**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

**The International Treaty**
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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| **INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE** |
| **FIFTH MEETING OF THE AD HOC TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE** |
| **4 – 7 October 2021** |
| **OUTCOMES OF THE ONLINE SURVEY ON THE USE, RELEVANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TOOLBOX FOR SUSTAINABLE USE OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE** |

## I.     Introduction

1.     Recognizing the need to enhance activities relevant to the goals of Article 6 of the International Treaty, and to address specific constraints identified as negatively affecting the capacity of national and regional programmes for its effective implementation, the Governing Body of the Treaty requested the development of a toolbox to assist countries in designing and implementing measures to promote sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).

2.     The Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA (Toolbox) is an online resource dedicated to the management and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA). The Toolbox contains resources such as publications, reports, research and studies, and other related information resources. These information resources come from development organizations, research and academic institutions, intergovernmental bodies, international agricultural research systems, and government bodies across the globe.

3.     Since its launch in 2017, the Toolbox has been populated with technical and policy information and other relevant resources. Information resources are available in three languages: English, French, and Spanish. Currently, there are about 1581 resources provided in the Toolbox. [1]

4.     The Governing Body, at its Eighth Session, decided to convene the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of PGRFA (ACSU). [2] One of its tasks is to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the Toolbox and prepare concrete recommendations on how it can be monitored, evaluated and improved in order to better guide Contracting Parties and stakeholders for the sustainable use of PGRFA.

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[1] As of 3 August 2021
[2] Report on the Eighth Session of the Governing Body, Rome, Italy, 11 – 16 November 2019: http://www.fao.org/3/nb918en/nb918en.pdf

5.      In the absence of a monitoring tool for the webpage use and feedback mechanism, the Secretariat proposed the idea of conducting a survey on the usage, relevance, and effectiveness of the Toolbox. During an informal briefing of the members of the ACSU, they welcomed the proposal to launch a survey to evaluate the usage, relevance, and effectiveness of the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA, as well as to gather suggestions for its further improvement.

6.      In April 2021, the Secretariat conducted a survey to assess the usage, relevance, and effectiveness of the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA and to gather suggestions for its further improvement. The survey was circulated to Contracting Parties, farmers' organizations, researchers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and other interested stakeholders.

7.      Forty-nine individuals – the majority being from Contracting Parties, from different regions responded to the survey. Overall, the respondents found the Toolbox to contain information resources relevant to their work on sustainable use of PGRFA. The respondents also provided valuable feedback on how to further improve the utility of the Toolbox.

### III.      Methodology

8.      The Secretariat developed a questionnaire consisting of fifteen questions, and used an online survey tool. The online survey was made available in four languages: Arabic, French, English and Spanish. The survey questionnaire is presented in the *Annex* to this document.[3]

9.      The online survey was circulated through a notification sent out to Contracting Parties and stakeholders.[4]  The notification was also circulated through the social media channels of the International Treaty.

10.     The online survey was made available from 13 to 30 April 2021.

### IV.      Results

11.     Forty-nine respondents took part in this survey and their geographical distribution was as follows: Europe (11), Africa (10), Latin America and the Caribbean (10), Asia (8), Near East (5), North America (2) and South West Pacific (2). One respondent opted not to answer this question (Figure 1).

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[3] English version of the online survey questionnaire

[4] Notification of the Online Survey on the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/notifications/detail-events/en/c/1394538/
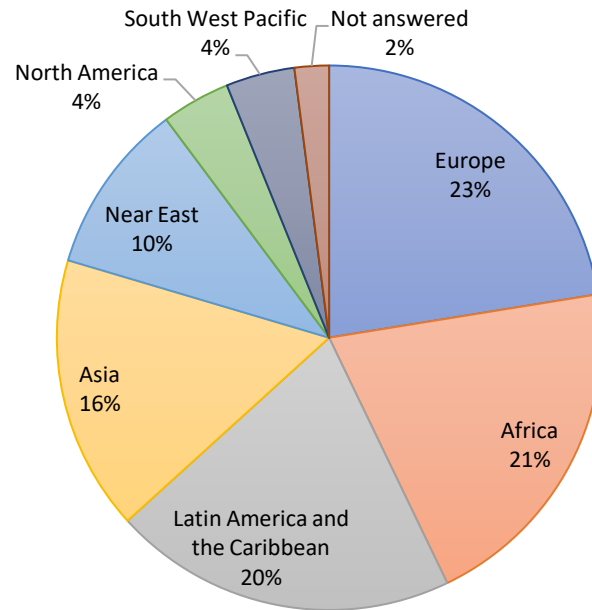
*Figure 1: Geographical distribution of respondents.*

