

# **Report on the Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights**

## **12-15<sup>th</sup> September 2023, New Delhi, INDIA**

### **Background**

In response to a request of the Ninth Session of the Governing Body, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources (ITPGRFA) Secretariat organized a Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights. The Global Symposium aimed to share experiences, innovative approaches, effective policies, and best practices and to learn from each other on implementing Farmers' Rights, as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty.

The Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights was hosted by the Government of India through the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPVFRA) in partnership with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) and the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR).

### **Objectives**

The Global Symposium aimed to share experiences, innovative approaches, effective policies, and best practices and to learn from each other on implementing Farmers' Rights, as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty. The discussions, key messages, and proposed activities that emerged from the Global Symposium are gathered and summarized for developing ideas for possible future work on Farmers' Rights as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty.

The Global Symposium also provided an opportunity for the participants to see India's crop diversity and to interact with Indian Plant Genome Saviour Awardees, farmer-scientists, farmer-producers and private seed sectors in India.

### **Symposium Outline**

The Global Symposium was structured in three parts: the inaugural ceremony the technical sessions and special sessions. The inaugural ceremony was graced by the Honorable President of India, Droupadi Murmu, as Chief Guest, Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar as Chair and a number of high-level officials from the various ministries in India, including the FAO Representative in India and the Secretary of the International Treaty. The inaugural ceremony included the presentation of the 2021 and 2022 Indian Genome Saviour and Community Awards to a number of Indian farmers/farming communities for their achievements and exemplary contributions to the development and conservation of crop diversity.

The inaugural ceremony was followed by a plenary lecture and a series of plenary technical discussions on five thematic sessions. Each session had a facilitator and a rapporteur. Panel discussions and special events were organized to complement the thematic sessions' discussions. Exhibition showcasing India's crop diversity by awardee farmers, farmer-produces and the private seed sector was also organized during the Global Symposium.

Participants of the Global Symposium had the opportunity to actively participate and give interventions at the end of each session or during the “*discussion, summary and take away messages.*”

The thematic sessions were as follows:

Session 1. Options for Realizing Farmers’ Rights as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty

Session 2. Legal and other measures supporting the realization of Farmers’ Rights

Session 3. International Processes and other issues of relevance to Farmers’ Rights

Session 4. State of Implementation of Article 9 of the International Treaty

Session 5. Proposal for future work on Farmers’ Rights

Apart from these, the Global Symposium had three Special Events in the form of; Farmers’ Forum, Community Seed Banks and Mainstreaming of Farmers’ Varieties, and South-South Cooperation to exchange the ideas among the different stake holders and to learn from the best practices that have been adopted anywhere in the World. After three days mammoth discussions among participating representatives of contracting parties, farmers, scientists, policy planners, and NGOs, a “Delhi Framework” on Farmers’ Rights was developed to further underline and strengthen the resolve and to chalk out a road map for implementation of enshrined principles as per the Article 9 of ITPGRFA globally.

## Summary Proceedings and Recommendations

### **Inaugural Ceremony**

The ceremony began with the arrival of the chief guest, the Honorable President of India, Droupadi Murmu. The national anthem of India was played and followed by the lighting of the lamp, which signifies the light of wisdom and knowledge. The lighting of the lamp was led by the President of India, joined by Kailash Choudary, the Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare; Manoj Ahuja, Secretary of Department of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare; Himanshu Pathak, Secretary, Department of Agriculture Research and Education (DARE) and Director-General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR); R.S. Paroda, Founder Chairman, Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS); Takayuki Hagiwara, FAO Representative in India, and Kent Nnadozie, Secretary of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, FAO.

**Trilochan Mohapatra**, Chairperson of the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers’ Rights Authority (PPVFRA) of India, warmly welcomed the honorable guests, dignitaries, and participants representing the different sectors, public and private institutions from India, and the international participants. Mohapatra expressed his appreciation for the presence of the senior officials and eminent guests for their crucial support in hosting the Global Symposium. In particular, Mohapatra expressed his deepest appreciation to the chief guest, the President of India, for gracing the event and for her dedication to supporting farmers and the neglected class of Indian society.

In his welcome address, **Manoj Ahuja**, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare of India remarked that each farmer is a scientist in their own field, and it needs to be recognised. He cited the recognition and protection of Farmers’ Rights as the critical component of the International Treaty. He took pride in sharing that India is taking the lead in promoting Farmers’ Rights in the context of plant variety registration through the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers’ Rights Act of 2001. The Global Symposium

represented a crucial gathering from around the world to share practices and discuss future work on Farmers' Rights. He hoped the Global Symposium could raise awareness of the importance of protecting Farmers' Rights.

In his remarks during the opening ceremony **Shri Narendra Singh Tomar**, Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare of India, thanked the FAO and the International Treaty for agreeing to India's proposal and organising the Global Symposium in India. He acknowledged the fundamental role of farmers in conserving India's agricultural heritage, comprising the richness of biodiversity, indigenous crops, and traditional knowledge. The Minister said the government has worked diligently to ensure compliance with the International Treaty. He stated that farmers provide food security to the world. Plant breeder rights and Farmers' Rights are part of the PPVFR Act 2001, and Section 39 has all provisions for Farmers' Rights. He also stated that India will continue its commitment to promote and protect Farmers' Rights.

