



Minutes of the 29th Meeting of the Donors' Council of the Global Crop Diversity Trust

13 June 2024

The Donors' Council of the Global Crop Diversity Trust ('Crop Trust') met on 13 June 2024 in Brasilia, Brazil. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Taek Ryouon-Kwon, representing the Republic of Korea. The meeting was attended by representatives of donors, multilateral partners and members of the Crop Trust Secretariat. Participation was primarily in person, but a virtual option was provided and some participants joined virtually. 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

Dr. Taek Ryouon-Kwon, Chair of the Crop Trust Donors' Council, welcomed meeting participants and thanked them for their attendance. The Chair commenced a brief round of introductions.

2. Adoption of the Agenda and Minutes from the 28th Meeting

The Chair called for the adoption of the agenda and approval of the minutes from the 28th meeting of the Donors' Council, held on 13 November 2023. The meeting agenda was adopted and the minutes from the 28th meeting approved.

3. Crop Trust's Role in the Conservation and Use of Opportunity Crops

Mr. Stefan Schmitz, Executive Director (ED) of the Crop Trust, provided an update on the Crop Trust's activities since the previous meeting. He began by recounting the successful hosting of the Global Crop Diversity Summit on 14 November 2023 in Berlin, organized in collaboration with the International Plant Treaty. The event brought together over 250 in-person attendees and over 1,500 online participants from various governments, research centers, international and national genebanks, NGOs, and other stakeholders.

The ED highlighted the ongoing efforts to build a global system of genebank conservation aimed at ensuring sustainable conservation and use of plant genetic resources. He emphasized the importance of the diversity of underutilized crops, and



he reiterated the Crop Trust's strong support for the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS) initiative, led by the African Union, FAO, and the US State Department.

The ED informed about a new contribution of EUR 10 million from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to the Crop Trust dedicated to supporting the implementation of the VACS initiative. This commitment positions the Crop Trust to establish a VACS Funding Facility, with Germany as the first contributor. He extended an invitation to other donors to contribute to this facility, highlighting it as an effective way for donors to support the collection, conservation, and use of neglected and underutilized species.

With the funding facility and other ongoing projects, such as Seeds for Resilience and BOLD (which includes a specific component on neglected and underutilized species), the Crop Trust has been recognized by the US State Department as one of four VACS Implementers. The ED provided an overview of the 60 crops identified by the VACS initiative and indicated which ones have high potential on the African continent, noting that VACS currently has a strong focus on Africa but is starting to expand to other regions. He explained that high potential refers to crops that, with minimal research and breeding efforts, have a significant chance of increased yields and other beneficial traits in a short period of time.

The ED discussed the Crop Trust's collaboration with over 120 international and national partners, which will significantly advance the collection, conservation, and use of neglected and underutilized species. He provided an overview of the collections of VACS crops in the genebanks of international and national partners and indicated which crops are covered by the Crop Trust's work.

Germany (BMZ) inquired about the gaps in the collections of neglected and underutilized species and which crops the Crop Trust would prioritize. The ED responded that the Crop Trust has so far focused on collections that have already been conserved. He explained that collection initiatives would commence in the next phase of activities under the funding facility and that the priorities would depend on donor preferences, which would help determine focus countries, genebanks, and crops.

The United States suggested exploring how the Crop Trust's conservation efforts for neglected and underutilized species could integrate with other programs, such as the Demand-Led Breeding Program. The ED agreed that cooperation across initiatives is key and emphasized that donor coordination presents a real opportunity to advance these initiatives.

Switzerland questioned how the Crop Trust was involved in the use aspect of the initiative. The ED confirmed that while the Crop Trust focuses on making genetic material available for use, CGIAR is a strong partner in terms of actual utilization, which involves activities such as breeding. The work supported by the Crop Trust involves



activities such as characterizing, cataloguing, and preparing material for distribution, as well as pre-breeding activities and participatory evaluation with farmers.

