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منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
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Organisation  
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pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

**Item 8 of the Draft Provisional Agenda**

**COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

**Eleventh Regular Session**

Rome, 11 - 15 June 2007

**REPORTS FROM FAO ON ITS POLICIES, PROGRAMMES, AND  
ACTIVITIES ON AGRICULTURAL BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY:**

**(3) PRIORITY AREAS FOR INTER-DISCIPLINARY ACTION  
(PAIAS)**

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**REPORTS FROM FAO ON ITS POLICIES, PROGRAMMES, AND ACTIVITIES ON  
AGRICULTURAL BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY:  
(3) PRIORITY AREAS FOR INTER-DISCIPLINARY ACTION (PAIAS)**

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture regularly receives reports from relevant international organizations, including FAO, on their policies, programmes and activities of relevance to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture. These reports contribute to understanding in this area between FAO and its Commission, and other international organizations, and to their further cooperation and coordination of their work.
2. This report provides information on FAO's Priority Areas for Inter-Disciplinary Action (PAIAs) of relevance to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture. Sectorial activities are addressed in document CGRFA-11/07/20.1 and cross-sectorial activities can be found in document CGRFA-11/07/20.2. Reports submitted by other organizations are in documents CGRFA-11/07/19.1, CGRFA-11/07/19.2 and CGRFA-11/07/19.3.

**II. PRIORITY AREAS FOR INTER-DISCIPLINARY ACTION (PAIAS)  
OF RELEVANCE TO GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

3. Priority Areas for Inter-disciplinary Action have been established within FAO as part of an overall effort to strengthen the capacity for inter-disciplinary planning (i.e. problem identification, goal formulation, priority setting, monitoring and evaluation) and to enhance mechanisms within and between units for the cross-sectorial aspects of programme implementation.
4. This report provides an overview of the main activities being undertaken in five of the PAIAs that are most relevant to the work of the Commission: Biological Diversity; Biotechnology; Organic Agriculture; WTO Multi-lateral Trade Negotiations and Biosecurity.

**1. Integrated Management of Biological Diversity for Food and Agriculture**

5. The Integrated Management of Biological Diversity for Food and Agriculture PAIA (PAIA/BIOD) is implemented by the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Biological Diversity for Food and Agriculture (IDWG/BIOD), which continues to be the main mechanism for coordination, active promotion and inter-disciplinary analysis of issues related to biological diversity within FAO. The IDWG is chaired by the Agriculture and Consumer Protection (AG) Department and its Secretariat is provided by the Natural Resources Management and Environment (NR) Department which is the focal point for biodiversity in FAO with its Assistant Director-General being the FAO Focal Point for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Activities specific to the NR Department are reported in Document CGRFA-11/07/20.2.
6. The PAIA/BIOD provides a coherent and substantial contribution to the work of the CBD and, in particular to the Joint Programme of Work on Agricultural Biodiversity which will be reviewed at the Thirteenth Meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to be hosted by FAO at its headquarters in February 2008. FAO's role is as leader in the CBD cross-cutting initiatives on pollinators and on soil biodiversity and, with Bioversity International, on biodiversity for food and nutrition.

7. The PAIA/BIOD convenes the Task Force on the development of the CGRFA Multi Year Programme of Work (MYPOW).
8. The PAIA/BIOD provides a platform for FAO activities towards the achievement of the 2010 Biodiversity Target, and in particular to the GEF-funded project on 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership and other related processes (e.g. Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators) by developing indicators on issues like genetic diversity, sustainable management and trends in extent of selected ecosystems.
9. The PAIA/BIOD maintains technical linkages with the FAO-hosted Secretariats of: the CGRFA also acting as the interim Secretariat for the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; the International Plant Protection Convention; the Cooperative Partnership on Forests; and Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS). Linkages are also maintained with the FAO Working Group on "Cluster of Programme Entities in the area of genetic resources and biodiversity" established in November 2005 by the Director-General to re-examine and suggest a coherent vision for work on biodiversity and genetic resources for food and agriculture.
10. The PAIA/BIOD delivery is facilitated by extra-budgetary support such as from the FAO-Netherlands Partnership Programme and FAO-Norway Partnership Programme.
11. Biological diversity, including also agricultural biodiversity, becomes an increasingly important global concern. The PAIA/BIOD is well placed and leveraged among inter-governmental and non-governmental networks to continue to provide technical expertise on how the ecosystem approach and community involvement can increase the range of benefits from agricultural biodiversity.
12. The PAIA/BIOD provides support to corporate events on biodiversity, (e.g. 2004 World Food Day on *Biodiversity for Food Security*) and prompts its members to mainstream biodiversity into departmental work, as exemplified by the GTOS cooperation with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the 2006 International Mountain Day on *Managing Mountain Biodiversity for Better Lives* and the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) (see CGRFA-11/07/20.2).
13. Guidance is being sought from the Commission on how the PAIA/BIOD could best serve the Commission to strengthen the integrated management of biological diversity for food and agriculture.

