



Global  
Facilitation  
Unit  
for Underutilized  
Species

## **Steering Committee Meeting IPGRI, Maccarese 28 May, 2004**

### **Minutes**

#### **1. Objectives of the meeting**

The objectives of the meeting were a) to brief the Steering Committee on the progress review conducted by Dr. Frank Begemann during May 2004, b) to discuss the reviewer's recommendations for a potential extension of the project

#### **2. Summary of the meeting**

##### **2.1 Introductory notes**

The chairman welcomed the participants and summarized the objectives of the meeting. He said that he was confident that the review of the GFU has revealed positive results and that he could see good reasons for a continuation of the project.

IPGRI's DG welcomed the participants of the meeting at IPGRI and explained the institution's current thinking and future strategy regarding underutilized species. He stressed that IPGRI would like to see the work on underutilized species in a broader picture looking beyond their contributions to food security but working out their importance related to risk reduction through diverse production systems and healthy diets to fight hidden hunger and diseases associated with affluence. He mentioned that IPGRI would work more in future in this area. He was happy to host the GFU and congratulated the staff for the achievement of important objectives. He saw a continuing important role for the Unit particularly with regard to mainstreaming the work on underutilized species. He was looking forward to continue to work with all partners around the table.

Hans Schoeneberger, GTZ, conveyed the apologies of Dr. de Haas, BMZ, for not being able to attend the meeting. On behalf of the donor he gave a brief review about the history of the GFU and the rationale behind the present progress review. He said that Dr. de Haas was very committed to the topic of underutilized species and the GFU and would like to see interesting suggestions for an additional phase of the project.

## **2.2 Progress Review**

### **2.2.1 Process**

Dr. Begemann, the reviewer, explained the procedures of the review. He mentioned that he had revised all relevant documents of GFU available as hard copies or on the internet, that he had consulted a number of experts from different stakeholder groups and all GFU founding partners either via e-mail or through face to face interviews. He explained that he intended to present his findings and suggestions to the GFU Steering Committee. Before editing his final report to GTZ, who commissioned the review, he would send a draft to all Steering Committee members for comments.

### **2.2.2 Findings**

Dr. Begemann listed all the achievements of the GFU during the reviewed period from May 2002 to May 2004 following the 4 expected outputs.

The overall assessment has been very positive. He mentioned ICUC's concerns of potential over-lapping related to the website and the information service provided. In his judgment of the achievements he stressed:

- The work that the project did was appreciated by the different stakeholders and partners
- A lot has been achieved particularly against the background of a) a subject of low attraction, b) the limited resources available and c) the short period of only two year of operations

He emphasized that the GFU was gaining visibility and that outputs 2 and 3 were good ground for further developments. He considered the output 3 as a task too difficult to be fulfilled by the GFU. The same was true for output 4 where he suggested a different approach to ensure sustainability of and long term commitment to the GFU.

### **2.2.3 Recommendations**

Dr. Begemann made the following *main recommendations*:

- extension of the project for a period of 3 years after February 2005 in order to ensure sustainability of the achievements, provided that Strategic Partners could be indentified that would ensure to take over the individual functions of the GFU after the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase
- contributions by strategic partners already in phase 2 can be obtained (predictable long-term funding from their core budgets, institutional mandate) to facilitate take-over of the GFU functions after the end of the next phase
- shift of the priorities set for the first phase (mainstreaming of the topic)

Regarding the *future activities and outputs* he grouped them in the following areas:

- 1) Documentation, Information and Communication targeting the technical level (networks, NARS, ARIs, NGOs, Food Industry)
- 2) Policy Analysis targeting policy and decision makers
- 3) Public Awareness targeting the Civil Society, policy and decision makers

He strongly recommended that the GFU should not get involved in project implementation, but maintain its role as a facilitator. It should not work on particular species, but rather focus on cross-cutting issues.

With regards to the *priorities* the following order was suggested: Policy Analysis – Public Awareness – Documentation, Information, Communication.

In relation to *organizational and financial aspects* he recommended:

- Hosting institution should remain IPGRI-HQ, but the institute should pool its human resources working on underutilized species in Rome (a full time coordinator, part time seconded to support GFU activities)
- A strong commitment of FAO, in particular of FAO/AGP with regards to the development of a database with funding sources
- A new name for the Unit reflecting the positive nature of the subject which would facilitate mainstreaming of the topic (“diversity of Crop Production”)
- New composition of the Steering Committee reflecting the long-term commitment of organizations to support the GFU and additional expertise needed to bridge existing gaps (food industry, marketing organizations, other geographical regions)
- IFAD should consider financial contributions during the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase
- Identification of additional stakeholders willing to contribute to a next phase and who could also take over some activities after the next phase (USA, Canada, Australia, private sector)

#### **2.2.4 Discussion**

A discussion started around the *strategic partnerships* and the role of GFU’s current partners. IFAD strongly felt that they were neither a strategic nor a key partner of the GFU. They want to be considered as recipients of other institutions knowledge (GFU, IPGRI, ICUC) that can be included in their loan and grant projects. However, the house saw a much bigger role of IFAD e.g. could they make resources available for case studies and policy analyses, where they are having a crucial role because diversification of agricultural production has to be part of their loan projects.

