



SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC)



Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture Policy Guidelines

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Preface

The SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC) was established with a mandate of conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in the region (PGRFA). One of the SPGRC activities is to provide technical back up and capacity building to Member States on international agreements and conventions that are important for management of PGRFA. Despite the fact that all Member States are Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), not all are Parties or signatories to other major international agreements such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. SPGRC as a regional institution is undermined without a common regional PGRFA policy to provide guidance to Member States on PGRFA conservation and sustainable use and in the development of mechanisms to realize farmers' rights, access and benefit-sharing regimes.

For this reason, the SPGRC with financial support from the Southern African Network for BioSciences (SANBio)/Finnish-Southern Africa Partnership Programme to Strengthen NEPAD, funded by the governments of South Africa (Department of Science and Technology) and Finland, commissioned country studies to investigate the current situation and experience in the conservation, sustainable utilization practices as well as the general policy framework on PGRFA. The country studies were synthesized into a regional report highlighting key findings and potential interventions to address challenges raised in the report. The regional report was presented to stakeholders at a consultative workshop with participants drawn from Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member States, including Curators and policy makers. The consultative workshop preceded a training workshop in field of PGRFA management. The stakeholder consultative workshop developed and adopted a structure for a proposed SADC PGRFA Policy Guideline and constituted a drafting team to prepare a draft Policy Guideline and including a timeline. The drafting team prepared an initial draft that was circulated to all Member States' NPGRCs for comments. The drafting team then incorporated the comments from the NPGRCs. A second draft was then presented to a stakeholders' consultative meeting held in Lusaka Zambia in September 2011.

The PGRFA Policy Guidelines provide the framework for facilitating policy coordination in PGRFA in the SADC region and provides the SPGRC with the relevant tools and institutional framework to fulfil its mandate of coordinating and promoting PGRFA policy in the region. The PGRFA policy Guidelines set out the goal, vision, objectives, priorities as well as the policy interventions and institutional framework for addressing PGRFA issues in the region. The Guidelines should also provide a road map for developing national policy and legislation at national level in a manner that affirms each country's national priorities and within the context of regional harmonization. As a Guideline, this document should be dynamic allowing for specific national interventions that acknowledge national realities. The Guidelines should however facilitate a harmonized regional response to international forum where Member States are called upon to commit to certain decisions. The institutions proposed in the Guidelines will provide space for keeping these Guidelines abreast of regional and international developments and where necessary, propose adjustments that facilitate development of best practices for the conservation and sustainable utilization of PGRFA. The Guidelines also propose strengthening information management to ensure that Member States have access to new developments in PGRFA policy and technologies. Information sharing will enhance national and regional capacities at minimal costs and also strengthen regional integration.

It is therefore the hope of SPGRC that Member States will utilize these Guidelines and will provide feedback to ensure the Guidelines are responsive and remain relevant to national and regional policy needs.

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Acronyms

ABS	Access and Benefit Sharing
BioFISA	Finnish-Southern Africa Partnership Programme to Strengthen NEPAD
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBO	Community Based Organization
CNA	Competent National Authority
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GIS	Geographic Information System
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
ITPGRFA	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPGRC	National Plant Genetic Resources Centre
NPGRCom	National Plant Genetic Resources Committee
PGRFA	Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SANBio	Southern Africa Network for Biosciences
SPGRC	SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre
TK	Traditional Knowledge

1. Preamble / background

Conscious of the importance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) to sustainable agriculture and livelihood of farming communities especially small scale farmers;

Recalling the SADC development priorities including the need to achieve sustainable food security as stipulated under the SADC Treaty, the Regional Indicative Development Plan and related regional instruments;

Recalling Member States' commitment to protect and enhance agricultural biodiversity as stipulated under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), the SADC Regional Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and National Biodiversity and Action Plans;

Conscious of the accelerated rate of disappearance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) and associated indigenous knowledge;

Recognizing that the region is endowed with rich diversity of medicinal plants and other useful plants thus inclusion in these guidelines is beyond the Treaty mandate list;

Convinced of the special and distinct features of PGRFA and requiring particular approaches to curb the ongoing loss of this valuable resource;

Acknowledging that the conservation, exploration, collection, characterization, evaluation and documentation of plant genetic resources are essential to meet the broad goal of sustainable food security for the current and future generations;