While inaugurating The Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights, **the Honorable President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu**, expressed her appreciation for the International Treaty for organising the event on Farmers' Rights in India. The President of India spoke with conviction that "... our farmers since the beginning of civilization are the real engineers and scientists. They have harnessed the energies and bounties of nature for the benefit of humanity." The President of India underscored the importance of the International Treaty "The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture signed in 2001 was one of the most important international agreements among member countries to conserve, use, and manage plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. For the first time it talked about guaranteeing food security through conservation, exchange and sustainable use of the world's plant genetic resources for food and agriculture."

Furthermore, the President of India expressed her hope "...that the Global Symposium, the very first of its kind in the world, provides a golden opportunity for the world fraternity to align their priorities and programmes according to the need of humanity and to make a common commitment for the fulfillment of Farmers' Rights".

The event concluded with the conferment of the "*Indian Genome Saviour and Community Awards*" by the President of India on Indian farmers and farming communities, acknowledging their exemplary contributions to and achievements in developing and conserving crop diversity. The President of India conferred awards to six Indian farmer communities and 20 Indian individual farmers. H.E. the President also declared open the new building of PPVFRA and also launched the Online Application Portal named "PARV". Her Excellency inaugurated an exhibition too that saw the participation of farmers, research institutions, international organizations and private seed sector displaying the rich agro-biodiversity and vibrant seed research and supply system of the country.

## Plenary Lecture

**Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra, Chairperson, PPVFRA, Govt. of India** delivered a Plenary Lecture to set the tone for the discussions to follow during the course of 4 days conference. Dr. Mohapatra discussed "Protecting Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights for a Secured Seed System: An Indian Perspective." As a background, he shared the historical account of how India transformed from a food-deficit nation to a food-surplus country. He stressed upon the fact that the success of India came from multiple factors, owing to the country's richness

in biodiversity and the vast genetic resources in gene banks as well as on farmers' fields, support to the seed system, and measures undertaken by the government. He specifically articulated the "Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Rights Act (PPVFRFA 2001)". In relation to safeguarding Farmers' Rights, he described the achievements of the Act in registering farmers' varieties, that accounted for almost 40 percent of all registrations in the PPVFRFA. He presented a few examples of recognised communities/farmers managed-seed systems.

## Technical Sessions

**Dr. Kent Nnadozie, Secretary of the International Treaty**, while introducing and setting the scene, warmly acknowledged and welcomed all the participants. He commended the Government of India for hosting the Global Symposium and for the excellent efforts in making the event a unique and remarkable experience for all the participants. He encouraged everyone to participate and interact in all the technical sessions. Finally, he expressed his hope that the Global Symposium may thus contribute to the understanding of the challenges and opportunities of implementing Farmers' Rights by the Contracting Parties and the interested stakeholders and in defining elements of possible future work on Farmers' Rights for consideration of the Governing Body at its Tenth Session.

**Mr Mario Marino, Technical Officer, Secretariat of the International Treaty**, echoed his appreciation to the host Government, giving a general overview and structure of the four-day event, which comprised five technical sessions organized by topic, as well as panel discussions and special events. He introduced the role of the facilitators and rapporteurs, and invited all participants to actively engage in the allocated open discussions at the end of each session, or to reach out to the Secretariat.

## Session 1: Options for Realizing Farmers' Rights as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty

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**Facilitators:** Ms. Svanhild-Isabelle Batta Torheim, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Norway

Dr. R.C. Agrawal, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, India

**Rapporteur:** Ms. Mary Jane Ramos Dela Cruz, ITPGRFA Secretariat

The purpose of this technical session was to provide updates on the work of the International Treaty on Farmers' Rights, inform about the progress made in the implementation of Farmers' Rights as well as to share experiences and best practices and to learn from each other. Technical Session, delved into different options chosen by different Contracting Parties and stakeholders to promote the implementation of Farmers' Rights under the International Treaty. Presentation of practices and experiences implementing Farmers' Rights were shared by Gyanendra Prataph Singh (India), Pitambar Shrestha (Nepal), Mr. Khaled Abulaila (Jordan), Graybill Munkombwe (Zambia), Riccardo Bocci (Italy), and Szonja Csorgo (International Seed Federation).

The inputs of participants were consolidated, summarized, and enumerated as follows:

### At national level:

- Continue sharing experiences by submitting more measures to the Inventory and be inspired by other's experiences as captured in the Inventory.

- Should Keep explaining Ways and means for implementation of the Options to further enhance the realization of Farmers' Rights.
- Identify farmers' needs and requirements for realizing their rights to seeds/farmers' seed system: Identify the levels, forms, degree, and mechanisms of support required by farmers by country and by region.
- Strengthen farmers' capacity, e.g., capacity building and awareness raising on Farmers' Rights, and provisioning of farmers' required technical and institutional support is necessary.
- Develop mechanisms and identify requirements to support, recognise, and institutionalise farmer-managed seed systems (peasants' seed system).
- Develop mechanisms to support farmers' capacity to produce their own, save, sell, share, and exchange seeds.
- Support farmers' seed market for biodiversity conservation and other social consideration

#### **At international level:**

- The Options are about WHAT could be done by Contracting Parties and other stakeholders on how to implement Farmers' Rights, but they do not say much about HOW to do this. Further guidance on HOW might be needed.
- Promote farmers' participation in international meetings, events, and gatherings, especially women and youth to empower them.
- Develop measures guaranteeing the recognition of farmers'/peasants' seed systems.
- Promote continuous sharing of experiences, best practices, and lessons learned from realizing Farmers' Rights at different levels.