The chairman explained that FAO’s commitment to GFU has been and will be in terms of staff time rather than in terms of financial resources.

The house felt that the time frame for the concertation of commitments from the partners was too short. Begemann however, mentioned the upcoming good opportunities to do this like the meetings in November in FAO (10th session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (8-12 Nov) and the session of the Interim Committee of the International Treaty on PGRFA (15-19 Nov) that could give way to such a commitment. IPGRI’s current review of the future institutional strategy will be finalized until September 2004 and there would be still room for consideration of a strong commitment to the GFU.

GFAR

There was general agreement that even if partners took over particular activities currently executed by the GFU there would always be a need for a kind of umbrella organization or a secretariat.

This discussion was followed by the discussion of the suggested *future priority activities and outputs*:

ad 1) GFAR offered support to the website maintenance after the end of the GFU. In its new business plan it is considered that there will be a page dedicated to the information of stakeholders about the GPPs.

The suggestion to establish a database on funding sources jointly with the “Facilitation Mechanism for the Implementation of the GPA” and the International Treaty on PGR was discussed controversially. The Chairman considered it very difficult to bring the idea forward to the Commission and was skeptical whether donors would like to see their names published in such a database.

The house agreed on the importance of publication of monographs, proceedings and in particular case studies and policy papers. The organization of workshops though seen as important were evaluated as very costly and should therefore be imbedded in a logical framework building on each other.

ad 2) It was not fully clear what the reviewer meant with the term “Policy”. He clarified that it referred not only to policies at governmental level, but should include concepts and strategies that open new markets for underutilized species products. It should also include an assessment of substitutional effects versus net diversification of cropping systems. The chairman clarified that it should comprise all plans that allow a new plant to get into a development program of a country or region and that the national poverty reduction plans should be analyzed in view of finding entry points for underutilized species.

It was suggested that this area of activities should be reformulated into Decision Support for Policies (final decision yet to be taken).

ad 3) It was questioned whether the GFU with its limited resources could do something substantial regarding such an awareness campaign. It was agreed that the GFU’s role should be seen as pushing the idea forward and have other more potent partners doing it. The suggested campaign title “ Diversity of Crop Production” did not get everybody’s approval. Main arguments against were that many organizations try to promote crop diversification and by adopting this focus, that GFU would lose its identity. It was also underscored that many underutilized species are not necessarily part of a cropping system, but collected from the wild and their domestication/ inclusion in existing cropping systems would not be an option in all cases. It was also said that one should be careful getting too polarized considering less diversified cropping systems as generally evil.

Regarding the proposed *prioritization* of the three future areas of intervention for the GFU some members of the SC felt that “Documentation, Information and Communication” should be given higher preference, though a lot has been done already.

Related to the proposed *organizational and financial issues* there was agreement that

- the GFU should continue to be hosted at IPGRI HQ. However the chairman presented the possibility of having a desk at FAO in order to enable better linking to other services

- IPGRI cannot be asked to pool its “Underutilized Species Resources” in Rome, but only be requested to consider this option
- a new name for the GFU was needed that does not only refer to the Unit but to the common ownership; it was suggested to maintain the logo even under a different name
- another meeting of the present Steering Committee should be convened in order to define the membership of the new Steering Committee and its mission.

Towards the end of the meeting Dr. de Haas of BMZ was informed by Hans Schoeneberger via telephone about the outcome of the evaluation and the discussion during the steering committee meeting. Dr. de Haas has been pleased about the results and expressed BMZ’s principle preparedness to provide funding for a next phase of the GFU should there be also relevant contributions of other partners to ensure the sustainability of the project.

The meeting concluded with IPGRI saying that they were looking forward to continue hosting the GFU and that they would definitively strengthen their contributions. The chairman said that the FAO Division Plant Production/Plant Protection was aware that more and more initiatives were going on related to the topic of underutilized species. As a Service Chief he would like to link the GFU more to other services within FAO. He saw the Steering Committee of the GFU to become increasingly more formal. He thanked the reviewer for his comprehensive report and good proposals in the short period of time available and the GFU staff for the good job done and the results achieved in the past.

**Annexes:**

**I Agenda**

**II List of participants**



**Steering Committee Meeting**  
**Friday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, IPGRI, Maccaresse, Rome**  
**(9:30 – 14:15, First Floor Meeting Room)**

**List of participants**

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