



Ouagadougou Declaration:

Towards Regional Cooperation for Effective and Efficient *ex situ* Conservation of PGRFA in West and Central Africa

Preamble and Background:

A regional conference titled: “Towards Regional Cooperation for Effective and Efficient *ex situ* Conservation of PGRFA in West and Central Africa” was organized at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 12 to 15 September 2006, under the auspices of CORAF/WE CARD. The Conference was organized with collaboration of International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), the Global Crop Diversity Trust (the Trust), the Genetic Resources Policy Initiative (GRPI), and the regional plant genetic resources network (GRENEWECA).

The overall goal of the workshop was towards the establishment of a mechanism and framework for regional cooperation and collaboration, including establishment of Nodal Centres for conservation of the region’s plant genetic resources (PGR). Specifically the aim was to develop an implementation plan for the creation of a regional *ex situ* conservation system for priority PGRFA in WCA.

Participants at the conference came from a broad range of institutions and organizations with programmes and responsibility for PGRFA conservation and use in WCA, including senior representatives from

- The national agricultural or PGR programmes of 14 countries in WCA
- The regional organizations CORAF/WE CARD, NEPAD Science and Technology; FARA, and INSAH/CILSS,
- CGIAR Centres (SGRP, IITA, ICRISAT, ICRAF, WARDA, IPGRI, ILRI), IRD, CIRAD, the Trust, and FAO.

The Ouagadougou conference was organized as direct follow-up on an earlier initiative: A Regional Conference on “plant genetic resources management and food security in West and central Africa” that was held at IITA Ibadan, Nigeria (26-30 April 2004), under the auspices of CORAF/WE CARD. The Ibadan conference established that PGRFA conservation and gene banking capacities, both in terms of physical and human resources, in various countries in WCA is generally weak. It established that only few countries in the region are able to make moderate commitments towards supporting research, conservation and use of the rich and diverse genetic resources of the region.

The Ibadan Conference called upon CORAF/WECARD to initiate a process to develop a regional approach to conservation of PGRFA, including exploring possibilities for establishing Nodal Centers of Excellence (NCE) for gene banking of priority species and collections in WCA.

In response to these recommendations, CORAF/WECARD commissioned a consultancy study in 2005 to assess existing plant genetic resources conservation facilities and capacities in WCA countries, and to initiate development of a framework for a strategy for PGRFA conservation in the region.

The conclusions of the study were presented to the CORAF/WECARD Annual General Assembly held in The Gambia in 2006. The General Assembly endorsed the concept of the regional conservation strategy including the establishment of NCE and requested CORAF/WECARD to further develop the proposals.

The Ouagadougou conference - Towards Regional Cooperation for Effective and Efficient *ex situ* Conservation of PGRFA in West and Central Africa, is in direct response to the CORAF/WECARD General Assembly recommendation. The conference reviewed the CORAF/WECARD-commissioned report, addressed outstanding issues, and worked towards the development of a regional strategy for cooperation within the region for the conservation and use of PGRFA.

In consequence, the Conference, after 4 days of deliberation, arrived at conclusions and recommendations, set out in this Ouagadougou Declaration. The declaration captures the shared agreements and recommendations from the conference.

Shared agreements:

NCE functions and modalities

- NCE provide the basis for creating *ex situ* collections in West and Central Africa (WCA) with long term conservation objectives
- NCEs are not just dedicated to conservation; they also should have research and training components.
- Research at NCEs should add value to what is on-going at national genebanks; NCE research should focus on the development of regional public goods.
- Responsibilities for multiplication, evaluation, characterization, and other research should be spread out among a range of partners located in countries in WCA including those that are not hosting NCEs and in some cases, outside WCA.
- The NCEs will be located in selected countries/organizations but will hold collections on behalf of the regional partners.
- WCA countries and CORAF/WECARD should facilitate the movement of experts to work at the NCEs.
- CGIAR institutions and ARIs, both inside and outside WCA, are critical partners in the WCA regional conservation strategy.
- To get started, the NCE will build on existing functional national or international facilities and network of partners (providing conservation and use services such as regeneration safety duplications etc.).
- The regional economic community organizations: ECOWAS, CEEAC & CEMAC should be involved in oversight of the NCE.
- Over time, the NCE will increase in size and capacity, and gain financial support from the regional economic organizations to establish their own facilities to function on a sustainable basis.

