



Minutes of the 27th Meeting of the Donors' Council of the Global Crop Diversity Trust

27 April 2023

The Donors' Council of the Global Crop Diversity Trust ('Crop Trust') met on 27 April 2023 via online video conference, hosted by the Crop Trust Secretariat in Bonn, Germany. The meeting was chaired by the Republic of Korea. The meeting was attended by representatives of donors, multilateral partners, and members of the Crop Trust Secretariat. A list of those in attendance can be found in Annex 1. Annex 2 shows the meeting agenda. Several background documents were circulated to invitees prior to the meeting.

1. Welcome, Introduction and Adoption of Agenda and Minutes

The Chair of the Donors' Council, Dr. Taek-Ryoun Kwon, opened the meeting and extended a warm welcome to all participants. The Chair commenced a brief round of introductions for participating Donors' Council members.

The agenda of the 27th Meeting of the Crop Trust Donors' Council was adopted by the Donors' Council members. The Minutes of the 26th Meeting of the Crop Trust Donors' Council held on 25 October 2022 were approved.

2. Update from the Executive Director

The Executive Director, Mr. Stefan Schmitz, opened the agenda item by reminding the Donors' Council of the new memorandum of understanding that was signed last year with the OneCGIAR. The MoU is the guiding framework for future cooperation with OneCGIAR and its genebanks. The Executive Director highlighted the Crop Trust's support of the OneCGIAR which includes long-term partnership agreements, providing system-wide support including work on information systems, quality management, knowledge management, and aligned fundraising activities.

The Executive Director provided updates on the recent Crop Trust Executive Board meeting, which was held on the campus of CIAT in Columbia.

He reported on the signing of a new long-term partnership agreement with CIAT, which provides long-term funding for the global bean and tropical forages collections.



The Crop Trust currently has two long-term partnership agreements with international genebanks. The first one with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) was signed five years ago. The second one, effective this year, was signed by CIAT and the Crop Trust last week. The third one with IITA is planned to be signed in an official ceremony later this year.

The Executive Director acknowledged donor support in making these long-term partnership agreements possible and mentioned three other genebanks (AfricaRice, CIP, and ICRISAT) have been invited to present their business plans for long-term partnership agreements.

The Executive Director informed the Donors' Council that in 2022, the Crop Trust received donations to the endowment from the United States, New Zealand, and Limagrain. The Crop Trust also received various project and operational grants in 2022.

He reported on the endowment fund investment returns for 2022. He noted that the current market value of the fund is considerably higher than total accumulated donor contributions to the fund, taking into account income withdrawn to date, showing that in principle, the model of the endowment as a source of income to provide long-term funding to genebanks fully works.

Norway, represented by Mr. Daniel van Gilst, enquired whether the USD 1.3 million yearly contribution to CIAT as part of the long-term partnership agreement, covered the entire genebank collection or just a part of it. The Executive Director explained that the long-term partnership agreement covered almost every collection, but was limited currently to the long-term *ex situ* conservation of the bean collection and the tropical forage collection. The smaller collection on cassava was excluded.

Mr. van Gilst also enquired about the current endowment fund market value and investment returns for Q1, 2023. The Executive Director responded that markets have improved and the endowment fund had an estimated return of 3.9% for the quarter with an estimated market value of USD 297 million.

The International Seed Federation, represented by Mr. Michael Keller, inquired about the Crop Trust's Seeds for Resilience project. The Executive Director responded that Seeds for Resilience is the first project where the Crop Trust entered into substantial cooperation with national genebanks. Seeds for Resilience allows the Crop Trust to cooperate with national genebanks and build bridges between genebanks and seed system development in sub-Saharan African countries. The Executive Director clarified



that the Crop Trust provides funding out of the income from the endowment for long-term, not time-bound support, which is focused on cooperation with international genebanks. Cooperation with national genebanks is made possible through time-bound project funding.

