

Minutes of the 24th Meeting of the Donors' Council of the Global Crop Diversity Trust

7 October 2021

The Donors' Council of the Global Crop Diversity Trust ('Crop Trust') met on 7 October 2021 via online video conference, hosted by the Crop Trust Secretariat in Bonn, Germany. The meeting was chaired in part by the outgoing Chair, the Netherlands, and in part by the newly elected Chair, the Republic of Korea. The meeting was attended by representatives of donors, multilateral partners, and members of the Crop Trust Secretariat. A list of those in attendance can be found in Annex 1. Annex 2 shows the meeting agenda. Several background documents were circulated to invitees prior to the meeting.

1. Introduction and Adoption of Agenda and Minutes

The outgoing Chair of the Donors' Council, Mr. Hans Hoogeveen, opened the meeting and extended a welcome to all participants. The agenda of the 24th Meeting of the Crop Trust Donors' Council was adopted by Donors' Council members.

The Minutes of the 23rd Meeting of the Crop Trust Donors' Council held on 29 October 2021 were approved.

2. Donors' Council Business and Elections

Two elections were conducted at this meeting: for the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Donors' Council. The Republic of Korea, represented by Dr. Taek-Ryoun Kwon, was nominated for the Chair position, and the Kingdom of Norway, represented by Mr. Daniel van Gilst, was nominated for the Vice-Chair position.

To allow for a staggering of terms for the future Chair and Vice-Chair, the Executive Director, Mr. Stefan Schmitz, suggested to Donors' Council members that the new Vice-Chair be elected on an initial two-year term, with the option of a standard three-year term after that, and the Chair position be elected for a standard three-year term. The Executive Director supported this suggestion by reading the relevant Rules of Procedures of the Donors' Council:

9.01 The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall normally each be elected from among the members of the Donors' Council for a three-year term and shall be eligible for re-election for one further term, provided that the first Vice Chairperson shall be elected for a term of two years.

The Donors' Council moved by consensus to appoint the Republic of Korea as Chair, for a three year term, and the Kingdom of Norway as Vice-Chair, for an initial two year term.

The outgoing Chair made closing remarks, emphasizing the importance of the conservation and use of crop diversity and the urgency of a more sustainable food system. The Chair commended the Crop Trust on their work, as well as the important work done by other members of the Donors' Council.

Mr. Peter Crane, the Chair of the Crop Trust Executive Board, took the floor to thank the outgoing Chair and Vice-Chair for their work and commitment to the Crop Trust over the years. The Executive Board Chair welcomed the incoming Chair and Vice-Chair.

The newly appointed Chair, Dr. Taek-Ryoun Kwon, took the floor mentioning that the Republic of Korea is eager to work together with the Crop Trust in the time ahead to further the mission of conserving the world's most important agrobiodiversity and promoting a more sustainable food system. The new Chair thanked both the outgoing Chair and Vice-Chair before closing the agenda item.

3. Oral Update by the Executive Director: Towards a “Global Genebank Partnership”

The Executive Director welcomed Donors' Council members to the meeting and congratulated the newly appointed Chair and Vice-Chair.

The Executive Director thanked Donors' Council members for their contributions and support throughout the years. Specifically, the Executive Director thanked those who contributed to the Crop Trust in 2020-2021 through various funding streams, including the Endowment Fund, operational funds, and project funds.

The Executive Director directed the attention of the Donors' Council to a newly submitted call for proposals for safety duplication in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. The grants are available for ODA recipients of low or middle-income countries who are also Party to the International Treaty of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Plant Treaty). The grants are made possible through the BOLD (Biodiversity for Opportunity, Livelihoods, and Development) project, funded by the Norwegian government.

The Executive Director gave an overview of the Crop Trust's mandate and mission, highlighting that the Crop Trust works within the framework of the Plant Treaty. Specifically, the Crop Trust works to ensure the long-term ex situ conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture within an efficient, effective, rational global system.

The Crop Trust Endowment Fund has a market value of USD 321 million, as of 30 June 2021. This value is a result of accumulated donor contributions, net investment income, and withdrawals. In order to fulfill its mandate, the Crop Trust aims to reach an endowment fund of USD 850 million. The target of USD 850 million is based on an annual withdrawal of 4% and projected annual funding requirements of USD 34 million.

The Executive Director introduced the ‘Strategic Development of the Crop Trust’ project. The three year project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

The Executive Director summarized the Crop Trust’s expected contributions to the CGIAR genebanks in the coming years and explained that the Crop Trust works very closely with CGIAR, including direct involvement in the development of the new CGIAR Genebank Initiative.

The Executive Director also provided an overview of the projects implemented by the Crop Trust, highlighting that the projects contribute to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the global system.

