



Genetic Resources Policy Committee

The Genetic Resources Policy Committee (GRPC), which exists to advise the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), first met in January 1995. The CGIAR had established the idea of a GRPC at its meeting in 1994, with the aim of assisting the Chair of the CGIAR to exercise leadership in this area and to enhance the openness and transparency of discussions on policy issues surrounding genetic resources among members of the CGIAR community.

The GRPC meets twice a year, usually in February and September. It issues reports of each meeting in addition to discussion papers and statements that address specific topics. When considered appropriate, the Committee makes specific recommendations to Centres and CGIAR members. In 1999 the composition of the Committee was expanded to give additional stakeholders, for example private industry and civil society organizations, a place at the table. The terms of reference were adjusted too. Under these terms of reference (which can be found at http://www.cgiar.org/who/structure/committees/grpc_index.html), the GRPC is charged to:

- Monitor and analyze external policy developments and recommend positions and action to the CGIAR.
- Monitor and analyze policy developments within the CGIAR and recommend action as necessary.
- Monitor implementation of the agreements that placed CGIAR Centres' collections of germplasm in trust under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and assist in interpretation and amendment where necessary.
- Review developments in intellectual property rights (IPR) and advise the CGIAR when modification of Centres' approach to IPR might be needed.

The System-wide Genetic Resources Programme (SGRP) of the CGIAR and the Central Advisory Service on Intellectual Property (CAS-IP) both make technical contributions for consideration by the GRPC.

Accomplishments

In the eleven years of its existence to date the GRPC has addressed a wide variety of topics. With regard to the in-trust agreements between the Centres and FAO, established under the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the Committee has had a hand in several strategies and procedures concerning access to the in-trust material and has also considered and endorsed many statements issued jointly by Centres and FAO. These have concerned the practical execution of the agreements and measures to be adopted in cases of suspected violations.

Nourishing the future through scientific excellence



Photo Credit: M. Usman, IITA

The International Undertaking has now been superseded by the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. During the negotiations the GRPC played a central role in advising the CGIAR and on several occasions recommended specific action to CGIAR members and to individual Centres. The Committee provided technical advice to the Centres concerning the evolving text of the agreements between the Centres and the Governing Body of the Treaty that were adopted by the Governing Body in June 2006 and signed by the Centres on World Food Day, 16 October 2006. In the international arena, the GRPC has kept a watching brief on policy matters relevant to genetic resources in the meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the trade agreements of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Special Workshops

The Committee has co-sponsored four workshops to address specific issues of importance to the work of the CGIAR.

Ethics and Equity

The GRPC, with the governments of Brazil, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA, sponsored a workshop on *Ethics and Equity in the CGIAR's Use of Genetic Resources for Sustainable Food Security*. The meeting was held in April 1997 in Brazil and formulated a set of ethical principles that were adopted by the CGIAR and used by Centres as the basis of their own guiding ethical principles.

Underutilized Crops

Working with the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the GRPC organized a meeting to explore the potential for Centre research on underutilized species. These are often of crucial importance to the food security of poor people in remote and harsh environments. *Enlarging the Basis of*

Food Security, the Role of Underutilized Crops took place in Chennai, India, in February 1999. Together, 53 participants from 12 countries developed a series of recommendations that resulted in a broad, multi-donor global initiative on neglected and underutilized species, coordinated by Bioversity International (formerly known as IPGRI).

International Treaty

After the FAO conference adopted the International Treaty in November 2001 it was important to consider the Treaty's implications for the CGIAR. The GRPC, together with SGRP, CAS-IP, the CGIAR System Office and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) convened an inter-Centre workshop at IRRI's Los Banos campus in February 2002. The meeting prepared a draft negotiating text for a new agreement on the in-trust collections, to be signed by the Centres and the Governing Body of the Treaty. The meeting also drafted a replacement text for the Standard Material Transfer Agreement that accompanies in-trust material. After considerable further negotiation and amendment, both texts were adopted by the Governing Body of the Treaty at its first meeting in Madrid, Spain, in June 2006.

Genetically Modified Organisms and ex situ collections of PGRFA

Given concerns about the possibility that genes from genetically modified organisms could find their way into CGIAR genebanks, the GRPC and the Science Council of the CGIAR organized a workshop on *Technical issues associated with the development of CGIAR policies to address the possibility of adventitious presence of transgenes in CGIAR ex situ collections* held at Bioversity headquarters in 2004. Based on the outcome of this workshop the GRPC had drafted a set of Guiding Principles for wide dissemination and discussion. Those Guiding Principles were subsequently revised and adopted by the GRPC and later, the Alliance Executive. The International Wheat and Maize Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) is currently coordinating a system-wide process, through the coordinating mechanism of the SGRP, whereby Centres are developing crop specific guidelines to implement the Guiding Principles.

The Future

The GRPC has adapted to the changing policy environment and its outputs have been welcomed by Centres, the CGIAR and other stakeholders. It will continue to adapt and to serve the needs of the CGIAR System to ensure that policies allow the fullest use of genetic resources for improving human well-being.



Photo Credit: CIMMYT



Photo Credit: S. Landersz, Bioversity International

Composition

The current committee was appointed by the Chair of the CGIAR in January 2004.

Carlos Correa, Chair

Carl-Gustaf Thornström, CGIAR

Juan Lucas Restrepo, CGIAR

Tony Gregson, CGIAR Alliance Board (since AUG05)

Masa Iwanaga, CGIAR Alliance Executive (since JAN05)

Maria José Sampaio, NARS

Anil Subedi, NGO (until AUG2005)

Bernard Le Buanec, Private Sector (until SEP04)

Orlando de Ponti, Private Sector (since JAN05)

Leonardo Montemayor, Farmers' Organization

Mike Gale, Science Council

Emile Frison, GRPC Secretariat

José Esquinas-Alcázar, FAO Observer

Further information

For further information please contact the GRPC Secretariat:

Dr Emile Frison

Director General

Bioversity International

Via dei Tre Denari, 472/A

00057 Maccarese

Rome, Italy

Phone: (39) 066118202

Fax: (39) 066118405

E-mail: e.frison@cgiar.org

http://www.cgiar.org/who/structure/committees/grpc_index.html

With effect from 1 December 2006, IPGRI and INIBAP operate under the name "**Bioversity International**", Bioversity for short. This new name echoes our new strategy, which focuses on improving people's lives through biodiversity research.

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