Acknowledging the threat of climate change to food security in the region;

Acknowledging further that PGRFA are raw materials for crop improvement, whether by means of farmers' selection, conventional plant breeding or modern biotechnologies and are essential for adapting to unpredictable environmental or climate change;

Acknowledging the resilience of the PGRFA informal seed system/network and the need to preserve and strengthen such a system;

Acknowledging the need to pursue the development of a functional Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) mechanism/system to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;

Acknowledging and recognizing farmers' contributions to the conservation and development of PGRFA over time and the need to reward the efforts of these farmers in conserving and sustainably utilizing plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;

Affirming the need to recognize, protect and facilitate farmers' and breeders' rights;

Acknowledging the vast diversity of PGRFA in the region and the existence of trans-boundary PGRFA diversity and indigenous knowledge.

Desiring to facilitate and encourage regional harmonization practices, programme plans, policies and legislation on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture by providing policy guidance and support;

Desiring to conclude regional policy guidelines reflecting agreed best practices and approaches to guide national policy and legislation development;

2. Use of terms

“Benefit sharing” means a commitment to channel monetary or non-monetary returns back to a range of stakeholders including source communities or nations in recognition of their role in conservation and as custodians of plant genetic resources and associated indigenous knowledge.

“Biotechnology” means any technological application that uses biological systems, living organisms, or derivatives thereof, to make or modify products or processes for specific use.

“Breeder” means the person who bred or discovered and developed, a variety or the employer of the person who bred, or discovered and developed the variety, if that person was employed for the purpose of such activity or otherwise commissioned to perform such work

“Centre of crop diversity” means a geographic area containing a high level of genetic diversity for crop species in in-situ conditions.

“Conservation” means controlled utilization, protection and development of the gene pool of natural and cultivated organisms to ensure variety and variability and for current and potential value to human welfare.

“Crop wild relative” means a wild plant taxon closely related to a domesticated plant species that may be a wild ancestor of the domesticated species, or another closely related taxon.

“Ex-situ conservation” means the conservation of plant genetic resources outside their natural habitat.

Farmers’ Rights consist of the customary rights of farmers to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seed and propagating material, their rights to be recognized, rewarded and supported for their contribution to the global pool of genetic resources as well as to the development of commercial varieties of plants, and to participate in decision making on issues related to crop genetic resources.

“Food security” as defined by the World Food Summit of 1996 is said to exist “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”. Food security includes at a minimum, the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and secondly, an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).

coping strategies).

“Genetic material” means any material of living organisms, including reproductive and vegetative propagating material, containing functional units of heredity.

“Indigenous knowledge” means the knowledge associated with plant genetic resources that has been developed and utilized by local and indigenous communities and passed on from generation to generation.

“In-situ conservation” means the conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings and, in the case of domesticated or cultivated plant species, in the surroundings where they have developed their distinctive properties.

“Landrace” means a traditional or farmers’ varieties of crops that are the products of breeding or selection by farmers in their own communities over a number of years. Unlike commercial varieties that have prescribed characteristics, a landrace is typically heterogeneous and may contain rare gene complexes because of its local adaptation. The term originally referred to livestock breeds.

“On-farm conservation” means the continued cultivation and management of a diverse set of crop populations by farmers in the agro-ecosystems where a crop has evolved or in secondary centres of diversity.

Plant breeders’ rights, means a form of intellectual property designed to grant the developer of a new variety of plant, exclusive control over the propagating material of a new variety for a specified period.

“Plant genetic resources” means any genetic material of plant origin of actual or potential value.

“Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture” means any genetic material of plant origin of actual or potential value for food and agriculture.

“Propagating material” means any reproductive or vegetative material for propagation, whether by sexual or other means, of a plant variety, and includes seeds for sowing and any whole plant or part thereof that may be used for propagation

“Seed system” includes the established procedures, networks and mechanisms for developing, certifying and distributing seed for food and agriculture.

“Sustainable use” means the use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations.

“Variety” means a plant grouping, within a single botanical taxon of the lowest known rank,

defined by the reproducible expression of its distinguishing and other genetic characteristics.

3. Scope

The guidelines apply to PGRFA and associated traditional knowledge and innovations.

4. Status

The guidelines are for the facilitation of policy coordination by the SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC) and to set standards for harmonized national policy development.

5. Goal

To guide the development of national policies for conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA.