12.     The majority of the respondents were from Contracting Parties (43%), agricultural research and academic institutions (31%), and the rest of the respondents were from different categories of stakeholders (Figure 2). However, there is no recorded respondent from the farmers' organizations and indigenous communities.
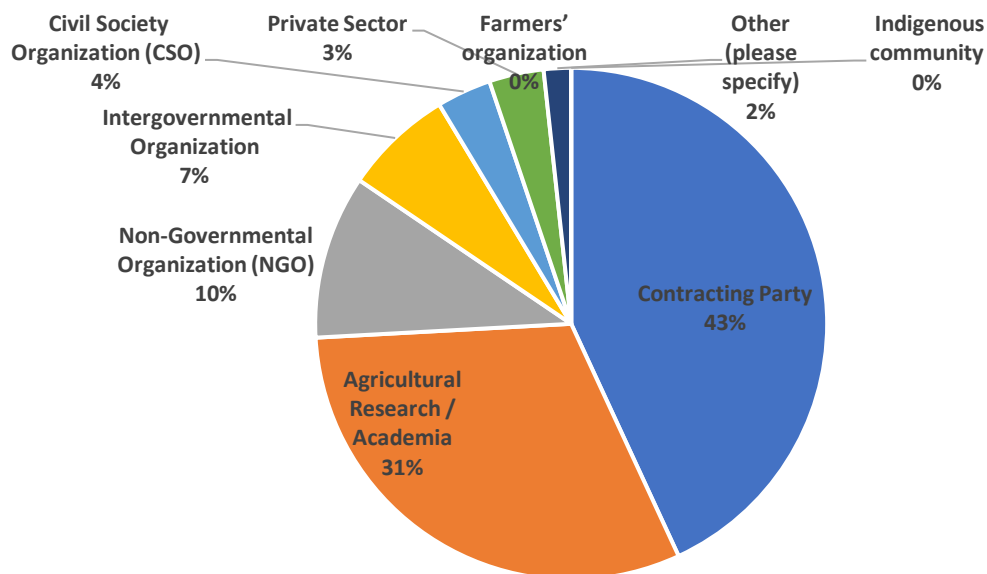


*Figure 2: Constituencies of respondents*

13.    The respondents were affiliated to different organizations and institutions operating at different levels: national (61%), regional (15%), global (12%), and at community/local level (12%). It should be noted that this was a multiple-choice question hence, some respondents' organizations may operate at different levels (Figure 3).
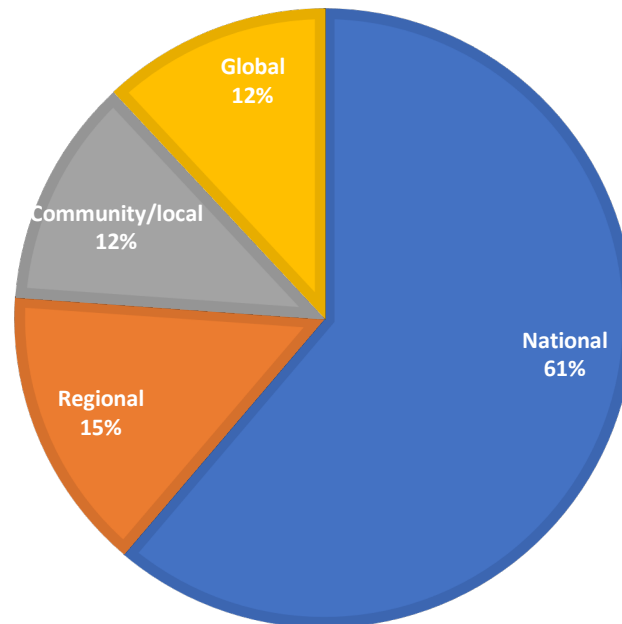


