

Agricultural Biodiversity for Life: Providing food, improving health and well-being and regenerating the environment

COP 11, Hyderabad, India, 8th – 19th October 2012
Agenda items: 13.5 and relevant issues in related items 2,3,7,9-13

Summary of issue

The conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity is fundamental to realising the goals of the CBD. Sustaining agricultural biodiversity contributes to many thematic areas and to achieving a majority of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Implementing CBD Decisions that impact on agricultural biodiversity and related ecosystem functions is vital not only to underpin sustainable food provision but also to improve human and planetary health.

Agricultural biodiversity and associated ecosystem functions in all biomes is the result of the resilient, biodiverse, ecological food production systems developed by knowledgeable women and men who, at smaller scales, currently provide food for more than 70 per cent of the world's peoples. The dynamic selection, development and exchange of seeds and other planting materials, as well as livestock and other terrestrial and aquatic food species, *in situ*, have created the myriad agricultural biodiversity in local production systems that not only **feeds the world** but also **improves human health and well-being** and **sustains the environment**.

Recap and Recall

Agricultural biodiversity – its conservation, sustainable use and the equitable sharing of benefits from its use – has always been at the heart of the CBD's work on these issues, usually in cooperation with other institutions especially FAO. They are summarised in Decisions III/11 and its Annex 1, which provides the basis for the CBD's work on agricultural biodiversity, IV/6, V/5, VI/5 (+ VI/6 on the International Seed Treaty), VII/3, VIII/23, IX/1 and X/34. These decisions reiterated the importance of *in situ* and on-farm conservation and sustaining the ecosystem functions provided by agricultural biodiversity, recognise the central role of small-scale food providers and the need to defend Farmers' Rights. Other agreements also impact directly on agricultural biodiversity e.g. the Biosafety Protocol on the transboundary movement of LMOs, most of which are of direct concern to food and agriculture, and agreements to prevent the negative impacts of restrictive monopoly privileges, biofuels, perverse incentives, GURTs (especially a moratorium on Terminator technologies, V-GURTs), geoengineering, synthetic biology etc. Agricultural biodiversity is also central to the issues covered by the CBD's decisions on Marine and Coastal biodiversity, Forests, Drylands and so on. Realising the goals of the CBD and a majority of the Aichi Targets thus requires revisiting all the CBD Decisions relevant to agricultural biodiversity and implementing the identified measures. It also requires Parties in other forums e.g. FAO to strengthen commitments to actions that will conserve and develop agricultural biodiversity.

What is at stake?

Biodiverse, ecological, food provision:

Effective measures on agricultural biodiversity will promote a model of production and consumption, that a) provides healthy, nutritionally-rich, local food and defends small-scale food providers and food sovereignty; b) helps sustain and develop agricultural biodiversity locally, *in situ*, on-farm, on the range and in productive waters; c) is supported by innovative research, which builds on the findings of IAASTD.

Climate Change:

Increasing agricultural biodiversity in local food systems will improve the adaptive capacity and resilience of production systems and can significantly reduce carbon emissions. However, the rapid deployment of inappropriate and inherently dangerous technologies, e.g. geoengineering, and monopoly practices, such as the patenting of 'climate ready' genes, undermine and restrict access to agricultural biodiversity, reducing the viability of local food systems.

Access to agricultural biodiversity:

Realising Farmers Rights / rights of livestock keepers, forest dwellers, artisanal fishers etc, and defining Traditional Knowledge related to agricultural biodiversity, will improve access to, control and use of agricultural biodiversity, and its component genetic resources for food and agriculture, by small-scale food providers. GURTs, GMOs, techno-fixes, 'valuations' and the misuse of traditional knowledge, that consolidate corporate control, will undermine agricultural biodiversity and facilitate its commodification.

Ecosystem functions:

Corporate control, monopoly privileges, commodification and financialization of agricultural biodiversity, which are embedded in the concepts of valuation and payment for ecosystems services, will marginalise small-scale food providers and undermine food sovereignty. Recognising the environmental, social value and the cross-cutting relevance of ecosystem functions related to agricultural biodiversity and increasing their effectiveness across all production systems will provide multiple social and environmental benefits. Strengthening these measures and ecosystem functions should therefore also be at the heart of IPBES, which should be fully transparent and should provide meaningful spaces for full participation of civil society and social movements in its deliberations and decision-making processes.

Proposals for COP 11

- **Reaffirm** the importance of agricultural biodiversity and the central role of small-scale food providers in its development and maintenance. The conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity are core issues in the CBD (Article 8j) and ITPGRFA (Articles 5, 6 and 9) and is the priority of the CGRFA. Farmers' Rights in the ITPGRFA and related measures require legally-binding compliance mechanisms to compel Parties to recognize, respect and ensure national implementation, in the same way that breeders' rights are enforced and protected internationally in UPOV, WTO, WIPO and TRIPS. CBD resolutions have requested studies on Farmers' Rights but nothing has yet been produced.
- **Resolve** to scale up commitments to implement the Decisions on the conservation and regeneration of agricultural biodiversity *in situ*, in local food production and harvesting systems. Commitment must be renewed to focus on *in situ* conservation and development of domesticated species by women and men small-scale food providers. While *ex situ* and protected area approaches may serve for the conservation of undomesticated species, domesticated biodiversity needs different approaches and governance. The CBD must recognize that the conservation, development and sustainable use of domesticated species will only take place through *in situ* measures. Parties must recognise findings in relevant assessments e.g. IAASTD and reinforce efforts to implement relevant plans of action of the CBD and FAO that prioritise *in situ* conservation of agricultural biodiversity.
- **Retain** important Decisions relevant to agricultural biodiversity, such as the moratorium on GURTs. COP must reject proposals to retire the paragraphs related to GURTs in Decision VII/3 as summarised in documents UNEP/CBD/COP/11/20 and UNEP/CBD/COP/11/INF/1.

GURTs undermine access to genetic resources and the ability to conserve and develop these resources *in situ*. Parties should therefore strengthen the moratorium on GURTs to include all technologies (including gene silencing technologies) that restrict access to agricultural biodiversity *in situ* and the re-use of seeds.

- **Regulate, transform or prohibit** any systems, methods, processes or technologies, which might damage agricultural biodiversity and related ecosystem functions. The CBD should evaluate intellectual property regimes and perverse incentives, and prohibit those that counter the CBD's goals and principles. The CBD should declare a ban or moratorium on the use of new plant varieties, especially GMOs and products of synthetic biology that have potential adverse impacts on agricultural biodiversity and the environment.
- **Renew** commitments to related Conventions and UN bodies, especially the FAO, that defend, develop and support the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity. Agricultural Biodiversity and the protection and support for those who defend and develop it *in situ* must be central to the International Decade on Biodiversity. Further, Parties should call on the FAO to strengthen its work on the joint POW on Agricultural Biodiversity and the MYPOW of the CGRFA, especially the preparations for the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture.

Further information

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The Convention on Biological Diversity Alliance (CBD Alliance) is a network of activists and representatives from NGOs, CBOs, social movements and Indigenous People's organisations advocating for improved and informed participation in the CBD processes.



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