



منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة	联合国 粮食及 农业组织	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture	Продовольственная и сельскохозяйственная организация Объединенных Наций	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Agricultura y la Alimentación
--	--------------------	--	--	---	--

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Twenty-second Session

Rome, 16 – 19 June 2010

MATTERS RELATED TO FAO'S COMMISSIONS, TREATIES AND CONVENTIONS OF RELEVANCE TO COAG

I. Introduction

1. The 36th Session of the FAO Conference underlined FAO's important role in the Codex Alimentarius Commission and other standard-setting bodies and welcomed the inclusion in future sessions of an agenda item on matters of relevance to COAG¹.
2. Within the framework of FAO, commissions have been established under Article VI of its Constitution. A series of conventions and agreements have been approved under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution while others have been concluded outside the framework of FAO but have functional links with the Organization. The document informs on recent developments and planned activities of treaties, conventions and commissions that are of international relevance and have not reported so far directly to the FAO Governing Bodies.

II. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)

A. BACKGROUND

3. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) is the main international framework for the management of plant genetic resources for food security and sustainable agriculture. With currently 123 contracting parties, it establishes a "Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing", through which contracting parties create a global gene pool of the world's most important food crops. This Multilateral System is implemented through the Standard Material Transfer Agreements (SMTAs). The ITPGRFA also provides for a Funding Strategy, including a Benefit-sharing Trust Fund which supports projects

¹ C 2009/REP, para. 84

and programmes for the benefit of farmers in developing and particularly in least developed countries. It recognizes farmers' rights and aims at the conservation and sustainable use of all plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. The ITPGRFA is of major relevance in addressing current global challenges, such as adapting and mitigating the adverse effects of climate change to agriculture and food production by facilitating the exchange of material that will be used to breed varieties which resist altered conditions such as drought.

B. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

4. The ITPGRFA allows governments, genebanks, and agricultural research centres to pool their genetic resources in an innovative management system that ensures the full use of the materials and the fair sharing of their benefits:

- More than one million accessions of genetic material have already been included in the Multilateral System since its establishment in 2007;
- More than 600 transfers of genetic material occur every day under the SMTAs;
- The information technology systems to manage this information are currently being set up;
- The Multilateral System has become operational by the financing of the first 11 projects by the Benefit-sharing Trust Fund. These projects address the following priorities:
 - Information exchange, technology transfer and capacity-building;
 - Managing and conserving plant genetic resources on farm;
 - The sustainable use of plant genetic resources.
- Voluntary funds for the implementation of the Benefit-sharing Fund of the ITPGRFA Funding Strategy have been received in the biennium 2008/2009 from Ireland, Italy, Norway, Spain and Switzerland.

C. PLANNED ACTIVITIES

5. The ITPGRFA's members have committed themselves to continue their efforts towards the full implementation of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing, including its Benefit-sharing Fund. The International Treaty Secretariat, in partnership with FAO and Bioversity International, is building capacities of developing countries to implement the Treaty and in particular the Multilateral System.

6. In order to accelerate crop diversity efforts and distribute their benefits fairly, the Third Session of the Governing Body of the ITPGRFA (June 2009)² adopted the Strategic Plan (2009-2014) for the implementation of the Benefit-sharing Fund. It aims at raising USD116 million to capitalize this fund which would be invested in high impact projects.

III. The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

A. BACKGROUND

7. The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is a legally binding multilateral international plant health treaty that aims to protect cultivated and wild plants by preventing the introduction and spread of pests. The Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) is the governing body of the IPPC which meets annually in Rome and is directed between sessions by the CPM Bureau (the seven-member elected executive body) that provides guidance to the IPPC Secretariat and CPM on strategic direction, cooperation, financial and operational management. One of the primary outputs of the CPM is the adoption of new International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs).

² http://www.planttreaty.org/meetings/gb3_en.htm

8. The IPPC is referred to by the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) as the plant health standard setting body. National rules and regulations based on the above mentioned ISPMs will be considered as science-based in terms of the SPS agreement, should a trade dispute arise.

9. In addition to the WTO, the IPPC Secretariat works with a number of international partners in order to implement the CPM work programme. A key partner is the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and a joint work programme on topics of common interest has been active for the past six years. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is a partner in providing both technical and logistical support in areas of common interest in the IPPC standard setting programme.

B. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

10. A full-time Secretary to the IPPC took up duties in January 2010.

11. The number of contracting parties to the IPPC continues to increase. Currently, 172 contracting parties (as of March 2010) adhere to the new revised text of the IPPC that entered into force in October 2005³.

12. The new IPPC capacity building strategy was adopted and discussion on a more detailed capacity building work programme took place at the Fifth Session of the CPM (CPM 5) which was held from 22 to 26 March 2010 in Rome. Capacity building continues to be an area of high priority as it becomes increasingly difficult for developing countries to implement all the new ISPMs that are adopted by the CPM. However, this programme has been restricted due to resource constraints and the issue will be addressed by the CPM and FAO in the future.

13. CPM 5 adopted the new annual work programme for the CPM in addition to a number of new ISPMs. Documentation for all activities of the CPM work programme can be found at <https://www.ippc.int>.

14. The work of the CPM is primarily funded from FAO's regular programme and is currently set at USD 2.63 million per annum. This funding is complemented by extra-budgetary resources in the form of a general multi-lateral trust fund and an EC trust fund specifically to improve developing country participation in the IPPC standard setting process.

C. PLANNED ACTIVITIES

15. The information exchange programme is encouraging an increasing number of countries to meet their reporting obligations under the IPPC. The revised IPPC website is expected to contribute significantly to this process.

