

**FAO International Technical Conference
on Plant Genetic Resources**

**REPORT OF THE SUB-REGIONAL
PREPARATORY MEETING FOR
WEST AND CENTRAL ASIA**

**Teheran, Islamic Republic of Iran
9-12 October 1995**



Food
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Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION	4
II. OPENING CEREMONY	4
III. PROCEDURAL MATTERS	5
IV. INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON PLANTGENETIC RESOURCES, ITS PREPARATORY PROCESS AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS.	5
V. PRESENTATION OF COUNTRY REPORTS AND SUB-REGIONAL SYNTHESIS REPORT	6
VI. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND WEST ASIA FOR THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION	7
Policy level	7
Institutional level and capacity building	8
Technical level	8
Regional activities and collaboration	10
VII. CLOSING REMARKS	12



I. INTRODUCTION

1. Representatives from 9 countries (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Yemen) met in Karaj, Iran, from 9 to 12 October 1995. Representatives from FAO, IPGRI and ICARDA also attended.

II. OPENING CEREMONY

2. The meeting was opened by Mr. Gamal Ahmed, FAO Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Following his welcoming remarks there was a reading from the Koran and the National Anthem was played.

3. Mr Mohamed Zehni, Director, AGP/FAO, on behalf of FAO, expressed sincere appreciation and thanks to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for having kindly offered to host such a meeting. Mr Zehni stressed the important task that the delegates had before them and the priority given this work by FAO.

4. Mr Zehni outlined the FAO Global System on Plant Genetic Resources and made written materials available on this subject.

5. Mr Ali Ahounmanesh, Deputy Minister, on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Islamic Republic of Iran, gave the keynote address. He welcomed all participants and wished them successful deliberations.

6. Mr Ahounmanesh pointed out that plant genetic resources are a humankind's asset and therefore efforts for ensuring their better conservation and use should be made through joint initiatives of both advanced and less developed nations.



7. Mr Ahounmanesh also stressed the role that the Islamic Republic of Iran can play in the region as a key partner in this area. On behalf of the government and the Agricultural Research, Education, and Extension Organization, he stated their readiness and willingness to:

- (a) Provide training courses for the regional scientists.
- (b) Cooperate in joint research projects.
- (c) Cooperate in germplasm exchange among regional countries.
- (d) Develop a regional data bank and network in cooperation with international agencies such as FAO, IPGRI, and other research centres affiliated with CGIAR.

He further suggested “that for better coordination and planning, with the assistance of FAO and other organizations, the center for Sub Regional Genetic Resources be established in the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

III. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

8. Mr Mohammed Taeb, Head of the Department of Genetics and Genetic Resources of the Plant and Seed Improvement Institute of the Islamic Republic of Iran was elected Chairperson of the meeting. Participants endorsed Mr Taeb’s suggestion that all heads of delegations be designated Vice-Chair of the meeting.

IV. INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON PLANTGENETIC RESOURCES, ITS PREPARATORY PROCESS AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

9. Mr Cary Fowler, Project Manager, FAO International Conference and Programme for Plant Genetic Resources, addressed the delegates providing an overview of the preparatory process for the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources within the context of the FAO Global System.



10. Mr Fowler noted the very positive response to this initiative demonstrated by the excellent quality of the country reports submitted to FAO. He noted that the participatory process has had already a positive impact in many countries as it has stimulated dialogue among competent organizations/ institutions in those countries towards the establishment of a national coordination mechanisms in the area of conservation and use of plant genetic resources.

11. Mr Fowler highlighted points of major concern that emerged in previous regional meetings and expressed his confidence that this meeting will further explore those issues as well as other important points for the region. Concrete recommendations on issues such as losses in genebanks, rationalization of collections, regeneration, characterization, priorities among crops were solicited.

12. Mr Fowler commended the work done by IPGRI in the preparation of the draft synthesis reports for Central and West Asia and noted that these documents while not necessarily representing the views of IPGRI and FAO, are a summary of the regional status of plant genetic resources and useful background material for the meeting.

V. PRESENTATION OF COUNTRY REPORTS AND SUB-REGIONAL SYNTHESIS REPORT

13. Delegations gave presentations summarizing their Country Reports.
Azerbaijan was presented by Mr Aliev
Islamic Republic of Iran by Mr Taeb
Iraq by Mr Al Janabi
Kazakhstan by Mr Shegebaev
Pakistan by Mr Akbar
Turkey by Messrs Kusman and Karagoz
Turkmenistan by Mr Mamedov
Uzbekistan by Mr Abdoukarimov
Yemen by Messrs El Ghouri and Khulaidi
14. Mr Yawooz Adham presented an overview of the role of IPGRI and the WANANET programme in the region.
15. Mr Jan Valkoun presented ICARDA's Programme on Plant Genetic Resources.