The Executive Director mentioned that a seminar with a focus on Crop Trust’s cooperation with the CGIAR genebank is planned for 2022. Donors’ Council members agreed that this would be a great opportunity to meet and discuss these topics further.

Donors’ Council members inquired whether the Crop Trust still prioritizes support to international genebanks. In response, the Executive Director clarified that Article 15 collections remain a key priority to the Crop Trust, as outlined in the Crop Trust Fund Disbursement Strategy.

4. Crop Trust Programs and Technical Work: Supporting the Global System

Ms. Nelissa Jamora, Crop Trust Agricultural Economist, presented an update on Crop Trust programs and technical work. This included updates on the CGIAR Genebank Platform, the Crop Wild Relatives (CWR) project, the Seeds for Resilience project, the global crop conservation strategies project, and BOLD.

The CGIAR genebanks currently manage approximately 736,000 accessions, representing the largest and most widely used collections of crop diversity in the world. In 2020, around 43,000 samples were distributed, mainly to developing countries. From 2016-2020, there was significant progress in making seed samples available for use, with several CGIAR genebanks reaching the 90% target of availability

The Agricultural Economist gave an update on the Genesys PGR data platform. Genesys now has data on over 4 million accessions, 248 germplasm subsets, and 434 characterization evaluation datasets available. The Crop Trust continues to work closely with the Plant Treaty on the Global Information System for PGRFA, to which Genesys is a key contributor.

The Crop Trust and the Genebank Platform are also supporting activities to systematically document the impacts and contributions of the CGIAR genebanks. This includes two journal special editions, one published in 2020 and one to be published in October 2021, with work and

contributions from the Genebank Impact Fellows. The Agricultural Economist reiterated that the Crop Trust has had constructive dialogues with the CGIAR in order to help design the new CGIAR Genebank Initiative.

The Agricultural Economist updated meeting participants that the Crop Wild Relatives (CWR) project is in its last year. National partners achieved their collecting targets, and 3,544 accessions were sent to the Millennium Seed Bank at Kew for long-term storage and onward distribution. Furthermore, the project worked with national genebank partners to complete IT assessments and upgrades. Additionally, pre-breeding projects have been completed for 10 crops, with plans for an additional 9 to be completed in 2021.

The Agricultural Economist provided an update on the pre-breeding project funded by the Templeton World Charity Foundation. Initiated in 2019, the project helps to advance pre-breeding work on grasspea and finger millet. In the first two years of the project, the grasspea reference genome has been resequenced, and a speed breeding platform has been developed with partners in ICARDA and Morocco. The best performing finger millet lines from Kenya are currently being multiplied in other African countries.

The Agricultural Economist gave an update on the Seeds for Resilience project. The project, supported by KfW, works in collaboration with five national genebanks in Africa. Despite COVID-19, all external genebank reviews have been completed and all five genebanks have now received the first disbursement to conduct upgrading activities.

The Agricultural Economist provided an update on the global crop conservation strategies, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL). All consultations for the 15 selected crops have started. The strategies for cucurbitaceae, vanilla, and temperate forages have been published and are publicly available.

The Agricultural Economist provided an update on the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, mentioning that two deposits are to be made in 2021. In June 2021, seven genebanks were able to deposit into Svalbard. The second deposit will happen in late October, involving two first-time depositors, Latvia and Serbia.

The Agricultural Economist also gave an update on the status of genebank operations in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, mentioning that the majority of seeds managed by CGIAR genebanks are safely duplicated. Furthermore, all genebanks are either fully or partially open compared to last year's lockdown and halt of operations. The CGIAR Genebank Platform is working to improve safety duplication numbers and reach the target for safety duplication within the coming years.

The Agricultural Economist provided an overview of the newly launched BOLD project, which is funded by the Norwegian government over the next 10 years. The BOLD project contains five work packages (WP): (1) strengthening national genebanks through capacity and resource development; (2) using new diversity; (3) supporting seed systems; (4) safeguarding seed

samples through safety duplication at Svalbard; (5) celebrating outcomes, creating connections through communications, engagement, and outreach.

The Agricultural Economist ended her presentation by summarizing the Crop Trust project timelines, and thanking Donors' Council members for their support and contributions over the years to make such projects possible.

5. The Urgency of a Global Initiative for Cryopreservation

Ms. Marleen Engbers, Project Development Coordinator, provided an overview of a proposed global initiative for cryopreservation.

The Project Development Coordinator explained that cryopreservation (the storage of plant material in ultracold conditions, using liquid nitrogen at -196°C), is the only method currently available which could be broadly applied for the secure, long-term, stable conservation of clonal and recalcitrant seed crop collections. Although the Svalbard Global Seed Vault acts as a long-term storage facility for seeds, it does not have the ability to store vegetatively propagated plant material.