## 2. Biotechnology Applications in Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

14. The FAO Biotechnology website (<http://www.fao.org/biotech/index.asp>) launched in 2001 in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish, has continued to be updated and expanded in recent years and is increasingly popular (e.g. an estimated 1.7 million web pages were viewed in 2006). The Russian version of the site will soon be made available. The e-mail newsletter FAO-BiotechNews is regularly distributed in English, French, Russian and Spanish to about 4,000 subscribers, roughly 30 percent of its news and event items are related to genetic resources.
15. In 2004-2005, the FAO Biotechnology Forum (<http://www.fao.org/biotech/forum.asp>) hosted three electronic conferences, covering the topics of biotechnology for food processing; public participation in decision-making regarding Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs); and the role of biotechnology for the conservation and characterization of crop, forestry, livestock and fishery genetic resources in developing countries. The latter conference was preceded by an international workshop held in Turin, Italy in March 2005, providing the basis for the publication "*The role of Biotechnology in exploring and protecting agricultural genetic resources*" (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0399e/a0399e00.htm>). The Forum has about 2,800 members and since 2000 it has hosted 13 moderated e-mail conferences, with very active participation

from people in developing countries. The results of the last six electronic conferences have recently been published (<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/009/a0744e/a0744e00.pdf>). The Biotechnology PAIA is also finalising a publication on "*Marker-assisted selection (MAS) in crops, livestock, forestry and fish: Current status and the way forward*".

16. The searchable database FAO-BioDeC ([http://www.fao.org/biotech/inventory\\_admin/dep/default.asp](http://www.fao.org/biotech/inventory_admin/dep/default.asp)) provides information on biotechnology products and techniques in use or in the pipeline in developing countries and on their biotechnology-related policies, regulations and activities. It has been constantly updated and covers more than 3,300 research initiatives in the crop, animal husbandry and forestry sectors. The information has been analyzed in the books "*Status of research and application of crop biotechnology in developing countries*" (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/y5800e/y5800e00.htm>) and "*Preliminary review of biotechnology in forestry, including genetic modification*" (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/ae574e/ae574e00.htm>).

17. Two Expert Consultations on "*Biosafety within a Biosecurity framework: Contributing to sustainable agriculture and food production*" and on "*Genetically Modified Organisms in Crop Production and Their Effects on the Environment: Methodologies for Monitoring and the Way Ahead*" (<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/008/ae738e/ae738e00.pdf>) were co-organised by the PAIA. The reports and selected papers of these consultations are under publication.

18. The PAIA also sponsored a conference, jointly organized by FAO and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), on "*Harnessing Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering for Agricultural Development in the Near East and North Africa*", in Cairo, Egypt, whose *Proceedings* are under publication, and organized a workshop lead by FAO, The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), entitled "*Towards Harmonization of Caribbean Biotechnology*", in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

### 3. Organic Agriculture

19. Sales of organic products have been steadily growing at an annual rate of 15 percent for over a decade and currently account for 1 to 2 percent of the world food market expenditure (US\$ 30 billion in 2005). In Europe, organic agricultural lands occupy 6 to 10 percent of all arable lands. Worldwide, there are 31 million hectares of certified organic arable lands and nearly 62 million hectares of land which has been certified to organic standards for the collection of wild products.

20. FAO's did not retain organic agriculture as a PAIA in its Programme of Work and Budget for 2006-07 and made no provision for a host programme or entity on organic agriculture. Activities have therefore considerably been downsized in 2006.

21. In 2005, the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Organic Agriculture developed the Organic Agriculture Information Management System (Organic-AIMS), which includes a database of country profiles related to the organic sector as well as a virtual questionnaire for gathering statistics on organic production and trade ([www.fao.org/organicag](http://www.fao.org/organicag)).

22. The FAO, IFOAM, UNCTAD International Task Force on Harmonization and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture (ITF) continued its work towards the development of tools to prevent trade barriers. The Task Force, which met in December 2005 (Hammamet, Tunisia) and October 2006 (Stockholm, Sweden), is currently finalizing international certification requirements.

