



ITPGRFA GB 6 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2015

Plenary considered: the Global Information System (GLIS); the work programme on sustainable use; farmers' rights; compliance; and cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Global Crop Diversity Trust (the Trust). Contact groups on the GLIS and on enhancing the MLS met in the evening.

GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

Theo van Hintum (the Netherlands), Co-Chair of the Expert Consultation on the Global Information System, introduced the document (IT/GB-6/15/7), including a draft vision, work programme and terms of reference (ToR) for the scientific advisory committee.

The ERG called for strengthening capacity to develop national inventories and regional information systems, and underscored that recipients of material are to make available to the MLS all non-confidential information. CANADA stressed that GLIS should integrate existing systems rather than develop new ones.

GRULAC called for incorporating initiatives for technology development and transfer into GLIS. BRAZIL highlighted the need to monitor the system's progress and results. AFRICA and the NEAR EAST underscored the high level of capacity development and technology transfer needed for all countries to benefit from GLIS. AFRICA requested taking into account implications for ABS regulations. The NEAR EAST noted that the last Consultation meeting did not include all regions.

On the ToRs for the scientific advisory committee, AUSTRALIA supported membership on the basis of technical expertise. ETHIOPIA recommended participation of public researchers and farmers. IRAN noted that the committee should be regionally balanced.

ARGENTINA and HONDURAS stressed GLIS should take into account all user needs. The US supported free access to non-confidential, non-proprietary information related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), and drew attention to the Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition.

Questioning focus on the DivSeek initiative, LA VIA CAMPESINA stressed that farmers need information on agroecological systems, not gene sequences. A CIVIL SOCIETY representative added that systems such as DivSeek are inaccessible to farmers and lead to the false belief that the seed is not important. Delegates established a contact group.

SUSTAINABLE USE

François Pythoud (Switzerland), Co-Chair of the Technical Advisory Committee on Sustainable Use (ACSU), reported on the intersessional ACSU meeting and on the third meeting

of the Platform for the Co-Development and Transfer of Technologies (IT/GB-6/15/12 and Inf.10). He stressed the need for complementarity and strengthened synergies between the Treaty programmes and areas, and for involvement of farmer organizations at all levels. Many supported reconvening the Committee.

AFRICA questioned Trust activities on crop wild relatives and opposed their mandatory inclusion in the MLS. CANADA noted his understanding that genebank accessions of Annex I crop wild relatives are part of the MLS.

CANADA stressed the need to develop close cooperation and agree on functional divisions with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA). The CGRFA suggested referencing components of its Global Plan of Action on PGRFA.

CANADA, the ERG and the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC asked to address a work programme element on training and capacity building on farmers' rights under the relevant agenda item. AFRICA and CIVIL SOCIETY asked to retain the reference to farmers' rights and to add language on support from the Benefit-Sharing Fund. The ERG then suggested adding reference to "Treaty Article 9" (Farmers' Rights) throughout the text.

ASIA proposed adding indicators on the inclusion of women in activities supporting the implementation of the work programme. PAKISTAN added reference to awareness raising on the need to duplicate materials. The NEAR EAST asked to support projects that address tensions between conservation and sustainable use.

GRULAC requested additional support for raising awareness on the importance of crop wild relatives, landraces, and under-utilized species. BRAZIL suggested several amendments to give special attention to the needs of farmers.

The SOUTHWEST PACIFIC asked that public-private partnerships for pre-breeding include a wide range of experts, including private sector breeders. The INTERNATIONAL SEED FEDERATION (ISF), supported by CANADA, requested that the work programme take into account the contributions of *ex situ* conservation and plant breeding to sustainable use. A revised draft resolution will be prepared.

FARMERS' RIGHTS

The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (IT/GB-6/15/13 and Inf.5). AFRICA supported developing voluntary guidelines, establishing a working group, conducting global consultation workshops, and strengthening partnerships with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV).

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Many called for enhancing understanding of the interrelations among the Treaty, WIPO and UPOV. The ERG, NORWAY and the NEAR EAST supported a joint capacity-building programme with the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR). NORWAY suggested joint symposiums with WIPO and UPOV and, supported by ETHIOPIA and others, commissioning a study on the interrelations among them.

ASIA urged developing an overall strategy for the protection of traditional knowledge and promoting farmers' participation in decision making, and noted that intellectual property rights (IPRs) legislation may impose constraints on farmers' activities, including community seed banks and participatory breeding. JAPAN noted that IPRs pose no restrictions to the sharing of farmers' varieties. INDIA pointed to national legislation balancing the rights of plant breeders and farmers. CANADA stressed that responsibility for implementation rests with national governments, and called for information exchange, but not assistance, towards implementation.

