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PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES IN ACTION

Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture are an integral component of agricultural biodiversity.

The genetic diversity contained in traditional varieties and modern cultivars, crop wild relatives and landraces provide a basis for food production, and also act as buffer for adaptation and resilience in face of climate change. All countries in the world are interdependent on plant genetic resources and there is a continuous need to conserve, exchange and transfer healthy germplasm for sustainable agriculture and maintenance of a dynamic agro-ecosystem.

Effective conservation for a wider use of plant genetic resources.

Women and men farmers and breeders need access to plant genetic resources, including alternative crops and new cultivars, and related information and technologies, including through seed provision, to achieve sustainable increases in production and income generation. FAO, with partners, is actively strengthening plant breeding capacities and seed supply systems in developing countries, especially for those crops that are not addressed by the private sector. These activities



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are underpinned by the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.



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Whether to face climate change or for providing ecosystem services, the continued availability of a diverse range of plant genetic resources is necessary to contribute to food production. Plant diversity is necessary for the delivery of ecosystem services such as pollination, pest-predator balances, carbon sequestration and water conservation, among others. Genetically diverse plant populations and species-rich ecosystems have greater potential to adapt to climate change and for increasing local adaptation and building ecosystem resilience.



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Given the vast contribution of plant genetic resources to humanity, the main challenge is to mainstream the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources, its associated biodiversity and seed related issues into policies at the national, sub-regional and international levels through capacity development and knowledge management. FAO provides policy advice and technical assistance to members in all related areas and offers a neutral forum for intergovernmental discussions on new and emerging issues. It is committed to promoting and supporting international instruments and partnerships for sustained conservation and use of plant genetic resources to alleviate hunger and make a positive impact on the livelihoods that depend on them.



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KEY INTERNATIONAL EVENTS IN PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES: A TIME LINE

2004

- Entry into force of the **International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)** with the signature of 40 Contracting Parties.
- Establishment of the **Global Crop Diversity Trust** to ensure ex situ crop conservation in perpetuity.

2001

- After seven years of negotiations in the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA), the FAO Conference adopts the ITPGRFA as a legally binding outcome of the revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources.

1996

- The rolling **Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food Agriculture (GPA)** adopted by 150 members through the Leipzig Declaration.
- Publication of the first **State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture** to provide an assessment of the current situation of plant genetic resources and lay the foundation for the GPA. Periodic updating of this Report is undertaken by FAO to facilitate revision of the GPA in light of emerging issues and trends.

1983

- FAO Conference adopts the **International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources** as the first international agreement on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and establishes the CGRFA.

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Further information about the work of FAO on biodiversity is available at:
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