6. Vision

SADC Member States have harmonious policies that support the best actions in the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA for food security, economic well-being, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life and protection of the environment.

7. Mission

To support the process of regional integration, in line with the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), through prudent policy decisions in the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA and associated traditional knowledge.

8. Objectives

8.1. General policy objective

To provide strategic direction to Member States with respect to SADC regional cooperation in making domestic policy decisions that are in harmony with regional needs in the field of PGRFA, particularly, in relation to conservation, access, equitable sharing of benefits arising from use of PGRFA and its associated traditional knowledge.

8.2. Specific policy objectives

Adoption of PGRFA regional policy guidelines will assist Member States to achieve the following specific objectives:

- a) To set regional standards for conservation and utilization of PGRFA;
- b) To guide the development and sharing of information on the best practices and approaches in conservation, sustainable utilization, access and benefit-sharing arrangements and mechanisms to realize farmers' rights and protection of PGRFA and related indigenous knowledge;
- c) To provide capacity-building for the effective negotiation and implementation of global and regional treaties and agreements

- d) To promote awareness on implementation of relevant treaties and agreements;
- e) To promote sharing of relevant technologies and develop suitable mechanisms for technology transfer and scientific cooperation in the field of PGRFA;
- f) To facilitate mobilization of financial resources to promote conservation and sustainable utilization of PGRFA;
- g) To improve information flow and setting of standards among Member States;
- h) To contribute to the development of mechanisms for access and benefit-sharing regimes that recognize the protection of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities;
- i) To contribute to mechanisms for poverty alleviation and support to the realization of human food security, commercialisation/marketing of traditional products, health and cultural integrity;
- j) To regulate ABS and Indigenous Knowledge (IK) regarding PGRFA of regional commonage.

9. General Principles

In developing national policies, legislation, plans and programmes on PGRFA, Member States shall take into account the following guiding principles focusing on:

- 9.1. Food security;
- 9.2. Climate change;
- 9.3. Conservation and protection of PGRFA;
- 9.4. Enhancing intra and inter-specific diversity of PGRFA to address biotic and abiotic stresses within farming communities;
- 9.5. Recognition and protection of Farmers' Rights and associated IK
- 9.6. Promotion of access to and sharing of benefits from utilization of PGRFA
- 9.7. Encouraging participation and empowerment of farming communities;
- 9.8. Encouraging cooperation at national, regional and global level with special emphasis on linking PGRFA conservation with research and development;

9.9. Encouraging commercialization and value addition of PGRFA, in particular, landraces and neglected under-utilized crop species.

9.10. Capacity building at different levels.

10. Statement of regional priority areas on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture

The priority areas below are not in any particular order:

10.1. Priority Area 1:

Harmonisation, coordination and collaboration of PGRFA conservation and sustainable use programmes and activities carried out by public, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), private sector and other relevant stakeholders.

The SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre (SPGRC) has the broad mandate to coordinate plant genetic resources conservation in the region including establishment and operation of national gene banks for active collection. There are however, no policy guidelines as to how this enormous task will be achieved in the light of the diversity of stakeholders including public institutions, NGOs and private sector at national and regional levels. National policies need to accommodate the coordination role of SPGRC.

10.2. Priority Area 2:

Implementation and promotion of in-situ/on-farm and ex-situ conservation with emphasis on food crops, wild crop relatives, forages, underutilized crop species medicinal plants and other useful plants.

The SPGRC maintains a base collection of voluntarily deposited PGRFA collected from the region and also supports in-situ/ on-farm conservation. Access to PGRFA is managed at national level. Since most Member States do not have specific legislation on PGRFA, there are no clear and harmonious policies regarding access to materials at regional level which is the prerogative of the individual Member States. While individual Member States may have clear understanding of their existing internal policies, the same cannot be communicated to clients through SPGRC. In addition, the collective advantage of managing similar resources across a number of countries cannot be realized without a harmonized policy or at least mandatory sharing of information and meeting minimum standards and targets in PGRFA conservation and utilization. There are also opportunities for developing policy measures to ensure trans-boundary management of PGRFA.

10.3. Priority Area 3:

Use of state-of-the-art technologies for the identification, characterization, documentation, evaluation, crop improvement and conservation of PGRFA to enhance

quality and efficiency towards the attainment of food security and poverty alleviation. These include molecular diagnostics, in-vitro conservation, application of Geographic Information System (GIS) and remote sensing technologies to support conservation and use of advanced databases for efficiency and transparency.