3. Elevating Crop Diversity on the Global Development and Food Systems Agenda

The Executive Director opened the agenda item highlighting the Crop Trust's work to play an increasing role in international processes and events in order to raise the political profile of the conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

He listed some of the international events that the Crop Trust is hoping to participate in this year, including the African Food System Forum in Tanzania in the, the New York Climate Week in New York, the World Food Prize events in Iowa and UNFCCC COP28 in the UAE. He also mentioned the Crop Trust's own conference in November and the 10th session of the Governing Body of the Plant Treaty towards the end of November in Rome

The Executive Director explained that the Crop Trust is planning to organize an international conference, tentatively called the Global Crop Diversity Summit 2023, which will take place in Berlin on November 14th, together with the Plant Treaty. He encouraged donors to participate at a high level.

4. Cooperation with the Plant Treaty Secretariat: Funding Facility for short-term support of international collections

Mr. Kent Nnadozie, Plant Treaty Secretary, presented the newly developed funding facility for short-term support of international collections. Mr. Nnadozie highlighted the important relationship between the Plant Treaty and Crop Trust, mentioning that the Crop Trust is fundamental to the implementation of the Treaty.

Mr. Nnadozie recognized the importance of international genebanks for securing unique collections of crop diversity. While these collections are extremely important to the multilateral system of *ex situ* conservation, many don't have adequate funding to facilitate and support their operations. The Crop Trust's objective is to provide



long-term support for essential operations of all international genebanks, however the endowment target of the Crop Trust has not yet been reached.

At the last session of the Governing Body of the Treaty in India, the Governing Body expressed clear policy guidance and requested the Crop Trust to work together with the Treaty to mobilize funds to support such international collections. Based on this guidance and the existing needs, the Treaty and Crop Trust developed a joint draft framework that will provide short-term bridge funding for essential operations of some of the international collections until the Crop Trust's endowment fund reaches the level necessary to support those genebanks in perpetuity.

Mr. Nnadozie highlighted the eligibility criteria of the funding mechanism, noting that the recipient collections must be an Article 15 collection or an international collection with unique germplasm of regional and international significance. Furthermore, Mr. Nnadozie highlighted the governance structure of the funding mechanism, noting that funds can be channeled through either the Crop Trust or Plant Treaty, depending on donor preference.

Mr. Nnadozie ended his presentation, noting again, the important relationship between the Crop Trust and the Plant Treaty Secretariat for the entire system of *ex situ* conservation.

5. From Neglect to Nourishment: The Role of Forgotten and Underutilized Crops for Nutrition Security

Director of Programs, Ms. Sarada Krishnan, started the presentation by discussing the challenges faced by the current food systems, including climate change and biodiversity loss.

The Director of Programs stressed the importance of crop diversity in transforming food systems. She highlighted the importance of underutilized and neglected crops, noting that these are crops that are often locally and regionally significant but have not been domesticated to the extent to make cultivation easy or improve the crop through breeding, research and development. Many of these crops are highly nutritious and have climate resilient traits. The Director of Programs emphasized that in order to transform our food systems, we need to embrace and incorporate neglected and underutilized crops through collective actions.

For this transformation to occur the Director of Programs emphasized the following points: (1) securing the diversity of underutilized and neglected crops for research and



development and breeding activities; (2) developing value chains and seed systems in order to make these crops available to farmers; (3) advocating for policy support.

The Director of Programs ended her presentation by stressing the importance of utilizing underutilized crops and conserving crop diversity to achieve climate resilience and ensure food and nutrition security.

Australia (DFAT), represented by Ms. Elena Martin Avila, highlighted the complementary roles of utilization and conservation of genetic resources and inquired whether the Crop Trust sees a role beyond just conservation. The Director of Programs responded by stating that the Crop Trust is already working with genebanks on the utilization and availability of genetic resources for farmers and research and development (R&D) under the BOLD and Seeds for Resilience projects. The Director of External Affairs, Mr. Hannes Dempewolf, added that while conservation is the core of the Crop Trust's mission, actively using collections and partnering with breeders, researchers, and farmers is also important.

Several members of the Donor's Council expressed interest in work on underutilized and neglected crops and encouraged for more concrete plans to be developed.