## **Session 2. Legal and other measures supporting the realization of Farmers' Rights**

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**Facilitator:** P.L. Gautam, former Chairman, PPVFRA

**Rapporteur:** Titilayo Adebola, Lecturer and Theme Coordinator, Intellectual Property Law University of Aberdeen

This session examined measures adopted at national level to support the realization of Farmers' Rights. The session commenced with a comprehensive presentation by Malathi Lakshmikumar on the farmers rights system in India titled "Legal Measures Supporting Farmers Rights: Challenges and Opportunities." This was followed by a panel discussion dedicated to examples and experiences on Farmers' Rights from Brazil, Ecuador, India, Malawi, Mali and Norway. The six panelists were Marciano Toledo da Silva (Small Farmers Movement, Brazil), Hugo Carrera (Small Farmers Organization, Ecuador), Dinesh Agarwal (Plant Variety Protection and Farmers Rights Authority, India), Modester Kachapila (Plant Genetic Resources Centre, Malawi), Alimata Traore (Convergence of Rural Women for Food Sovereignty, Mali) and Elin Cecilie Ranum (Development Fund, Norway).

#### **Recommendations and next steps**

Panelists and participants noted that certain factors can facilitate the realization of Farmers' Rights at national level including the following.

- Consider the crucial gender dimensions of implementing Farmers' Rights: work with women to promote Farmers' Rights.
- Consider the role of cooperatives in establishing community seed banks and in promoting Farmers' Rights.
- Build and develop community seedbanks and gene banks.
- At national levels, there should be collaborations amongst relevant institutions with interests in Farmers' Rights.
- Civil society organisations (CSOs) can support the implementation and monitoring of Farmers' Rights.
- Generate financial support to facilitate the implementation of Farmers' Rights.
- Build and maintain dialogues with farmers. There is an urgent need for farmers to be strategically involved in decision making.
- Recognise, develop and promote farmer managed seed systems, landraces and local/farmers varieties to enhance local seed systems.
- States must recognise and promote peasant seed systems as conceived and practiced by peasant communities in accordance with their habits and customs.
- Measures governing the industrial and commercial seed system must not be applied to peasant seed systems, particularly those relating to marketing, sanitary quality and IPRs. States must recognise that peasant seed systems have their own specific rules guaranteeing the quality of peasant seeds, particularly in terms of agronomy, nutrition and health, and ensuring the protection of peasant knowledge, through a voluntary initiative such as a code of conduct and/or a participatory guarantee system.
- Investigate the impacts of new and emerging technologies on Farmers' Rights.
- Examine the relationship between IPRs and Farmers' Rights.
- Review relevant national legislations and if necessary, amend or modify the provisions if they are inconsistent with farmers rights and States obligation to promote or protect Farmers' Rights under Article 9.
- Ensure that national laws, policies and initiatives do not undermine Farmers' Rights.
- Other legal measures to promote the realization of farmers rights include:
  - Conservation and promotion of native farmers' seeds, including their protection from genetic modification.
  - Promotion of resilient systems such as agroecology.
  - Public procurement of seeds produced by peasants' seed systems.
  - Participation of farmers in public policy-making spaces related to seeds. This should also relate to UNDROP and UNDRIP.
- Recognise peasants collective rights to seeds.
- Raise awareness about Farmers' Rights and organise capacity building to equip stakeholders.
- Peasant Organisations - through the IPC, are interested in collaborating with States who want to work towards legal measures for the recognition, promotion and realization of Farmers' Rights.
- The Governing Body should request the Secretariat to support Contracting Parties with the construction of Farmers' Rights instruments and related policy documents.
- Registration of peasant seeds under the official registration system is not the answer to the concern to recognise, promote, and protect farmers' seed systems. Peasants need their own seed systems to be recognised legally and supported concretely, respecting the peasants' own quality criteria, i.e., agronomic, sanitary, and germinative qualities that enable them to continue growing, distributing, and selling

their seeds from diversified population varieties, which is the strength of agroecological systems.

- The Secretariat should consider collaborations with human rights institutions to explore the connections between the Farmers' Rights provisions in Article 9 of the International Treaty and provisions in human rights instruments particularly the UNDROP and UNDRIP.
- Create platforms at national, regional and international levels to exchange experiences and knowledge on promoting and supporting farmer managed seed systems and Farmers' Rights.
- Create a working group to enforce the legally binding nature of Article 9 of the International Treaty.

### **Session 3: International Processes and other issues of relevance to Farmers' Rights**

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**Facilitator:** Roberto Bocci, Rete Semi Rurali, Italy

**Rapporteur:** Rachel Wynberg, Department of Environmental and Geographical Science, University of Cape Town, South Africa

The six panelists were Normita Ignacio (SEARICE, Philippines), Georgina M. Catagora-Vargas (Bolivian Catholic University), Szonja Csorgo (Euroseeds), Teresa Aguero Teare (Ministry of Agriculture, Chile); Sok Sotha (World Farmers Organisation, Cambodia); and Achelander Reddy (National Biodiversity Authority, India).

#### **Recommendations and next steps**

A range of recommendations were made by different participants. These are listed below.

- Links with human rights and other agreements should be built upon to strengthen Farmers' Rights, including co-operation between the International Treaty and relevant bodies involved in the administration and implementation of these agreements.
- Participants noted the urgent need for transformative change to recognize the nexus between Farmers' Rights, sustainable food systems, agroecology and ecosystem health, and to consider these connections in future discussions on Farmers' Rights. It was recommended that experiences should be shared about how agroecology could be used as a strategy to realise Farmers' Rights.
- Sharing experiences about different elements of Farmers' Rights, together with approaches to adjust the current legal framework to strengthen Farmers' Rights and agrobiodiversity. Legal measures to strengthen women's involvement in activities for PGRFA were recommended needs to be continued. National seed and marketing laws should be adapted to ensure they support Farmers' Rights.
- The importance of supporting farmer-managed seed systems was emphasized; farmers need to have full and free access to materials to build resilience for challenges such as climate change.
- Work on how farmer-managed seed systems and the formal seed system could complement each other and work together to serve the needs of farmers is to be undertaken. It was suggested that efforts are to be made to align Farmers' Rights and breeder's rights. Greater trust between stakeholders is required for better mutual understanding.