As of now, clonally propagated crop collections are mainly conserved in the field or *in vitro* in genebanks. These collections can be vulnerable and expensive. The Project Development Coordinator explained the advantages of cryopreservation over such methods, highlighting that cryopreservation provides long-term, secure storage with minimal maintenance. Additionally, it is more energy efficient and cost-effective.

The Project Development Coordinator explained that the need for cryopreservation has been further highlighted by the pandemic. She then introduced the idea of a Global Cryopreservation Initiative for Clonal and Recalcitrant Crops, which was developed jointly between the CGIAR and the Crop Trust with support also by the Plant Treaty Secretariat. The initiative focuses on seven Annex 1 crops (as defined by the Plant Treaty), and three crops not listed in Annex 1. The initiative foresees the development of Cryo Regional Centers of Excellence/Capacity (hubs). Hubs will focus on capacity building, knowledge sharing and support to national programmes.

The Project Development Coordinator explained that donor support will be needed to finance these investments. Furthermore, there needs to be a strengthened network of stakeholders, as well as strengthened communications and outreach initiatives.

The Project Development Coordinator ended her presentation by emphasizing the need for political as well as financial support in order to make the initiative successful.

6. Report on Crop Trust Finances: Investment Management and Revised Budget 2021

Ms. Janet Muir, Director of Finance, presented the Finance and Investment report and the Revised Budget for 2021. This provided Donors' Council members with an overview of the activities of the Finance & Investment Committee (FIC) since its last report to the Donors' Council in October 2020.

The Director of Finance opened the presentation by describing the members of the FIC, and noted that the Crop Trust continues to work with the investment managers DWS and Mercer. Additionally, the Director of Finance mentioned that the Crop Trust recently went out to tender for a new outsourced Chief Investment Officer, and the preferred candidate will be recommended to the Executive Board for selection in late October.

Ms. Muir provided details on the Crop Trust's Endowment Fund investments. The total value of the endowment fund as at 30 June 2021, including the KfW loan proceeds, amounted to USD 388 million (USD 365 million in December 2020). Contributions to the endowment in 2021 were received from Germany, USAID, New Zealand, Limagran and India. The total return for the year to date of the USD Fund amounted to 7.5%, against a policy benchmark of 6.4%. Since the appointment of the investment managers in 2016, Mercer had an annual real return of 11.3% and DWS of 7.8%.

The EUR Fund, which is composed of the KfW loan and the contributions received to pay the loan interest, also performed positively for the year to date in 2021, with a 2.4% return on investment against a policy benchmark of 1.6%. Since inception (2017), the EUR Fund received a 3.8% return against a policy benchmark of 2.9%. Repayment of the KfW loan will start in November 2022.

The Director of Finance highlighted that the market value of the Endowment Fund is greater than the sum of the contributions received despite the withdrawal of USD 57 million, since 2005, to support the Genebank Platform and Crop Trust operations.

Ms. Muir presented a balanced Revised Budget for 2021 and provided a variance analysis of the revised budget against the original Executive Board-approved budget for 2021 based on an analysis of actual expenditure to 31 July 2021 and projected expenditure for the remainder of the year, following consultation with budget-holders.

Ms. Muir highlighted that the Annual Budget for 2022 has not yet been finalized, as discussions are still underway in regards to future support to CGIAR genebanks once the Platform has ended. Once finalized, the Annual Budget for 2022 will be circulated to Donors' Council members for information.

7. Investing in the Future of Food: Innovative Finance and Food Security Bond - Update

The Director of Finance updated Donors' Council members on innovative finance initiatives. The Crop Trust continues to have bilateral discussions with respect to the Food Security Bond (FSB).

In addition, a new financing strategy will be developed under the new GIZ-funded “Strategic Development of the Crop Trust” project. Also, a new staff member responsible for innovative finance will join the Crop Trust Secretariat in mid-October.

8. Conclusions and Next Steps

The Chair opened the floor for any remaining questions or comments. The Netherlands questioned whether the Crop Trust will work with CGIAR genebanks through bilateral contributions in the future. The Director of Finance explained that the Crop Trust provides all of its funding for routine operations through bilateral Long-term Grants (LTGs) or Long-term Partnership Agreements (LPAs) and the priority is to use the Endowment Fund to support international genebanks.

Australia inquired how the Crop Trust incorporates climate change into its priorities. The Executive Director emphasized that the conservation and availability of plant genetic resources for the future of food security has become increasingly important due to the threat of climate change. There is now, more than ever, additional pressure to utilize the diversity conserved in order to breed new varieties that will be able to withstand the consequences of climate change. The Crop Trust reflects this in its partnerships with genebanks throughout its programmatic work.

The Netherlands took the floor to update Donors’ Council members on the Inclusive Seed Systems proposal launched at the United Nations Food Systems Summit. The initiative is based on the creation of a platform for dialogue in which all seed system actors can come together to exchange knowledge, viewpoints and capacity building. The Netherlands invited Donors’ Council members to join the platform.