They also encouraged the ideas to be further discussed in the lead-up and context of the Global Crop Diversity Summit 2023

6. Finance and Investment Report

The Director of Business Operations in transition, Ms. Anne Clyne, gave an update on the finance and investment activities of the Crop Trust since the last Donors' Council meeting.

She discussed the investment performance of the endowment fund, noting that 2022 was a difficult year for investment markets. She cited several reasons for this, including rising interest rates, recessionary fears, rolling lockdowns due to Covid, and conflict in the Ukraine. As a result, the endowment fund was down 16.3%, and the euro fund was down 13.4%. However, by Q4, 2022 markets had started to improve and the funds were showing strong returns for Q1, 2023 with estimated returns of 3.9% and 3.2% for the USD and Euro funds respectively.

The Director of Business Operations in transition showed the fluctuation of investment returns since the fund was established. She mentioned that the endowment fund has been set up with a long-term perspective and is highly



diversified and structured to withstand short-term market dislocations and still achieve its objectives.

She noted that total contributions to the endowment fund now stands at USD 253 million, of which USD 8.5 million was received in 2022.

She also provided an update on investment management, noting that Mercer was appointed as the outsourced chief investment officer (oCIO) in quarter one of last year. The Investment Committee carried out a client service performance review at the start of this year and concluded that they were happy with the outcome of the review and Mercer's client service performance to date.

The Director of Business Operations in transition updated the Donors' Council on the Crop Trust's Sustainable Investment Framework, which is included as an annex to the Investment Policy, noting that it was updated to show that the organization has signed up to two new initiatives: the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) and the Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), and set a NetZero decarbonization target of 2040. With regard to TCFD, the organization is now a supporter and the governance structure for this will be put in place in 2023. This includes establishing a Sustainability Governance Committee, a climate governance statement, a climate action plan, and TCFD climate training for relevant staff. The Crop Trust intends to produce its first TCFD report for 2024 which will be released in Q1, 2025. The TNFD framework is still in a pilot testing phase and the Crop Trust, as a member of this forum, is looking into the potential to provide input into this process. As regards to the NetZero target date of 2040, the Director of Business Operations in transition noted that the Crop Trust is currently ahead of target at 28% progression. Progress against interim targets will be reviewed annually by the Investment Committee.

The Director of Business Operations in transition then presented the financial statements for 2022, noting that the Crop Trust carried out an external audit services tender process in 2022, and PWC were appointed again by the Executive Board. She added that a new audit partner and manager were appointed. The audit commenced in February and is now in the completion stage following approval of the Financial Statements at the recent Executive Board meeting.

The Director of Business Operations in transition ended her presentation by presenting the new Reserves Fund Policy for the organization. The Crop Trust now has an unrestricted reserves fund with a target minimum level of four months of



budgeted operating and program expenditure and a designated reserves fund of USD 3 million for the Fundraising Campaign for the period 2023-2025.

7. Donors' Council Business: Executive Board Nominations at Upcoming Fall Meeting

The Executive Director reminded the attendees that the Crop Trust Executive Board comprises 11 members, out of which four are appointed by the Donors' Council, another four by the governing body of the Plant Treaty, and two are self-appointed by the Board itself and the Executive Director. The Executive Director informed the Donors' Council that Ms. Emmy Simmons' (representing the United States) second Executive Board term will come to an end at the end of this year, and hence she cannot be re-appointed. Mr. Bernhard Lehman's (representing Switzerland) first term will come to an end at the end of this year, and he is up for reappointment at the end of this year.

The Executive Director informed the Donors' Council that at its meeting on the 13th of November 2023 in Berlin, the Donors' Council will be asked to appoint one member of the Donors' Council to take up Ms. Simmons' Executive Board seat. The appointment will preferably be by consensus. Furthermore, it will be suggested that the Donors' Council move by consensus to re-appoint Mr. Lehman at the Fall meeting.

In line with the Crop Trust's constitution, Donors' Council members are invited to submit nominations to the Crop Trust Secretariat prior to the November meeting. These nominations will be circulated to all Donors' Council members and discussed beforehand with the Executive Board.