CGIAR inquired about the duplication of conservation efforts in the CGIAR genebanks and whether the Crop Trust is mandated to help conserve crops outside of Annex 1 of the International Plant Treaty. The ED responded that while the Crop Trust primarily focuses on Annex 1 crops, it is not limited to supporting only these crops. He noted that the Crop Trust has received full support from the International Plant Treaty to support neglected and underutilized crops due to their importance. Regarding duplication, the ED explained that a significant proportion of duplication is intentional as a first safety backup before it is sent to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault which serves as the second backup. Unnecessary duplication is addressed during genebank reviews.

The European Commission inquired about the Crop Trust's work with national genebanks under the VACS Trust Fund. The ED explained that to complement the work already being done through VACS by CGIAR, the Crop Trust's efforts would likely revolve around national genebanks. However, this would involve partnerships and strong cooperation with international genebanks to provide complementary work.

Ireland inquired if there was an overall structure or secretariat working on VACS to streamline coordination. The ED responded that current coordination is managed by the US State Department in close collaboration with FAO and the African Union. However, a joint secretariat hosted by CGIAR and FAO is planned to be established.

The United Kingdom encouraged the Crop Trust's participation in the VACS initiative and urged the Crop Trust to get more involved where possible. The ED noted this encouragement and reiterated that such work can only be achieved primarily through project financing and a sufficiently filled funding facility. However, he acknowledged that certain long-term support from the endowment to specific genebanks, such as AfricaRice, would also inherently support VACS.

4. Collaborative Efforts in Food Systems Transformation: Crop Trust's support to CGIAR

The ED reminded the Donors' Council members of the conversations held at the last meeting in Berlin, highlighting the intensive discussions on cooperation between the Crop Trust and CGIAR. He highlighted that the Crop Trust is currently providing around USD 6 million annually to support CGIAR genebanks. He reminded members that the estimated total cost of essential operations for CGIAR genebanks is approximately USD 16 million annually, excluding CIFOR-ICRAF.

The ED reiterated that the sooner the endowment fund has reached its target, the sooner the Crop Trust can support all essential operations of the CGIAR genebanks.



CGIAR inquired if there was currently space to increase the contribution to support the CGIAR genebanks. The ED responded that any additional contribution to the endowment immediately translates into more funds for the CGIAR genebanks.

The International Plant Treaty highlighted that Norway and Germany provided bridge funding to support the CIFOR-ICRAF and WorldVeg genebanks until they are eligible for long-term, in perpetuity funding from the Crop Trust's endowment.

5. Donors' Council Procedural Changes

The ED informed Donors' Council members that the current guidelines for membership of the Crop Trust Donors' Council do not specify whether project donors and donors providing operational funding are eligible to join the Donors' Council. He explained that at its Spring 2024 meeting, the Executive Board requested the Crop Trust Secretariat to review, in consultation with the Donors' Council, the current membership rules of the Donors' Council and if deemed appropriate, a proposal for clarification or improvement should be submitted for Executive Board approval at its upcoming Autumn 2024 meeting.

The Crop Trust Secretariat put forth the following clarification regarding the membership terms to the Donors' Council members:

Donors who make contributions to the endowment at the minimum threshold or above, shall be entitled to a permanent seat on the Donors' Council. Donors who contribute to time-bound contributions (e.g. project funding) at the minimum threshold or above, shall be entitled to a seat limited to the duration of their contractual funding agreement with the Crop Trust plus one additional year. Existing memberships established under the previous guidelines will be retained.

Donors' Council Members agreed with the suggested clarification. The Crop Trust Secretariat will present this update to the Executive Board for approval at the Autumn 2024 meeting.

6. Donors' Council Business: Nominations for new Donors' Council Chair

The ED reminded Donors' Council members that at its meeting on 7 October 2021, the Donors' Council appointed the representative of the Republic of Korea as the Chairperson of the Donors' Council. The current 3-year terms of the Chairperson will expire at the end of 2024 and the Chairperson intends to step down. Therefore, at the



next meeting in Autumn 2024, the Donors' Council will elect a new Chairperson of the Donors' Council.