- Several participants recommended the need for more work to understand the impact of DSI on farmers. Suggestions were made to revisit the notion of stewardship and to reject intellectual property rights as “fundamentally objectionable”. Another participant suggested exploring open access and a stewardship approach to enable benefit-sharing from DSI. The importance of transparency and accountability was noted in this regard, along with an appropriate governance mechanism. It was noted that there are ongoing processes to consider DSI within the MLS and the CBD, including definitional questions, and it was best to use these processes to take forward the discussion.
- A range of capacity building measures were suggested, at international, regional and national levels, with a focus on technological developments and their implications for Farmers’ Rights, as well as measures to reduce the scientific and technological gap between countries.

## Session 4: Implementation of Farmers’ Rights and ways forward

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**Facilitator:** Modester Kachapila, Plant Genetic Resources Centre, Malawi

**Rapporteur:** Regine Andersen, Research Professor, Fridtjof Nansen Institute, Norway

### Summary of proposed recommendations on ways forward

- **Carry out inter-sessional work to develop guidelines and promote the Inventory:** It was emphasized to ensure a better composition of the working group compared to the Ad Hoc Technical Working Group on Farmers’ Rights. In particular, it would be crucial to ensure better representation of farmers, farmers’ organizations and civil society, even those in countries that are not parties to the International Treaty, and to invite these groups and organizations to the sessions of the Governing Body, so they can become part of this community.

### Promote regional and South-South-cooperation

- **Promote national implementation:** The need to track national implementation of Farmers’ Rights under the compliance mechanism was stressed upon. Farmers’ organizations should be involved designing the criteria and methodology for assessing the state of implementation, and it would be important to avoid measures that go against the protection, promotion and realization of Farmers’ Rights.
- **Boost outreach and capacity building:** Continuing outreach and capacity building activities on Farmers’ Rights would be essential in the follow up on Article 9 under the International Treaty. In this context, it would be important to address young people in particular. It was also suggested that peasant organizations could be engaged in providing capacity building activities for contracting parties based on farmers’ expertise, provided resources would be made available for the purpose.
- **Take measures to safeguard Farmers’ Rights against intellectual property rights:** India’s Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers’ Rights Act could be replicated in other countries and that measures could be taken to facilitate that. Developing countries should refrain from using intellectual property law for this purpose.
- **Strengthen benefit-sharing mechanisms:** It would be important to strengthen the possibilities for peasant organizations to receive benefits from the Benefit-sharing Fund, as this has been rather the exception than the rule so far. The Benefit-sharing Fund should ensure that the benefits actually reach farmers, so that they can get

access to the resources they need. On another note, several participants suggested that solutions had to be found for benefit-sharing with regard to DSI and that it would be important to continue discussing the impact.

- **Strengthen international collaboration:** Several participants stressed the need to strengthen collaboration within the broader international structures, in particular the CBD and UNDROP.

## Session 5. Proposal for future work on Farmers' Rights

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**Facilitator:** R.S. Paroda, President of the Indian Society of Plant Genetic Resources (ISPGR) and Founder Chairman, Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS)

**Rapporteur:** Tobias Kiene, ITPGRFA Secretariat

The aim of this last session was to recall elements for future work on Farmers' Rights identified throughout the Symposium and to allow a panel of five experts as well as the general audience to discuss and suggest further ideas.

R.S. Paroda, President of the Indian Society of Plant Genetic Resources (ISPGR) and Founder Chairman, Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), India, introduced the session by emphasizing the importance of multilateralism in addressing global challenges and the important role of the International Treaty in particular. He highlighted that the inaugural session had shown the many achievements and success stories in India. All plant varieties registered at the PPVFRA are important, whether bred by farmers or in the so-called formal seed system. Countries are called upon to recognize and realize Farmers' Rights, and the rich and productive discussions at this Symposium have shown many initiatives that could be used for that purpose.

### Summary of inputs and recommendations:

Many highlighted the importance of ensuring the full participation of farmers, especially women and youth, in the debates and meetings on Farmers' Rights, as well as in efforts towards their effective implementation. It should be ensured that farmers and peasant communities will have the possibility to play a key role in these processes. This Global Symposium had shown, in the view of many participants, the useful experiences and lessons learned, as well as challenges for the realization of Farmers' Rights.

- Community seed banks (CSBs) were identified as an important element of the realization of Farmers' Rights, with calls for more financial resources and support to be provided, including for establishing networks between CSBs and possibilities to learn from each other.
- A holistic view of farmer-managed seed systems should be adopted and policies to support them should be developed, with a focus on supporting farmers, so that they could continue their indispensable work on the ground. The role and importance of farmers' varieties cannot be overemphasized.
- Farmers should also be recipients of benefits, including monetary, in return for their work on conserving and making available crops for the benefit of all.
- Several participants pointed to the need for more active work on the ground, by Contracting Parties, stakeholders and the International Treaty community at large.
- Many participants called for further regional consultations and workshops, and for strengthening South-South collaboration and cooperation for the implementation of Farmers' Rights.

