

## CGRFA 13 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 19 JULY 2011

CGRFA 13 delegates continued to consider items related to the Commission's Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW), namely policies and arrangements for access and benefit-sharing (ABS) for genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA), and: cooperation with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGR); progress in implementation of other CGRFA recommendations on PGRFA; and forest genetic resources. A contact group on the updated Global Plan of Action (GPA) on PGRFA met in the evening.

### MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK

**CROSS-SECTORIAL MATTERS: Access and benefit-sharing:** The Secretariat introduced the issue (CGRFA-13/11/5 and Background Study Paper No.59) underscoring the Nagoya Protocol provisions relevant to GRFA, including its recognition of the special character of GRFA and the ITPGR, as well as the ample scope to develop specialized international agreements.

Delegates discussed two options for action by the Commission: one requesting the Secretariat to monitor the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, develop mechanisms for inclusion of GRFA policies on ABS and analyze the need for further instruments on ABS for GRFA; and a second option providing for the establishment of an open-ended *ad hoc* subsidiary body on ABS for GRFA, and its terms of reference.

GRULAC and AFRICA supported the second option. Poland, for the EU and its member states, and CANADA supported the first option, with the EU supporting one inter-sessional meeting of an ABS group of experts to study distinctive solutions for GRFA. CANADA called for further study before engaging in specific work on GRFA, and encouraged the Commission to focus on ABS for animal genetic resources. GRULAC suggested: including reference to harmony with the CBD and its relevant instruments; referring to "mechanisms" on ABS for GRFA, rather than "instruments"; and considering a financing mechanism for the proposed subsidiary body.

The NEAR EAST supported developing draft mechanisms for inclusion in ABS policies, as stated in both options, but opposed text referring to monitoring implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and considering the need for, and modalities of, instruments addressing ABS for GRFA. ERITREA requested developing distinctive solutions for GRFA along with a mechanism to ensure implementation of benefit-sharing.

YEMEN called for funding and technical support for national implementation of ABS and suggested the Commission focus on ABS for aquatic genetic resources. The EU called for distinctive solutions, agreeing to analyze the need for specialized international tools on GRFA.

CANADA proposed identification of approaches for differential treatment of GRFA but, supported by the US, preferred reference to "legislative, policy and administrative measures" rather than "legislative and regulatory requirements," to ensure consistency with the Protocol. BRAZIL said different opinions on procedure should not prevent action by the Commission. BHUTAN called for capacity building and guidance for ABS implementation in GRFA sectors.

BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL commended the CGRFA's technical expertise, noting that the CGIAR centers would continue to contribute expertise for ABS implementation. THE INTERNATIONAL SEED FEDERATION called for stakeholder involvement in ABS implementation to enable sharing of experiences. An informal group met in the evening to consider revised text on actions to be taken by the Commission.

**PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE: Cooperation with the ITPGR:** CGRFA Secretary Linda Colette introduced the document on policy coherence and complementarity of the work of the CGRFA and the Governing Body of the ITPGR (CGRFA-13/11/7) noting that it sets out key activities of both bodies and the current institutional framework. ITPGR Secretary Shakeel Bhatti reiterated that the Governing Body had reviewed a similar paper and had requested further information on the legal, administrative and financial implications of transfer of activities from the CGRFA to the ITPGR.

Delegates discussed three different options regarding whether or how PGRFA related activities should be transferred from the Commission to the ITPGR Governing Body. The EU, CANADA, ECUADOR, AUSTRALIA, KENYA and others called for further consideration of the legal, administrative and financial implications of the options presented. AUSTRALIA suggested the three options could be considered as short-, medium- and long-term objectives.

The first option to enhance the ongoing cooperation framework was supported by ARGENTINA, AFRICA, COSTA RICA, ECUADOR, YEMEN, MEXICO, the US, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA and BRAZIL, with many noting that the bodies have distinct roles and different membership. PRACTICAL ACTION called for the Commission to continue its leadership across all GRFA.

The option of a case-by-case gradual transfer of specific tasks and activities to the Governing Body was supported by the EU, AUSTRALIA, CUBA and MALAYSIA, with the EU noting that

some tasks can be transferred more easily than others. CUBA recalled that the scope of the ITPGR covers all PGRFA, noting that the transfer would occur in the medium to long-term and in a coordinated way. MALAYSIA suggested the ITPGR Governing Body is better placed to focus on certain specific issues.

The final option of transfer of all PGRFA activities from the Commission to the Governing Body was supported by CANADA, noting that the Commission should keep cross-sectorial matters such as ABS within its purview.

**Progress in Implementation:** Under this agenda item, delegates considered several issues arising from CGRFA 12 decisions. On the draft revised genebank standards for orthodox seeds (CGRFA-13/11/9), Canada, for the NORTH AMERICAN REGION, requested that the current draft be reviewed by the ITWG on PGRFA, along with further standards for non-orthodox seeds and germplasm, which he requested to be developed. The EU agreed with the latter, but urged adoption of the current draft genebank standards. YEMEN and IRAQ supported considering the standards at the next ITWG meeting. KENYA called for technical support for the implementation of international genebank standards.

