' rights, including fostering their participation in policy making. ITPGR Governing Body (GB) Chair Matthew Worrell (Australia) highlighted recent GB decisions to promote further collaboration with the Commission work and avoid duplication of efforts.

EUROPE suggested that the Commission consider cooperating with the CBD's Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions to increase coordination and exchange information with other biodiversity-related conventions. BRAZIL added that closer collaboration with international organizations on, *inter alia*, forest GRFA is needed. AFRICA supported collaboration and partnerships, noting that the Commission should keep a leading role in the area of GRFA.

CANADA supported the transfer of plant GRFA tasks from the Commission to the ITPGR, "where feasible," and addressing the issue at CGRFA 16. The US noted the need for further information before making a formal decision on task transfer. BRAZIL asked for information on the financial implications of such a transfer. ETHIOPIA said that such a transfer may also imply changes in the mandate of both institutions, noting that a technical paper could contribute to clarifying these implications.

OTHER MATTERS

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING: The Secretariat proposed, and delegates agreed, that CGRFA 16 take place from 30 January - 3 February 2017 in Rome, Italy.

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIRS: The following individuals were nominated as Vice-Chairs representing their region: Chang-Yeon Cho (Republic of Korea) for Asia; Charles Nying (Cameroon) for Africa; François Pythoud (Switzerland) for Europe; Larissa Maria Lima Costa (Brazil) for GRULAC; Javad Mozafari Hashjin (Iran) for the Near East; Christine Dawson (US) for North America; and William Wigmore (Cook Islands) for the Southwest Pacific.

Delegates elected Chang-Yeon Cho as the next CGRFA Chair, by acclamation.

IN THE CORRIDORS

With the weather forecast announcing that the sun will soon shine again in rainy Rome, CGRFA delegates accomplished their work almost a day ahead of schedule, leading observers to wonder what was the magic formula that enabled such efficient decision making.

Addressing conflicting issues in informal discussions at the sidelines of the plenary seemed to be part of the winning recipe. One delegate defined the key factor as "sufficient" decision making: a method that consists of making decisions that allow the Commission to continue working, while avoiding opening any major "Pandora's box." For example, while the Commission gave a green light to the creation of an ITWG on aquatic GR, it refrained from engaging in broader international discussions of marine issues, limiting the ITWG's mandate and duration to only preparing the State of the World report on aquatic GR. Delegates were also prudent in dealing with the long-standing Near East request for an additional representative: while the region got an extra representative in each of the existing ITWGs, the Commission did not revisit the abiding and unresolved question of how regional representation should be decided, thus avoiding difficult discussions.

Smiling delegates boasted in the corridors that other international fora should learn from their effective formula. "We can't deny that they managed to tackle an impressive number of agenda items in an equally impressive record time," said a participant, as he headed out unexpectedly early into the winter twilight.

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of CGRFA-15 will be available on Monday, 26 January 2015 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/cgrfa15/>



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SUMMARY OF THE FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE: 19-23 JANUARY 2015

The fifteenth session of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA 15) took place from 19-23 January 2015, at FAO headquarters, in Rome, Italy. More than 200 participants, including representatives of governments, intergovernmental, non-governmental and farmers' organizations, and international agricultural research centers attended the meeting.

The Commission addressed a series of sectoral and cross-sectoral issues under its Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW), including: the preparation of the report on the State of the World's (SoW) Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture; targets and indicators for biodiversity for food and agriculture; access and benefit-sharing (ABS) for genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA); biodiversity and nutrition; application and integration of biotechnologies for the conservation and sustainable utilization of GRFA; and climate change and GRFA. The Commission also considered: animal genetic resources, including the preparation of the second SoW on animal GRFA and implementation and updating of the Global Plan of Action (GPA) for Animal GRFA; forest genetic resources (GR), including follow-up to the GPA for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest GR; plant GRFA, including a review of the implementation of the Second GPA for Plant GRFA, and the preparation of the third SoW report on Plant GRFA; aquatic GR; and micro-organisms and invertebrates.

After an efficient session that completed its work ahead of schedule, delegates were generally satisfied with the outcome, with many highlighting the adoption of the second SoW on animal GRFA, results on ABS, and climate change and GRFA as important outcomes that further consolidated the Commission's mode of working and improved its ability to contribute to other fora, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CGRFA

The FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources was established in 1983. Renamed the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 1995, to reflect its broadened mandate to encompass all components of biodiversity for food and agriculture in addition to plants, including animal, aquatic, forest, invertebrate and micro-organism GR, it currently comprises 178 countries and the European Union (EU). The Commission's main objectives are to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of GRFA, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use.

The Commission develops and monitors the Global System on Plant GR and the Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal GR. It also facilitates cooperation between the FAO and other relevant bodies on GRFA policy issues, including the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Its regular sessions are held every two years and extraordinary sessions are convened when necessary.

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The Commission also maintains three subsidiary bodies, the Intergovernmental Technical Working Groups (ITWGs) on plant, animal and forest GR to address specific issues in these sectors.

PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES: The development of the Global System on Plant GR began in 1983. The first Report on the State of the World's Plant GR was presented at the fourth International Technical Conference held in Leipzig, Germany, in 1996. The Global Plan of Action (GPA), adopted through the Leipzig Declaration, comprises a set of activities covering capacity building and *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation of plant GRFA. The GPA for the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant GRFA also recognizes the crucial roles played by farmers, seed curators and breeders in managing these resources.

ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES: Initiated in 1993, the Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal GR provides a technical and operational framework for assisting countries. It comprises: an intergovernmental mechanism for policy development; a country-based global infrastructure to help states plan and implement national strategies; a technical support programme aimed at the country level; and a reporting and evaluation system to guide the Strategy's implementation and facilitate collaboration. A communication and information tool, called the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System, assists in the Strategy's implementation.

CGRFA 10: At its tenth session, held in Rome, Italy, in November 2004, the Commission agreed to hold an international technical conference on animal GR in 2007 to mark the completion of the first Report on the State of the World's Animal GR. Regarding its future work, the Commission requested the Secretariat to prepare a MYPOW for submission to CGRFA 11, with a view to implementing the Commission's full mandate in the medium and long term, which would include: a study on the status and needs of forestry, fishery and microbial GR; biodiversity for food and agriculture; the agro-ecosystem approach to genetic resource conservation; and cross-sectorial matters.

ITPGR: The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGR) entered into force on 29 June 2004. With 134 parties to date, the ITPGR is a legally binding instrument that targets the conservation and sustainable use of plant GRFA and equitable benefit-sharing for sustainable agriculture and food security. The ITPGR established a Multilateral System (MLS) of ABS, which facilitates access to a specified list of plant GRFA, balanced by benefit-sharing in the areas of information exchange, technology transfer, capacity building and commercial development. The list of crops contained in Annex I defines the scope of the MLS, and includes 35 crop genera and 29 forage species.

The treaty negotiations were based on the revision of the non-binding International Undertaking (IU), which was originally founded on the principle that plant GRFA should be "preserved ... and freely available for use" under the concept of "common heritage of mankind." This concept was subsequently subjected to "the sovereignty of states over their plant GR," according to FAO Resolution 3/91. In April 1993, the CGRFA decided that the IU should be revised to be in harmony with the CBD. Negotiations spanned more than seven years, until the 31st FAO Conference adopted the ITPGR on 3 November 2001.

CGRFA 11: At its eleventh session, in Rome in June 2007, the Commission adopted its MYPOW, a rolling 10-year work plan covering the totality of biodiversity for food and agriculture, including plant, animal, forest, aquatic, micro-organism and invertebrate GR, and including major outputs and milestones. The MYPOW also covers a range of cross-sectorial matters relevant to several or all components of biodiversity for food and agriculture. Delegates also agreed on the draft Interlaken Declaration on Animal GR and the elements of a GPA for animal GR, incorporating priority activity areas.

FIRST INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON ANIMAL GR: The first International Technical Conference on Animal GR took place from 3-7 September 2007, in Interlaken, Switzerland. The meeting included: a forum on the scientific aspects of animal GR; presentation of the Report on the State of the World's Animal GR; and negotiations on, and adoption of, the GPA for Animal GR and the Interlaken Declaration on Animal GR.

CGRFA 12: At its twelfth session, held in October 2009 in Rome, the Commission adopted the Strategic Plan 2010-2017 for implementation of the MYPOW, identifying processes and cooperation needed to achieve the agreed outputs and milestones. The Commission also adopted its new rules of procedure and a resolution on policies and arrangements for ABS for GRFA. It agreed to the funding strategy for the implementation of the GPA on Animal GRFA; approved the outline of the state of the world report on forest GR; and agreed to create an ITWG on forest GR.

