

Foreword

Worldwide, specific agricultural systems and landscapes have been created, shaped and maintained by generations of farmers and herders based on diverse natural resources using locally adapted management practices. Building on local knowledge and experience, these ingenious agricultural systems reflect the evolution of humankind, the diversity of its knowledge and its profound relationship with nature.

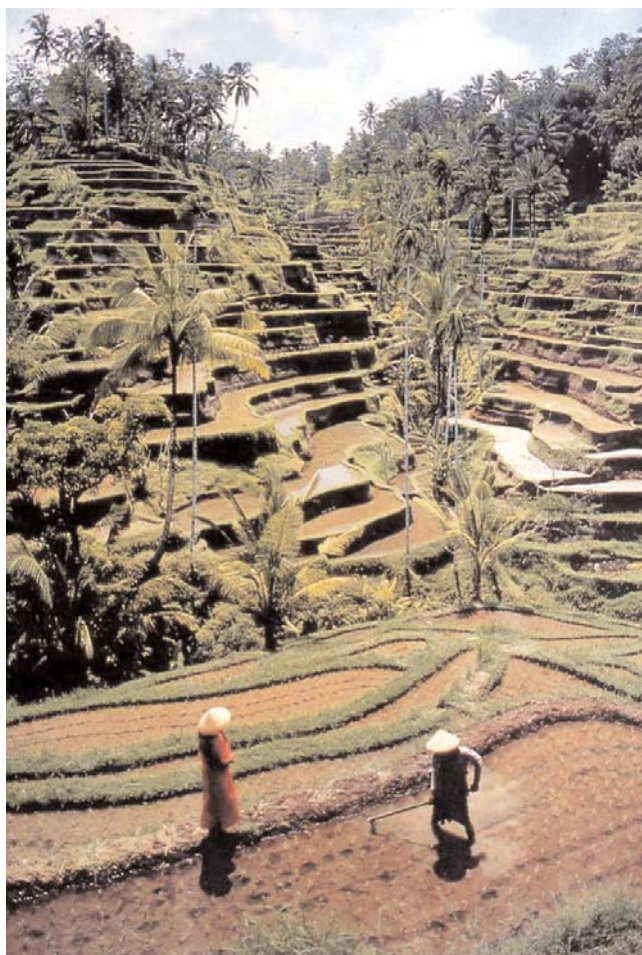
These agricultural systems have resulted not only in outstanding landscapes, maintenance and adaptation of globally significant agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems and cultural diversity, but



above all in the sustained provision of multiple goods and services, food and livelihood security and quality of life. At the occasion of World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg, 2002), FAO developed and presented a Partnership Initiative on conservation and adaptive management of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) with the support of Global Environment Facility (GEF) and in collaboration with UNDP, UNESCO, CBD, UNU, IFAD, IUCN, Bioversity International and country partners, aiming for the recognition, conservation and sustainable management of such agricultural systems and their associated landscapes, biodiversity, knowledge systems and cultures.

Over the four years of initial phase of this programme, a call for proposals and inventory of agricultural heritage systems was launched, and two interna-

tional steering committee meetings cum workshops and several focus-group discussions were conducted in FAO-Rome, to formulate and conceptualise the GIAHS programme, prepare selection criteria, and particularly the assessment of existing agricultural systems and selection of pilot systems. During this project development phases, some two hundred systems were identified in different parts of the world including in OECD countries that qualify as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System. To kick-off the global programme implementation phases with concrete actions at national and local levels, country missions and stakeholder forums were organised in several countries and five pilot systems were selected: Andean agriculture of Peru, Chiloe agriculture of Chile, Ifugao rice terraces of the Philippines, rice-fish agriculture of China and



the oases of the Maghreb in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. The project development phase is close to the final stages and in 2007 the full scale project implementation shall start. The International Forum on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) was convened in Rome from 24-26 October to take stock of the findings of the project development and give direction for the full scale global GIAHS programme. The Forum brought together all partner government organizations, the implementing agency and co-funding institutions, UN agencies, academics and other international organizations as well as civil societies organizations and biodiversity conservation advocacy groups.

The Forum discussed experiences of pilot countries in implementing initial phase of the programme and provided participants a full view of the GIAHS programme and further elucidated the overall conceptual approach, the scientific underwriting of agricultural heritage as well requirements for enabling policy instruments for recognition and safeguarding globally important agricultural heritage systems. A number of issues pertaining to the underpinning of the scientific concept of agricultural heritage, management structure at all levels and policy frameworks in search of recognition and deeper understanding of GIAHS were discussed. Several recommendations from the participants are listed which are annexed to the Forum proceedings, including other background papers (full paper and PowerPoint presentation materials are contained in the attached CD-Rom). Likewise, the notes of the Forum observed by GIAHS management team are provided at the end of the discussion of the proceedings. FAO wish to thank all the participating government organizations (Chile, China, Peru, Philippines, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) for their cooperation during the preparatory phase as well as other co-funding institutions, all the partner organizations from the UN systems and other international organizations and civil society partners who have contributed to GIAHS programme. Furthermore, FAO would like to thank these organizations for making this important Forum a success.

In particular, we wish to express our gratitude to the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, which through Wageningen International supported financially the conference and provided valuable inputs, particularly regarding the practice of GIAHS dynamic conservation. FAO would also like to thank the Christensen Fund for the grant to prepare the scientific underwriting of the agricultural heritage concept. FAO looks forward to continuing the work with partner governments and other international, national and local partners to address dynamic conservation of GIAHS - our common heritage for the future.



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