16. The total resources available are insufficient to adequately service the CPM work programme and ensure a sustainable IPPC Secretariat. Resource mobilization is being addressed by the new Secretary to the IPPC as a high priority in order to improve the sustainability of the IPPC Secretariat and delivery of the CPM work programme.

³ www.ippc.int

IV. Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade

A. BACKGROUND

17. The Rotterdam Convention is a multilateral environmental agreement designed to promote shared responsibility and cooperative efforts among Parties in the international trade in certain hazardous chemicals in order to protect human health and the environment. The Convention is legally binding on Parties and entered into force in February 2004. The Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP) of FAO together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) jointly provide the Secretariat to the Rotterdam Convention. In 2007 the Committee on Agriculture was informed of the role of the Rotterdam Convention in reducing the risks associated with highly toxic pesticides⁴ and identified the Convention as a priority area of work.

18. The Conference of the Parties is the governing body of the Rotterdam Convention which generally meets every two years. A key outcome of the last ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 4 - October 2008) was the adoption of a triennial programme of work (2009-2011) and a budget of USD 17 million, including USD 6 million from voluntary contributions for assistance to countries. A further decision was related to increasing synergies with the Secretariats of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions.

B. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

19. As of 28 February 2010 there were 131 Parties to the Convention. A progress report (October 2009) on the implementation of the programme of work adopted by COP 4 is available on the Convention's website (www.pic.int). The website also provides up-to-date information on activities of the Secretariat as well as information on the status of implementation of the Convention in individual countries.

20. The 137th session of the FAO Council was informed of the preparations for the extraordinary meetings of the COPs to the Rotterdam, Basel and Stockholm Conventions (Ex-COPs) which took place from 22 to 24 February 2010 in Bali, in particular the issues associated with greater synergies among the three Secretariats⁵. At the request of Council, an information session for permanent representatives in Rome was convened on 20 January 2010⁶. The principle objective of the information session was to ensure that member countries were aware of the discussions at the Ex-COP related to joint management of the Secretariats and FAO's comparative advantage with respect to pesticides management. Member countries were encouraged to consider the steps needed to recognize and maintain the role of FAO in the provision of the Secretariat to the Rotterdam Convention and to consider possible opportunities for a greater role for FAO in working with countries on implementing those elements of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions related to pesticides. A key outcome of the Ex-COPs was the decision to create a Joint Executive Secretary for the Basel, Stockholm and the UNEP part of the Rotterdam Convention Secretariat in Geneva.

C. PLANNED ACTIVITIES

21. The work of the Rotterdam Convention is fully integrated with that on pesticides in FAO and is seen as a direct contribution to Strategic Objective A: Sustainable intensification of crop

⁴ COAG/2007/Inf. 14

⁵ CL 137/Inf. 7

⁶ CL 137 REP, para. 68

production. The Secretariat will continue to implement the programme of work adopted at COP 4 in line with available resources. The assistance provided to Parties in the implementation of the convention is undertaken in close cooperation with the decentralised offices of FAO. The next ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 5) is scheduled for June 2011 in Geneva and will decide on the programme of work and budget for 2012-2013.

V. Codex Alimentarius Commission

A. BACKGROUND

22. The Codex Alimentarius Commission was established by the FAO Conference and the World Health Assembly. The Commission is responsible for the implementation of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme and held its First Session in Rome in 1963. Its objectives are to protect the health of consumers, to ensure fair practices in international food trade, and to coordinate food standardization work undertaken by international organizations. As of April 2010, the Commission's membership includes 182 member countries and one Member Organization, the European Union.

23. Sessions of the Commission and of its Executive Committee are normally held in Rome or Geneva and are funded by the Codex budget, while host country arrangements apply to subsidiary bodies.

24. There are currently more than 400 Codex standards and related texts on all aspects of food safety and quality, more than 3000 Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for pesticides, 2000 maximum levels for food additives and more than 500 MRLs for veterinary drugs. These standards are a reference in international trade as the Codex Alimentarius Commission is specifically mentioned under the WTO SPS Agreement as regards food safety, while reference to international standards applies to Codex in the framework of the Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement.

B. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

25. During the 2008-2009 biennium, 40 sessions of Codex subsidiary bodies were held and the Commission adopted more than 50 standards and related texts, including several codes of practice for the prevention of chemical or microbiological contamination. The Commission completed the follow-up to the 2002 *Joint FAO/WHO Evaluation* and adopted its Strategic Plan 2008- 2013.

26. In recent years the systematic approach to risk analysis was completed in all areas of food safety: microbiological contamination, additives, contaminants, residues of pesticides and veterinary drugs. The principles for risk analysis and safety assessment of foods derived from biotechnology were revised in 2008. In order to establish Codex food safety standards, Codex committees rely on the scientific advice provided by FAO and WHO through their joint expert committees, such as JECFA (Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives) and JMPR (Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues) as well as expert consultations.

27. In 2003, FAO and WHO established the *FAO/WHO Project and Trust Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex*, funded by voluntary contributions and administered by WHO on behalf of both organizations, which resulted in a significant increase in participation of developing countries and is complementary to other technical cooperation activities.

C. PLANNED ACTIVITIES

28. The Commission will proceed with the implementation of its strategic plan and programme of work, including the convening of 20 sessions of specialized committees per year. The Thirty-third Session of the Commission is scheduled for July 2010. In addition to its main

task of standard-setting, it will consider general issues, especially the Mid-Term Review of the FAO/WHO Trust Fund, the activities of FAO and WHO complementary to Codex work, and the question of private standards. The 34th Session will be held in July 2011.

29. In order to ensure that Codex standards address recurring and emerging food safety issues in an efficient manner, it is essential that FAO and WHO continue to provide timely and high quality scientific advice to the Codex programme.