

## **Minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Donors' Council of the Global Crop Diversity Trust**

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2016, Rome, Italy

The Donors' Council of the Global Crop Diversity Trust ('Crop Trust') met on 2 February 2016 at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. The meeting was chaired by the Netherlands and attended by 20 representatives of current and prospective donor parties. Annex 1 provides the list of attendees. Annex 2 shows the meeting agenda.

### **1. Introductions and Adoption of the Agenda**

The Chair of the Donors' Council opened the meeting, drawing special attention to the diversity of countries and partners and the high-level representation in the room.

The Chair recognized the importance of plant genetic resources as a prerequisite for global food security, as re-affirmed most recently in the vision of the COP21 in Paris and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. He stressed that the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Donors' Council is the last gathering of this forum before the Crop Trust Pledging Conference on 15 April 2016 in Washington, DC. The Chair highlighted that this Council meeting provided an opportunity for participants to conduct substantive discussions in their capitals on cooperating with the Crop Trust and joining the Pledging Conference.

The Crop Trust Executive Director pointed to the many new contacts of the Crop Trust in donor capitals, in many cases facilitated by country Embassies in Rome and Berlin. She emphasized that in 2016 the current CGIAR Research Program (CRP) on Genebanks is concluding with its fifth year, to be followed by a new Genebank Platform over the period 2017-2021. Also in 2016, the Crop Trust will work to secure funding for implementing phase three of the Crop Wild Relatives (CWR) project (2017 – 2020).

The Executive Director highlighted Target 2.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which includes a call to maintain the genetic diversity of seeds and cultivated plants in soundly managed genebanks by 2020. The Crop Trust, FAO and CGIAR are important entities working towards fulfilling this objective. Governments and private sector partners will need to collaborate closely to meet the expectations of the global community.

The Minutes of the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Crop Trust Donors' Council held on 26 October 2015 were adopted. The meeting agenda for this 14<sup>th</sup> meeting was agreed upon by the Council.

### **2. Updates by Crop Trust Management**

The Crop Trust provided information on the logistical details for the Pledging Conference. The event will take place on 15 April 2016, from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm, in Washington, DC at the National Press Club. Management outlined the conference goals to mobilize new funding commitments for the endowment fund; increase global representation of donors including from both parties and non-parties of the International Plant Treaty; and further visibility for the issue of crop diversity. Further details and the on-line registration form for



participants at the Pledging Conference can be found at [www.croptrust.org/pledging-conference-private](http://www.croptrust.org/pledging-conference-private).

### **3. Report on Scientific Work of the Crop Trust**

The Crop Trust provided a comprehensive update on its scientific work program. The technical work is informed by the policy framework of the International Plant Treaty and guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Target 2.5.

The presentation stressed the global interdependence of all countries on crop diversity found in other countries and continents (see infographics and further information in the paper found [here](#)). The Crop Trust's [video](#) on the Global System for the protection of plant genetic resources was shown. Building this system requires the cooperation of many partners globally.

#### **a) Working with International Genebanks**

The Crop Trust leads the international genebanks program of the CGIAR. Together as a system, the CGIAR Consortium maintains the largest collection of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in the world. Essential routine activities of genebank management include the following: long-term storage, safety duplication, regeneration and characterization, information management, disease testing, and distribution of materials. Each of these are associated with quantifiable goals and dedicated performance targets; all activities have well-estimated costs.

The current Genebank CRP (2012-2016) and its structure, content, and purpose were introduced. The CGIAR crop collections offer a truly global public resource being used by almost every country on earth without restriction. The Crop Trust monitors their efficiency in a transparent manner, including through detailed external reviews covering scientific and financial performance indicators for genebanks. The new Genebank Platform (2017-2021) will build on this results framework and also enhance the representation of genebanks in policy development.

Over the next 5 years, with the projected growth of the Endowment Fund, the Crop Trust will take on a progressively increasing share of funding the annual routine operations of the CGIAR genebanks, complemented by funding from the CGIAR Fund Council. From 2022, the Crop Trust will become the sole funder for these costs.

Participants inquired about implications for the governance structure of the CGIAR system as the Endowment of the Crop Trust grows. Management explained the daily managing structure of the current Genebank CRP, which includes an open dialogue with Genebank Managers and Director Generals. The governance structure will be a key element in the forthcoming Genebank Platform and will consider all parties within the system.

#### **b) Svalbard Global Seed Vault**

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is the most publicly visible and iconic element of the Crop Trust's work. It serves as an ultimate, fail-safe back-up facility to safeguard against loss of crop diversity in national, regional and international genebanks such as due to fire, military conflict, or natural disasters. The use of the Vault is possible for parties and non-parties to the International Plant Treaty, including also private partners. The Svalbard Global Seed



Vault is co-managed by the Government of Norway, the Nordic Genetic Resources Center (NordGen) and the Crop Trust. If required, the Crop Trust can fund the shipment of seeds for deposit in Svalbard.

### **c) Crop Wild Relatives (CWR) Project**

The CWR project is a global effort to collect, conserve and initiate the use of the wild, non-domesticated relatives of food crops, so as to enhance the globally available pool of genetic resources for plant improvement and to help global agriculture adapt to climate change. This 10-year project is made possible through financial support from the Government of Norway. Tapping into the traits of wild relatives of crops opens new opportunities for plant breeders; therefore the project not only funds the collection and conservation of these materials but also addresses gaps in funding for crop pre-breeding work.