CGRFA 13: At its thirteenth session, held in July 2011 in Rome, the Commission adopted the second GPA for Plant GRFA, a major milestone in its MYPOW. CGRFA 13 also amended its MYPOW to lay out major outputs and milestones between 2013 and 2021; agreed on the need for a roadmap or work programme on climate change and GRFA; decided to establish an *Ad Hoc* Technical Working Group on ABS for GRFA; and addressed cooperation with other processes including the ITPGR and the CBD.

CGRFA 14: At its fourteenth session, held April 2013 in Rome, the Commission adopted the GPA for forest GR, the genebank standards for plant GRFA, the Programme of Work on Climate Change and GRFA, and the Strategic Plan 2014-2021 for the implementation of the MYPOW. The Commission also endorsed the draft guidelines on *in vivo* conservation of Animal GRFA, and decided that the scope of the report on the SoW report on aquatic GR would be farmed aquatic species and their wild relatives in areas within national jurisdiction. The Commission also adopted a series of mostly procedural decisions that clarify that Commission's role with regard to the interconnected policy environment on ABS, climate change and aquatic GR will be to provide targeted input to policy-makers as well as to mainstream GRFA across relevant international processes.

CGRFA 15 REPORT

On Monday, 19 January 2015, CGRFA 15 Chair Amar Tahiri (Morocco) opened the meeting. Maria-Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General, Natural Resources, FAO, highlighted the CGRFA's role in developing and implementing policies that address growing pressure on natural resources. Braulio

Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the CBD, reported on CBD-CGRFA collaboration, noting FAO's leading role in implementing Aichi Target 13 (genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and wild relatives); the entry into force of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS; risk assessment regarding genetically modified organisms; and synthetic biology.

Linda Collette, CGRFA Secretary, reviewed changes in the policy-making context since CGRFA 14, including: formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals under the post-2015 agenda; entry into force of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS; and the ongoing climate negotiations. William Wigmore (Cook Islands) summarized discussions of the special event on "Food Security and Genetic Diversity," held on Friday, 16 January 2015, which recognized the need to integrate nutritional aspects in crop and animal improvement programmes.

Delegates then adopted the meeting's agenda and organization of work (CGRFA-15/15/1 and 2) with minor amendments.

This report summarizes discussions and outcomes under each agenda item, which were finalized on Friday in the context of the adoption of the report of the meeting.

CROSS-SECTORAL MATTERS

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S BIODIVERSITY FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/3, highlighting that the SoW report on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture should be based on country reports and thematic studies. She noted that although guidelines for country report preparation had been developed, only five country reports have been submitted.

The EU, speaking also for Norway, Switzerland and Turkey, supported including micro-organisms and invertebrates, and conducting regional exchange of experiences. Asia supported regional consultations to finalize the reports and exchange experiences. The US expressed concerns on data availability, stressing that the report's conclusions should be based on hard data and scientific evidence.

Most developing countries requested technical and financial support for country reporting, including through the development of webinars, workshops, and extrabudgetary resources. The Secretariat clarified that technical support could be provided through webinars and video conferencing, if further resources are made available.

Several groups proposed extending the deadline for submitting country reports, with the EU and the US suggesting the end of June 2015, whereas Congo, Ethiopia and Argentina preferred the end of September 2015. Delegates agreed that countries should "preferably" submit their reports by the end of June but "no later" than the end of September, with the CGRFA Secretary clarifying that the SoW report on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture may therefore not be fully completed for presentation at the Commission's next session.

The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) proposed considering not only species for human consumption but also other biodiversity, such as insects and micro-organisms. The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) suggested including ecosystem services, such as pollination, and drawing on

outcomes of international conferences and regional symposia on ecological agriculture.

On Friday, during the closing plenary, Europe requested that the Secretary continue working towards the finalization of the global report and submit a draft for consideration at its next session, "including a report reflecting upon the entire state of the SoW process." The US requested subjecting this "to the availability of funds."

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- acknowledges the progress in the preparation of the SoW report on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture, reiterates that the information is expected to be preliminary and incomplete, and recognizes that data collection is challenging for countries;
- invites countries to submit their country reports by 30 June 2015 and no later than 30 September 2015, with the understanding that the draft of the SoW report on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture may not be fully completed when submitted to CGRFA 16;
- requests its Secretary to continue working towards the finalization of the SoW report and to submit a draft for CGRFA 16 consideration;
- requests its Secretary to continue reporting on the status of preparation of the SoW report;
- calls upon donors and relevant international organizations to make available extra-budgetary financial resources for the preparation of the SoW report on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture, including for country reports; and
- requests FAO to provide technical support to countries, including through seminars and training.

TARGETS AND INDICATORS: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/4. The EU said that indicators should be scientifically sound, understandable, feasible to obtain and flexible, stressing the need for ensuring consistency among the relevant international fora in the refinement of indicators for biodiversity. The US expressed concern regarding food consumption data, which is difficult to obtain. Africa requested support to conduct food consumption surveys.

Canada supported strengthening cooperation with other relevant institutions. On animal GR, he asked to better define breed and population classification and to apply statistical tools to assess current trends and status.

The IPC stressed the importance of an indicator to monitor the capacity of farmers and indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) as custodians of biodiversity.

On Friday, delegates agreed to a proposal by the US to replace a reference to the "post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) process" with "post 2015 UN development agenda."

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- encourages FAO to continue its work to ensure consistency and coherence among the relevant fora and processes;
- requests its Secretary to provide technical inputs to the *Ad hoc* Technical Expert Group on Indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and to continue engagement in the post-2015 UN development agenda;

- requests FAO to continue updating the FAO International Network of Food Data Systems (INFOODS) Food Composition Database for Biodiversity and developing and applying indicators for biodiversity for food and agriculture; and
- requests FAO to continue assisting countries to generate food consumption data.

Plant GRFA: On Monday, the Secretariat presented document CGRFA-15/15/4.1, including a proposed list of higher-order composite indicators (HCIs) for each of the targets under the GPA for plant GRFA. Canada supported the use of HCIs linked to GPA implementation. Brazil said delegates should agree on a model and methodology rather than endorsing the proposed HCIs. Argentina expressed concerns about data availability for the proposed model and suggested including expert opinions from national focal points to facilitate coherence, applicability and comparability over time.

The US requested replacing quantitative numerical indicators with numerical ranges. The EU expressed concern that HCIs may still require calculation based on the underlying 63 indicators. Africa said a pilot phase of monitoring HCIs will be valuable in ensuring the order of priorities.

The Secretariat advised that HCIs are based on the expert judgment of a national focal point or committee, and that countries can identify areas where particular indicators do not apply.

On Friday, delegates agreed to Canada's proposals to: request FAO to continue to work on and develop HCIs; and to coordinate an intersessional consultative process with the ITWG on Plant GRFA, prior to its next meeting, to further refine the list of verifiable indicators.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- stresses the importance of the HCIs and endorses the model of HCIs for PGRFA;
- requests FAO to continue to work on and develop HCIs;
- requests the ITWG on Plant GRFA to monitor and revise the application of the HCI model based on data provided by member countries as part of the monitoring of the Second GPA for Plant GRFA; and
- invites all countries to nominate a national focal point for reporting on the implementation of the second GPA for plant GRFA.

Forest GR: On Monday, the Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/4.2 including a list of proposed indicators. Brazil, the EU and Canada supported, and delegates agreed to, requesting FAO to coordinate a consultative process to further refine the list of verifiable indicators and to identify a set of targets for the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest GR for consideration by the ITWG on Forest GR at its next session.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- recognizes that more work is needed to finalize the list of verifiable indicators for monitoring the implementation of the GPA for Forest GR; and
- requests FAO to coordinate an intersessional consultative process with the ITWG on Forest GR prior to its next meeting

to further refine the list of indicators and identify a set of targets and a draft schedule for monitoring the implementation of the GPA for Forest GR for consideration by CGRFA 16.

ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING: ABS for GRFA was discussed in plenary and in informal consultations from Monday through Wednesday. Javad Mozafari Hashjin (Iran) presented the work of the team of technical and legal experts on ABS (the ABS expert team) (CGRFA-15/15/Inf.11 and Inf.12), stressing the team had agreed on draft elements to facilitate domestic implementation of ABS for different subsectors of GRFA. The Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/5 containing the draft elements and a draft resolution to the FAO Conference and other relevant information documents (CGRFA-15/15/Inf.13, Inf.13/Add.1 and Inf.14).

The discussion focused on the text of the draft elements, future work of the ABS Expert Team, and whether the Commission should bring the draft elements to the attention of the FAO Council using a draft resolution or welcoming the draft elements in the CGRFA 15 report.