The SPGRC has so far been successful in working with National Plant Genetic Resources Centres (NPGRCs) to maintain certain minimum standards in terms of methodologies and equipment. This approach can further be improved by encouraging policy decisions that support the use of state-of-the-art technologies to increase regional harmony and efficiency. There is also the need for provisions that embrace advances in science and technology to help pioneers to pave the way for the region to adopt as the advances become practically implementable.

10.4. Priority Area 4:

Building capacity of appropriate institutions involved in and contributing to the conservation and use of PGRFA.

The SPGRC has been instrumental in the development of capacity to conservation and use of PGRFA in the region. This effort should be further enhanced to cover institutions such as NPGRCs, community seed banks, research institutes, universities, NGOs, herbaria, botanical gardens, museums and national monuments. In addition a regional approach will be needed to improve on the capacity of the region to deal with international conventions that Member States are party to, as well as maintain a pool of experts in the region who are capable of responding to emerging issues through incorporation of specific elements in academic and professional training curricula. Establishing a resource mobilization strategy to support all inclusive rigorous discussions and analysis of the implications of global conventions and other emerging issues with various stakeholders nationally and regionally during negotiations and prior to domestication and implementation of conventions is desirable. The strength of the SADC region demonstrated during negotiation of the International Treaty on PGRFA can serve as an incentive towards this approach.

10.5. Priority Area 5:

Support activities conducted at grassroots level in promotion of conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, particularly, in the field of access and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use.

A number of organizations including NGOs, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and Faith-Based Organizations are often in the fore front in support or implementation of specific issues independently or with government institutions. The strengths of these organizations at grassroots level allow them to have a clear picture on issues of Farmers' Rights and Traditional Knowledge. While PGRFA policies developed by Member States should target to ensure that there are neither distortions nor unnecessary duplication of efforts, they should also strive to empower them to perform desired actions and deliver

the appropriate messages.

In addition, new and more efficient means of conducting dialogue, managing and using PGRFA can be developed through deliberate effort of searching and adapting new innovations into the field of PGRFA. Member States, with the involvement of communities, should be encouraged to develop policies that are flexible and accommodate new and emerging technologies without losing sight of the quality standards necessary for effective operation of conservation programmes.

10.6. Priority Area 6:

Recognition of Farmers' Rights, farmer varieties and providing mechanisms for their protection and promotion for food and agriculture.

The International Treaty on PGRFA which is in harmony with the CBD has left the implementation of Farmers' Rights at national level. However, at regional level, it is possible to cooperate on transboundary activities relating to PGRFA which include recognition of farmers' varieties and farmers' contributions towards conservation and sustainable utilization of PGRFA; as well as facilitating the development and implementation of national policies and legislation to protect the right of farmers to save, use, exchange, commercialise and reuse seed.

10.7. Priority Area 7:

Development of a harmonised regional Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) regime.

A unified ABS regime aimed at strengthening and facilitating the development of a common ABS policy and legal system for the region will increase the efficiency and benefits realized from the access to PGRFA. Such policy could include establishment of a regional ABS clearing mechanism to support global efforts where necessary and development of mechanisms and frameworks for facilitating technology transfer and scientific cooperation in the region to take advantage of relevant provisions under international agreements such as the CBD and the ITPGRFA.

10.8. Priority Area 8:

Linking conservation to utilization of PGRFA particularly for crop improvement, in light of climate change challenges.

Ex-situ genebanks are the major source of genetic material for plant breeding purposes. Special emphasis on crop improvement and exploiting PGRFA will be needed to make the genebanks relevant for socio-economic development, and in turn, attract more attention and support. Breeding goals should include coping and mitigation measures to climate change.

10.9. Priority Area 9:

Improved regional and national funding mobilisation efforts to support conservation and sustainable utilisation of PGRFA

Concerted efforts should be undertaken to encourage policy makers to allocate sufficient funding to the activities of conservation and utilisation of PGRFA. Additional funding should be mobilised through collaborative engagements with international cooperating partners.

