

# SADC Policies on the Conservation and Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

*In Situ* Conservation and Use of Crop Wild Relatives in three ACP countries of SADC region

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# Introduction

- The Southern African Development Community (SADC) recognizes the important role of good environmental management in the social and economic well being of the people, particularly during these challenging times of climate change
- This is why natural resources require integrated actions at national, regional and international levels
- Most legislations support biodiversity conservation in designated protected areas

# Introduction

- The legislations are not necessarily designed specifically to address the conservation and use of neither plant genetic resources nor Crop Wild Relatives
- Protected areas in the region focus more on ecosystems and do provide the conservation of a broader range of these plants including wild life
- Some protected areas do not have inventories of existing plants which makes it difficult to allow conservation management plans for edible plants and CWR

# Regional Policies on the Conservation and Use of PGRFA

- Protocols and the harmonisation of policies is one of the underlying cornerstones of true regional integration
- There are several Protocols that are related to PGR conservation and use, they include: the Protocol on Environment for Sustainable Development (2014), the SADC Protocol on Forestry (2002); the Revised SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses (2002); the SADC Protocol on Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement of 1999 (Wildlife Protocol)
- Other relevant regional documents are: the Regional Biodiversity Strategy of 2006 (RBS) – not legally binding, complimented by the SADC Regional Biodiversity Action Plan, 2013 (RBAP) that aims to operationalise the RBS

# Protocol on Environment for Sustainable Development (2014)

- To enhance the protection of the environment, promote equity and sustainable utilisation of natural resources, promote the shared management of trans-boundary environment and natural resources, promote effective management of natural resources, facilitate effective and coordinated responses to the impacts of climate change
- The protocol urges Member States to take measures to conserve ecosystems, including their biodiversity and unique habitats, to ensure the sustainable management and use of trans-boundary biological diversity
- This takes into account natural forests, wildlife, fisheries, wetlands, agro-biodiversity and genetic resources.

# **SADC Protocol on Forestry (2002)**

- Entered into force in 2009 aims to promote the development, conservation, sustainable management and utilisation of all types of forests and trees; trade in forest products, achieve effective protection of the environment, and safeguard the interests of both the present and future generations
- The SADC Forestry Strategy (2010-2020) was developed to facilitate the implementation of the Protocol

# Protocol on Forestry

- Article 17 (2) on Forest Genetic Resources calls for State Parties to develop a regional approach and harmonised national legislation regulating access to, and the management, development and use of forest genetic resources as well as the equitable sharing of benefits derived from those resources shared by more than one State Party
- Under point (4), Parties shall share germplasm from plant genetic, upon mutually agreed terms
- (5) Reflects that Parties shall, for the purposes of preservation of germplasm of forest species, cooperate to further develop the forest collection in the SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre network



# PGR Conservation Policies

- Legal frameworks on PGRFA are of absolute importance in order to achieve conservation and utilization of PGRFA
- Most, if not all countries, have sectoral policies and regulations, administered by different ministries without proper collaboration. In some cases, these laws are out-dated and need amendment
- National agricultural policies do not explicitly address PGRFA conservation and sustainable utilization
- The existence of **International legal framework for conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources** (Convention on Biological Diversity, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture) **provide stimulus to development of regional policy frameworks**
- In 1987, SADC agreed to establish a regional plant genetic resources centre, , in recognition of the importance of conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture for the benefit of present and future generations
- A **Memorandum of Understanding** establishing SPGRC and its network has been in force since 1994

# SADC Policy Guidelines for Plant Genetic Resources

- The guidelines 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
- They therefore serve as a guide for the development of national policies for conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA
- Priority Area 2 of the guidelines: 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**.
- Southern Africa is already experiencing increased climate variability through floods and droughts which are projected to increase in intensity.
- The best that can be done now is to enhance the ability of ecosystems and species to adapt to change in the long-term; using well integrated and coordinated conservation strategies
- Such productivity gains **require large scale breeding programs** to produce new crops. The raw material of these new breeds is the **genetic variation that occurs naturally** across the **native range of these species and their wild relatives**

# Conclusion and Recommendations

- Legal frameworks do exist and the most relevant to PGRFA conservation and use being the **Protocol on Environment and Sustainable Development** and the **Forestry Protocol**
- **The region is relying on International instruments such as the ITPGRFA and CBD**
- There is need to publicize the SADC Policy Guidelines for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
- A **regionally coordinated strategy** need to be developed and should incorporate activities that will ensure **the identification, collection and conservation of important CWR in the region.**
- Development of **national strategic plans for the conservation of CWR scaled up** to enable effective conservation and use of material that have greater potential for crop improvement and attributes for climate change adaptation
- Incorporate the conservation and use of PGRFA including CWR in Biodiversity/protected areas policy frameworks and management plans

**Thank you for your attention**