MADAGASCAR called for gender mainstreaming and a participatory process ensuring that benefits reach farmers on the ground. VENEZUELA highlighted national implementation efforts, including through labelling systems and local seed banks. CONGO stressed supporting community seed banks.

CANADA opposed a proposed pilot project on complementarity of formal and informal seed systems. GRULAC said the resolution should include references to the scope of farmers' rights and invite parties to ensure greater coordination and synergies among institutions working on the issue.

UPOV drew attention to confusion between seed registries, marketing regulations and plant variety protection, noting that seed systems regulation extends beyond plant variety protection.

GFAR highlighted assistance to governments, upon request, to improve grassroots capacity, national decision making and awareness on farmers' rights, noting that the joint capacity-building programme aims to build the capacity of parties to implement farmers' rights.

Supporting the commissioning of a study, a representative of farmer organizations and civil society highlighted the impact of IPRs and stressed that farmers' rights are linked to human rights.

COMPLIANCE

The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (IT/GB-6/15/14 and Add.1). Many supported the draft resolution and the corrigendum to the Standard Reporting Format. The ERG and CANADA suggested adding language to request the Secretariat to complete its work and place the Standard Reporting Format online by the end of 2015. The draft resolution was agreed as amended.

COOPERATION WITH THE CBD

The Secretariat introduced the relevant document (IT/GB-6/15/15). The CBD highlighted areas of cooperation between the Treaty and the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol (NP) stressing CBD COP 12 decisions on: synergies and efficiencies among the multilateral agreements; the financial mechanism, regarding identification of funding priorities to the GEF; and the Multi-Year Programme of Work, including strategic actions to enhance national implementation.

BRAZIL requested that guidance to the GEF be added to the GB 7 agenda. The ERG said that a possible roadmap for the biodiversity-related conventions will increase synergies in implementation. CANADA noted that the two Secretariats must work within their respected mandates. AFRICA drew attention to areas of tension between the Treaty and the NP, calling for more coordination and harmonization of implementation at the national and international levels. On the basis of an African proposal,

and comments by Canada and Japan, delegates agreed to add language urging parties and the Secretariat to fully engage in the process under NP Article 10 to consider developing a global multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism. The draft resolution was agreed upon as amended.

GLOBAL CROP DIVERSITY TRUST

Marie Haga, Executive Director of the Trust presented the Trust's report (IT/GB-6/15/16). She highlighted a ten-year project to collect, characterize and conserve crop wild relatives *ex situ*, and a forthcoming pledging conference. Reporting on the operations of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, NORWAY described the first withdrawal to reestablish parts of the collection of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), formerly located in Aleppo, Syria, which had been lost due to civil war and drought.

On the draft resolution, the ERG asked to reflect the Trust's role in providing transparent and complementary policy guidance and establishing quality management systems in genebanks. JAPAN suggested strengthening coordination with the Trust on the review of the Funding Strategy. CANADA encouraged increased cooperation between the Trust and the Treaty.

BRAZIL suggested enhancing the Trust's accountability to all countries and developing joint fundraising activities with the Treaty. ECUADOR called for support to national collections. ETHIOPIA stressed the need for the Trust to function within the Treaty governance system. BRAZIL and NAMIBIA called for policy guidance that balances *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation. IRAN highlighted persisting challenges in optimizing coordination between the Treaty and the Trust. NAMIBIA stressed that global food security depends on smallholder farmers, not *ex situ* collections, and opposed DivSeek work on crop wild relatives.

A CIVIL SOCIETY representative stressed: the need for more clarity on the difference between *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation; the shift towards the "dematerialization" of genetic resources, cautioning against national genebanks turning into genome banks; and the need for the Trust to address the issue of IPRs on digital DNA sequences.

The US noted its financial contribution to the Trust and the importance of genebank standards for donors. A contact group was established.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Tuesday saw GB 6 delegates trying to put fresh spices on old issues – with varying degrees of success. Statements that implementation of farmers' rights could be either supported or obstructed by national regulations other than IPRs, such as seed certification, labelling or access to land and markets, sparked discussion in the corridors. Some wondered whether there was an opportunity for a pragmatic "better-than-nothing" approach to support farmers' rights implementation at the national and local level. Others however maintained that such efforts would do little to hide the "IPR elephant in the room."

At the same time, "achieving the right balance between *ex situ* and on-farm conservation under the Treaty remains a challenge," as a participant commented. While many noted the need to refocus towards on-farm management, highlighting the contribution of smallholders to global food security, two examples nicely illustrated the complementary nature of the two approaches: the ICARDA story, which marked the first withdrawal of samples from the Global Seed Vault to reestablish collections lost during the Syrian civil war, and the ANDES Potato Park, showcasing conservation and use of potato varieties by indigenous peoples in the Peruvian Andes.