11. Statement of key interventions

Member States should be aware that their individual interventions should be associated with a positive attitude for regional harmony. While recognizing and respecting national sovereignty as provided for under relevant international agreements, some interventions are better done by individual Member States while others will be more successful if done in a coordinated manner at regional level. Key interventions include:

- 11.1. Developing common understanding on the value of PGRFA and interdependence among Member States and the rest of the World.
- 11.2. Working towards effective and sustainable conservation and utilization of PGRFA through coordinated prudent actions at national and regional levels including:
 - a) Regular review of status and trends of PGRFA
 - b) Valuation of PGRFA
 - c) Adopting ecosystem approach in planning national conservation measures taking into account transboundary cooperation
- 11.3. Strengthening and consolidating the long-standing historical exchange of PGRFA nationally and regionally through:
 - a) Analysis of existing seed systems
 - b) Establishing or domesticating code of conduct / procedures for access to genetic materials and associated information
 - c) Reviewing and updating policies and legal instruments
- 11.4. Promoting mechanisms that maximize benefits derived from access to PGRFA of the Region including use of indigenous knowledge
- 11.5. Developing legal frameworks for farmers and/or farming communities to realise their rights in accordance with article 9 of the ITPGRFA in harmony with Article 8j of the CBD
- 11.6. Developing and implementing complementary national and regional strategies and action plans for PGRFA
- 11.7. Developing strategies for strengthening human resources and institutions that protect, conserve and support sustainable use of PGRFA

- 11.8. Generating innovative measures and incentives for farmers and/or community participation
- 11.9. Incorporating specific policy elements of PGRFA conservation and use in academic and professional training curricula
- 11.10. Initiating and supporting programmes for adaptation and/or mitigation of the effects of major challenges to PGRFA, particularly in climate change, genetic erosion and alien invasive plant species, and desertification.
- 11.11. Inclusion of PGRFA issues in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes
- 11.12. Strengthening national and regional funding of PGRFA programmes

12. Specific Policy Statements

12.1. Conservation strategies

Member States should promote an integrated approach to explore and conserve PGRFA and take measures to eliminate or reduce threats to these resources.

12.2. Sustainable utilization strategies

Member States should develop and adopt national policies and legal frameworks that promote sustainable use of PGRFA including promoting fair agricultural practices, strengthening research, promoting participatory plant breeding, broadening the genetic base of crops, and promoting expanded use of locally adapted crops, varieties and underutilized species.

12.3. Access and benefit sharing

- a) Member States should develop and adopt national policies and legislation to facilitate access to PGRFA and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits accruing from their use.
- b) In developing national policies and legislation, Member States should take into account their respective national interests, the demands and requirements of regional integration and their international commitments particularly, the provisions of the CBD, ITPGRFA and the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising from their Utilization.
- c) Policies and legislation should also fully take into account national interests, farmers' and local communities' concerns and awareness thus facilitating effective participation in the decision making process.

12.4. Transboundary regulation of PGRFA

Member States should strengthen and encourage application of mechanisms that facilitate cooperation among stakeholders sharing similar in-situ resources across

boundaries for conservation, sustainable utilization as well as regulating access to such resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization.

12.5. Promotion of Farmers' Rights

- a) Member States should develop and maintain policies and legislation to regulate use of traditional knowledge associated with PGRFA taking into account indigenous procedures and customary laws for accessing and utilizing such knowledge.
- b) Member States should develop mechanisms to inform potential users of traditional knowledge associated with PGRFA and their obligations for access to and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge.
- c) Member States should facilitate the development of community protocols and model contractual frameworks to facilitate participation of local communities in regulating access to PGRFA and realizing the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization.
- d) Member States should develop appropriate policies and legislation to promote and protect the rights of farmers to save, reuse, exchange and sale farm saved seed and to effectively participate in decision making on matters relating to conservation and sustainable utilization of PGRFA.

12.6. Capacity building

- a) SADC should facilitate cooperation for the development and strengthening of regional human and institutional capacity through existing regional frameworks.
- b) Member States should develop appropriate national policies and legislation to facilitate institutional coordination to enhance capacity at national, local and indigenous community level.
- c) Member States should develop and/or incorporate curricula on PGRFA conservation and use in academic and professional training.

12.7. Information management

- a) Member States should conduct baseline studies to gather and analyse information on PGRFA.
- b) Member States should establish databases and develop requisite protocols for facilitating access to and exchange of information on PGRFA
- c) Member States should develop legislation that protects PGRFA information and mechanisms for information management which include databases and requisite protocols for facilitating access to information on PGRFA.