The Chair thanked all participants, mentioning he looks forward to seeing Donors’ Council members at the next meeting in the Spring of 2022. The Chair closed the meeting.

Annex 1: List of Participants

Affiliation	Name	Role
Australia	Fiona Lynn	Director, Agriculture and Food Security Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Brazil	Mariana Marshall	Alternate Permanent Representative of Brazil to FAO, WFP, and IFAD
Canada	Julie Emond	Alternative Permanent Representative of Canada to the Food and Agriculture Agencies of the U.N.
CropLife International	Dominic Mulydermans	Senior Legal Consultant IGO Affairs
Czechia	Vlastimil Zedek	Head of Unit of Renewable Energy Sources and Environmental Strategies, Dept of the Environment and Organic Farming, Ministry of Ag
Egypt	Dr. Megahed Ammar	Deputy Director for Research Affairs, Field Crops Research Institute (FCRI), Agricultural Research Center, Egypt.
European Union	Cara Stauss	Seconded National Expert Delegation of the European Union to the Holy See to the Order of Malta and to the UN Organisations in Rome and to the Republic of San Marino
European Union	Goda Milasiute	Intern
FAO	Rene Castro	Assistant Director General of Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water Dept.
FAO	Dan Leskien	Senior Liaison Officer of the Secretariat of the Commission on Genetic Resources
FAO	Hans Hoogeveen	Independent Chair of the FAO Council
Germany, KfW	Freya Negenborn	Project Director
Germany, BLE	Imke Thormann	Senior Officer for Plant Genetic Resources
Germany, BMZ	Rene Franke	Senior Policy Officer, Agricultural Research and Innovation
Germany, BMEL	Beate Madan	Officer
Germany, BMZ	Sebastian Lesch	Head of International Agricultural Policy, Agriculture and Innovation
India	Vijaya Lakshmi Nadendla	Joint Secretary (Seeds), Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
International Seed Federation	Michael Keller	Secretary General
International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture	Álvaro Toledo	Deputy Secretary
International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture	Kent Nnadozie	Secretary
Netherlands, MoA	Kim van Seeters	Senior Policy Officer, European Agricultural and Fisheries Policies and Food Security

Norway	Daniel van Gilst	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad Department for Climate, Energy, and Environment, Senior Advisor
Oak Spring Garden Foundation	Peter Crane	President
Spain	Gonzalo Eiriz	Deputy Director General for Analysis, Coordination and Statistics at the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Switzerland	Bruce Campbell	Programme Manager, Global Food Security, Global Cooperation Department, SDC
Republic of Korea	Taek-Ryoun Kwon	Director General, Technology Cooperation Bureau, Rural Development Administration (RDA)
United States of America	Robert Bertram	Chief Scientist, Bureau for Resilience and Food Security
Crop Trust	Stefan Schmitz	Executive Director
Crop Trust	Dezreen Cameron-Stein	Finance and Investment Manager
Crop Trust	Hannes Dempewolf	Director of External Affairs
Crop Trust	Charlotte Lusty	Head of Programs
Crop Trust	Nelissa Jamora	Agricultural Economist
Crop Trust	Marleen Engbers	Project Development Coordinator
Crop Trust	Rodrigo Barrios	Strategic Partnerships Manager
Crop Trust	Isbandiyar Valiyev	Partnerships Assistant
Crop Trust	Bailey Cate	Partnerships Assistant
Crop Trust	Shaliz Barzani	Partnerships Fellow

Annex 2: Meeting Agenda

24th Meeting of the Crop Trust Donors' Council Agenda

7 October 2021

Videoconference

Time (CET)	Topic
12:00	1. Welcome, Introduction and Adoption of Agenda and Minutes Approval of the minutes from the 23rd Donors' Council meeting held on 29 October 2020 Hans Hoogevan , Chair of the Crop Trust Donors' Council
12:05	2. Donors' Council Business and Elections Hans Hoogevan , Chair of the Crop Trust Donors' Council and Stefan Schmitz , Executive Director of the Crop Trust
12:15	3. Oral Update by the Executive Director: Towards a "Global Genebank Partnership" Stefan Schmitz , Executive Director
12:45	4. Crop Trust Programs and Technical Work: Supporting the Global System Nelissa Jamora , Agricultural Economist
13:15	5. The Urgency of a Global Initiative for Cryopreservation Marleen Engbers , Project Development Coordinator
13:30	6. Report on Crop Trust Finances: Investment Management and Revised Budget 2021 Janet Muir , Director of Finance
14:00	7. Investing in the Future of Food: Innovative Finance and Food Security Bond - Update Janet Muir , Director of Finance
14:15	8. Conclusions and Next Steps