23. Besides country organic sector studies (i.e. Croatia, India, Tunisia) produced as part of Technical Cooperation Projects, analysis of organic markets include two publications on: The Japanese Market for Environmentally and Socially Certified Agricultural Products from Central

America and Traceability Implementation in Developing Countries, its Possibilities and its Constraints. FAO cooperated with IFOAM on a Conference on Organic Wild Production in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2-5 May 2005) by providing studies on the Assessment, Management and Utilization of Organic Wild Products.

24. In organic agriculture, member countries mainly ask for FAO assistance in establishing appropriate legislative frameworks; tapping market opportunities, improving quality and performance of low-input production systems; and improving value-chains. FAO currently runs projects (TCPs and Trust Funds) in 12 developing countries for a total budget of approximately US\$ five million. In addition, FAO set up a number of TeleFood projects on organic agriculture in over 20 countries. These projects provide quick funding (up to US\$ 10,000) for small activities, providing families and communities with the necessary tools to increase the quantity and variety of food they produce.

#### **4. WTO Multi-lateral Trade Negotiations on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

25. The WTO Multi-lateral Trade Negotiations PAIA (PAIA/WTO) ceased to exist at the end of the 2004-2005 biennium when a decision was taken to “house” the activities of the PAIA within regular programme entities. Bulk of the activities has been incorporated in Programme Entity (PE) 3CA02, *Support to the Multilateral Trade Negotiations and Support for Implementation of Multi-Lateral Trade Negotiations*. What follows therefore reports the activities of the PAIA during 2004 and 2005, as well as activities continued with PE 3CA02.

26. The objective of the PAIA/WTO was to support Member Countries, particularly developing countries and countries in transition, to increase their participation capacity in international trade negotiations and to better integrate into global trade in food, agricultural, fishery and forestry products. The PAIA/WTO key areas of focus were:

- Information and analysis (analysis of country proposals, assessment of experience, etc.);
- Training and capacity-building; technical advice on investment in trade-related infrastructures and on legal frameworks; and
- Facilitation of developing country participation in the new WTO negotiations on agriculture.

27. The following activities were undertaken during the biennium 2004-2005 as well as under PE 3CA02:

- a) Studies were prepared in the following areas:
  - Recent developments in commodity markets and trade with a focus on global food security trends;
  - Medium-term projections to the year 2015, and commodity market review;
  - Analyses of country case-studies on the implementation experience of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture;
  - Country case-studies on the impact of trade reforms on food security; and
  - Several analytical papers on the implications of alternative proposals emerging from the agenda on trade negotiations.
- b) Trade-related capacity building activities in support of Members were organised at three levels:
  - National capacity-building projects and activities were implemented in more than 10 developing countries providing support in analyzing trade-related issues, implementing trade agreements and preparing for trade negotiations.
  - Regional and sub-regional workshops on technical issues related to the ongoing WTO negotiations, trade and development issues and regional trading arrangements.

A total of 12 such workshops were held and directly benefited over 400 officials from some 120 developing countries.

- At the global level, informal briefings and roundtables in Geneva were held to support the agriculture-related WTO negotiations.

## 5. Biosecurity in Food and Agriculture

28. Since its inception in 2002, the FAO Biosecurity PAIA has been working to promote and implement a Biosecurity approach that analyses and manages risks in the fields of food safety, animal life and health, and plant life and health, including the associated environmental risks, in an integrated manner.

29. To facilitate the exchange of Biosecurity-related information, FAO has led an inter-agency initiative to develop and maintain an *International Portal on Food Safety, Animal & Plant Health* ([www.ipfsaph.org](http://www.ipfsaph.org)). The portal was launched in May 2004 and is navigable in English, French and Spanish. It provides access to a rich source of original language information (including international and national standards, notifications, national legislation and regulations, risk analyses, Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs), etc) and has become a means of viewing more than 25 core Biosecurity related data sets, that are maintained by the CBD, FAO, the International Atomic Energy Agency IAEA, the International Plant Protection Convention, the World Organisation for Animal Health, the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization.

30. FAO continues to play a leading role in the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), which has provided additional opportunities to increase coordination, both within FAO and between FAO and other partner agencies, of integrated Biosecurity-related technical assistance at the national level. The STDF's funding mechanism has provided financial resources for a number of capacity building projects in food safety, plant and animal health, as well as inter-disciplinary projects.