*Figure 3: Geographical operation of respondents and/or their organization(s).*

14.    Thirty-two respondents (65%) had previously used the Toolbox while seventeen respondents (35%) had not accessed the Toolbox prior to this survey (Figure 4).
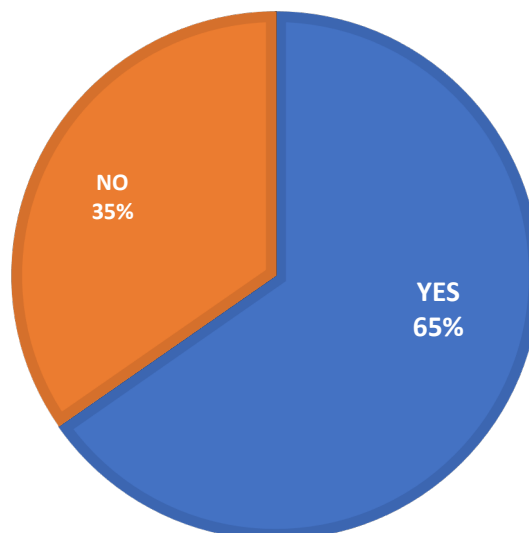


*Figure 4: Respondents who had accessed the Toolbox website prior to the survey.*

15.     Out of the thirty-two respondents who had accessed the Toolbox, 56% had used it only once while the remaining 44% had used it two to five times (Figure 5).
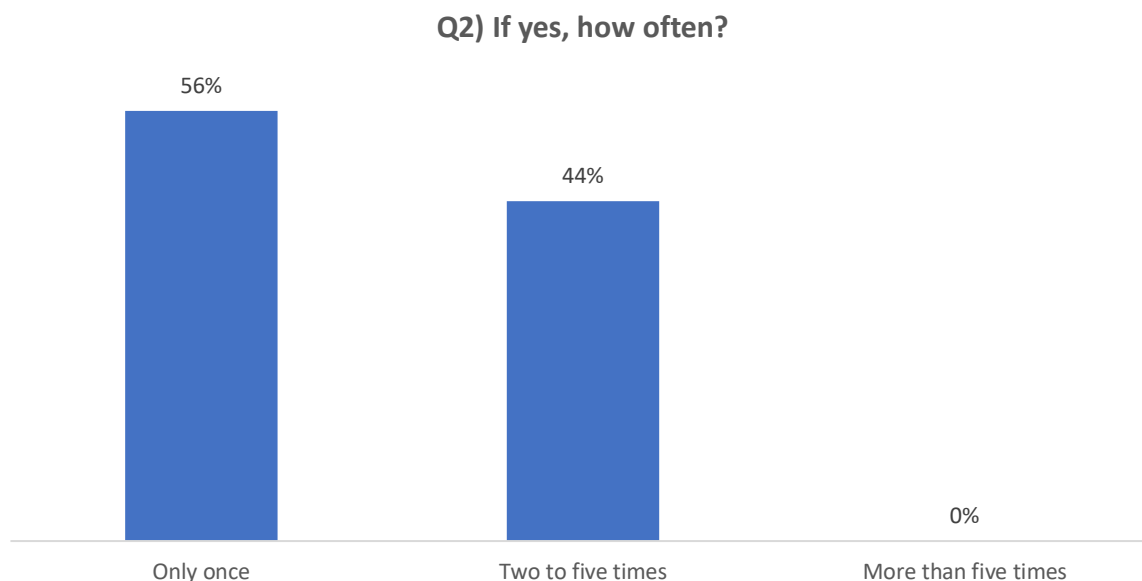
**Q2) If yes, how often?**