12.8. Biotechnologies and biosafety

- a) Member States should develop policies to [promote the use of biotechnology applications in conservation and crop improvement programmes in order to

address challenges of food security and climate change.

- b) Member States should develop evidence-based policy for decision-making regarding agricultural biotechnologies for food security. While it is important to engage a broad range of stakeholder groups in policy-development processes, it should be clear that scientific and socio-economic evidence are essential to guide the process;
- c) Member States should develop policy instruments that take into account the potential benefits provided and risks posed by modern biotechnologies to PGRFA including its impact on traditional varieties and the realization of farmers' rights. Such policies must clearly balance the need to promote research and development of PGRFA to solve current challenges and the conservation and sustainable utilization of PGRFA;
- d) Member States should integrate the bio-security approach across agricultural biotechnology policies and regulations ensuring that regulations for agricultural biotechnologies are coherent and in harmony with other national regulations and regional frameworks and standards.

13. Institutional framework and implementation

13.1. Regional institutional framework and coordination with related instruments

The region has hitherto depended on SPGRC for the development of common opinions for negotiations in international agreements. However, absence of a common policy document limits effective participation of all Member States in articulating common positions and necessitates Member States to go it alone during negotiations in some cases. A regional policy should clearly state the level of involvement of SPGRC as well as lay a mechanism for collaboration. Actions of SPGRC on policy matters shall need the support of a panel of experts for PGRFA policy, scientific and technological matters. Therefore:

- a) The Board of SPGRC should be mandated to have overall coordination of deliberations on PGRFA policy issues and awareness creation at regional level;
- b) The SPGRC should be mandated to nominate and recommend to the Board a standing panel of experts with advisory role on PGRFA policy, scientific and technical Matters;
- c) The standing panel of experts should deliberate on specific and general issues relevant to PGRFA and prepare reports or options for the region to consider through SPGRC and NPGRCs;
- d) The Panel should develop mechanisms by which it can receive information and views from Member states through NPGRCs for developing regional positions as well as provide feedback to NPGRCs on regional and international trends

affecting PGRFA;

- e) NPGRCs should have the duty of creating awareness on the policy, scientific and technical matters regarding PGRFA in Member States and coordinating feed back to regional level in accordance with national legislation;
- f) NPGRCs should be encouraged to share with SPGRC policy, scientific and technical issues for which a common regional approach would be an advantage.

13.2. National policy and institutional coordination of PGRFA

a) NPGRC

The NPGRCs of Member States are well established as competent centres for technical matters and coordination in connection with conservation of PGRFA. However, many of them are not established by any legal framework which often impedes them from operating effectively. It is also important to note that, while NPGRCs are the correct focal institutions for the ITPGRFA, the focal point for ITPGRFA in most SADC countries is somewhere else other than NPGRC which is not ideal.

Therefore:

- i. Regional policies should encourage Member States clarify the legal situation of NPGRCs including linkages with national desks of CBD and other global agreements;
- ii. Member States should accord appropriate legal mandates for the NPGRCs to effectively deal with policy issues relating to PGRFA access, benefit sharing and Farmers' Rights.
- iii. To facilitate harmonisation of regional PGR activities, it should be ideal that ITPGRFA is hosted by the NPGRC.

b) Competent National Authority (CNA)

Each Member State is unique in terms of institutional set up and human resources involved in PGRFA policy issues. Currently, most National Plant Genetic Resources Committees (NPGRCs) in Member States are operating without legal frameworks. Hence, a Competent National Authority is desirable in order to minimize conflicts among local institutions as well as facilitating flow of information on authoritative decisions. The home of the CNA will vary depending on where the NPGRC is housed and the key stakeholders involved in approval of requests.