- Collaboration with relevant human rights bodies and instruments was identified as a further area for future work.
- Since the possible implications and impacts of digital sequence information/genetic resource data for Farmers' Rights are not yet fully understood, some participants suggested further research on this subject in the list of possible tasks.
- Finally, several participants called for a discussion at the Tenth Session of the Governing Body on a possible intersessional process to develop voluntary guidelines for the realization of Farmers' Rights.

## Special Session on “South-South Cooperation on Farmers Rights”

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Co-Chairs : **Dr. Himanshu Pathak**, Secretary, DARE & DG, ICAR, New Delhi  
**Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra**, Chairperson, PPVFRA, New Delhi  
 Facilitator : **Dr. PK Singh**, Agricultural Commissioner, MoA&FW, New Delhi  
 Rapporteur: **Dr. Sunil Archak**, Principal Scientist, ICAR-NBPGR, New Delhi

### Context

1. Countries of the Global South more or less have same agrarian situation and are facing the similar multiple challenges like climate change, energy & health crises, and diminishing agro-biodiversity. These challenges affect developing and under-developed countries the most and within these countries the most vulnerable are the farmers and indigenous communities. Issues of agro-biodiversity conservation and recognition of indigenous communities in their conservation, national sovereign rights over these resources, and prevalent subsistence farming situation in these most vulnerable parts of the world, therefore, entail a right to the allocation of adequate priority to the issue of Farmers' Rights,
2. In the context of the Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights, South-South Cooperation is “a process whereby two or more participating developing countries pursue their shared objective of realization of Farmers' Rights through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources, successful initiatives and technical know-how, and possibly through regional and interregional collective actions.” South-South cooperation is expected to lead to greater innovation as it provides opportunities for developing countries –*sharing rich history of their indigenous communities and conservation and having common socio-economic challenges*– to learn from each other and to evolve a set of common strategy and action points to implement the provisions of Article 9 of the ITPGRFA.

### Report

- The session on South-South Cooperation on Farmers Rights sought to offer a platform to deliberate on cooperation among Global South on Farmers' Rights. While the session was titled as South-South Cooperation, it was not meant for formation of any grouping within Treaty negotiations. On the contrary, the session aimed to explore possibilities of South-South and Triangular Cooperation to enlist successful initiatives, funding, capacity building, etc among all the treaty contracting parties.

- After having a brief introduction about the session's background and the objectives of this special session within the context of the Global Symposium, the Session started with the remarks by the Co-Chair Dr. H. Pathak reiterating that as a founder signatory to the ITPGRFA as well as CBD, India has (i) laws to protect Farmers' Rights; (ii) established proactive institutions to implement legal and non-legal options to realize farmers' rights in all their dimensions; and (iii) a mammoth vertical of agricultural research, education and extension system with institutional capacity and technical expertise.

The Session had no formal presentations. Deliberations took place on various issues sequentially with interventions from the participants.

- First and foremost point that ignited the discussion was if and how PPV&FRA i.e. *sui generis* PVP model of India for co-existence of breeders' rights and farmers' rights has been serving the envisaged dual purposes and can be emulated by other interested countries having similar farming scenario. Participants mentioned that creation of greater awareness in the governmental set up in other countries about advantages of such a model for farmers and breeders is required. India (particularly PPV&FR Authority) may consider engaging other countries from the South in this regard.
- Second point was regarding Farmers' Rights and IPRs. Farmers and civil society argued that any kind of IPRs compromise the rights of the farmers. Dr. Sunil Archak informed that India has provided for Geographical Indications (GI) that recognizes a specific place as origin of that agricultural product and thereby ensures the rights of the community/producers of that region. GI conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness which is essentially attributable to the fact of its origin in that defined geographical locality. India has many examples of including *Darjeeling Tea, Coorg Orange, Navara Rice, Malabar Pepper, Alleppey Green Cardamom, Nashik Grapes, Byadagi Chilli, Ganjam Kewda Flower, Basmati rice*, etc. that have facilitated farmers capture niche markets and higher economic returns. Participants agreed that GI could be a viable option for countries to immediately emulate India. However, they felt that more discussion was required to understand the beneficial part of an IPR regime to farmers.
- The third point of discussion was about the new technologies as facilitator of Farmers' Rights. Participants immediately identified lack of capacity among the farmers of the South to harness the benefits of technological advancements. Finally, expectations from ITPGRFA, and how farmers see and perceive the co-existence of multilateral and bilateral processes of benefit sharing were flagged. Participants expressed that in future, in any such meetings, a longer session should be organized with proper interpretation facilities. It was suggested that the point on having South-South cooperation should be flagged further during the GB10 deliberations.

In his closing remarks, Dr Pathak mentioned that India can work with interested countries from Global South through bilateral or regional processes to provide the customized solutions based on her experience in realization of farmers' rights. India also aims to learn

from other countries to enhance the efficiency of domestic processes. Dr Mohapatra mentioned that PPV&FRA shall consider all possible opportunities to assist countries from Global South in capacity building and preparation of draft legislation related to farmers rights.

## Special Session on “Farmers Forum”

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Chair: **Prof. Anil K Gupta**, Former Professor, IIM, Ahmadabad  
Co-Chairs: **Dr AK Singh**, Director, ICAR-IARI, New Delhi  
**Dr Anupam Mishra**, VC, CAU, Imphal  
Facilitator: **Dr RR Burman**, ADG (Extension), ICAR, New Delhi  
Rapporteur: **Dr Sushil Pandey**, Principal Scientist, ICAR-NBPGR, New Delhi

During the session, eight selected farmers from different part of the country presented their experience in conserving the farmers varieties and maintaining the traditional diversity.