16. Mr Yawooz Adham, on behalf of Mr. Jaradat of IPGRI, presented a case study on national programmed collaboration in the area of fruit tree genetic resources.
17. Mr Mohammed Tazi presented the draft sub regional synthesis report for West Asia.
18. Ms Zofia Bulinska-Radomska presented the draft sub regional synthesis report for Central Asia.
19. There was discussion of both reports. Delegates noted the high quality of the reports and appreciation was expressed to the consultants who prepared them. (Annexes 1 and 2).

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND WEST ASIA FOR THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

Policy level

The meeting recommended the following:

20. Elaboration of national strategies and programmes for the conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources for sustainable development. The commitment of the policy makers is essential to achieve this goal. The conservation and utilization including the enhancement of local germplasm in national programmes should be set as the priority. More attention should be paid to countries in need.
21. Assistance should be offered on the basis of sound national proposals and priorities.
22. Creation of public awareness through development of effective integrated mechanisms for sensitizing policy makers, scientific, farming communities and target groups on the importance of the conservation of plant genetic resources. Effective educational programmes need to be carried out at different levels.



Institutional level and capacity building

The meeting recommended the following:

23. Establishing/strengthening national plant genetic resources programmes through provision of facilities, necessary equipment and Personnel development. The emergence of regional centres of excellence engaged in training on plant genetic resources. Consideration should be given to any possible advantage for carrying out training activities at local level.
24. Capacity building is needed at all levels for the national programmes of all the countries, in germplasm collecting, characterization, evaluation, conservation, regeneration, documentation and utilization. Opportunities for carrying out these activities in countries of recognized experience, which volunteered to actively collaborate to this end, should be pursued.
25. The development of qualifying training for administrators and technicians as well as managers in relation to the new concept of biodiversity. The training should consider planning, management and project implementation methodologies and integration of indigenous knowledge into biodiversity management.

Technical level

The meeting recommended the following:

- for *in situ* conservation

26. Promotion of *in situ* conservation of wild crop relatives indigenous to the region and on-farm conservation of landraces should be decisively pursued.
27. Encouragement of decentralized “on farm” breeding for adequate use of landraces, based on an integrated system approach that includes socio-economic studies on the conservation of crops, determination of genetic diversity and conservation biology research on target species. Emphasis should be placed on the involvement of farmers in the development of breeding objectives and in germplasm characterization and evaluation activities. Policies and regulations for the sustainable *in situ/on farm* conservation of crops and their wild relatives should be established.



28. All necessary measures should be taken to evaluate and rescue existing plant genetic resources of the ecologically devastated Aral Sea and other severely endangered ecosystems in the region.

- for *ex situ* conservation

29. Germplasm collection and re-collection is needed in countries where conservation infrastructures are lacking or different factors such as wars have hindered germplasm collections. Further collecting expeditions for major and minor crops should be undertaken in all countries.

30. Particular attention should be given to promote/strengthen the conservation of arid and desert zone plants, forest species, rangeland and underutilized species for food and agricultural uses.

31. Implementation of actions to allow countries voluntarily to place materials in secure storage facilities outside their country. Terms and conditions of such arrangements would be contained in a legal agreement signed by all Parties under FAO auspices. FAO is requested to draft a model agreement. Such an agreement would:

- confirm ownership of the material by the providing countries
- guarantee quick access to the material by the providing countries
- spell out the conditions, if any, for granting others (including the institution housing the material) access to the materials or information about them
- detail the conditions under which the material would be stored and provisions, if any, for its characterization, regeneration, and evaluation
- allow for the facilities to be inspected and the material examined by the providing country and/or FAO at any time upon reasonable notice
- fix the term of the agreement, with provisions for immediate termination by the providing country or termination by the host institution upon reasonable notice.

32. Storage cost for a fixed amount of time should be included in the Global Plan of Action to be met through the financing mechanism eventually established for the Plan. This proposal should be complementary with efforts to reduce unintended and unnecessary duplications of materials and promote cost efficiency in global conservation efforts.