On the draft elements, the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) preferred to "welcome" rather than to "adopt" them. Africa supported further review, whereas the EU proposed that countries provide feedback on the use of the draft elements. Argentina said that where a history of human intervention makes it difficult to establish countries of origin, benefit-sharing should be determined on a case-by-case basis. Japan cautioned against retroactive application of ABS requirements, noting they should cover only GR, not biological resources and commodities.

The US highlighted the need for technical assistance to ensure that ABS measures accommodate GRFA considerations. Africa and Bhutan highlighted the need for legal, technical and financial support to developing countries for ABS implementation. The Southeast-Asia Regional Initiatives for Community Empowerment (SEARICE) called for highlighting farmers' rights and their role in the sustainable use and conservation of GRFA.

Africa and the EU called for mutually supportive work among the Commission, the ITPGR and the Nagoya Protocol. Canada said ABS for plant GRFA should be addressed by the ITPGR Governing Body. The CBD suggested that the CGRFA could share relevant standards and practices on ABS in the ABS Clearing-house of the Nagoya Protocol. After informal consultations, delegates agreed on the text of the draft elements, and reconvening of the ABS Expert Team.

Canada, Asia, Japan and the EU supported adopting a resolution to give greater visibility and recognition to the draft elements. They suggested reflecting the role of the ITPGR in the resolution text, with Canada noting that it is premature to discuss further international ABS instruments, as this depends on how the Nagoya Protocol is implemented. Africa, GRULAC and the Near East said it is premature to present a resolution to the FAO Conference, since this issue is still being discussed, proposing instead to welcome the draft elements in the CGRFA 15 report. After several rounds of informal consultations, delegates agreed to reflect the ABS elements in the CGRFA 15 report, based on the understanding that this implies that they are accepted as a milestone and that the FAO Conference can therefore be advised of future work to be done in specific subsectors.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- welcomes the Elements to Facilitate Domestic Implementation of ABS for Different Subsectors of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture contained in the report's appendix;
- invites the FAO Director-General to bring the Elements to the attention of the FAO Conference;
- requests the Secretary to develop awareness-raising materials and targeted capacity-building materials at the national level regarding ABS in GRFA subsectors;
- requests the Secretary to continue working with the CBD and ITPGR Secretariats to ensure mutual participation in appropriate meetings and capacity-building activities to discuss the Nagoya Protocol and ABS for GRFA;
- invites CGRFA members to submit information on use and exchange practices, relevant voluntary codes of conduct, guidelines and best practices, and/or standards and community protocols on ABS for GRFA and requests the Secretary to compile this information for consideration by the ITWGs and the Commission;
- invites countries to, as appropriate, use the ABS Elements and provide feedback to the Secretary and requests the Secretary to compile and report on the national use of the ABS elements;
- requests the ITWGs to continue elaborating subsector-specific ABS Elements including consideration of traditional knowledge associated with GRFA;
- requests the ABS Expert Team to consolidate the outputs of ITWG meetings and any additional information from studies commissioned by the Secretariat on sectors not covered in the ITWGs and report to CGRFA 16; and
- requests the ABS Expert Team to work electronically and meet for three days, subject to the availability of funds.

The elements contained in the report's appendix provide: considerations for developing, adapting or implementing measures for ABS for GRFA; information on the international legal framework; rationale for ABS measures for GRFA; and elements of measures for GRFA. The elements cover institutional arrangements, access to and utilization of GRFA, access to traditional knowledge associated with GRFA, fair and equitable sharing of benefits, and compliance and monitoring.

BIODIVERSITY AND NUTRITION: On Monday, the Secretariat presented document CGRFA-15/15/6. Argentina highlighted the importance of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), held on 19-21 November 2014, in Rome, Italy. With the Southwest Pacific and Brazil, he proposed stating that the guidelines on biodiversity and nutrition are "voluntary."

The EU proposed more references to aquatic resources and to additional ICN2 recommendations, as well as the improvement of the scientific base. The US expressed concern that a section on raising awareness and implementation suggests scientific certainty that does not exist. The US and Canada highlighted the need for robust scientific evidence. Canada said the concepts of dietary diversity and under-utilized species need to be well-defined and that recommendations in the guidelines should be consistent with relevant international obligations.

Africa called for additional research to improve the scientific base and asked for support to develop capacity for implementation. Kenya noted biodiversity's potential to combat malnutrition and called for additional indicators.

Brazil supported the call to enhance research capacity, knowledge and awareness of useful traits from the nutrition perspective; and to give special attention to native and locally-adapted species and breeds. The Southwest Pacific recommended targeting primary-school students and eliciting support at the highest level to promote consumption of highly nutritious indigenous crops, such as the Pacific banana.

The IPC said loss of biodiversity is not a reason to invest in bio-fortified food. He called for farmers to be allowed access to public gene banks. IFOAM called for communication campaigns to introduce healthy foods, targeting children and youth. The Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR) invited countries' participation in efforts by GFAR, FAO and the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centres (CGIAR) to develop metrics and indicators of nutritious consumption, based on the nutritive quality of foods, as well as access to food.

On Tuesday, the US reported back from informal discussions, saying that delegates had agreed to refer to "voluntary" guidelines and to qualify language on research, implementation and awareness as "examples of how mainstreaming could be implemented, depending on each country's needs and capabilities, as appropriate."

On Friday, Brazil proposed, and delegates agreed, to delete specific reference to cultivars so that landraces can also be included under the term "varieties." Delegates also agreed to a proposal by Argentina to refer to "such as" instead of "especially" in referencing the recommendations of the INC2 Framework of Action.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- reiterates the importance of biodiversity for food security and nutrition, highlighting its relevance to outcomes of the ICN2, such as recommendations 8, 10, 19, 20, 21, and 42 of its Framework for Action;
- endorses the Voluntary Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Policies, Programmes and National and Regional Plans of Action on Nutrition, annexed to the report;
- encourages governments and stakeholders to implement the Voluntary Guidelines, where appropriate, and support research on the nutrient composition of foods; and
- requests FAO to publish the Voluntary Guidelines and report on their implementation at CGRFA 17, as well as, subject to the availability of funds, provide support to their implementation and continue improving the scientific evidence for biodiversity and nutrition and exploring the possibility for new indicators.

BIOTECHNOLOGIES FOR GRFA CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/7.

Africa, GRULAC, Asia and the EU called for strengthening developing-country capacities to develop appropriate biotechnologies for the characterization, conservation and utilization of GRFA at national and regional levels.

The EU further noted that field trials and contained use activities must take place under specific biosafety regulations. The Near East suggested studying trends and progress regarding the application of biotechnologies in different regions. The IPC suggested strengthening regional capacities for research on traditional knowledge and the appropriate use of *in situ* conservation.

Australia, Iran, Paraguay and Canada opposed reference to risk assessment and socio-economic analysis, to avoid duplication of work with other international bodies. Brazil favored retaining the references to portray their importance, even if FAO is not requested to conduct a similar analysis. Argentina supported removing language on risks and benefits, but underscored the importance of socio-economic analysis. The EU suggested that CGRFA members may conduct such analyses at the national level. The US proposed that members “may” highlight the importance of socio-economic analyses of certain biotechnology applications in the characterization, conservation and utilization of GRFA. Afghanistan supported having the FAO undertake socio-economic analyses. SEARICE supported FAO work on risk assessment. Noting that provisions for risk assessment already exist at regional and national levels, Brazil proposed stating that member states “may wish to highlight the importance of conducting socio-economic analysis.”

After informal consultations, delegates agreed to delete a reference to “addressing benefits and risks of biotechnology” and to add that member states “may wish to undertake socio-economic analyses of biotechnology applications, where appropriate.”

The Near East and Canada suggested requesting FAO to periodically study trends and progress in the application of biotechnology to the conservation and utilization of GRFA.

On Friday, during closing plenary, the US supported having FAO “continue to” assess trends and progress in applications of biotechnologies.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- requests that FAO continue to strengthen developing countries’ capacities to develop appropriate biotechnologies for GRFA, taking into consideration national and regional laws, and international instruments, including those related to risk assessment;
- requests that FAO continue its activities for the regular dissemination of updated factual information on the role of biotechnologies;
- requests that FAO continue to assess trends and progress of applications of biotechnologies by compiling existing information in line with the 2014-2023 MYPOW;
- requests that FAO continue exploring mechanisms for future cooperation; and
- recognizes that CGRFA members may wish to undertake socio-economic analyses of biotechnology applications, where appropriate, in the characterization, conservation and utilization of GRFA.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GRFA: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced documents CGRFA-15/15/8 and Inf.15. Many countries supported the revised draft Guidelines to Support the Integration of Genetic Diversity into National

Climate Change Adaptation Planning. Brazil and the US opposed renegotiating the guidelines. Argentina and the US suggested clarifying that the guidelines are “voluntary.” Asia said that GRFA aspects should be considered within national adaptation plans, but opposed developing a separate plan for GRFA and climate change.

