

Intergovernmental Technical Working Group Meeting on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Rome, 2 – 4 July 2001

Summary

Representatives of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Plant genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and observers from invited organizations met in Rome from 2 to 4 July, to discuss: 1) the progress on the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, 2) a monitoring mechanism for its implementation, 3) updating the report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, 4) the progress on the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, 5) a Facilitating mechanism for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, and 6) the potential impacts of Genetic Use Restriction Technologies on agricultural biodiversity and agricultural production systems.

Documents discussed can be found at:

<http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/AGRICULT/AGP/AGPS/PGR/ITWG/docsp1.htm>

The Working Group noted that substantial progress had been made on implementing the *Global Plan of Action*, mainly as a result of national efforts, but there was a perceived need to strengthen co-ordination between stakeholders within countries. Several areas for future concentration of efforts were identified, including, 1) *in situ* conservation activities, 2) seed production distribution support, particularly in the African region; 3) assisting farmers in restoring genetic resources in situations of recurrent drought 4) regeneration of germplasm in *ex situ* collections 5) capacity building. The Working Group also identified new areas that need to be taken into account for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, namely 1) effects of climate change on the state of plant genetic resources, 2) increased use of genetically modified crops and 3) threats to *in situ* conservation arising from spread of invasive species. It was agreed that these issues, together with analysis of lesser known but potentially valuable crops, use of new methodologies for conservation and evaluation and participatory plant breeding, might be considered further in preparation of the second report *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.

The Working Group discussed the reporting formats and indicators to be used in a comprehensive monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. Indicators included those for gauging genetic diversity and vulnerability. Preliminary pilot activities, to be conducted by FAO and IPGRI, were proposed as a means to develop a comprehensive survey, including the establishment of national clearing-house mechanisms on the implementation of the *Plan*, to be carried out in 2004. The results of these activities will be used to update the report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources. This will be completed in 2007 and will be used in turn to update the Global Plan of Action. The second report will address issues additional to those covered in the first report and should be supplemented with thematic studies relevant to the Commission's mandate and take account of the revised International Undertaking.

The World Information and Early warning System was considered to be important for monitoring implementation of the Global Plan of Action and updating the report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources. It was agreed that WIEWS continue to be developed

in a simple and cost-effective way, linked to national information systems on PGRFA, and that the Secretariat should continue assisting member countries in building capacity for information management.

Several options were debated for approaches to facilitating implementation of the Global Plan of Action, with an emphasis on maintaining elements of dynamism and flexibility. These options included 1) the Regular programme approach, 2) the project model approach, 3) the consultative forum approach and 4) the *Plan* Facility approach. Diverse views were expressed and a recommendation was made to consider all options until discussion following further elaboration.

The potential impacts of Genetic Use restriction Technologies on agricultural biodiversity and farming systems were discussed and there was a range of views expressed by those present. Some members were opposed to the technology while others felt that advantages could accrue and should be considered further. It was, however, agreed that some of the conclusions were speculative in the absence of sufficient information to make more definitive analyses. The document (CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/7) will be revised by the Secretariat for submission to the Ninth Regular Session of the Commission for its consideration, and the results submitted to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Recommendations agreed by the Working Group will be submitted to the Ninth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture for consideration.