*Figure 5: Number of times the respondents accessed the Toolbox website*

16.     The respondents' purpose of using the Toolbox are: to seek information or guidance on policies, strategies and activities on sustainable use of PGRFA; to support advocacy and promotion of sustainable use of PGRFA; to support research, extension work and awareness-raising on the importance of local crop genetic resources; to access recent information on best practices, experiences and lessons learned on sustainable use of PGRFA; to find learning materials/education materials for teaching purposes; and for other purposes such as familiarizing themselves with the Toolbox (Figure 6).
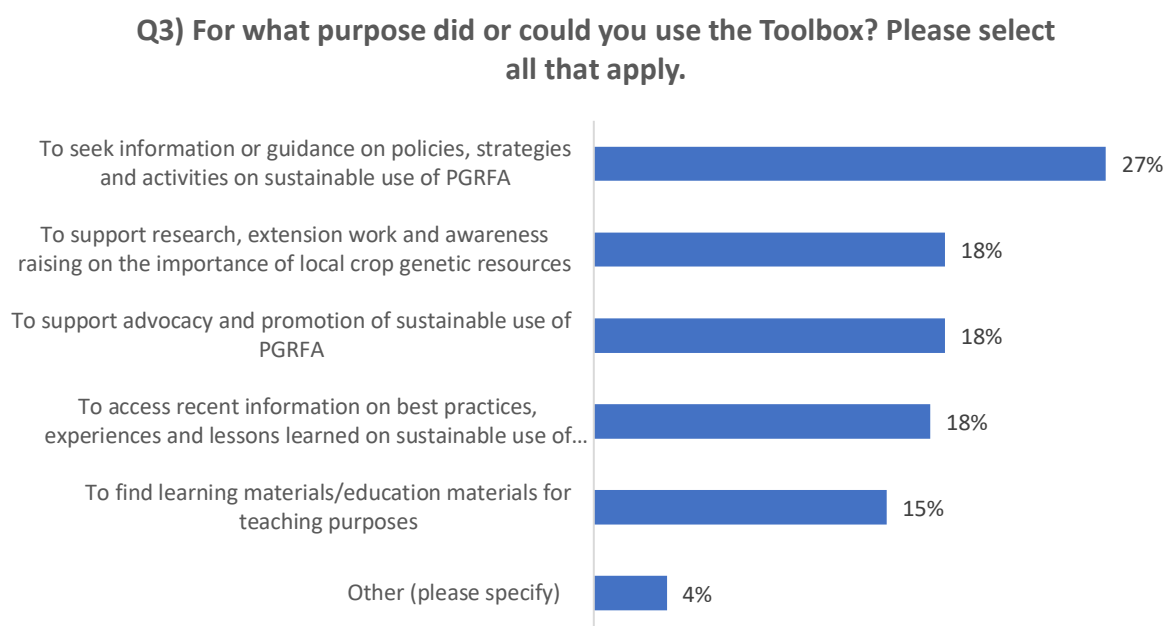
**Q3) For what purpose did or could you use the Toolbox? Please select all that apply.**



*Figure 6: Purpose of accessing the Toolbox.*

17.    The Toolbox contains many different resource types and, based on respondents' feedback, their importance can be ranked (from first to last) in the following order: case studies, publications/reports, articles/presentation, learning materials, database/platform, videos, slide shows, audio clips and webinars, methods, tools and lastly, multimedia (Table 1).

**Q4) Which of the following resource type(s) do you find most useful and relevant to your work on sustainable Use of PGRFA? Please select all that apply.**

*Table 1: Resource type(s) that are useful and relevant to the respondents' work on sustainable use of PGRFA.*

| Type of Resources available | Number of selections | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Case studies | 34 | 16% |
| Publications/Reports | 34 | 16% |
| Articles/Presentation | 33 | 15% |
| Learning materials | 29 | 13% |
| Database/Platform | 22 | 10% |
| Videos, slide shows, audio clips and webinars | 21 | 9% |
| Methods | 19 | 9% |
| Tools | 14 | 6% |
| Multimedia | 13 | 6% |
| **TOTAL** | **219** | **100%** |

18.    The Toolbox has two primary thematic components, "Sustaining local crop diversity" and "Policy for sustainable use."  Sixty-nine percent of the respondents find both of these components to be useful and relevant in their work. In contrast, the remaining 31% of the respondents have chosen one or the other components as useful and relevant to their work, i.e., 19% of the respondents have chosen "sustaining local crop diversity." Some 12% have chosen the "policy for sustainable use" (Figure 7).

**Q5) Which of the primary components of the Toolbox do you find more useful to your work?**
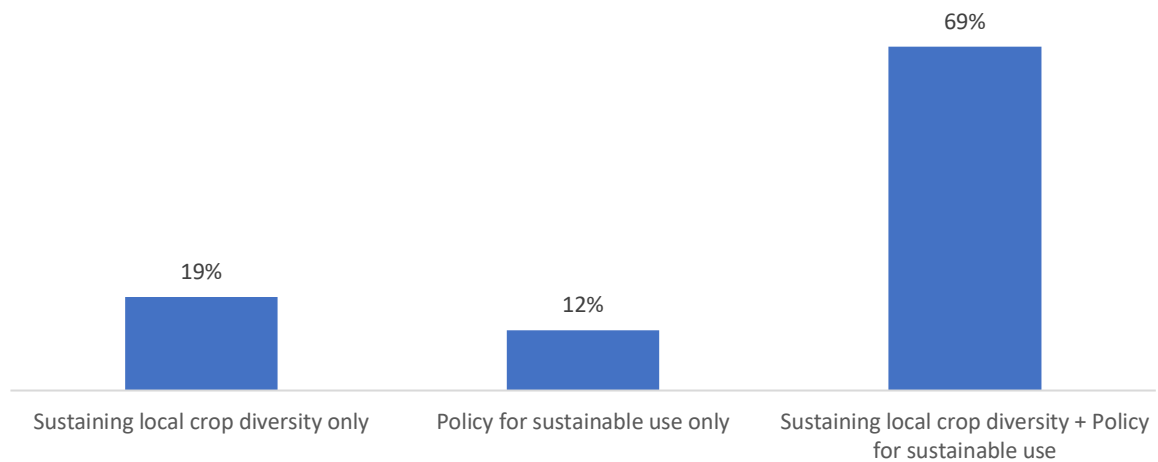