The EU highlighted the relevance of addressing both mitigation and adaptation to climate change in the different sectors, such as animals, plants and forests. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) highlighted the interdependence between climate change and land systems and the synergistic implementation of plans and programmes to address climate change efficiently. Bioversity International stressed the relevance of agricultural biodiversity in national climate change adaptation planning. SEARICE highlighted the contribution of indigenous peoples to climate change adaptation and supported raising their awareness to develop location-specific climate change policies.

On Friday, during the final plenary, Argentina suggested that the implementation of the Climate Change Programme of Work should not preempt negotiations under the UNFCCC.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- endorses the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Integration of Genetic Diversity into National Climate Change Adaptation Planning and invites FAO to bring the guidelines to the attention of the FAO Conference for approval at its next session;
- invites the CGRFA Secretary to transmit the Voluntary Guidelines to the UNFCCC and relevant international bodies;
- approves the proposed revision to the Programme of Work on Climate Change and GR for the period 2015-2016; and
- notes that the implementation of the Programme of Work should not prejudice the ongoing negotiations under the UNFCCC.

ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

REPORT OF THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE ITWG ON ANIMAL GRFA: On Tuesday, Drago Kompan (Slovenia), speaking for Harvey Blackburn (US), Chair of the ITWG on Animal GRFA, introduced the report of the group’s eighth session (CGRFA-15/15/9). The EU suggested that FAO continue implementation of the GPA for Animal GRFA, seeking financial resources through, *inter alia*, partnerships. Africa emphasized conservation and sustainable use of indigenous breeds and their genetic improvement.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission endorses the report of the eighth session of the ITWG on Animal GRFA.

SOW REPORT ON ANIMAL GRFA: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced the second SoW report on animal GRFA (CGRFA-15/15/10) and related information documents (CGRFA-15/15/Inf.17.1, Inf.17.2 and Inf.17.3) highlighting: the importance of livestock diversity for adapting production systems to future changes; new challenges caused by increased demand for meat; and an increasing proportion of livestock at risk, from 15% to 17% since 2005.

Europe, supported by Africa, suggested preparing a report summary and translating both documents into all UN languages.

The US expressed concern over data availability regarding livestock breeds classified as being at risk.

Canada called for the application of statistical tools to accurately reflect the current status of animal populations and breeds. Brazil recommended providing further information on locally adapted breeds.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission requests FAO to make the revised draft of the second SoW report on animal GRFA available by 31 March 2015, and invites comments from members and observers by 31 May 2015. The Commission further requests FAO to finalize the second SoW report on animal GRFA and publish it, also as an in-brief version, in all FAO languages, subject to the availability of funds, by the end of 2015.

IMPLEMENTATION AND UPDATING OF THE GPA FOR ANIMAL GRFA: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced documents CGRFA-15/15/11, Inf.18, Inf.19 and Inf. 20, and background study paper no.66.Rev.1, underscoring the stepwise approach to reviewing the second GPA for Animal GRFA. Most regions supported the stepwise approach.

Africa called for financial and technical support for the GPA for Animal GRFA implementation. Europe prioritized inviting donors to contribute before discussing maximum budgets or threshold levels for implementation.

Asia and Africa welcomed the draft guidelines for the development of integrated multipurpose animal recording systems, with Africa requesting that they be characterized as “voluntary.”

Europe and Africa called for updating information and breed classifications in the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS) to ensure informed decisions, as well as maintaining DAD-IS as the global clearing house mechanism. Canada expressed concern over the DAD-IS’s lack of connection to other databases. China called for allocation of funds to ensure full geographic representation.

Opposed by Argentina and Brazil, the US expressed concern that the use of the terms “exotic” or “locally adapted” may lead to inflation of the number of breeds. Before taking further budget decisions, the US suggested waiting for the results of currently funded projects. The Secretariat clarified a distinction between breeds and national breed populations, noting that a breed may be spread over several countries and may consist of several national breed populations, some of which may be classified as “locally adapted” in one country, and “exotic” in another.

Australia and the US questioned references to specific SDGs, noting that the post-2015 development agenda is still under negotiation. The Secretariat responded that specific SDGs were mentioned to maintain continuity as the GPA for Animal GRFA had previously supported the specific Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on environmental sustainability and poverty. Delegates nonetheless agreed to the US request to delete the reference.

On Friday, delegates agreed to a proposal by Europe to “urge,” rather than “request” FAO to ensure long-term support for DAD-IS. They further agreed to a proposal put forth by Norway and amended by Canada to add reference to contributing to the process of the UN post-2015 development agenda.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- welcomes progress made in the implementation of the GPA for Animal GRFA, calls upon countries to continue implementing it in order to contribute to global food security and sustainable rural development, in particular to the process of the UN post-2015 development agenda, and requests FAO to continue supporting country implementation;
- endorses the Guidelines for the Development of Integrated Multipurpose Animal Recording Systems and requests FAO to publish and distribute them;
- stresses the importance of DAD-IS as the international clearing house mechanism for information on Animal GRFA, urging FAO to ensure long-term support for its maintenance and inviting donors to provide *ad hoc* support for its development;
- stresses the need for countries to regularly update their official national breed data in DAD-IS, provide information on breed classification;
- requests FAO to investigate options for obtaining data on the size of unspecified species populations to account for locally adapted and exotic breeds;
- agrees to consider at CGRFA 16 an increase of the maximum budget per national project for future calls for proposals, following a review of the administrative costs of the Funding Strategy for the Implementation of the GPA for Animal GRFA; and
- agrees to the two-step approach to the review of the GPA for Animal GRFA and requests FAO to facilitate the process.

FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

REPORT OF THE ITWG ON FOREST GR: On Tuesday, Pierre Bouillon (France), Chair of the ITWG on Forest GR, introduced the report of the ITWG’s third session (CGRFA-15/15/12). Canada and the US emphasized the intersessional consultation process to further review the proposed indicators for the implementation of the GPA for Forest GR, with the US suggesting a need to reduce the number of indicators. The EU proposed that material produced in the process of creating the SoW report on forest GR, such as the thematic studies, be widely disseminated, including by publication on the FAO website.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission endorses the SoW report on forest GR, and requests FAO to make country reports and thematic studies produced during its preparation available on the FAO website.

GPA FOR FOREST GR FOLLOW-UP: On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/13, containing the draft strategy for the implementation of the GPA for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest GR.

Brazil, supported by the US, suggested that the strategy for the implementation of the GPA for Forest GR take into account and be consistent with the work of the relevant international instruments and processes related to forests. She also proposed that IPLCs be involved in the process for developing technical standards, where possible.

The EU encouraged regional collaboration on implementation of the GPA for Forest GR, and called on FAO to develop information systems to ensure dissemination of information produced during GPA implementation. Africa called for

technical support to foster experience sharing, and community involvement in GPA implementation. The EU and the US supported seeking extra-budgetary funding and donor support for GPA for Forest GR implementation. The EU and Japan suggested careful consideration of a funding strategy.

On coordinating and avoiding duplication of efforts in implementing the GPA for Forest GR, FAO highlighted collaboration with existing regional networks referenced in the report.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- adopts the Strategy for the Implementation of the GPA for Forest GR;
- calls upon countries to implement the GPA for Forest GR;
- calls for implementation of the Strategy, in coordination with the FAO Committee on Forestry and relevant international organizations;
- requests FAO to assist in the mobilization of funds;
- acknowledges the importance of REFORGEN as a knowledge-sharing platform on forest GR; and
- requests FAO to continue integrating forest GR within its forestry programme and to report back to the Commission.

The report contains an appendix with the Strategy for the Implementation of the GPA for Forest GR.

PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

This issue was discussed in plenary and informal discussions on Wednesday.

REPORT OF THE ITWG ON PLANT GRFA: Luis Salaices Sanchez (Spain), Chair of the ITWG on Plant GRFA, presented the report of the group's seventh session (CGRFA-15/15/14). The EU, with the US, noted the importance of technical support for the implementation of genebank standards for plant GRFA, with the US underscoring their voluntary character.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission endorses the report.

REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECOND GPA FOR PLANT GRFA: The Secretariat presented an update on implementation of the second GPA for Plant GRFA (CGRFA-15/15/15) and additional documents on guidelines and technical guides to support implementation (CGRFA-15/15/Inf. 21-25). Several developing countries called for FAO to build countries' capacities for GPA implementation. The US stressed that implementation is a national responsibility, not that of FAO. Canada noted duplications with the ITPGR's work.