31. In 2005, FAO formed a biosafety working group as a joint sub-group of the Biosecurity and Biotechnology PAIAs. This group convened an expert consultation on *Biosafety within a Biosecurity framework: contributing to sustainable agriculture and food production* from 28 February to 3 March 2006 with a view to help further define FAO's role in biosafety. The consultation addressed current and potential issues related to the safe use of new biotechnologies across the relevant sectors within FAO's mandate in sustainable agriculture and food production. FAO also adopted a corporate FAO policy and vision on biosafety.

32. FAO has developed a Biosecurity Toolkit, comprising a Biosecurity Principles and Components document, a Biosecurity Capacity Evaluation Tool and a Biosecurity Risk Analysis Manual, to assist countries to implement a Biosecurity approach. The Toolkit was peer reviewed at a meeting in Rome in November 2005 and subsequently pilot tested in selected countries. It is currently being used in FAO member countries and a series of training activities to promote and facilitate its adoption more widely are under development.

33. Under the terms of the Programme Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the Government of Norway and FAO, the PAIA is coordinating a series of activities focusing on improving agricultural Biosecurity in least developed countries. These include assessments of both institutional and technical capacity to assess and manage risks associated with Biosecurity; studies on the enabling legal frameworks in place; analysis at district level (particularly near national border crossings) of the interplay between factors influencing plant, animal and human health; and of the impact on smallholder livelihoods of the breakdown of Biosecurity in certain sectors.

34. The PAIA also launched a wiki (collaborative website) to share the results (or work in progress) of the various programmes and activities, and build synergies within FAO, which complements the official PAIA website.

35. Guidance is being sought from the Commission on how the Biosecurity PAIA could further support the Commission to undertake its work on genetic resources for food and agriculture.

## 6. Ethics in Food and Agriculture

36. The PAIA/ETHI continues to operate in the current biennium. The PAIA/ETHI prepares and supports meetings of the Panel of Eminent Experts in Food and Agriculture; implements and oversees a technical work programme to mainstream ethical considerations within FAO's work; and coordinates the preparation of studies within the FAO Ethics Series. A full description of the PAIA/ETHI was provided to the Ninth Regular Session of the Commission in document CGRFA-9/02/14.3. Activities since the last session of the Commission are reported on here.

37. The Panel of Eminent Experts on Ethics in Food and Agriculture was established by the Director-General in accordance with Article VI.4 of the FAO Constitution and Rule XXXV of the General Rules of the Organization, for a period of four years as of 1 January 2000. It met twice in its first four years of existence. The term of the Panel was extended by a further period of four years beginning on 1 January 2004.

38. The Panel held its third session in FAO headquarters in Rome from 14-16 September 2005. The Panel dealt with: 1) ethical aspects in fisheries; 2) food safety 3) food aid 4) animal welfare and the intensification of animal production 5) sustainable agricultural intensification 6) hunger, malnutrition and the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security 7) Globalization of food and agriculture 8) Global goods, global services and privatization 9) intellectual property rights.

39. The Panel addressed a number of issues and ideas that relate directly to genetic resources for food and agriculture. These are:

- The Panel called on governments and relevant international organizations to put global public goods (GPGs) at the centre of international cooperation, which in the Panel's view requires a clearer understanding of the nature and scope of these goods. The Panel called on the international community to place discussions on international conventions and treaties under the auspices of the ethical notion of humanity when dealing with financing and management of GPGs and services, protection of natural resources (biodiversity), ownership (private and communal), usufructuary and access rights. The trend of privatization of natural resources and commons (from the local to the global) in the pursuit of economic liberalization policies was noted with concern, and the Panel called for a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, its ethical implications for local communities, states, the international community, and appropriate responses.
- The Panel called on governments and relevant international organizations to adopt measures to correct distortions in the use of the intellectual property rights (IPRs) system and ensure that it rewards genuine creation and invention, while preserving genetic information and biological processes in the public domain and allowing legitimate trade in agricultural products.

The report of the Panel has been published and is available on FAO's website .

40. Since the last session of the Commission the following publications have been published in the *FAO Ethics Series*: "The ethics of sustainable agricultural intensification" (*FAO Ethics Series No. 3*); and "Ethical issues in fisheries" (*FAO Ethics Series No. 4*). "Animal welfare and the intensification of animal production" was published as *FAO Readings in Ethics No. 2*.



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### **III. GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

41. In the closing paragraphs of some of the PAIAs in the previous section, specific requests for guidance have been addressed to the Commission. The Commission may also wish to express its views and make suggestions on any other of the policies and activities covered in this document, which the PAIAs can take into consideration when carrying out their specific tasks, and when planning for the future.