

Working together on the sustainable use of Agrobiodiversity and the Development Importance of local varieties and indigenous species



The multi-stakeholder constituencies of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) have prioritized the issue of agro-biodiversity as one of prime global importance. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources in Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) recognizes the importance of agricultural research and contains special provisions for the exchange of information, transfer of technology and capacity building related to plant genetic resources.

The visions of GFAR and ITPGRFA converge in the need to expand varietal conservation, exchange and use, and the fair sharing of benefits, to include a wide range of species that have local significance and in many cases global market potential. Both GFAR and ITPGRFA are keen to facilitate greater collaboration and synergies among the many programmes addressing these crops, a view that has been echoed through discussion with all those concerned about the future of these species.

Over recent years, regional initiatives and multi-partner international actions related to the International Year of Biodiversity have highlighted these links. There is a strong desire for collaborative action in and between regions in order to achieve development impact at scale. Examples are the recently set-up frameworks for biodiversity conservation and use in Africa and Asia.



To promote greater international synergy around this crucial agenda, GFAR, with the ITPGRFA Secretariat, held an initial meeting in Rome on January 20-21, 2011. This meeting brought together UN organizations, international research networks and institutions as well as civil society, all concerned with generating, accessing and using knowledge of these crops and with promoting their sustainable use and their value in

development. Through productive discussions, these diverse programmes agreed to form a collective movement, open to all and provisionally termed the ***Development Opportunity in Diversity Initiative***, with the goal of collaborative action to strengthen the role and value of agro-biodiversity and its sustainable use in contributing towards development aims.

Through this meeting the potential importance of these crops, based on **three key development objectives, considered as pillars for action**, was highlighted:

1. Nutrition and health – keeping traditional diets alive through the production and consumption of foods, thus providing food security and a diet diversity naturally rich in micronutrients;
2. The resilience of farming systems and environmental services at field or landscape level (e.g. to manage pests and diseases or maintain soil fertility);
3. Source of income for farmers, enabling market opportunities and value addition potential, especially for poor producers who have very little land.



We must take this unique opportunity to bring the ideas and the resources of currently fragmented initiatives together to enable each to realize its true value and achieve greater development impact than any one could alone. In that perspective, a **short-term action plan** was proposed:

1. Set up inclusive working groups to grow collaboration around each of the three development pillars;
2. Organize a side event at the fourth session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty in March 2011 highlighting the agenda and its development linkages; and
3. Identify and pursue appropriate subsequent events (e.g. Science Forum, 2011; Rio plus 20, 2012) to build collaborative actions that can achieve large scale development impacts.

All interested partners are invited to become involved in this collaborative action. For further details contact the GFAR Secretariat (gfarsecretariat@fao.org).

Organizations Involved to Date

The coordinators

GFAR - The Global Forum on Agricultural Research

ITPGRFA - International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

The regional fora

Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA)

Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI)

Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (CACAARI)

The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)

Forum for the Americas on Agricultural Research and Technology Development (FORAGRO)

European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD)

The UN international bodies

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)/ Commission on Plant Genetic Resources (CPGR)

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The international and regional platforms

Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research

The Global Horticulture Initiative (Global Hort)

Plant Resources of Tropical Africa (PROTA)

Crops for the Future International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR)

The international and advanced research institutions

Bioversity International for the CGIAR

Global Crop Diversity Trust

Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)/AGROPOLIS

The World Vegetable Center (AVRDC)

Center for Applied Molecular Biology in Agriculture

National Institutions

National Genebank of Kenya; Kenya Agricultural Research Institute

Direction Générale des Enseignements et de la Recherche Scientifique Institut de l'Environnement et des Recherches Agricoles, Burkina Faso

Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, Cuba

Civil Society:

Prolinnova International Support Team; ETC Ecoculture

Institute of Himalayan Environmental Research and Education (INHERE)



The International Treaty
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