In situ conservation and on-farm management: Canada suggested addressing *in situ* conservation and on-farm management separately, while ensuring complementarity and balance between both strategies. The EU said it is premature to decide whether these strategies should be supported by a single or two different networks. Africa highlighted the role of smallholders in *in situ* conservation. Argentina highlighted that *in situ* conservation networks should respect countries' sovereignty. The IPC called for strengthening support for on-farm activities.

Ex situ conservation: Delegates agreed that gene bank standards should be voluntary and that the Commission should work synergistically with "relevant international organizations, especially the ITPGR."

Sustainable use: Canada and Brazil said the draft technical guidelines on national conservation of landraces and wild relatives should be further revised by the ITWG on Plant GRFA. Brazil stressed the discussion should include relevant stakeholders, in particular smallholder farmers and IPLCs.

On a draft guide on national seed policy formulation, delegates discussed whether or not to make reference to farmers' rights, as requested by Brazil. Many delegates cautioned against renegotiating the draft guidelines. After informal consultations, delegates agreed to adopt the draft guide without changes, while noting in the CGRFA 15 report that nothing in the guide should be interpreted as limiting farmers' rights to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seeds.

Building sustainable institutions and human capacities: Delegates agreed that guidelines for developing national plant GRFA strategies should be voluntary and that extra-budgetary funding for their implementation be "invited" rather than "called for."

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- invites the ITWG on Plant GRFA to review and revise the draft technical guidelines on national-level conservation and use of landraces, and on national-level conservation of crop wild relatives;
- requests FAO to convene an informal multi-stakeholder dialogue to discuss options for networking for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management, its functions, governance and budget requirements, and, in particular, ways to ensure its long-term funding;
- requests FAO to continue supporting countries in implementing the voluntary Genebank Standards for Plant GRFA and propose a mechanism to monitor their application;
- endorses the voluntary Guide for National Seed Policy Formulation, agreeing that nothing in this guide should be interpreted to limit farmers' rights to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seed/propagating material, subject to national law and as appropriate;
- requests FAO to continue strengthening national seed systems; and
- endorses the Guidelines for Developing a National Strategy for Plant GRFA as a voluntary reference tool.

PREPARATION OF THE THIRD SOW ON PLANT GRFA: The Secretariat introduced the proposed outline, timeline, thematic studies and budget for preparation of the third SoW report on plant GRFA (CGRFA-15/15/16). Delegates suggested: assessing the Second GPA for Plant GRFA before deciding on the thematic studies to be conducted; focusing on providing information needed for GPA implementation, rather than developing measures for implementation; and fully integrating GPA monitoring and report preparation.

On Friday, delegates requested several clarifications and proposed minor amendments to the Commission's report to reflect the agreements reached during the discussions.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- endorses the timeline, amended outline and provisional budget for report preparation;

- invites donors to provide extra-budgetary resources to monitor implementation of the Second GPA for Plant GRFA and preparation of the SoW report on plant GRFA, including for the National Information Sharing Mechanism; and
- invites all CGRFA members to nominate a national focal point for monitoring the Second GPA for Plant GRFA and preparation of the country reports to be submitted for the third SoW report on plant GRFA.

AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES

PREPARATION OF THE SOW ON AQUATIC GR: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced CGRFA-15/15/17. Europe said the report should complement the FAO's regular assessment of aquatic resources and improve implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Africa requested support for establishing harmonized information systems, relevant benchmarks and translation.

Regarding a proposal to develop elements related to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to maintain a broad genetic basis, the US preferred referring to "follow-on activities, which could include development of elements related to the Code of Conduct."

On Thursday, Argentina said that, following informal deliberations, she agreed with Canada's proposal to invite "regional and international organizations and institutions" rather than "relevant stakeholders" to contribute to the preparation of the SoW report on aquatic GR. On Friday, during the closing plenary, Canada requested clarifying that the organizations to be invited should have "recognized mandate and competence."

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- takes note of the Status of Preparation of the SoW report on aquatic GR (CGRFA-15/15/17), requests FAO to continue preparing the SoW report on aquatic GR and endorses its timeline, indicative list of thematic background studies and cost estimates;
- notes the need to strengthen existing information systems and requests FAO to identify opportunities to strengthen them at the regional and global levels;
- invites countries to prepare national reports and notes that follow-up activities to the SoW report on aquatic GR could include the development of elements related to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; and
- invites relevant regional and international organizations and institutions with a recognized mandate and competence, to contribute to the preparation of the SoW report on aquatic GR.

ITWG ON AQUATIC GR: The Secretariat presented document CGRFA-15/15/18, including: the terms of reference for the Advisory Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources and Technologies to be established under FAO's Committee on Fisheries' (COFI) Advisory Group and draft statutes for a proposed ITWG on aquatic GR under CGRFA.

On the terms of reference of COFI's Advisory Group, the Secretariat clarified that the Group has no specific mandate to contribute to the SoW report on aquatic GR. He added that if the Commission decided that the SoW report on aquatic GR should draw on advice by COFI's Advisory Group, it would be able to do so only at CGRFA 16. He also explained that COFI's

Advisory Group will address COFI's urgent concerns, including invasive alien species, modern biotechnology and aquatic GR databases.

On the proposed ITWG on aquatic GR under the Commission, Australia and the US opposed the establishment of such an ITWG, noting concerns over duplication of work and budgetary considerations. Japan considered its establishment premature. Europe, Brazil, Argentina, Africa and the Near East supported establishing the ITWG, noting the special features, complexity and social importance of aquatic GR. The Near East underscored the practicality of having a single forum to deal with aquatic GR.

Responding to a concern raised by Australia and Japan that the proposed statutes for the ITWG on aquatic GR extend beyond providing input to the SoW report on aquatic GR, he explained that while the report would be the ITWG's immediate task, any follow-up action would be the Commission's prerogative.

On Thursday, a Friends of the Chair Group was formed to further discuss the issue. In order to facilitate the preparation and review of the SoW report on aquatic GR, CGRFA members agreed to establish the ITWG with the statutes proposed in document CGRFA-15/15/18. They also agreed that CGRFA 16 will consider whether the ITWG will continue after this initial period. CGRFA members further requested the Secretariat to ensure complementarity between the work of the CGRFA and COFI, and invite COFI's Advisory Group to contribute to the SoW report on aquatic GR.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- agrees to establish the ITWG on Aquatic GR to guide the preparation and review the SoW report on aquatic GR;
- adopts the statutes of the ITWG and elects its members;
- states that CGRFA 16 will consider if this ITWG shall continue to exist;
- requests the Commission's Secretary to ensure complementarity between COFI's Advisory Group and the Commission, especially with regard to aquatic GR; and
- reiterates the importance of inviting COFI's Advisory Group, when convened, to contribute to the SoW on Aquatic GR.

Two appendices to the report contain the ITWG's statutes and its elected members.

MICRO-ORGANISMS AND INVERTEBRATES

On Wednesday, the Secretariat presented document CGRFA-15/15/19 on how microbial and invertebrate diversity is being considered in the preparation of the report on the SoW Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture, as well as document CGRFA-15/15/Inf.28 on progress on the international initiative for the conservation and sustainable use of pollinators. Delegates suggested including yeasts, fungi and ecosystem services of pollinators in future work. Africa requested technical and financial support, especially for culture collections.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- reiterates the importance of microbial and invertebrate diversity for sustainable agriculture and food security and nutrition, and notes that bacteria, yeasts and fungi used in food processing need to be included in the Commission's future work;

- calls for technical and financial support for countries to carry out further work on the characterization, conservation, and sustainable use of micro-organisms and invertebrates, including through the establishment of culture collections, subject to the availability of funds; and
- requests FAO to review its work on the conservation and sustainable use of micro-organisms and invertebrates, following the presentation of the SoW Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture, preferably at CGRFA 16.

MYPOW IMPLEMENTATION

On Thursday, the Secretariat presented document CGRFA-15/15/20.1, which provides information on the human and financial resources available for implementing the Commission's MYPOW and outlines the Commission's work in the context of FAO's Programme of Work and Budget. She noted that document CGRFA-15/15/Inf.29 contains an updated implementation plan for the Commission's MYPOW, to be annexed to the Commission's Strategic Plan 2014-2023.

Brazil, with Europe and Argentina, proposed the inclusion of an item on the Commission's agenda to reflect the important role of GRFA for food security and nutrition, and encouraged the Commission to further work on raising awareness. Africa and Europe suggested that the role of GRFA be recognized in all of FAO's strategic objectives.

The Secretariat noted that revising the MYPOW to include food security would mean several years of delay. She suggested instead engaging with the narrative, linking biodiversity to food security and cooperating with the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), for example, by organizing side events during CFS Week and developing guidelines on the importance of GRFA and national food security policies.

