

POLICIES, CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES FOR DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE PGR NETWORK – REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

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Context and relevant definitions

- The Caribbean Region straddles the Sea with one foot in Central America (Belize) and the other on the continent of South America (the Guyanas)
- from a Hemispherical, PGR perspective, the wider Caribbean Region is framed by “Mega-diverse Countries”: Brazil and Venezuela to the direct South; Costa Rica, Colombia and Ecuador to the South West, and Mexico to the North West.
- “Very Diverse Caribbean” countries can be the Guyanas, Panama and Belize.



Context and relevant definitions (cont'd)



- Biodiversity: the biosphere = the web of life;
- Ecosystems: habitats + flora + fauna;
- Genetic resources (GR): all living organisms with DNA, RNA and any mechanisms to transfer genetic information from parents to progenies (Chromosomes, genes etc);
- Plant Genetic Resources (PGR): flora, all plants;
- Plant Genetic Resources for food and Agriculture (PGRFA): all crop species for food and agriculture;

A REGIONAL NETWORK

- Links/connects all the stakeholders who manage PGR in all the countries of the Caribbean;
- The countries of the Caribbean, for networking purposes, can be grouped into : -
Anglophone, Francophone, Dutch speaking & Spanish speaking.



STATUS OF POLICIES (LAWS, REGULATIONS ETC) GOVERNING PGRFA

A clearer picture emerges when examined hemispherically: the Latin American mega diverse countries and North America have developed efficient/sophisticated systems for PGR management.

They have developed laws/policies to govern:

- ABS (Access and benefit sharing);
- Protection of traditional Knowledge (TK), biosafety, IPRs (intellectual property rights);
- Biotechnology (LMOs – living modified organisms, GMOs – genetically modified organisms etc);
- Biodiversity planning;
- Networking (commodity based, national, regional and int'l).

STATUS OF POLICIES (LAWS, REGULATIONS ETC) GOVERNING PGRFA (cont'd)

These countries, owing to their organised national systems for biodiversity management, have strong negotiating positions at a wide range of international forums such as the CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity), WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation), WTO (World Trade Organisation) or WSSD (World Summit for Sustainable Development). Their main focus was GR, TK, & IP.

Most of these successful countries have developed NBSAPs (National Biodiversity Strategies & Action Plans) or similar instruments.

STATUS OF POLICIES (LAWS, REGULATIONS ETC) GOVERNING PGRFA (cont'd)

The complex process to harmonise existing national legislation, institutional frameworks and governmental policies with international protocols and regional needs, is still on-going.

INCOME GENERATION

As a result, all of South American and most Central American countries have at least one major bio-prospecting project underway which includes partnerships among industry, academia, indigenous communities and the state.

Another area common to all these countries is that they have made full use of international conventions to facilitate development of PGRFA.

STATUS OF POLICIES (LAWS, RULES ETC) GOVERNING PGRFA in the Caribbean

- The Caribbean (except Cuba and the French Territories) is far less organised than Latin America to manage its Biodiversity hence its PGRFA. Low levels of organisation varies from country to country.
- There being no regional mega diverse country, the urgency was not felt as in Latin America despite the value of the existing rich and unique biodiversity.
- There is less developed NBSAPs as in Latin America.



Caribbean policies at the national level: – a few examples

The Bahamas and Guyana seem to be in a favourable position in biodiversity management generally and in Biodiversity organisation, in particular.

Resulting in the Bahamas, the following patents:

- Fenical's find – Gorgonians (*P.elisabethae*) + an anti-inflammatory product from coral reefs; *Euphorbia britonii*; *Euphorbia cayensis*; *Salinispora tropica* and *Aplysina fistularis* .

Caribbean national policies – an example

- Guyana patented nuts of the Greenheart Tree (*Ocotea rhodiaei*)- Dr Gorinsky 2000 – ethno-veterinary medicine for horses;
- Enacted the Amerindian Act 2006: a regime of special rights for the Amerindian communities to own and manage their land within state control – 96 communities among 9 tribes own their land and regulate access to GR by PIC (prior informed consent);
- Seed laws mainly to govern rice were tabled and rice institutions, CRIDNET, GRDB and BRRS, were established;
- Sugarcane is governed by GUYSUCO & GARC institutions;
- And MHO CGA was formed to guide the development of organic cocoa.



ESSENTIAL INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES FOR THE CARIBBEAN

Historically when the underpinning philosophy to germplasm exchanges was GR = common heritage of mankind, 12 CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) Centres were established to execute *ex situ* conservation “holding germplasm in trust for the benefit of the international community”, introductions of significant numbers of species/varieties were made into Caribbean countries; this, along with technical information, greatly influenced the shape of PGRFA management and policies in the region.



ESSENTIAL INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES FOR THE CARIBBEAN (cont'd)

The CBD was established in 1994 for the conservation, sustainable use and exchange of PGR with an emphasis on Benefit Sharing. Between 1994 – 2011, sixteen Caribbean countries ratified this Convention.

Its Nagoya Protocol is particularly attractive in its drive to create business ventures whereby incomes can be earned and shared with all the stakeholders.

ESSENTIAL INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES FOR THE CARIBBEAN (cont'd)

- The FAO/Commission for GRFA: is the MAIN global umbrella forum dealing with all aspects of biodiversity (1983).
- A move to the underpinning philosophy of farmers' rights (1989) and State Sovereignty over Genetic Resources (1991).
- The ITPGRFA (International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture aka "the Treaty") entered into force 2004 with a Global Plan of Action focusing on: the sustainable use of PGRFA; global and regional *ex situ* conservation (thru specially formed GCDT mechanism) to regenerate collections, secure unique and threatened accessions, and set up information systems for PGRFA management.
- The Caribbean countries which acceded to the Treaty as at 8/10/12: Haiti, Cuba, DR, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago.

ESSENTIAL INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES FOR THE CARIBBEAN (cont'd)

- IPRs – Patents
- UPOV – Breeders Rights – Efforts to harmonise IPRs away from unbalanced ‘market’ power
- WIPO – World Intellectual Property Organisation
- TRIPS – (Traditional Knowledge, Folklore, and so on.....)
- The IPPC – (International Plant Protection Convention) Plant Quarantine Regulations subscribed to by ALL the Caribbean countries

Recommendations

Essential coordinated strategies to secure and use PGRFA optimally to help the Caribbean cope with climate change:

1. Establish Regional Seed System (with inputs from CARDI & FAO) with the essential components: Seed Rules and Regulations; Seed Quality Control; Seed Production and delivery and Seed Security and Rehabilitation;
2. In situ conservations of genetically diverse populations to provide adaptability and to allow evolution to continue, at national levels.
3. Negotiate positions with the appropriate CGIAR Centres and other International organisations to achieve short term pre-breeding objectives for the Caribbean such as climate change resilience;
4. Increase support to capacity building in plant breeding to develop crop varieties to meet new challenges, using all conventional breeding as well as new biotechnological methods and participatory breeding. A regional programme with modern facilities for breeding, conservation and rapid multiplication and distribution for use, is mandated.

Recommendations (cont'd)

5. Establish National and Regional Biodiversity Plans of Action in harmony with the Global Plan of Action (the Treaty). Garner all the support from Hemispheric and Global Networks and subscribing to essential Global protocols : CDB, ITPGRFA, GCDT, GENESYS-GRIN Global, GIPD(FAO) and so on.....). Link CAPGENET more actively with the Hemispheric, Regional and Global Systems for support in PGRFA.
6. Devise methods to properly recognise, promote and reward Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge and Farmer's Contributions to the conservation and improvement of PGRFA with climate change resilience.

Thank you

