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“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 8

Inputs by Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA)

The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) is the only permanent intergovernmental body that specifically addresses biological diversity for food and agriculture. It aims to reach international consensus on policies for the sustainable use and conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use.

The Commission initiates, oversees and guides the preparation of global sectoral and cross-sectoral assessments. These assessments address the state of biodiversity and genetic resources in the respective sectors, along with their uses, drivers that contribute to their erosion, and the challenges and opportunities involved in conserving and using them in a sustainable manner to contribute to food security and nutrition. The global assessments are prepared through participatory, country-driven processes.

In response to the main gaps and challenges identified in the global assessments, the Commission may decide to agree on policy responses, such as voluntary Global Plans of Action through which governments commit to take action to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and genetic resources in their respective sector. Implementation of these policy instruments is monitored by countries through the Commission which, on the basis of the implementation results produces new global assessments of the sectors at about every ten years.

Due to the COVID pandemic, all intersessional meetings of the Commission scheduled for 2020 have been postponed to 2021; and the 18th Session of the Commission has been postponed to September 2021. However, work has continued on the development of policy responses to new global assessment reports, on support to countries in their national implementation of the Commission’s global plans of action, and on monitoring national implementation, including on SDG 2.5.

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

Policy responses to new global assessments

The Commission, its last session, agreed that the report on [The State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture](#), along with developments in other fora that also point to declines in biodiversity of

relevance to food and agriculture, calls for a timely and clear cross-sectoral follow-up. The Commission agreed that the follow-up product should be: actionable at country, regional and global levels; complementary to, not duplicative of, and coherent with, other processes and initiatives in FAO, such as the Commission's [Global Plans of Action](#) and FAO's [Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors](#), and in other fora; and voluntary. Furthermore, the follow-up product should clarify terminology, take into account characteristics of diverse ecosystems and production systems, consider the special needs of developing countries, contribute to the implementation of the SDGs and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and highlight areas for partnerships with multiple stakeholders.¹

An open-ended virtual meeting of the [Group of National Focal Points for Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture](#) will be held from 2 to 4 March 2021, with a view to reviewing and revising the document, for consideration by the Commission at its Eighteenth Regular Session, with the motivation to have it adopted as a Global Plan of Action by the FAO Conference.

The Commission further agreed that a Global Plan of Action on Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture should be prepared as a response to [The State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture](#), upon consultation with the regions and in collaboration with the Committee on Fisheries and its relevant subsidiary bodies. The Global Plan of Action should be voluntary and collaborative and be implemented in line with the needs and priorities of Members. Following five regional workshops, a draft Global Plan of Action, reflecting all comments and inputs received, will be presented to the Third Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, for its consideration². The virtual session of the Working Group is scheduled for 1 to 3 June 2021.

Access and Benefit-Sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture

The Commission encouraged Members to consider the [ABS Elements Elements to Facilitate Domestic Implementation of Access and Benefit-Sharing for Different Subsectors of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture with Explanatory Notes](#)³, and, as appropriate, make use of them. It reaffirmed that ABS measures for the different subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture are relevant for achieving SDGs 2 and 15. Furthermore, it recommended that countries implement ABS measures in harmony with existing frameworks and infrastructures of the different subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture and that agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries ministries be engaged in the development and implementation of ABS measures for genetic resources for food and agriculture⁴.

Strengthening the national implementation of the Commission's global plans of action

Following the request by the Commission, at its Seventeenth Regular Session, several technical guidelines and awareness raising materials have been published.

- *How the world's food security depends on biodiversity* shows the contribution of genetic resources for food and agriculture to food security and to the achievement of relevant

¹ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 40

² CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraphs 55-56

³ [ABS Elements Elements to Facilitate Domestic Implementation of Access and Benefit-Sharing for Different Subsectors of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture with Explanatory Notes](#), Available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian, <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA5088EN/>

⁴ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraphs 14-18

Sustainable Development Goals. Available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb0416en>

- *Guidelines on Developing Sustainable Value Chains for Small-scale Livestock Producers* are available in electronic and hard-copy formats. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5717en/ca5717en.pdf>
- *Voluntary Guidelines for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Farmers' Varieties and Landraces*, are available online. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5601en/ca5601en.pdf>

Progress against SDG targets and indicators, especially SDG 2 on zero hunger

The Commission has taken a leading role in the development and monitoring of SDG indicators under Target 2.5 (genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals and related wild species).⁵ FAO maintains two dedicated databases for the monitoring of Target 2.5:

- The Domestic Animal Diversity Information System⁶ provides tools to monitor national breed populations and to make informed decisions on the management of animal genetic resources. It provides access to official data on the implementation of the animal component of SDG indicators 2.5.1b and 2.5.2.
- The World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture⁷ provides access to official data on the implementation of the plant component of SDG indicator 2.5.1a.

Data show that the number of conserved plant and animal genetic resources (SDG indicator 2.5.1) is rising. Globally reported accessions of plant genetic resources have reached 4.9 Million. However, only for 9% of local livestock breeds, material is stored in gene banks and countries report that only for 3 % of local breeds, stored material is sufficient to allow for reconstitution of the breed⁸.

Results for SDG indicator 2.5.2 (risk classification of local breeds) show that across the world, 61 percent of local breeds are classified as of unknown status, 29 percent as at risk, and 10 percent as not at risk, when excluding extinct breeds⁹. Results differ widely across regions. In all regions except Europe and the Caucasus and North America, more than 80 percent of local breeds are of unknown status. In Europe and the Caucasus, 35 percent of local breeds have unknown status, 54 percent are considered as at risk, and 10 percent not at risk. Improved reporting and reducing the number of local breeds with unknown population status remains a challenge, as is the case for crop varieties and wild relatives kept on farm and in situ.

Monitoring systems for forest genetic resources and aquatic genetic resources for food and agriculture are being developed. A module for the monitoring of domesticated bees has been added to DAD-IS.

Selected recommendations for accelerating progress towards achievement of SDG 2 on zero hunger and 17 on partnerships

Raise awareness among decision-makers about the importance of biodiversity for food and agriculture for sustainable agriculture and food production systems, livelihoods, food security and nutrition, and about developing or strengthening relevant policies.

⁵ Please see <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg2> for the full description of SDG targets and indicators.

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/dad-is/en/>

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/wIEWS/en/>

⁸ <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/251/en/>

⁹ CGRFA/WG-AnGR-11/21/Inf.6

Promote the use of biodiversity-friendly sustainable management practices¹⁰ in crop and livestock production, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, including, where relevant, traditional management practices associated with local or indigenous communities, and promote the maintenance of viable areas of natural or seminatural habitat within and around production systems, including those that are intensively managed – where necessary, restoring or reconnecting damaged or fragmented habitats, or establishing and maintaining protected and other designated areas.

Strengthen, at all levels, enabling frameworks for the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity for food and agriculture, and improve cross-sectoral collaboration and multistakeholder engagement and cooperation in the management of BFA.

¹⁰ The FAO report on The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (<http://www.fao.org/cgrfa/topics/biodiversity/en/>) defines more than 20 practices and approaches that can be considered biodiversity-friendly.