

Working Group 5

Secure and equitable access to resources for food security and nutrition – Plant genetic resources

(1) Topic outline

Plant genetic resources are a basic requirement of primary production in agriculture, with crop production playing the instrumental role in food security, either directly, or indirectly as animal feed. Plant genetic resources are therefore of key importance to food security.

Worldwide, there are approximately 7.4 million PGR samples held in some 1,750 gene banks. Peasant farming, however, very rarely makes direct use of these genetic resources from gene banks; it neither uses them for breeding activities nor for direct planting. Nevertheless, the resources play a major role as a basic breeding material for the provision of site-adapted varieties by local breeders and agricultural research institutes. In addition, the in-situ storage and in-situ further development of seeds of local varieties, and the traditional knowledge in terms of planting that accompanies such practices, are extremely important for sustainable food security. Women play a particular role in this task.

(2) Aim of the working group

To draw up recommendations as to how access to and the use of genetic resources as a basis for all breeding activities, especially for farmers and local breeders in developing and emerging countries, can not only be guaranteed but also improved if necessary.

(3) Specific questions to the working group

Lead question

How can access to and the use of plant genetic resources by farmers and local breeders directly at local level be improved (conservation, characterisation/evaluation, pre-breeding and breeding of new varieties)? What exists already in practice? Which systems have proved to be successful and what can be improved?

Working questions

- What contribution is made by the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, in particular due to its Multilateral System of access and benefit-sharing and its funding strategy? How can articles 6 and 9 be effectively implemented?
- Is the ex-situ system of conservation in gene banks efficient and accessible? Are there differences here in effective access to plant genetic resources for small or larger-scale breeding companies and smallholder farmers?
- What experiences are there of cooperation between gene banks, local breeders and smallholder farmers? What role can 'participatory breeding' play? Which farmers, or which representatives of farmers' interests, can be involved here?
- How can smallholder farmers be supplied more quickly and more effectively with low-cost, modified seeds which they too can afford?

Process orientation

- Implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) with a focus on the following aspects:
 - Implementation of articles 1 and 3 (conservation of PGRFA and equitable benefit-sharing)
 - Implementation of articles 5-7 and 9 (Farmers' Rights)
 - Articles 10-13 (Benefit-sharing)

Languages: English
Venue: Außenministersaal

(4) Reference documents:

- FAO International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/i0510e/i0510e.pdf>
- FAO Second Report of the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
<http://www.fao.org/agriculture/seed/sow2/en/>
- Oliver de Schutter The right to food. Seed policies and the right to food: enhancing agrobiodiversity and encouraging innovation. Report by the UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food to the UN General Assembly, October 2009.
http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/20091021_report-qa64_seed-policies-and-the-right-to-food_en.pdf