8. Conclusions and Next Steps

The Director of External Affairs reminded Donors' Council members that the Donors' Council Vice-Chair position held by Norway will also be up for reappointment at the November meeting and that Norway has signaled an interest to continue for a second term.

The Chair thanked the Donors' Council members for their participation and closed the meeting.

Annex 1: List of Participants

Affiliation	Name	Role
Australia	Elena Martin Avila	Assistant Director, Agricultural Development and Food Security Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	Ruben Echeverria	Senior Advisor, Agriculture Development
Brazil	Mariana Marshall	Alternate Permanent Representative of Brazil to FAO, WFP, and IFAD
Brazil, Embrapa	Aluana Abreu	Researcher
Canada, GAC	Francois Cloutier	Analyst
Corteva Agriscience	Marc Cool	Global Seed Policy Lead
Czechia	Vlastimil Zedek	Head of Unit of Renewable Energy Sources and Environmental Strategies, Dept of the Environment and Organic Farming, Ministry of Ag
European Union	Darrell Sexstone	Program Manager, European Commissions Department for International Cooperation and Development
Germany, GIZ	Alexander Schöning	Advisor
Germany, GIZ	Joachim Langbein	Project Manager
Germany, BMZ	Felicitas Röhrig	Senior Policy Advisor
Germany, BLE	Imke Thormann	Advisor
Germany, KfW	Carolin Kremheller	Portfolio Manager
International Seed Federation	Michael Keller	Secretary General
International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture	Kent Nnadozie	Secretary
Norway	Daniel van Gilst	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad Department for Climate, Energy, and Environment, Senior Advisor
Spain	Gonzalo Eiriz	Deputy Director General for Analysis, Coordination and Statistics at the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Sweden, Sida	AnnaKarin Norling	Senior Research Advisor
Switzerland, SDC	Bruce Campbell	Programme Manager, Global Food Security, Global Cooperation Department
Republic of Korea, RDA	Taek-Ryoun Kwon	Director General, Technology Cooperation Bureau
Republic of Korea, RDA	EunJung Choi	Scientist
Republic of Korea, RDA	Hyunjeong Hwang	Assistance Coordinator



United States, USAID/USUN	Ronit Gerard	Senior Development Advisor
Crop Trust	Stefan Schmitz	Executive Director
Crop Trust	Sarada Krishnan	Director of Programs
Crop Trust	Anne Clyne	Director of Business Operations in transition
Crop Trust	Dezreen Cameron-Stein	Head of Finance and Investment
Crop Trust	Hannes Dempewolf	Director of External Affairs
Crop Trust	Isbandiyar Valiyev	Partnerships Officer
Crop Trust	Bailey Cate	Partnership Development Associate, minute taker

Annex 2: Meeting Agenda

27th Meeting of the Crop Trust Donors' Council Agenda

27 April 2023
Videoconference

Time (CET)	Topic
14:00	1. Welcome, Introduction and Adoption of Agenda and Minutes Approval of the minutes from the 26th Donors' Council meeting held on 25 October 2022 Dr. Taek-Ryoun Kwon , Chair of the Crop Trust Donors' Council
14:05	2. Update from the Executive Director Stefan Schmitz , Executive Director
14:15	3. Elevating 'Crop Diversity' on the Global Development and Food Systems Agenda Stefan Schmitz , Executive Director
14:30	4. Cooperation with the Plant Treaty Secretariat: Funding Facility for short-term support of International Collections Kent Nnadozie , Secretary of the Plant Treaty Hannes Dempewolf , Director of External Affairs
15:00	5. From Neglect to Nourishment: The Role of Forgotten and Underutilized Crops for Nutrition Security Sarada Krishnan , Director of Programs
15:30	6. Finance and Investment Report Anne Clyne , Director of Business Operations in transition
15:45	7. Donors' Council Business: Executive Board Nominations at Upcoming Fall Meeting Stefan Schmitz , Executive Director
15:55	8. Conclusions and Next Steps