Delegates also discussed follow-up activities to other CGRFA 12 recommendations (CGRFA-13/11/10), including: national information sharing mechanisms; strengthening plant breeding capacities (CGRFA-13/11/Inf.12); strengthening seed systems (CGRFA-13/11/Inf.13); and options to promote food security through on-farm management and *in situ* conservation of PGRFA (Background Study Paper No.51).

The EU noted that the nature of any information sharing mechanism depends on the future division of tasks between the Commission and the Treaty and, with CANADA, requested that the Commission continue collaborating with the Treaty Secretariat to avoid duplication. ECUADOR requested that funding for the information sharing mechanism be included in the FAO's regular programme, to avoid repeated requests for extra-budgetary funding. KENYA suggested strengthening synergies among existing information systems and networks at the regional level.

On strengthening plant breeding capacities and seed systems, the EU encouraged governments, NGOs and the seed sector to recognize the importance of long-term support and funding for plant breeding research. ANGOLA supported the use of locally adapted material. The SOUTHWEST PACIFIC highlighted the need for capacity building, support for regional networks and technical assistance at the local level. The NEAR EAST underscored the need to strengthen capacity and support for breeding activities and funding for GPA implementation in developing countries.

Regarding *in situ* and on-farm conservation, the EU requested the identification of indicators of diversity to establish and monitor changes in diversity at a national, regional and global level. ECUADOR prioritized on-farm conservation, and expressed reservations regarding the establishment of a global network due to lack of clarity on its sustainability and added value.

Delegates decided to postpone the nomination of regional representatives to the ITWG on PGRFA to Wednesday. The NEAR EAST requested to increase the number of their representatives from three to five due to lack of proportion in representation considering the number of countries compared to other regions. NORWAY, AUSTRALIA, SWITZERLAND, GERMANY and CUBA expressed concern about this proposal and preferred postponing consideration of the issue.

**PROGRESS IN OTHER AREAS OF THE MYPOW:**  
**Forest Genetic Resources:** The Chair of the ITWG on Forest Genetic Resources, Tore Skroppa (Norway), reported on the ITWG's first meeting (CGRFA/13/11/12) which provided input on the format and timing of country reports to inform the

SoW Forest Genetic Resources Report, noting that once it was completed, a next step could be consideration of a GPA on forest genetic resources. The CGRFA Secretariat then presented the guidelines for preparation of country reports and workshops to build capacity of national focal points for report preparation (CGRFA/13/11/Inf.15).

CANADA declined to support an international conference to launch the SoW Forest Genetic Resources. CHILE, ECUADOR and INDIA requested that funds be made available to allow countries to complete high-quality reports as scheduled. IRAN and AFRICA lamented the rapid erosion of forest GR, and called for global attention and action on the issue.

The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO noted the need to: identify climate-resilient varieties that can also contribute to food security; stabilize the *in situ* conservation of known forest varieties; and maintain emphasis on capacity building and participatory and inclusive approaches. AFRICA called for: capacity building among farmers to conserve forest GR, increasing awareness for both *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, and support for countries to produce their national reports on time. NORWAY called on countries to provide additional resources for country reports on forest GR.

JAPAN noted earlier agreement to use existing financial resources for this purpose. The ERG prioritized: country reports on forest GR by 1 January 2012; study of biotic and abiotic impacts of climate change; and close coordination of information systems.

#### **CONTACT GROUP ON THE GPA**

Delegates completed the first reading of the priority action areas related to sustainable use, namely: expanding characterization, evaluation and further development of specific collection subsets to facilitate use, supporting plant breeding, genetic enhancement and base-broadening efforts; promoting diversification of crop production and broadening crop diversity for sustainable agriculture; and promoting development and commercialization of plant varieties, farmer varieties and underutilized species. Following repeated debates about references to breeders, farmer breeders and farmers, delegates agreed to simply refer to breeders and farmers throughout the text; and in other provisions they agreed to refer to breeding programmes rather than breeders.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

Discussions on ABS affirmed that the long-standing efforts to ensure adequate recognition of the special character of GRFA under the Nagoya Protocol have been successful. However, delegates diverged as to whether the Commission should take action now to occupy the field, or wait to see how the Nagoya Protocol plays out. Opinions diverged especially on whether an "intersessional body" should be established. Some warned against missing this "historic opportunity" to further define the global system on GRFA conservation, while others noted that the Nagoya Protocol will not enter into force for some time and the "window of opportunity" may stay open for a while.

Similarly, delegates could still not agree on whether and how responsibility for more PGRFA-related tasks should be transferred to the ITPGR Governing Body. One veteran negotiator warned against a reductionist approach to PGRFA: "I understand concerns on duplication but we cannot just push all PGRFA matters into the Treaty with its specific mandate and limited resources, taking them from the Commission with its broader mandate, different membership and separate funding." Echoing the CGRFA Chair, one insider explained the ITPGR is like a son to the Commission, such that disconnecting the two, "even if physically possible, would not be emotionally feasible." Others felt confident that the collaboration of both bodies is already highly efficient, and issues might work themselves out faster on the ground – so, *de facto* before *de jure*.