Mr. E. Vinod from Kolli Hills of Tamil Nadu and Ms. Raimati Ghiuria from Koraput District of Odisha gave a brief account of their activities which was supported by MSSRF. Ms. Ghiuria explained how she was successful in conserving more than 80 landraces of paddy and around 30 landraces of millets, which was supported by MSSRF.

Ms. Lahri Bai from Dindori, Madhya Pradesh, who is popularly known as ‘Millet Woman of India’ narrated about her determination to make millets regain their lost glory. She has transformed her home into a ‘Millet Seed Bank’ where she has collected seeds of over 60 varieties of millets in earthen containers. She also distributes these seeds to farmers who grow them and she gets a part of the produce to be preserved in her homemade seed bank. Her unique mission has also been appreciated by Hon’ble Prime Minister of India. It signifies the important role of women in agriculture in India particularly in conservation of heirloom varieties in different crops.

Mr. S.S. Paramesha from Chellur, Karnataka explained about a self conserved jackfruit variety which yields unusually attractive fruits. Fruit flesh is coppery red, flaky and very tasty. This traditional variety has been named as ‘Siddu jackfruit’ and has been registered with PPVFRA. With the hand holding support of ICAR-Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Bengaluru, this traditional variety is being multiplied and sold in the market, as there is huge demand for this tasty fruit with attractive coppery red flesh. This is an example of low IPR protection with an active support of research institution can help mainstreaming the farmers varieties and bring higher income to them.

Mr. Napanda Poonacha of Kodagu district, Karnataka who was recently awarded the Plant Genome Saviour Farmer Reward (2019-20) for his contribution towards the conservation of indigenous crops of ‘Adi Pepper’ narrated his experience. His farm is extensively involved in identifying native crops in the district that have great potential of becoming a commercial crop without causing damage to the ecosystem. He shared his success story with the audience.

Ms. Meena Devi from Himachal Pradesh explained how she has been involved in growing traditional vegetables, legumes, cereals and millets under the organic conditions to safeguard the environment. Similarly, Ms. Pushpa Parmar from Jhabua, a tribal district of Madhya Pradesh, explained about the efforts she has made in growing the short duration traditional varieties of pulses, millets and maize. Her efforts have been successful through the support she received under GEF project.

Shri Sundaram Verma from Ramgarh in Rajasthan explained his efforts in undertaking research on arid zone crops. He calls himself a 'farmer-breeder', one with a strong urge to develop traditional varieties through participatory selection. His improved plant variety - *Cicer arietinum* L. commonly known as 'Kabuli chana - SR-1' is distinct by virtue of having medium bold seeds (higher test weight) and superior in terms of yield and pest resistance; and it was successfully registered with Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Rights Authority (PPV&FRA). In addition, there are other improved plant varieties to his credit like the high yielding 'Guar (cluster bean)- SR-23' which is suitable for both arid and semi-arid conditions and can also be grown in various types of soil but the most suitable soil is sandy/sandy loam. Besides, the 'Moth bean (SR-1)' is a short duration (60-65 days) variety, superior to the other commercially released varieties in terms of yield & resistance against major pests and diseases. He has been cultivating and conserving local landraces/cultivars of various crops since many years.

The contributions by all these farmers were highly appreciated by the audience, particularly the delegates from abroad. Several interesting exchanges took place between the speakers and the farmers in audience. After detailed discussions, the session ended with following recommendations:

- The crop improvement programmes should focus more on participatory plant breeding approaches involving custodian farmers from different zones.
- A system of Testing and Evaluation of Farmer's varieties need to be worked out, something in line of AICRP testing and evaluation.
- It was also felt that in order to formalize and encourage the traditional cultivars and farmers' varieties, it is important to develop a separate set of descriptors and seed standards for the farmers' varieties.
- The farmers are being awarded by different agencies in their efforts to safeguard the diversity and grow traditional varieties and landraces. However, there is a lack of continuous support by the national governments to sustain their activities.
- There is a need to organize Traditional Food Festivals so as to popularize the traditional varieties along with their significance, among the masses.
- Farmers Rights along with Consumer Support is very important to have a sustainable system which will safeguard preserving diversity.
- Based on the majority request, it is strongly recommended that in future, the session on 'Farmers Forum' should be organized as part of the main programme and not as a side event.

- There is a need to create greater opportunities for more interaction among farmers of different countries/regions so that experiences are shared and successful models are scaled up.

## Special Session on “Community Seed Bank and Value Chain”

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Chair: **Dr RB Singh**, Former Chancellor, CAU, Imphal  
Co-Chairs: **Dr AK Singh**, Vice Chancellor, CAU, Jhansi  
Facilitator: **Dr DK Yadava**, ADG, Seeds, ICAR, New Delhi  
Rapporteur: **Dr PR Choudhury**, Principal Scientist, ICAR, New Delhi

At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the speakers and greeted the dignitaries and audience. He opined that a robust seed system is the pillar of transformative agriculture. He emphasized upon the availability of right kind of seed for specific agro-climatic region and in this aspect community seed banks play a key role in meeting local seed needs and thereby ensuring livelihood security. Facilitator, Dr. DK Yadava informed that informal seed system contributes around 40% of seeds required in the country and therefore plays an important role in food security. He greeted the dignitaries and speakers and called upon the six speakers to deliver their lectures.

