

NEGOTIATIONS ON AN ENHANCED MULTILATERAL SYSTEM FOR ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING OF GENETIC RESOURCES TO RESTART AFTER GB9

Seed sector reiterates its support to the Treaty on conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

The 9th session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA / the Treaty) held in New Delhi on 19-24 September concluded with an agreement by the Parties to restart discussions on enhancing the functioning of the Multilateral System of the Treaty and the implementation of Article 9 of the Treaty which addresses Farmers' Rights.

At the opening ceremony Santosh Attavar, First Vice President of the International Seed Federation, said: "Today there are more than 700 million people living in extreme poverty, starkly illustrating that we need to continue to strengthen our collaboration on food systems towards a healthier, more sustainable, equitable and resilient seed production and food systems. We are convinced that this can be achieved through continued cooperation among the farmers, the private sector and the public seed sector and we are convinced that the International Treaty is the most suitable tool to ensure facilitated access and benefit sharing of genetic resources, which are critical in ensuring food and nutritional security."

During the past round of negotiations which failed in 2019, the seed sector made important, practicable proposals to improve the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA) and supported the full expansion of the list of crops in Annex 1 of the Treaty. ISF supported proposals for a workable subscription system to complement single access mechanisms as a means to increase the number of potential users and user-based payments. The seed sector remains willing to work with the Parties to find effective solutions for a comprehensive and meaningful enhancement of the Multilateral System, and strongly believes that the Multilateral System of the Treaty is the best means of handling Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) related to plant breeding.

On Farmers' Rights discussions, the seed sector emphasized the closely intertwined, complementary and mutually supportive relationship between Farmers' Rights and Breeders' Rights to support agricultural development. The private seed sector advocates that farmers must have the right to access the best varieties available, at the right time, right place, and right quantity. At the same time, optimizing access to a wide range of plant genetic resources is essential for plant breeders to develop improved varieties that boost farmers' crop productivity and address the impact of climate change and other challenges, to attain sustainable food production and food security. ISF strongly supports policies that create incentives for breeders to access genetic resources, invest in making improvements, and making improved germplasm available to farmers who choose to buy it.

The seed sector welcomes the initiative of the Treaty to develop a mechanism for assessing the value of the non-monetary benefit sharing contributions, which continue to be substantial but have so far been mostly neglected in the discussions related with Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilization.

Further, ISF urged the Parties to create the Treaty's own path forward on Digital Sequence Information / Genetic Sequence Data on genetic resources (DSI/GSD), in a manner consistent with the CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity), while allowing the enhancement of the Multilateral System and facilitating research and plant breeding.

ISF commended the monetary donation made by its member, the Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII), towards supporting the work of the Benefit Sharing Fund.

Dr Arvind Kapur, Vice Chairman, FSII said, “We would like to donate INR 20 lakh (USD 25000) as an addition to the other financial contributions regularly made by the seed sector globally. However, I would like to highlight that the non-financial contributions of the seed sector towards food security are many times greater and critically impactful towards food security.”

The ITPGRFA is a specialized international regime designed to facilitate the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture i.e., germplasm, and generate fair and equitable benefit sharing resulting from seed sales based on use. The ITPGRFA is harmonized with international regimes that support conservation, sustainable use and fair and equitable benefit sharing for all organisms, specifically the CBD and the Nagoya Protocol on access and benefit sharing.

See also: ISF Guide on Genetic Resources – available in ([EN](#)), ([FR](#)), ([ES](#))

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About ISF

ISF is the voice of the global seed sector. Since 1924, it has represented the interests of its members who make up 96% of international seed trade today. Its global reach extends to seed associations and seed companies around the world, and it has official observer status in key intergovernmental and international organizations.
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