

CGRFA HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 20 OCTOBER

Delegates to the twelfth regular session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA-12) continued to discuss issues relating to the multi-year programme of work (MYPOW), including on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture (AnGRFA). They also met for an evening session to discuss the compiled views and proposed text on policies and arrangements for ABS for GRFA.

PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES: Modibo Tiémoko Traoré, Assistant Director-General, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, FAO, emphasized the importance of protecting and diversifying PGRFA, and all GRFA, to ensure sustainable agricultural production and help cope with the effects of climate change. He noted that the draft *Second Report on the State of the World's PGRFA* (SOW-2) examines the past, present and future role of crop plants in sustainable development, focusing on the major changes in the plant sector in the last decade and identifying gaps and needs in their sustainable use. Traoré explained that it is time to review and update the Global Plan of Action (GPA) for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of PGRFA in light of the SOW-2, and that the update will help countries meet their commitments to reducing hunger and poverty.

Chair Javad Mozafari Hashjin congratulated the FAO on its work, saying it would pave the way for better use of PGRFA. Elcio Guimarães, FAO, introduced the documents on the preparation of the SOW-2 (CGRFA-12/09/5, and 7), stressing that FAO has produced an authoritative assessment of the PGRFA sector and that the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on PGRFA (ITWG-PG4) had recommended that the document be endorsed and published. He then outlined the findings of the report, noting that a chapter on the contribution of PGRFA to food security and sustainable agricultural development had been added since the first SOW report.

AFRICA, with GRULAC, ASIA, SOUTHWEST PACIFIC, CUBA, NORWAY, IRAN, CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (CGIAR), the GLOBAL CROP DIVERSITY TRUST (GCDT) and PRACTICAL ACTION, thanked the Secretariat, FAO and other contributors for their excellent work and endorsed the SOW-2, with CANADA and the ERG endorsing the report pending minor amendments. The ERG also asked the FAO to prepare a non-technical synthesis report distilling key messages for policy-makers and others. ASIA, supported by CANADA, requested

the FAO publish the report and called for financial resources for publication and translation. AFRICA asked for support to developing countries to prepare country reports, with GRULAC adding a request for support to country report dissemination and YEMEN for support to establish National Information Sharing Mechanisms on PGRFA. CUBA noted that proportionally fewer member countries contributed to the second report than the first and the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC noted that all regions should be able to contribute equally in future.

NORWAY described the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, managed in partnership by the Nordic Genetic Resource Center, the Government of Norway and the GCDT. PRACTICAL ACTION emphasized that the report needed to be stronger in its coverage of the state of the world's small-scale farmers. Shakeel Bhatti, ITPGR Executive Secretary, stressed the need for enhancing cooperation between the ITPGR's Governing Body and the CGRFA to ensure policy coherence and avoid duplication. Chair Mozafari asked, and CGRFA agreed, to endorse SOW-2, with ECUADOR stressing the need for greater cooperation and financial support for the publication of country reports.

PROGRESS SINCE CGRFA-11: Vice-Chair Brad Fraleigh (Canada) introduced the report of the ITWG-PG4 and the document detailing follow-up recommendations on PGRFA (CGRFA-12/09/6 and 7). He highlighted key recommendations in the following areas: the preparation of the SOW-2; updating the GPA; the draft strategic plan 2010-2017 for the implementation of the MYPOW; and the reports from international organizations and instruments.

The ERG stated that there is a need to collect more information on whether to update the Code of Conduct for Plant Germplasm Collection and Transfer. GRULAC highlighted that there should be complementarity between the Facilitating Mechanism for the GPA and the ITPGR's funding strategy. BRAZIL, supported by KENYA and the US, noted that current gene bank standards need updating.

CANADA said that the Commission should request the ITPGR to take responsibility for the implementation of both the GPA and the Facilitating Mechanism, and proposed the transfer of several activities directed towards PGRFA from the CGRFA to the ITPGR. ECUADOR said that it is premature to discuss further tasks for the ITPGR when it has not yet been recognized as a universal instrument. The SOUTHWEST PACIFIC noted that small island nations need to receive more technical assistance on GRFA issues. The CGIAR highlighted that the CGRFA should contribute to the development of a world programme on agriculture in cooperation with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

FUTURE WORK: In the afternoon, the Secretariat introduced the document on updating the GPA (CGRFA-12/09/8), saying that the document includes a suggested process, timeline, and budget. Noting weaknesses in progress and implementation of the GPA, GRULAC, with BRAZIL, supported updating the plan, yet requested the Commission to monitor utilization of financial resources. Noting the “tight” timeline laid out by the Secretariat for updating the GPA and the need to economize on meeting costs, the ERG, with ARGENTINA, supported considering the GPA at CGRFA-13, not at a possible fifth International Technical Conference on PGR. YEMEN said that little more than half of countries in the Commission were able to provide national data for the SOW-2, and more financial assistance should be provided to countries so that the GPA can be finalized and implemented. Noting the financial support received by some countries, AFRICA asked donors to increase support. The US supported the update of the GPA based on the SOW-2 and the participation of the ITPGR Secretariat in this work. With CANADA, he sought clarification on the need for a fifth International Technical Conference on PGR. CANADA emphasized the importance of the GPA as a supporting component of the ITPGR, in particular in relation to the funding strategy of the Treaty, and said that there is no need to postpone updating the GPA. He also supported the proposal by ERG and ARGENTINA to finalize and adopt the GPA at CGRFA-13. The Chair noted that comments made in plenary on this agenda item will be reflected in the final report.

ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERLAKEN CONFERENCE:

The Secretariat introduced documents on *inter alia*: the follow-up to the Interlaken Conference (CGRFA-12/09/9), the report of the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group (ITWG) on AnGR (CGRFA-12/09/10), and the Funding Strategy for the implementation of the GPA for AnGR (CGRFA-12/09/11). François Pythoud (Switzerland), Vice-Chair of the fifth session of the ITWG-AnGR, held from 28-30 January 2009 in Rome, Italy, presented the report of the meeting on behalf of Chair Vanida Khumnirdpetch (Thailand) (CGRFA-12/09/10).

The ERG proposed that the CGRFA urge implementation of the GPA for AnGR at the national level through appropriate measures, including national strategies and action plans. She, with ASIA, acknowledged the important contributions of small-scale livestock keepers and of sustainable management and use of AnGR by breeders and breeder associations, as well as in large-scale production systems. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA called for more work on breed identification and embryonic transfer methods for *ex situ* conservation. Togo, for AFRICA, commended the CGRFA for the adoption of the Interlaken Declaration. She also expressed appreciation for FAO’s technical advice for the conservation of AnGR in Africa. GRULAC said establishment of early warning and response systems should be in line with existing initiatives and require technical support. The US cautioned that the issue of early-warning systems and response should not be decided upon until the working group further studies it. PAPUA NEW GUINEA emphasized the need for region-focused early warning systems.

On the report from the ITWG-AnGR, the ERG supported the recommendations put forward. IRAN noted the need for continued support and mechanisms to provide updated information on AnGR. CHILE noted the CGRFA guidelines’ role in assisting the country to complete its national plan. CGIAR stressed the need for valuation methods for AnGR and decision-support tools for management and breeding programs.

Funding Strategy for Implementation of the GPA for AnGR: The Secretariat introduced the Funding Strategy for the implementation of the GPA (CGRFA-12/09/11) highlighting the: country focus; call for greater cooperation; and project- and voluntary-based nature of the mechanism. GRULAC noted

that this strategy should boost the international component of cooperation. BRAZIL and MEXICO aligned with GRULAC. The ERG stressed that all efforts should be directed to the implementation of the GPA and, with the US, opposed setting targets under the Funding Strategy. CANADA, concerned with the overall administration of the Funding Strategy, inquired whether there will be an oversight body. The US emphasized that the Funding Strategy is a separate element to advance AnGR conservation and should not detract resources from ongoing activities and also proposed deletion of “species and breed relevance” as a selection criteria (Section C III para. 10). The Secretariat clarified that donors can continue to use other mechanisms to support activities of the GPA without using trust funds. The LEAGUE FOR PASTORAL PEOPLE suggested including eradication of alien species as a priority for the use of resources under the funding strategy.

POLICIES AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR ABS

At the onset of the evening negotiating session on the proposed text on the policies and arrangements for ABS for GRFA (CGRFA-12/09/3.1/DRAFT GUIDANCE/1), CANADA and SWITZERLAND raised the question as to what body and in what form this document should be transmitted. States considered whether it should be conveyed to the FAO Conference, CBD COP-10 or the CBD *Ad hoc* Open-ended Working Group on ABS (ABS-WG). They then proceeded to negotiate the operative text of the document. Delegates debated replacing references to the special nature of “agricultural biodiversity” with the term “GRFA”. BRAZIL preferred the former as agreed CBD language, while SWITZERLAND preferred specific mention of the genetic component of agricultural biodiversity. On collaboration between the FAO and the Commission and the CBD, participants arrived at compromise language inviting CBD bodies “to explore and assess options for” rather than “to ensure” that the international regime incorporate flexibility to adapt solutions for GRFA, but the overall paragraph remained bracketed.

CANADA highlighted that a paragraph referring to the interdependence between countries on GRFA should not be deleted and proposed that the background studies on ABS prepared for this meeting be transmitted to the ABS-WG on ABS. Delegates agreed to move several other paragraphs elsewhere in the report and supported the Chair’s proposal to consolidate preambular text. Discussions will resume in an evening session on Wednesday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The morning session started with a sense of accomplishment, with the FAO and the Commission introducing delegates to the near-final version of the Second Report on the State of the World’s PGRFA. The culmination of a long and involved preparatory process, this new arrival was welcomed into the CGRFA with open arms. A few reservations could be heard however, with some wondering why the “comprehensive” report was based on significantly fewer country reports than the one first published some 13 years ago. Lack of resources was cited as an issue by developing countries, but since country reports from a number of developed countries were absent as well, one delegate questioned countries’ commitment to the process.

The mood was hardly perturbed however, and the meeting continued to roll along. Another delegate commented, “It will be all smooth sailing until tonight,” anticipating the evening session scheduled on ABS issues. And they were right. Delegates debated wording on the Commission’s contribution on ABS well into the night. Though the process was tedious, progress continued to be made throughout the evening. Still, several fundamental questions remain, including whether the final message will be in the meeting’s report or in a declaration...