Australia stressed that the Commission and the ITPGR should play an important role in raising awareness and understanding regarding the role of plant GRFA in food security. He added that all efforts should be made on a sound technical and scientific basis. Brazil highlighted awareness raising and collaboration with the ITPGR and the CFS.

Africa suggested inviting donors to continue providing extra-budgetary resources. Europe underlined the need for detailed information on future funding priorities, noting that while a single trust fund for all sectors may be more efficient and visible, other options should be explored to accommodate sector-specific donors.

The US suggested preparing a follow-up document to the SoW report on aquatic GR, which may include the development of elements related to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, aiming to maintain a broad genetic basis and ensure the sustainable use and conservation of aquatic GR.

On Friday, delegates agreed to a proposal by Argentina to "welcome" rather than "take note" of the alignment of the MYPOW to the FAO Reviewed Strategic Framework.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- welcomes the alignment of the MYPOW to the FAO Reviewed Strategic Framework and recognizes that GR provide a key contribution to all FAO Strategic Objectives, in particular Strategic Objective 2 on increasing and improving the provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry

and fisheries in a sustainable manner;

- stresses the importance of building on the lessons learned from the sectors and requests its Secretary to explore options to help attract funds and increase efficiency, including the establishment of a trust fund for GRFA, for consideration at CGRFA 16;
- requests its Secretary to continue raising awareness on the important role of GRFA in food security in the follow-up to the Special Event on Food Security and Genetic Diversity, identify options for specific activities in this regard, and strengthen collaboration with the CFS; and
- requests its Bureau to make adjustments to the Implementation Plan for the Commission's MYPOW (2014-2023), reflecting the outcome of the session.

NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS: On Thursday, the Secretariat presented document CGRFA-15/15/20.2 on the establishment of national focal points to the Commission to facilitate its future work.

Many regions and countries noted that the establishment of national focal points will enhance the collaboration between the Commission and CGRFA members. The US asked for clarification regarding the role and structure of the suggested network of national focal points, and the Secretariat explained that the network will support the exchange of related information. Namibia called for clearly defined terms of reference for the national focal points.

On Friday, delegates agreed to a proposal put forth by Canada and supported by Argentina to remove reference to the establishment of a network of national focal points, in order to avoid ambiguity.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission acknowledges the key role of sectoral focal points in its work, invites members to nominate national focal points and requests the Secretary to publish them on the Commission's website.

COOPERATION

On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/21. International and intergovernmental organizations presented on their collaborative activities with CGRFA and their initiatives related to the protection of GRFA (CGRFA-15/15/Inf.30-34).

Biodiversity International highlighted its support to CGRFA in preparing the SoW reports, as well as its collaborative activities for the implementation of the GPA for Forest GR. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) underscored current negotiations in the WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore on an international legal instrument that is expected to address traditional knowledge and ABS related to GR.

The Global Crop Diversity Trust presented initiatives to ensure the conservation and availability of plant diversity for food and agriculture, including by supporting some of the world's most important genebanks. With Norway, he provided updates on the Global Seed Vault initiative. UNCCD noted that 2015 is the International Year of Soils, pointing to the need to acknowledge the relevance of soils for sustainable development. GFAR highlighted work on farmers' rights, including fostering

farmers' participation in policy making. ITPGR Governing Body Chair Matthew Worrell (Australia) highlighted recent Governing Body decisions to promote further collaboration with the Commission's work and avoid duplication of efforts.

Europe suggested that the Commission consider cooperating with the CBD's Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions to increase coordination and exchange of information. Brazil added that closer collaboration with international organizations on, *inter alia*, forest GR is needed. Africa supported collaboration and partnerships, noting that the Commission should maintain a leading role in the area of GRFA.

Canada supported the transfer of plant GRFA tasks from the Commission to the ITPGR, "where feasible," and addressing the issue at CGRFA 16. The US noted the need for further information before making a formal decision on task transfer. Brazil noted the lack of information on the financial implications of such a transfer. Ethiopia said that such a transfer may also imply changes in the mandate of both institutions, noting that a technical paper could contribute to clarify these implications.

On Friday, during the closing plenary, Argentina said cooperation should be strengthened in particular with the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), "and the respective areas of competence."

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- requests the Secretariat to continue strengthening cooperation with biodiversity-related conventions and instruments, including IPBES, and the respective areas of competence;
- requests its Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration with the ITPGR to promote coherence in the development and implementation of the respective programmes of work of the two bodies;
- recalls that, at its last session, there was no consensus among CGRFA members on the transfer of tasks or activities, and agreed to keep the matter under review; and
- takes note of ITPGR's resolution 4/2013 and requests the Commission's Secretary to provide, in collaboration with ITPGR's Secretary, information necessary for an informed discussion on the transfer of tasks and activities to the next sessions of CGRFA and ITPGR.

THE COMMISSION'S MODE OF OPERATION

STATUS OF THE COMMISSION: On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced CGRFA-15/15/22 on recent developments with regard to observers attending meetings of FAO, noting that the existing rules date from 1957 and limit participation to international NGOs, whereas in practice, civil society is increasingly involved in FAO meetings on an informal, no-objection basis. She explained that the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM) had prepared a 2013 study, including proposed rules and procedures, which was submitted to the FAO Council, and that regional consultations are ongoing.

On observers, Brazil, supported by the IPC, called for increasing stakeholder engagement in the Commission's work and creating a funding mechanism for stakeholder participation in ITWG meetings. Argentina said observer admission should be subject to the consensus of member countries, noting that this issue is under consideration in the FAO Council.

Europe pledged to contribute to the regional consultations so as to reach agreement without undue delay. The Chair observed that the Commission needs to await the decision of the FAO Council, and delegates meanwhile took note of the document.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission takes note that the issue of participation of observers is being addressed by the FAO Council.

COMPOSITION OF ITWGS: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-15/15/23. The Near East requested an increase in the number of representatives from his region. Africa and Brazil supported the proposal, but cautioned against compromising the number of members from their own regions.

Canada, Australia, the US, and Europe supported maintaining the current composition of regional representation in the ITWGs. Canada suggested that decreasing the number of representatives per region could result in improved efficiency and effectiveness. Europe said the system of representation, currently addressed in an *ad hoc* manner in each ITWG's terms of reference, had been effective and provided flexibility. Many developed countries requested information on the financial implications of possible changes. Kuwait suggested that adding one representative from the Near East to each ITWG would not have financial implications because their participation is not financially supported by FAO.

On the participation of alternates, delegates discussed two options: option 1, providing for the ITWG to select an alternate member from the same region, provided that the ITWG members from the same region agree; and option 2, providing for the Commission to elect a list of alternates at each regular session, which would replace ITWG members in the order in which they appear on the list. Africa, Canada, Australia and the US supported option 1. Asia, Brazil and Argentina supported option 2.

Brazil added that once the Commission's list of alternates has been exhausted, the ITWG members could choose a member among countries participating as observers. Iran proposed notifying the Secretariat through the Bureau member of the relevant region, who would be able to identify a replacement.

Negotiations continued in an informal group and on Thursday morning Brazil reported that the informal group decided to increase the number of representatives from the Near East from three to four in all sectoral ITWGs, noting that further discussion on the composition of the ITWGs should take into account fundamental discussions on the methodology and criteria utilized for composing the Commission's ITWGs.

On Thursday afternoon, after further informal consultations, Brazil presented a compromise on the selection of alternate representatives. She said the group had decided to amend the statutes of all ITWGs to state that the Commission shall elect at each regular session a list of up to two alternate members for each region, which will replace, in the order in which they appear on the list, any member who has resigned. Both elected and alternate members will be eligible for re-election.

The amended statutes further require delegates to confirm their participation in an ITWG meeting. A member who is not able to attend will be replaced in a timely manner by one of the elected alternate members from the same region. In case a

member does not attend the meeting, the ITWG, in consultation with the regional group, may replace this member, on an *ad hoc* basis, by a member of the Commission from the same region that is present at the meeting.

In response to a request by the US, it was confirmed that the new rules on ITWG composition and alternates will apply also to the ITWG on Aquatic GR. The Secretariat clarified that these new rules will be included in the statutes of the new ITWG on Aquatic GR. Delegates accepted the proposal.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- agrees to amend the statutes of already operating sectoral ITWGs on animal, forest and plant GRFA by changing the number of seats of the Near East Region from three to four in each of the ITWGs and close this agenda item, also agreeing that any future discussion should be undertaken only if the whole methodology/criteria for the composition of ITWGs is to be considered;
- amends Article III of the Statutes of the ITWGs on animal, forest and plant GRFA to add that: the Commission shall elect at each regular session a list of up to two alternate members for each region, eligible for re-election, that will replace, in the order in which they appear on the list, any member who has resigned and informed the Secretariat accordingly; members are requested to confirm their participation in the ITWG meeting, and will be replaced in a timely manner, if not able to attend, by one of the elected alternates from the same region; and in case an ITWG member does not attend the meeting, the ITWG, in consultation with the region, may replace this member, on an *ad hoc* basis, by a member of the Commission from the same region that is present at the meeting; and
- elects the members of its ITWGs, included in an appendix, and requests the ITWGs to meet before CGRFA 16.

