



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



High Level Political Forum 2021

6-15 July 2021

“Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”

ANNEX 7

Inputs by International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)

Adopted by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in November 2001, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) is the only legally binding international agreement that specifically deals with the exchange and management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).

The objectives of the International Treaty are the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity. It addresses food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture and resilient livelihoods of small-scale farmers against climate change, therefore supporting better recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Suggested outline¹

a. Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs under review in the 2021 HLPF

During 2020, a survey was conducted to gather information and views on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the International Treaty at the national level. Based on the response to the survey, a high level expert panel was held to discuss the survey results and analysis as well as to learn from relevant stakeholders' experiences at international, regional and national levels.

One of the findings of the panel was that significant impact occurred at the level of access to seeds and, in particular, demand in developing countries, which is brought about by lower-income and weaker support programmes (e.g. subsidies, financial services, extension, insurance). On-farm systems and availability, supply and distributions of quality seeds for the next cropping season require critical interventions.

¹ The headings and bullets are included as per the suggested outline annexed to the letter of the President of ECOSOC. Notes on expected contents are included in each section in *italic*.

Both consumers and producers of food crops rely on plant genetic resources and seeds for food, nutrition, agriculture and livelihoods. Our food systems depend on the availability of diverse seeds, which was negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting the implementation of SDGs under review in 2021 HLPF, particularly 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13.

b. Actions, policy guidance, progress, challenges and areas requiring urgent attention

The Bureau of the Governing Body of the ITPGRFA noted the importance of supporting PGRFA collections at risk in order to build preparedness and maintain crop diversity within seed systems. This has become even more urgent, given the number of emergency situations and adverse events posing threats to certain germplasm collections, including from the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters.

The effort to conserve and sustainably use PGRFA must be further strengthened to enable provision of sufficient and healthy food to all people in the world, not only at present time but also in the future, as they are the backbones of global food security and sustainable agriculture. Managing and deploying plant genetic diversity is also one of the few key options available to vulnerable farmers in their efforts to increase resilience and secure their food security and livelihoods.

c. An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind”

Small-scale farmers were more vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions, as local seed production and supply of quality seeds were disrupted. COVID-19 has negatively impacted the work of small-scale farmers in conserving and using locally adapted plant varieties and consequently their livelihoods. Safeguarding the food security and livelihoods of those vulnerable farmers is critical to achieve the 2030 Agenda and all SDGs.

d. Cooperation, measures and commitments at all levels in promoting sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

In order to reduce the negative effects of COVID-19, ensuring that governments, international organizations, private sector, farmers and NGOs all work hand in hand would be the key strategy to building more robust seed systems at the local, national and regional levels for farmers of all sizes, especially smallholder farmers, to access high-quality seed. This collaborative strategy should include capacity development for collaborative research and breeding, building new flexibility within existing normative instruments for all the stakeholders, while preserving legal certainty, taking advantage of existing processes within the International Treaty.

e. Various measures and policy recommendations on building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

The Governing Body of the International Treaty encourages Contracting Parties to mainstream the implementation of the International Treaty into their national agriculture policies, development strategies and programmes related to the 2030 Agenda, including measures to promote Farmers' Rights and conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA as set out in the International Treaty. Recommendations pertinent to COVID-19 recovery include:

- Integrate international and national genebanks into seed system restoration in emergency situations.

- Accelerate the development of a global network of cryobanks through the International Treaty to safety-duplicate field and *in vitro* plant collections that are at risk and are a particular challenge during the crisis.
- Prioritize availability, supply and distributions of quality seeds of locally adapted plant varieties within food/seed security interventions.
- Support local seed production interventions for vulnerable small-scale farmer interventions, including through the Benefit-sharing Fund of the International Treaty.
- Accelerate integration of digital solutions for farmers and field workers (e.g. agricultural research organizations, extension workers, genebank curators).

Selected recommendations for accelerating progress towards achievement of specific SDGs under review in 2021, which are, 1 on no poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 3 on good health and well-being, 8 on decent work and economic growth, 10 on reduced inequalities, 12 on responsible consumption and production, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships.

- Promote the One Health approach, including in the context of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, to realize healthy ecosystems (SDGs 12, 13) and healthy people and livelihoods (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 10). Recognizing the full range of linkages between biodiversity and all aspects of human health, it is important to integrate biodiversity, genetic resources conservation and breeding to address the common drivers of biodiversity loss, disease risk and ill health.