Regional activities and collaboration

The meeting recommended the following:

33. Encouragement of plant genetic resources information and materials exchange at a regional and international level through the creation and/or the reinforcement of specialized networks. The mandate of these networks is to promote collaborative research, exchange of information, exchange of experience, and to formulate proposals for regional projects. Special attention should be paid to the spreading of information within the networks.
34. Highest priority should be given to programmes dealing with plant genetic resources in the country of origin and an equitable sharing of benefits deriving from their utilization should be ensured for them.
35. Emergence of regional plant genetic resources centres in different countries to keep a duplicate of base collections and to maintain and make available a central inventory database on plant genetic resources of the region. Consideration should be given to the offer of several countries to make facilities available, including *inter alia* offers from The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The meeting also noted the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the modalities will be worked out in the future.
36. The reinforcement of collaboration in different fields related to plant genetic resources between national programmes and Regional and international organizations/centres such as ACSAD, CIHEAM, ICARDA, FAO, IPGRI, UNDP, UNEP and other relevant institutions. Such collaboration should be based on the concrete regional situation taking into account national priorities.
37. Establishment and development of better linkages between the existing networks dealing with plant genetic resources such as WANANET, ECP/GR, UMS and Pasture and Forage Mediterranean Network should be promoted.
38. Reinforcement of the WANANET to expand and to insure its continuity and sustainability. A Proposal for supporting this network and its activities should be prepared for the Global Plan of Action.
39. Establishment of cooperative network for Central Asian countries. Uzbekistan is willing to host the storage facilities for these countries, whereas Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan volunteer to undertake field evaluation programmes for this material.



40. Development of regional projects/programmes to support plant genetic resources activities, including activities for collecting, regeneration, conservation, characterization, evaluation and use. This might catalyze the organization of national programmed Technical workshops related to specific crops including forest and rangeland genetic resources are needed to implement this action.
41. Identification and monitoring of ecosystems including inventories of areas with high plant diversity and determination of genetic diversity of target species in selected sites. Survey of endangered and threatened species, in situ and *ex situ* conservation and development of methods to measure sustainability.
42. Reinforcement of international legislation and formulation of mechanisms in order to ensure that countries providing genetic resources have access to the benefits arising from them and to promote transfer of innovative and efficient technologies into these countries. Allocation of sufficient budgets to the international created fund for plant genetic resources activities at the research, training and development level.
43. Establishment of international laws that guarantee the access to the universal plant genetic resource collections by all the countries and users, provided the original right of ownership is preserved.
44. Establishment of an early warning mechanism based on integrated system approach to monitor genetic erosion of key species or crop varieties, maintenance of facilities and scientific standards in genebanks, degradation of natural habitats and ecosystems.
45. Germplasm previously collected in countries lacking suitable storage facilities and now stored outside these countries should be made available to the country originally providing the material. Original providing countries may seek repatriation of the material, or a duplicate of the material, or may seek and expect an affirmation of its continuing availability upon future request.
46. Any country of the region should be provided if needed (e.g. countries of the former Soviet Union) international assistance in planning, priority setting, establishment, management and coordination of plant genetic resources programmes at the national and sub-regional levels. Assistance should also be provided in legal matters relevant to plant genetic resources, including legislation on the status of plant genetic resources themselves and the national programme.



47. Outstanding scientists in each region should be recognized yearly with the awarding of a medal or a certificate.

48. The meeting called on FAO, IPGRI, ICARDA and other relevant organizations to carry out a detailed survey of the countries of the region, in order to be able to implement networks activities with the assistance of national programmes.

VII. CLOSING REMARKS

49. The Chairman called upon Mr Fowler who made closing remarks on behalf of FAO. Mr Fowler expressed FAO's appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the first country to offer to host a sub-regional meeting. He recognized the tremendous amount of work necessary to organize such a meeting and thanked, in particular, Mr. Taeb for taking responsibility for the logistical organizing as well as the chairing of the meeting. His skills and hard work contributed greatly to the success of the meeting. The interpreters were recognized for their very professional work. And the staff of the institute and the Guest House were thanked for their excellent service and hospitality. IPGRI was also thanked for its valuable assistance and the consultants who prepared sub-regional synthesis reports were recognized.

50. Mr Fowler noted that the recommendations for the Global Plan of Action adopted by the meeting would constitute a very important input to the documents. The task facing the Secretariat now was to integrate the recommendations from the various sub-regional meetings into a coherent and practical Global Plan of Action. While it is unlikely that all recommendations can be carried forward into the Global Plan, all would be seriously considered. Mr Fowler also highlighted the importance of having the countries of Central Asia participate in the meeting and urged them to consider joining FAO and the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources. Regarding the latter, he offered to advise them how to do so.

52. Mr Fowler reiterated his thanks to the government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran for their generosity and hospitality and the local staff headed by Mr. Taeb for their efficiency and support.

53. Mr Taeb thanked FAO for the opportunity to host the meeting which had been a valuable experience for all. He thanked delegates for their hard work and expressed appreciation to IPGRI for its help.



54. Various delegates expressed their satisfaction with the results of the meeting and thanked the Islamic Republic of Iran, FAO and the chairman, Mr. Taeb, in particular.

55. The chairman closed the meeting.