

Plant genetic resources and seeds: policies, conservation and use

India, 1 – 19 November 2010



Course focus

The valuable genetic diversity of South and South-East Asia is threatened by genetic erosion. Formal seed supply has been fostered to increase food production. Local landraces are being replaced by higher-yielding improved varieties. Population pressure, intensification and globalization contribute to this process that is often accompanied by environmental degradation. At the same time, informal farming systems, i.e. indigenous, knowledge-based, farmer managed crop production systems, maintain their own genetic resources and seeds. The international conventions CBD and IT-PGRFA are calling for concerted efforts towards the conservation of biodiversity and for new policy and regulatory regimes in germplasm exchange and use. The TRIPS agreement sets further conditions for the use of genetic resources and seeds.

Aims and objectives

The overall objective of the training programme is to enhance the participants' capabilities to deal with contemporary issues in the management of genetic resources and seeds. The programme pays special attention to participatory approaches in genetic resources management and relevant related policies. It aims for the participants and facilitators to exchange experiences and work together to explore practical approaches towards the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources in agriculture and to better understand the functioning of different agro-ecosystems, including seed supply systems.

Training methods

The training is experience-based and task-oriented. Based on their own knowledge and experience, the

participants themselves are important resources for the course. Speakers invited to the course introduce topics, after which participants generally work in small groups on case study assignments. The training includes excursions and field work. It concludes with the development of proposals which integrate the topics dealt with and relate them to the reality of participants' working situations.

Target group

The training programme is designed for project coordinators, senior staff, managers, trainers, programme leaders and other professionals who aim to promote the conservation and use of PGR for agriculture from a policy, research, education or development perspective. Participants are employed by research institutes, public/private seed companies, universities, NGO's or other agricultural development oriented organisations and governmental institutes.

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Have at least a BSc or the equivalent in training and experience
- Have at least three years of professional experience in a relevant field
- Be proficient in English.

Programme

The training focuses on two main topics: (i) genetic resource policies and (ii) participatory approaches in genetic resources conservation and crop improvement. The first part of the training will be implemented at the headquarters of the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation in Chennai; the second part in Jeypur, Orissa. Please find a more elaborate description of the training below.

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Genetic resource policies

What is the impact of international agreements, in particular the CBD, IT-PGRFA and TRIPS, at the local level on genetic resources management? How to deal with intellectual property rights and mechanisms of access and benefit sharing? This course module aims to increase the participants' capabilities to deal with genetic resource policies in the context of local genetic resources management. Topics addressed include:

- International agreements relevant to genetic resources
- Policy regimes
- Genetic Resource access mechanisms and Material Transfer Agreements
- Intellectual Property Rights, Plant Variety Protection and Farmers' Rights.

Participatory approaches in genetic resources conservation and crop improvement

This course module aims to assist participants in designing efficient and effective genetic resource management and crop improvement programmes, while actively involving farmers and farmer communities in conservation, variety selection and breeding procedures. From a systems perspective, participants will explore options for linking formal genetic resource programmes with local genetic resource management activities. Topics addressed include:

- Methodologies and tools for participatory learning & action
- Formal and informal genetic resource systems
- Integrated approach to seed sector development
- Community Biodiversity Management
- Participatory variety selection

The organising committee reserves the right to change the programme if necessary.

Partners

The training programme is organized by Wageningen UR – Centre for Development Innovation (www.cdi.wur.nl) and the Centre for Genetic Resources, the Netherlands (CGN, www.cgn.wur.nl), in cooperation with the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in India (www.mssrf.org).

Certificate

Participants will be granted a Certificate of Attendance.

Fees

The fee for the three-week programme is **€ 3200**. The fee includes administration costs, lecture materials and excursions, but excludes board and lodging and travel expenses. The participants will be accommodated at the guesthouses of MSSRF in Chennai and Jeypur. A budget including all costs will be sent to you on request.

Fellowships

Fellowships are available from the Netherlands Fellowship Program (NFP) for nationals of certain countries. NFP-candidates must FIRST apply to Wageningen UR – Centre for Development Innovation for admission to the training. The deadline for application with NFP is **1 June 2010**. Acceptable candidates will receive a PROVISIONAL LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE from Wageningen UR – Centre for Development Innovation. Candidates can then apply for a NFP fellowship through the Netherlands Embassy or Consulate in their own country. More information: www.cdi.wur.nl, www.nuffic.nl. Please note that in all correspondence reference to the name of the training program will be made. In September the definite selection for NFP will be made known.

Application

The application deadline is **4 September 2010**. For additional information, application forms and online application www.cdi.wur.nl.

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NFP Fellowship application deadline: 1 June 2010

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