The ED requested nominations for a new Chairperson from the Donors' Council before the end of September. All nominations for the position of Chairperson will be circulated prior to the Autumn 2024 Donors' Council meeting.

7. Conclusions and Next Steps - 2024 roadmap

The ED informed the Donors' Council that the next meeting would once again be scheduled back-to-back with the CGIAR System Council meeting. This will take place in December in Berlin. The Executive Director mentioned that more information will be sent by the Secretariat soon.

The ED highlighted some of the events the Crop Trust would be present at the remainder of the year, including the World Food Prize in Des Moines, Iowa, where the Crop Trust will hold a 20th year anniversary event and two former Crop Trust Executive Directors will be awarded the World Food Prize.

The Chair thanked the members for their time and closed the meeting.

Annex 1: List of Participants

Affiliation	Name	Role
Australia, ACIAR	Bosibori Bett	Director, Multilateral and Strategic Partnerships
Bezos Earth Fund	Andy Jarvis (Virtual)	Director, Future of Food
Brazil, Embrapa	Aluana Abreu	Researcher, Embrapa Genetic Resources and Biotechnology
Brazil, Embapa	Maria Jose Amstalden Moraes Sampaio	Researcher, International Office
CGIAR	Ismahane Eloufi	Executive Managing Director
Egypt, Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation	Shireen Assem (Virtual)	Deputy Head, Agricultural Research Center
European Commission, DEVCO	Christophe Larose	Head of Sector, Sustainable Agriculture
Germany, GIZ	Joachim Langbein	Advisor, Development Cooperation
Germany, BMZ	Felicitas Röhrig	Senior Policy Advisor
Germany, BLE	Imke Thormann (Virtual)	Officer for plant genetic resources
International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture	Kent Nnadozie	Secretary
Netherlands, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality	Kim van Seeters (Virtual)	Senior Policy Officer
Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Timmo Gaasbeek	Senior Policy Officer, Food Security
Norway, Norad	Daniel van Gilst	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad Department for Climate, Energy, and Environment, Senior Advisor
Sweden, Sida	AnnaKarin Norling	Senior Research Advisor
Switzerland, SDC	Manfred Kaufmann	Global Programme Climate Change and Environment
United Kingdom, FCDO	Alan Tollervey	Advisor
United States, USAID	Jerry Glover	Deputy Director, Center for Agriculture
United States, USAID	Robert Bertram	Chief Scientist, Bureau for Food Security
Crop Trust	Taek Ryouun-Kwon	Chair, Crop Trust Donors' Council
Crop Trust	Stefan Schmitz	Executive Director
Crop Trust	Anne Clyne	Director of Administration
Crop Trust	Jaspreet Stamm	Director of External Affairs
Crop Trust	Bailey Cate	Partnership Development Associate, Minute taker

Annex 2: Meeting Agenda

29th Meeting of the Crop Trust Donors' Council Agenda

13 June 2024

Brasilia, Brazil

Time (CET)	Topic
18:00	1. Welcome Dr. Taek Ryouun-Kwon, Chair of the Donors' Council
18:05	2. Introduction and Adoption of Agenda and Minutes Approval of the minutes from the 29th Donors' Council meeting held on 13 November 2023 Dr. Taek Ryouun-Kwon, Chair of the Donors' Council
18:15	3. Crop Trust's Role in the Conservation and Use of Opportunity Crops Dr. Stefan Schmitz, Executive Director <i>Discussion</i>
18:45	4. Collaborative Efforts in Food Systems Transformation: Crop Trust's support to CGIAR Dr. Stefan Schmitz, Executive Director <i>Discussion</i>
19:15	5. Donors' Council Procedural Changes Dr. Stefan Schmitz, Executive Director
19:30	6. Donors' Council Business: Nominations for new Donors' Council Chair Dr. Stefan Schmitz, Executive Director
19:45	7. Conclusions and Next Steps - 2024 roadmap
20:00	End