The new rules on ITWG composition and alternates are reflected in the adopted statutes of the ITWG on Aquatic GR.

OTHER MATTERS

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING: On Thursday, delegates agreed that CGRFA 16 will take place from 30 January - 3 February 2017 in Rome, Italy.

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIRS: On Thursday, delegates nominated the following individuals as Vice-Chairs representing their region: Chang-Yeon Cho (Republic of Korea) for Asia; Charles Nying (Cameroon) for Africa; François Pythoud (Switzerland) for Europe; Larissa Maria Lima Costa (Brazil) for GRULAC; Javad Mozafari Hashjin (Iran) for the Near East; Christine Dawson (US) for North America; and William Wigmore (Cook Islands) for the Southwest Pacific. Chang-Yeon Cho was elected as CGRFA 16 Chair by acclamation.

CLOSING PLENARY

On Friday afternoon, the plenary convened to adopt the report (CGRFA-15/15/DR) reflecting the meeting's deliberations and containing its decisions. Noting the growing importance of cross-cutting issues, CGRFA Secretary Linda Colette highlighted progress made on ABS, biodiversity and nutrition,

and the renewed commitment to finalize the report on the SoW Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture.

In their closing statements, all regions praised the Chair and the Secretariat for a successful meeting. They reiterated that genetic resources are at the heart of sustainable development and efforts to combat hunger and malnutrition. Africa thanked donors for their support and called on them to redouble their efforts to ensure MYPOW implementation. Speaking for civil society participants, the ICP lauded the work of the Commission, noting that CGRFA 15's outcomes will strengthen its ability to contribute to other processes, in particular climate change and combatting hunger. Noting the challenges ahead, he encouraged members to prioritize national implementation.

Chair Tahiri thanked all participants and gavelled the meeting to a close at 6:22 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF CGRFA 15

"Genetic resources are at the heart of sustainable development." This mantra, repeated by all regional groups in their closing statements, reveals both the importance of the Commission's work in the broader sustainable development context as well as the main challenges that lie ahead. CGRFA 15 took place at the nexus of negotiations in other fora, including the first Meeting of Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing in October 2014, as well as ongoing international discussions toward a new climate agreement and the post-2015 development agenda in the year to come. Given the importance of decisions to be taken in the international arena in 2015 and the many agenda items to be discussed, one might have expected a hectic session in Rome. Yet, much to many participants' surprise, the meeting was very efficient, completing its agenda almost a day early and managing to completely avoid evening plenaries, while also leaving many delegates satisfied and optimistic with regard to the Commission's ability to work at its own pace while also contributing to other processes.

This analysis will explore the "secret formula" that facilitated the Commission's work.

LESS IS MORE

The first ingredient of the formula was the ability to slim down the scope of the Commission's work to avoid being entangled in politically sensitive issues. The groundwork for this strategy was laid during CGRFA 14 when, after deadlock on several agenda items, delegates adopted a series of procedural decisions that allowed CGRFA 15 to circumvent the same pitfalls and focus on areas of low-hanging fruit.

On climate change, for example, CGRFA 15 focused on the adoption of guidelines to support the integration of genetic diversity into national climate change adaptation planning. The Commission's newly released report, *Coping with Climate Change: The Roles of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, highlights the importance of genetic resources in adaptation. While much can be done to address mitigation through the agricultural sector, the tensions around the issue of allocation of responsibilities for mitigating climate change under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change make discussion of this area politically impossible for now. Leaving

mitigation issues completely off the agenda avoided this “hot potato” that provoked the lengthy and unresolvable debates experienced at the Commission’s previous session.

On aquatic GR, after some negotiation, CGRFA 15 agreed to form an ITWG with a mandate and time frame limited, for now, to preparing a report on the State of the World’s Aquatic GR. CGRFA 14 had limited the scope of this report to farmed fish and their wild relatives in areas within national jurisdiction. This allows the Commission to move forward with work in the aquatic GR subsector while negotiations continue on biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Coincidentally, the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction successfully completed the development of recommendations for a new instrument on BBNJ in New York during the same week as CGRFA 15 met in Rome.

On access and benefit sharing, the Commission focused on finalizing a set of “elements” of guidance to support countries in designing national measures that implement ABS for GRFA. While agreement on the elements was quickly reached, delegates spent long hours debating whether their adoption should be highlighted by the FAO Conference through a dedicated resolution. The supporters, including the EU, Asia and Canada, argued that a resolution would increase visibility of the elements and raise awareness among national actors that they are a valuable source of information. The opponents of a resolution, mostly countries from Africa and Latin America, feared that such emphasis could give the impression that the Commission is “jumping the gun” on developing specialized ABS instruments for GRFA similar to the ITPGR. While most delegates agree that such instruments could be developed in the long run, the fear of prejudging their negotiation seemed reminiscent of the highly politicized negotiation processes of the Nagoya Protocol and the ITPGR. The solution to import the content of the draft resolution into the meeting’s report, while refraining from engaging in further work on ABS in GRFA subsectors at this meeting, without closing off the possibility to do so in the future, was yet another application of the “less is more approach.”

Focusing on limited and broadly agreed contributions within its technical mandate, rather than attempting to explore the full range of possible input the Commission could provide based on its expertise, allowed the meeting to move ahead on these issues. In this way the Commission avoided becoming mired in political debate.

SLOW AND STEADY WINS THE RACE

The second ingredient of the formula is the Commission’s long-standing approach of providing sound information and consolidated data first—in the form of its signature State of the World reports—before moving into the policy development realm, through its global plans of action. The adoption of the second *State of the World’s Animal Genetic Resources* was hailed by many as an important outcome of this session, and confirms the Commission’s mode of operation, whereby it continues to issue a new sub-sector report every two years, synthesizing the state of knowledge about plant, animal, forest, aquatic GR and, eventually, micro-organisms and vertebrates in turn.

The SoWs give the Commission a solid standing within the FAO and the international agricultural policy community. Most delegates to the Commission are scientists, and see information provision as its major role. This mode of operation is one that appears to be comfortable for many, and is useful in providing predictability of outputs. The “information first” approach also helps bridge the divide between the agriculture and environment communities, and places the value of actively managing GR in the context of sustainable development.

At the same time, the Commission’s organization of work into five subsectors, which is a reflection of fragmentation within the agricultural sector in most countries, implies a high burden of work on the Commission’s Secretariat. Conducting separate assessments and developing action plans for each sector means that the Commission can only conduct one full cycle of information gathering, report publication, policy development and monitoring per decade for each sub-sector.

CGRFA 15 delegates took a first step in addressing the underlying fragmentation by adopting guidance for establishing national focal points. The hope is that by fostering collaboration and exchange at the national level, CGRFA members will discover the value of a more integrated approach to GRFA management. The report on the State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture, which will be the Commission’s first integrated assessment, could be an important driver of this process; however, even the most optimistic delegates admitted that integrating the subsectors will be a long-term process.

WHEN MORE IS MORE AND FASTER IS BETTER

At the age of 32, the Commission has been around for a generation, and operates in an increasingly complex international landscape of multilateral and bilateral treaties, trade arrangements and a convergence of development issues addressed in negotiations towards a post-2015 development agenda. The Commission is facing a double challenge to ensure its role is well defined in this landscape, while at the same time responding to demand for attention to the role of GRFA in the sub-sectors, from large farm animals down to yeasts and fungi, which are part of soil biodiversity, and are used in many industrial processes.

Inevitably, the Commission is called upon to play a normative role, in addition to providing “pure” science to support the policy-making process. These two sets of expectations were evident at CGRFA 15, where delegates welcomed guidance and benchmarks in the form of the national seed policy guide, and the ABS elements, while stressing the importance of a strong science base for all recommendations.

Like other UN processes and programmes, the Commission needs to find ways to mobilize its knowledge more effectively, and deliver timely and relevant advice, especially due to the rapid growth in the area of biotechnology. The growing importance of cross-sectoral issues is a reflection of this need, which many CGRFA members see as a step in the right direction. Some observe, however, that more could be done in the area of knowledge management: fully exploiting the potential of the information revolution could mean looking at examples such as the UNEP-Live portal and the innovative work being done by some non-governmental organizations to make environmental

data more accessible to the public, and to draw on it in policy making, education and implementation, without the long wait for a SoW report to be concluded.