The first speaker was Ms. Jui Pethe, a freelancing ecological researcher predominantly working in the Nandurbar / northern Western Ghats of Maharashtra, in and around the tribal dominated Satpura Hilly areas. She contributed to development of community seed bank with documentation of more than 100 wild species of edible vegetables and 250 landraces involving local people. She spoke briefly about her work and stressed that the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs, Farm Science Centres) and Agricultural Colleges/ Universities should be linked to native seed conservation programme. Funds and grants to the universities and KVKs should be increased for these types of activities. She also suggested to establish one DUS center for each district to undertake more awareness towards documentation and identification of land races/ native seeds and development of homestead level to cluster level chains for conservation of native landraces.

Dr. G. Krishna Prasad, Founder Director of Sahaja Seeds known as Rural Karnataka’s ‘native seed man’ informed that his company is a INR 12 million turnover company and is India’s first farmer owned organic seed company. He further informed that “Sahaja Samrudha”, an organic farmers collective, has spearheaded a movement for the promotion of ecological agriculture through the revival of indigenous seeds and is inspired by many local seed savers, who over the generations had conserved, reproduced and handed down seeds that had unmatched richness of flavor, nutritional benefit, and resistance to pest and diseases. He emphasized that a support system from the Government is required for the sustainability of community seed banks.

Dr. Lal Singh works for the people in the remote mountains of Himachal Pradesh and founded the “Himalayan Research Group (HRG)” in 1997 which was joined by like-minded professionals. Under his leadership, HRG has successfully completed over 50 R&D projects to improve livelihoods and conserve biodiversity, creating a range of technology models. Dr.

Singh informed that his group's technology-based initiatives have directly impacted the lives of about 900 households bringing in an average annual benefit of around Rs. 40-45 lakhs. He informed that they are working on red rice, buck wheat, kidney bean, amaranth etc. and have documented 111 land races in six crops. A company has been established involving farmers in the community seed bank and a cluster of around 500 people are involved in processing, packaging and branding of indigenous seeds including red rice, which is fetching Rs.500/kg, as this rice is very important from the nutritional point of view and people are ready to pay for genuine products. Dr. Singh strongly argued that revival of food system, organizing food festival, and market driven initiative for the farmers are the need of the hour to promote elite local varieties.

Ms. Harshita Priyadarshini Mohanty, a Class-VII student from Odisha, is on a mission to preserve rare varieties of paddy and millets in Koraput district. Harshita has set up a seed bank in her house where she has preserved seeds of more than 150 rare varieties of paddy, 53 varieties of finger millets and seven varieties of pearl millet. Harshita spoke about her collection and organic farming and also exhibited her collection at the symposium. She has formed 'Harshita Priyadarshini Science Club' and inducted many of her friends and local farmers into it. Through the club, she provides seeds of rare and country-grown foodgrains for cultivation free of cost. Many paddy and millet varieties are becoming rare and through her collection, she wishes to help farmers in growing them in the future. She aims to become an agronomist in the future. She opined that more and more awareness towards native seed conservation should be spread to schools, Panchayats, Blocks and Districts. Emphasis should also be given to establishment of more numbers of genome clubs in localities and she requested for more funding to the schools for organizing awareness programs and activities for native seed conservation.

Sh. Rajiv Sarma informed that he has been working on conservation of agro-biodiversity in the state of Assam. He has been instrumental in creating value chain so that conservation of rare seeds could be materialised. He has conserved more than 130 rice land races, and a number of black gram, green gram, mustard and sesame land races. He is associated with the farm-to-fork initiative and created a brand called Native Basket, involving some 2,000 farm families, wherein around 40 natural products have been launched including deep-water rice and soft rice that does not require cooking. He informed that research-backed farmers' branding of nutritional rice is an endeavour of more than two decades to save Assam's indigenous paddy from extinction. He stressed upon organising more awareness activities for communities involved in conservation of native seeds and generous funding from private and public sectors for native seed conservation activities.

The last speaker of the session, Dr. Jai C Rana is the Country Representative of the Bioversity International – CIAT Alliance in India. He presented about the efforts of the Alliance with regards to Biodiversity Conservation and use. He informed that more than 200,000 landrace and crop wild relative samples have been collected from all over the world. He opined that more awareness from Government and International forum on conservation of valuable land races could save them from extinction.

After the deliberations by the distinguished speakers, facilitator Dr. DK Yadava, ADG (Seed) briefed about the main points of the talks and based upon the thought provoking opinion of the Chairman and Co-chairman, following recommendations were made:

- New Education policy has been implemented in India. As part of this, emphasis & encouragement on traditional seed savings is to be given to students through proper policy intervention by the Government. The course curriculum needs to have topics on local seed system and its importance.
- Financial support through an appropriate institutional framework for community seed banks should be provided by Govt. & Private organizations.
- Synergy of different sectors including private, public, and NGOs is very important; they need to come together to save traditional knowledge and traditional varieties from their extinction.
- Development of the National Seed Savers Forum and linking them to markets are required through policy interventions.
- Incentivizing farmers especially those involved in native landrace conservation through more awards and recognition.
- The Corpus of the National Gene Fund should be increased to Rs.100 crores for supporting community gene cum seed banks in India.
- To ensure the economic security of farmers, special capacity-building programmes are required for the development of community seed banks, value chains, branding, and marketing of the seeds and local products.
- Farmers are to be encouraged more in participatory plant breeding as they are the seed savers, seed conservers, breeders and providers of seeds through informal seed system.
- Proper administrative and legal support and guidance are needed for the establishment, management and sustainable use of community seed banks.
- The Farm Science Centres (KVKs) being located in each district are to be involved in the management and use of Community Seed Banks so that their sustainability is ensured through this important institutional arrangement.