Global partnerships are at the core of the CWR project. It engages partners from a multitude of countries in collecting, capacity building, and pre-breeding activities. A map of partners can be found [here](#). Project activities are grounded in the Multilateral System under the International Plant Treaty. Council participants commended the work under the CWR project and the underpinning effective collaboration of partners.

### **d) Information Systems**

The primary goal of the Crop Trust's efforts on information systems is to offer fast and direct access to important passport information about plant genetic material being held in global crop collections. Such scientific data is essential to allow users to find and request the material – the value of the material in effect depends on the data available on it. Information in many genebanks is often still not digitized nor available in compatible formats.

The Crop Trust works to improve data management in international, regional and national genebanks, consolidating information on crop holdings in the Genesys webportal. Thus far, Crop Trust IT experts have worked in 25 countries, providing IT assessments for national genebanks followed by project funding for IT system upgrades. Regional workshops are organized to provide capacity building and exchange knowledge about best practices.

## **4. Report on Crop Trust Finances**

Management provided an overview of the structure and assumptions for the organization's revised 2015 budget and the multi-year budgets 2016-2018. The organization assumes flat operational expenditures against rising programmatic spending, with the objective to keep operational expenditures for the Crop Trust Secretariat at or below 10% of total spending to ensure cost efficiency. Sourcing of transitional donor support to fund operational expenditures over the next several years will be helpful so as to protect the endowment fund from withdrawal of income during the growth phase of the endowment.

Investment returns of the Crop Trust endowment vary between years, with a target of reaching an average annual return of 4% plus the rate of US Dollar inflation. The actual average annual investment return since inception of the endowment in 2005 has been at 3.5% per year. Investment returns are expected to be volatile over the coming years, especially in view of uncertainty over the economic future of various emerging market countries and the development of interest rates in major currencies.



Future directions for fundraising by the Crop Trust include concessional donor loans, where discussions are underway with a number of interested governments and their bilateral development finance agencies; further project funding such as for upgrading of national genebanks; funding for routine running costs of genebanks; transitional funding of operational expenditures of the Crop Trust Secretariat; piloting private industry funding for the endowing-a-crop approach; tapping into socially responsible investments through the new Investment Sharing Facility equity fund as well as through a possible Crop Trust bond issue; and crowd-funding through the web involving household donors at the retail level.

## **5. Any Other Business**

The Donors' Council emphasized the need for a coherent and organized approach amongst the different institutional partners involved with plant genetic resources. It was requested that the next Donors' Council meeting include a report on the how the Crop Trust is implementing policy guidance received from the Governing Body of the International Plant Treaty. Management highlighted its intention to develop a coordinated strategy with partners towards a more efficient system for fundraising for the protection of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

## **6. Wrap-up and Conclusions**

The Chair thanked participants for their thoughtful discussion and reiterated the need to communicate back to capital officials about the upcoming Crop Trust Pledging Conference. It is noted that the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Donors' Council will take place on Tuesday, 21 October 2016 in Rome. Further information will be issued closer to the date of the meeting.

Minutes of this meeting will be circulated for comments along with the presentations shown during the meeting.



## **Annex 1:** List of Participants

### (a) Donors' Council Members

Brazil:	Larissa Maria Lima Costa
Canada:	Eric Robinson
Egypt:	Ahmed Shalaby
Germany:	Felix Povel
Netherlands:	Gerda Verburg, Jaap Satter (Chair of the Donors' Council)
Norway:	Inge Nordang
Spain:	Santiago Menéndez de Luarda
Switzerland:	Francois Pythoud
USA:	Maria Adelaide D'Arcangelo
DuPont Pioneer:	Paolo Marchesini

### (b) Donors' Council Observers

China:	Niu Dun
EU:	Ana Fraile Vasallo
FAO:	Irene Hoffmann
ITPGRFA:	Shakeel Bhatti
Kuwait:	Yousef Jhail
Oman:	Rasmi Mahmoud
UAE:	Mirghani Obeid

### (c) Crop Trust staff

Marie Haga, Executive Director  
Michael Koch, Director of Finance (Secretary of the Donors' Council)  
Hannes Dempewolf, Scientist and Project Manager  
Julia Greene, Partnerships Assistant



## **Annex 2:** Meeting Agenda

### 14th Meeting of the Donors' Council of the Global Crop Diversity Trust

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2016, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

#### Agenda

- 09:30     **1.**     Welcome, introduction and adoption of the Agenda; approval of report from last Donors' Council meeting held on 26 October 2015
- 09:45     **2.**     Update by Crop Trust Management: Upcoming Crop Trust Pledging Conference on 14 April 2016 in Washington, DC
- 10:00     **3.**     Report on the Scientific Work of the Crop Trust: Building a global system for ex situ conservation
- (a) Working with International Genebanks  
                  (b) Crop Wild Relatives Project  
                  (c) Information Systems  
                  (d) Svalbard Global Seed Vault
- 11:30     **4.**     Report on Crop Trust Finances, including 2016-2018 Multi-year Budget
- 12:15     **5.**     Any Other Business
- 12:30     **6.**     Wrap-up and Conclusions