Criteria and process for establishing NCE

- Eligibility criteria for a country to host a NCE include: ratification of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Treaty); membership of CORAF/WECARD in good standing; submission of hosting request by government; good track record of national institution in PGR conservation and management, and financial management.
- To host NCE, countries are expected, at the minimum, to ensure current levels of funding for the national organization.
- CORAF/WECARD should organize a competitive bidding process for countries that want to host NCE.
- CORAF/WECARD should develop host country agreements/guidelines with well-defined responsibilities.

Scope of plants conserved in the NCE

- A list of priority crops were agreed to by the workshop participants as entry points for further discussion and elaboration. Associated crops could be considered in the future.

Policies for exchange of materials and information in support of the regional conservation strategy

- Materials listed in Annex 1 of the Treaty and associated non-confidential information will be exchanged using the SMTA under the Treaty since most countries in WCA have ratified the Treaty.
- There needs to be a harmonized approach for the exchange of non-Annex 1 material and associated information within the region (e.g., fonio, frafra potato, forest species). The policy should follow the logic of the Treaty and the standard material transfer agreement (SMTA) adopted by the Governing Body of the Treaty in June, 2006. Perhaps the SMTA would need to be adapted to respond to the specific conditions of the region.
- CORAF/WECARD should promote the inclusion of additional crops of importance to WCA in Annex 1 of the Treaty. Using the SMTA for those materials would represent a proactive move to get those materials eventually included in Annex 1.
- CORAF/WECARD is invited to advise the few countries in the region which have not ratified the Treaty to ratify it as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, the SMTA should be used when sending Annex 1 materials to non-parties. Non-parties should be asked to supply materials using the SMTA. If they refuse, a new agreement will need to be developed.

Funding strategy

- Countries hosting NCE must secure long term commitments of financial support for their portion of the cost of operating the NCE.
- CORAF members countries should make special contributions to the regional conservation system, including the NCEs, by increasing their annual contributions to CORAF.
- ECOWAS, CEMAC and CEAC should make provisions in their budgets to support the regional conservation system.
- Donor organizations should also be invited to provide financial support for the conservation strategy to be developed.

Dr. Houssou's report, commissioned by CORAF

- The study commissioned by CORAF, conducted by Dr. Moise Houssou, on the status of PGR conservation in 9 countries reflects the overall situation in the sub-region and provides a useful basis for developing a regional strategy. That report needs to be complemented with information from other countries.
- The report provides a useful basis for developing a regional strategy.

Recommendations:

The Conference accepts the NCEs as an important instrument for enhancing cooperation within the region to manage and conserve PGR. The outcome of this Conference should culminate in the development of a regional strategy for management and conservation of PGRFA, which should be included in the CORAF/WECARD overall strategic plan to be completed by May 2007. In this regard, the Conference recommends the following:

1. In general, CORAF/WECARD should take full ownership of the process of developing the regional strategy which includes the NCE. More particularly, CORAF/WECARD should:

- create links with relevant regional economic community bodies to ensure that the conservation strategy is included in their respective strategic plans for implementation;
- create, to start with, 4 NCE based on plant species and agro-ecological zones:
 - Cereals and related plant species in the Sahelian zone
 - Root and Tuber crop species in Coastal West African zone
 - Coconut Collections and other industrial crop species in Coastal West African zone
 - Banana and plantain collections in Central African zone
- implement the process for the initiation and implementation of the regional strategy, including the process of countries' bidding to host NCEs, and developing host country agreements;
- coordinate efforts among countries from WCA to expand the list of materials included in Annex 1 of the International Treaty to include more crops of regional importance; and
- lead the process to develop a WCA policy for exchanges of non-Annex 1 materials.

2. GRENEWECA should undertake a survey to obtain additional information on countries that were not included in the report by Dr. Houssou that was commissioned by CORAF/WECARD.

3. Country representatives should take steps to ensure the internalization of the concept of the regional PGRFA conservation strategy to be developed, including the creation of NCE, within their planning processes and to ensure the involvement of relevant Ministries to obtain strategic recognition.

4. Countries within the region that have not already done so should ratify or accede to the International Treaty and effectively implement it in national laws, policies and or practices.

5. The CG Centres and ARIs should embed the regional conservation strategy to be developed in their own implementation plans, acting as key partners in the strategy.