The Commission also needs to continue defining its role in relation to other international entities, in particular the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources. Speaking at a pre-session seminar, Braulio Dias, Executive Secretary of the CBD, outlined the CBD's role as providing capacity building for countries to establish their own ABS regimes. In keeping with its technical role, the Commission's ABS Elements could provide general, science-based guidance for implementing ABS for GRFA, while the ITPGR promotes its Multilateral System as a specialized ABS instrument in the plant GRFA subsector.

The pre-session seminar on food security and genetic diversity promoted understanding of the links between genetic diversity and nutrition, and showed the Commission's interest in engaging in partnerships that will focus attention on GR in the international policy agenda. The event included briefings on the place of GR in the draft SDGs, and featured speakers from UN entities that are natural partners of the Commission, such as the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the CBD Secretariat.

The achievements of CGRFA 15 show that the Commission's technical and scientific role is evolving toward addressing broader sustainability concerns. The ABS, climate, and nutrition discussions show that there is mutual interest among the international agricultural policy sector, and processes such as the CBD and other biodiversity-related conventions, to seek out synergies between the realms of agricultural and environmental policy making, which are institutionally separated in many countries.

The UN system is increasingly promoting this message that the environment and agriculture communities have a common cause. For example at the pre-session seminar, FAO official Jomo Kwame Sundaram warned of the danger of taking too narrow a focus on genetic diversity, "We can't reduce the arguments to whether something affects genetic diversity for food security, and say all the other diversity can go: we must reflect on the ongoing limitations of human knowledge, and apply the precautionary principle."

The challenge for the Commission going forward will be to make use of its full potential to inform and influence broader sustainable development processes, without losing the efficacy of its current mode of operation. Difficult political questions cannot be entirely left to other UN entities, as stakeholders look to the Commission as the provider of consolidated knowledge of genetic resources and the arbiter of issues relating to their use. At the same time, the opportunities to accelerate or broaden the scope of its work are limited. The challenge was summed up by an observer paraphrasing a quote that is often cited in discussions on green growth at the World Economic Forum in Davos, which also convened during the same week as CGRFA 15: "More is not better! Faster is not better! Better is better!"

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Global Conference on Inland Fisheries: This conference will address the past, present and future of inland fisheries, the role of freshwater fish in childhood nutrition, tribal fisheries management and rights, and sustainable water use in development. **dates:** 26-28 January 2015 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** Devin Bartley, FAO **phone:** +39-6-52254376 **fax:** +39-6-5225-3020 **email:** Devin.Bartley@fao.org **www:** <http://inlandfisheries.org>

Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: The second meeting of the committee will address coordination of the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use of PGRFA and Supporting Initiatives, cooperation with the CBD and other international processes and institutions in the field of sustainable use of PGRFA; and on the development of the toolbox on sustainable use of PGRFA. **dates:** 3-4 March 2015 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** ITPGR Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-570-53441 **fax:** +39-6-570-53057 **email:** pgrfa-treaty@fao.org **www:** <http://www.planttreaty.org>

Commission on Phytosanitary Measures: The tenth session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) will consider items relating to the state of plant protection around the world, actions to control the spread of pests into new areas, international standards, guidelines for the recognition of regional plant protection organizations, and cooperation with international organizations on matters covered by the IPPC. **dates:** 16-20 March 2015 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** IPPC Secretariat **phone:** +39-06 5705-3388 **email:** IPPC@fao.org **www:** <https://www.ippc.int/events/standard-setting/tenth-session-commission-phytosanitary-measures>

151st session of the FAO Council: The 151st session of the FAO Council will address programme, budgetary, financial and administrative matters, including the revised medium-term plan 2014-2017, as well as constitutional, legal and governance matters, including the Council's MYPOW 2015-2018. **dates:** 23-27 March 2015 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** FAO Secretariat **phone:** +39 6 57051 **fax:** +39 6 570 53152 **email:** FAO-HQ@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/bodies/council/cl151/it/>

International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV): The 32nd Extraordinary Meeting of the UPOV Council will take place in March. **dates:** 27 March 2015 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** UPOV Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-338-91-11 **fax:** +41-22-733-03-36 **email:** upov.mail@upov.int **www:** <http://www.upov.int/meetings/en/calendar.html>

Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing: The third meeting of the committee will take place in Brazil. **dates:** 20-24 April 2015 **location:** Brasilia, Brazil **contact:** ITPGR Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-570-53441 **fax:** +39-6-570-53057 **email:** pgrfa-treaty@fao.org **www:** <http://www.planttreaty.org>

Expo Milano 2015: Under the theme, "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life," the six-month Expo aims to open up a dialogue between international players on the challenges of nutrition and

planetary resources. **dates:** 1 May - 31 October 2015 **location:** Milan, Italy **contact:** Expo Organizers **phone:** +39-02-8945-9400/499 **fax:** +39-02-89459492 **email:** rup@expo2015.org **www:** <http://www.expo2015.org/it>

FAO Conference: The 39th Session of the FAO Conference will review the state of food and agriculture, reports from regional conferences and reports from the technical committees. **dates:** 6-13 June 2015 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** Louis Gagnon, FAO Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-57051 **fax:** +39-6-570-53152 **email:** FAO-HQ@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/gsbhome/conference/en/>

FAO Council: The 152nd session of the FAO Council will address programmes, finance and constitutional and legal matters, and discuss the calendar of FAO Governing Bodies and other main sessions for 2015-2016. **dates:** 15 June 2015 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** FAO Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-57051 **fax:** +39-6-570-53152 **email:** FAO-HQ@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/gsbhome/council/en/>

Global Soil Partnership: The third session of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly will take place in Rome, Italy. **dates:** 22-24 June 2015 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** Ronald Job Vargas Rojas **email:** GSP-Secretariat@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/globalsoilpartnership/>

ITPGR Governing Body: The sixth session of the Governing Body will take place in Rome, Italy. **dates:** 3-10 October 2015 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** ITPGR Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-570-53441 **fax:** +39-6-570-56347 **email:** pgrfa-treaty@fao.org **www:** <http://www.planttreaty.org/>

Committee on World Food Security: The 42nd session of the CFS will take place in Rome, Italy. **dates:** 12-17 October 2015 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** CFS Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-570-53200 **fax:** +39-6-570-53152 **email:** cfs@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-home/en/>

CBD SBSTTA and the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions: The 19th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and the 9th meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the CBD will meet back to back. **dates:** 1-7 November 2015 **location:** Montreal, Quebec, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <http://www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2015/ntf-2015-003-cop13-en.pdf>

FAO Council: The 153rd session of the Council will take place in Rome, Italy. **dates:** 30 November – 4 December 2015 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** FAO Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-57051 **fax:** +39-6-570-53152 **email:** FAO-HQ@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/gsbhome/council/en/>

Global Landscapes Forum 2015: The third annual Global Landscapes Forum will coincide with the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. **dates:** 5-6 December 2015 **location:** Paris, France **contact:** Ann-Kathrin Neureuther, Global Landscapes Forum **phone:** +62-251-8622-622 **fax:** +62-251-8622-100 **email:** cifor@cgiar.org **www:** <http://www.landscapes.org>

CBD 20th Meeting of SBSTTA and First Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation: The twentieth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 20) and the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) take place back to back. **dates:** 25 April - 7 May 2016 **location:** Montreal, Quebec, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <http://www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2015/ntf-2015-003-cop13-en.pdf>

CBD COP 13, Cartagena Protocol COP/MOP 8, and Nagoya Protocol COP/MOP 2: These meetings will take place concurrently in 2016. **dates:** 4-17 December 2016 **location:** Los Cabos, Mexico **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <http://www.cbd.int/>

CGRFA 16: The 16th regular session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture will address a range of issues related to its Multi-Year Programme of Work. **dates:** 30 January – 3 February 2017 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** Linda Collette, CGRFA Secretary **phone:** +39-6-570-54981 **fax:** +39-6-570-53152 **email:** cgrfa@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/nr/cgrfa/cgrfa-home/en/>

GLOSSARY

ABS	Access and benefit-sharing
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CGRFA	Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
DAD-IS	Domestic Animal Diversity Information Service
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GPA	Global Plan of Action
GR	Genetic resources
GFAR	Global Forum on Agriculture Research
GRFA	Genetic resources for food and agriculture
GRULAC	Latin American and Caribbean Group
HCIs	Higher-order composite indicators
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
IPC	International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty
IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
ITPGR	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
ITWG	Intergovernmental Technical Working Group
MYPOW	Multi-Year Programme of Work
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEARICE	Southeast Asia Regional Initiatives for Community Empowerment
SoW	State of the World
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change