Therefore:

- i. Member States should nominate and empower a Competent National Authority, with legal powers, within an appropriate institution in accordance with applicable national legislative and administrative procedures of Member States for the purpose of granting access, collecting and releasing information for official use;

- ii. The CNA may create a multi stakeholder body to provide advice and process applications as appropriate under relevant policy and or legislation;
- iii. The CNA should be responsible for setting out conditions for ABS of PGRFA and associated indigenous knowledge;
- iv. The CNA should be responsible for processing of applications and approval of internal agreements as well as issuance of permits associated with PGRFA research and access;
- v. The CNA should further be responsible for implementation and/or monitoring and evaluation of PGRFA status on access and benefit-sharing agreements;
- vi. The CNA should further be responsible for creating mechanisms for the effective participation of different stakeholders;

13.3. Consultative Meetings of Stakeholders /Stakeholders' forum

PGRFA access and benefit sharing issues are a concern to a diversity of stakeholders including individuals, communities (farmers and traditional users) and institutions. Consultative meetings of stakeholders should be established formally at different levels as means of collecting ideas and public opinion. Member States should as appropriate:

- a) Establish Stakeholders Forums for the purpose of collecting ideas and public opinion and creating awareness among stakeholders formally (such as through the National Plant Genetic Resources Committee) and informally at different levels;
- b) Apply other innovative and effective ways of gathering opinions and getting public consensus and mainstreaming such opinions.

13.4. Capacity building

The region has established SPGRC with physical infrastructure, human resources, and some financial mechanism to sustain it. SPGRC has specific mandates that are essentially part and parcel of a regional PGRFA policy. Clarity will be needed as to how the region and individual Member States can take advantage of the existing facilities and regional human capacity to advance local and regional policies. Whereas human resource recruitment and remuneration is subject to standardization by SADC secretariat, the policy could to some extent aim to encourage development and maintenance of specialized pools of technical and scientific teams for the purpose of continuity as well as attracting the best expertise to serve in PGRFA activities. The Member States should:

- a) Encourage linkages at regional level through SPGRC such that implementation of current activities are linked to opportunities for growth by incorporating additional PGRFA activities such as (but not limited to) diagnostic laboratories, and training;
- b) Be encouraged to use as appropriate, SPGRC and NPGRC facilities and in their

jurisdiction for the purpose of efficiency and delivering results effectively to the region;

- c) Seek advice from SPGRC and other relevant institutions from time to time on how best specialized pools of technical and scientific teams could be developed and maintained for the purpose of continuity as well as attracting the best expertise to serve in PGRFA activities;
- d) Be encouraged to develop mechanisms for retention of specialized pool of technical experts on PGRFA and related fields.

13.5. Programme development and management

PGRFA conservation and use will succeed through good programmes and management in Member States and at regional level. A regional policy can be a good opportunity to indicate the types of programmes that should be implemented at national level and those that can be implemented jointly at regional level. Therefore Member States should:

- a) Encourage development of joint training programmes for PGRFA specialised human resources;
- b) Encourage the development and harmonization of standardized procedures for programme development and implementation.

13.6. Information management

- a) Databases

Databases are major sources of information for effective programmes and policies. SPGRC and its network of NPGRCs have been instrumental to the development of databases on PGRFA in the region. Such databases need sufficient policy backing in relation to content, authenticity, security, valuation, access and rights of those accessing data. Member States should therefore:

 - i. Jointly review from time to time SPGRC's database with the aim of maximizing their usefulness;
 - ii. Encourage expansion of content taking advantage of technology development as well as demand for new information;
 - iii. Consider data protection mechanisms that are user friendly and generate benefits for the region.
- b) Technical synthesis of information

The value of databases can be greatly enhanced if synthesis of the information

they contain is made for specific purposes, particularly for the sake of simplicity and focussing on issues. Member States can improve the use of their databases by establishing information resource centres linked to SPGRC's shared information portal to provide synthesised information on a number of areas including available numbers of groups of materials, summaries of reports on evaluation of PGRFA from the region, how genetic materials are used in the region and globally, training needs, general information on breeding programmes etc. Member States should:

- i. Establish information resource centres linked to SPGRC's shared information portal to provide synthesised information
- ii. Use the link with SPGRC as a source of regional status reports as well as a point for easy access to other relevant information from around the globe

13.7. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are essential steps for any programme in order to have efficiency, effectiveness and impact. Monitoring and evaluation being continuous functions to inform stakeholders and PGRFA managers will require clear indicators set out in policies at national and regional level so that there is systematic and timely collection of data. Member States and SPGRC should:

- a) Encourage the implementation of scheduled reviews of programmes and administrative performance
- b) Develop mechanism for continuous flow of information to and from Member States regarding progress on database
- c) Encourage learning from the outcome of the monitoring and evaluation process.