### **DELHI FRAMEWORK ON FARMERS' RIGHTS**

Symposium presented the “Delhi Framework on Farmers’ Rights”, which it had prepared to capture the essence of the discussions at the Symposium and as a possible action plan on the way forward. It announced that it would present the “Delhi Framework on Farmers’ Rights” (Annexure-I) to the Tenth Session of the Governing Body when reporting on the Symposium as the host country.

### **SYMPOSIUM IMPACT**

The Global Symposium contributed to the greater visibility and gathered support from high-level government officials, including the President of India, who led the inaugural ceremony and spoke of high regard for and the paramount importance of the role of farmers as the true guardians of crop diversity. The Global Symposium attracted over 50 countries, about 700 individuals from government, international organizations, non-government

organizations, civil society organizations, farmers' organizations, rural women farmers' cooperatives and associations, and the private sector. Around 400 participants actively participated in the succeeding technical sessions and events. Speakers and panelists from various regions and stakeholders contributed to the richness of discussion sharing of practices, experiences, challenges, and lessons learned in implementing Farmers' Rights.

The key outcomes and discussion recommendations are expected to contribute to shaping the possible future work on Farmers' Rights to be decided by the Governing Body at its Tenth Session.

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# Delhi Framework on Farmers' Rights

## *Preamble*

1. Agro-biodiversity and genetic resources have been the foundation for our food security since millennia. The farmers and indigenous communities, especially women, have been the inventors and custodians of the seeds and plants globally.
2. Farmers, across different agro-ecologies and cultural practices, continue to select the best seeds for taste, nutrition, cuisine and medicine, which survive unfavourable weather, pests and diseases thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA.
3. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture states that past, present and future contributions of farmers in all regions of the world, particularly those in centres of origin and diversity, in conserving, improving and making available PGR for food and agriculture is the basis of Farmers' Rights.
4. The Plant Treaty, a legally-binding international instrument, explicitly acknowledges the enormous contribution of farmers and indigenous communities to developing and managing crops and other plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. The Treaty recognizes Rights of Farmers as custodian of plant genetic resources.
5. Farmers' Rights are realized as right to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seed and other propagating material; right to participate in decision-making related to PGRFA; and right to fair and equitable sharing benefits arising from the use of PGRFA as well as the associated traditional knowledge.
6. The past global efforts have been fruitful in enhancing the understanding of Farmers' Rights (International Informal Consultation on Farmers' Rights, Lusaka, Zambia, 2007 and Global Consultation on Farmers' Rights, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2010) and guiding the formal process under the aegis of the Treaty (The Global Consultation on Farmers' Rights, Bali, Indonesia, 2016).
7. *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights has proposed an inventory of national measures, best practices and lessons learned from the realization of Farmers' Rights, as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty.
8. Despite national and international efforts, the actual measures for the recognition, protection, promotion and realization of Farmers' Rights as stated in Article 9 of the International Treaty, and in terms of equitable benefit sharing arising out of use of PGRFA, appears to be inadequate.
9. Global Symposium on Farmers Rights hosted by India at New Delhi from 12-15 September, 2023 provided a forum to share experiences and to discuss possible future work on Farmers' Rights.

## ***Future Work on Farmers' Rights***

*As an outcome of excellent discussions that took place during the Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights that included sessions on options for realization of Farmers' Rights, Experiences of Best Practices, Legal Measures, Other International Processes and State of Implementation of Article 9 of the International Treaty, as well as Special Sessions on South-South Cooperation, Farmers' Forum and Community Genebanks and Value Chain, Government of India is pleased to present the following 10-point **Delhi Framework on Farmers' Rights** for consideration of Contracting Parties and Stakeholders towards the future work on Farmers' Rights:*

1. Accelerate efforts to implement multiple options as advocated by the Treaty for realization of farmers' rights. Treaty Secretariat to create a handholding and capacity development mechanism in this regard.
2. Establish an institutional mechanism that is responsible for creation of awareness about the Farmers' Rights, capacity building of custodian farmers and farmers' seed systems, and facilitating equitable benefit sharing; Treaty Secretariat to Coordinate such initiatives.
3. Create functional synergy across different UN instruments (ITPGRFA, CBD, UNDROP, UNDRIP, etc.) to facilitate the realization of farmers' rights.
4. Strengthen the Benefit Sharing Fund for supporting farmers and farmers' seed systems to ensure conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, and for the realization of farmers' rights through enabling environment by national governments, international organizations; and incentivise participation of private sector in supporting conservation activities.
5. Create conducive condition for active participation of different stakeholders and for building farmer-centric partnership opportunities including South-South, multi-lateral and regional cooperation to accelerate implementation of Farmers' Rights.
6. Formulate a special package as part of climate change adaptation and mitigation funds to directly support *on-farm* conservation activity by the custodian farmers, who are most affected by extreme climatic events.
7. Establish and support farmer-managed seed system for traditional varieties, and create self-sustaining seed production and marketing value chain to enhance farm income of custodian farmers and strengthen local food systems.
8. Join hands to systematically document traditional knowledge associated with PGRFA, adhering to prior informed consent and respecting the sensibilities of communities; Treaty Secretariat may facilitate the process under ongoing documentation programmes.
9. Encourage application of new science and technologies aimed at conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, taking necessary precautions to avoid negative impact on farmers' rights and ensuring enhanced benefit sharing opportunities.
10. Create legal and formal provisions in their existing system that recognize and protect farmers' rights as envisaged in the Plant Treaty.