*Figure 7: Components of the Toolbox that the respondents find it useful.*

19.       The Toolbox is divided into seven subject areas. Based on the respondents' feedback, the subject areas of relevance to their work can be enumerated (from most to least) in the following order: policy for conservation of PGRFA, promoting local crop diversity, enhancing crop diversity for local needs, strengthening seed systems, access and benefit-sharing policy, policy to recognize the role of farmers and local communities and integration of policy for sustainable use into national frameworks. It should be noted that 13% of the respondents find all the subject areas to be relevant in their work on sustainable use of PGRFA (Figure 8).

**Q6) Which of the following subject areas do you find most relevant in your work? Please select all that apply.**
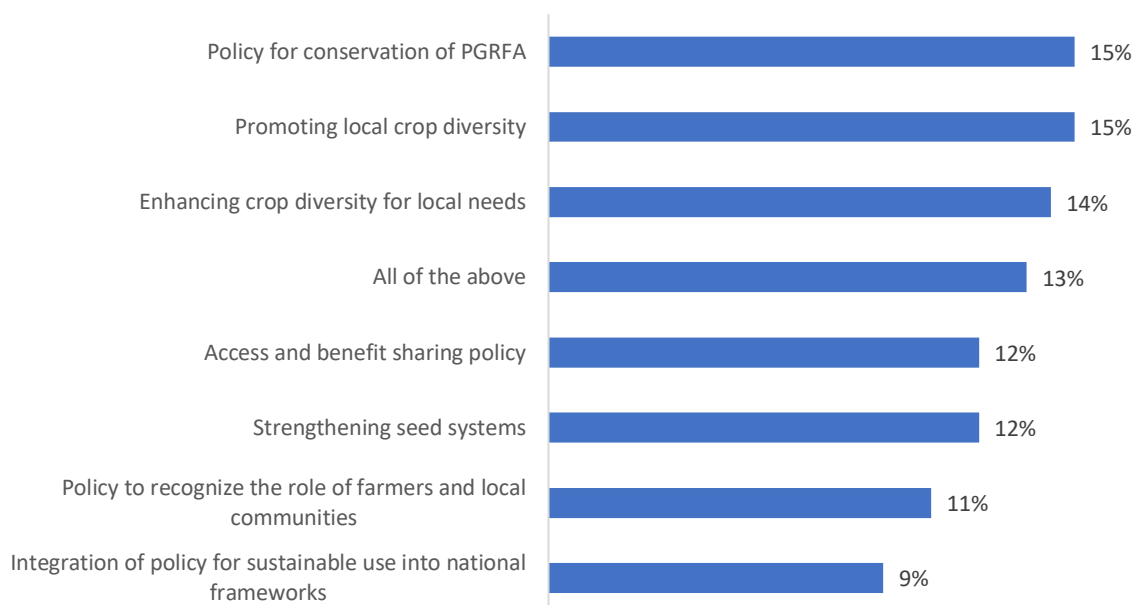


*Figure 8: Subject areas in the Toolbox that are relevant to the respondents' work on PGRFA.*

20. The Toolbox has the following subject categories: access and benefit-sharing, community seed banks, crowdsourcing, developing the value chain, enhancing local capacity, evolutionary plant breeding, farmers' rights, financial and incentive mechanisms, gender-related content, improving the knowledge base for local crop diversity, integrated seed sector development, participatory plant breeding, raising awareness on local crop diversity value, seed policy, seed quality assurance, smallholder seed enterprises, strategies and action plans, the role of genebanks, and recently, COVID-19 was added as a new subject category. The respondents' views on the relevance on all the categories (Figure 9).

**Q7) Which of the following subject categories do you find most relevant in your work? Please select all that apply.**

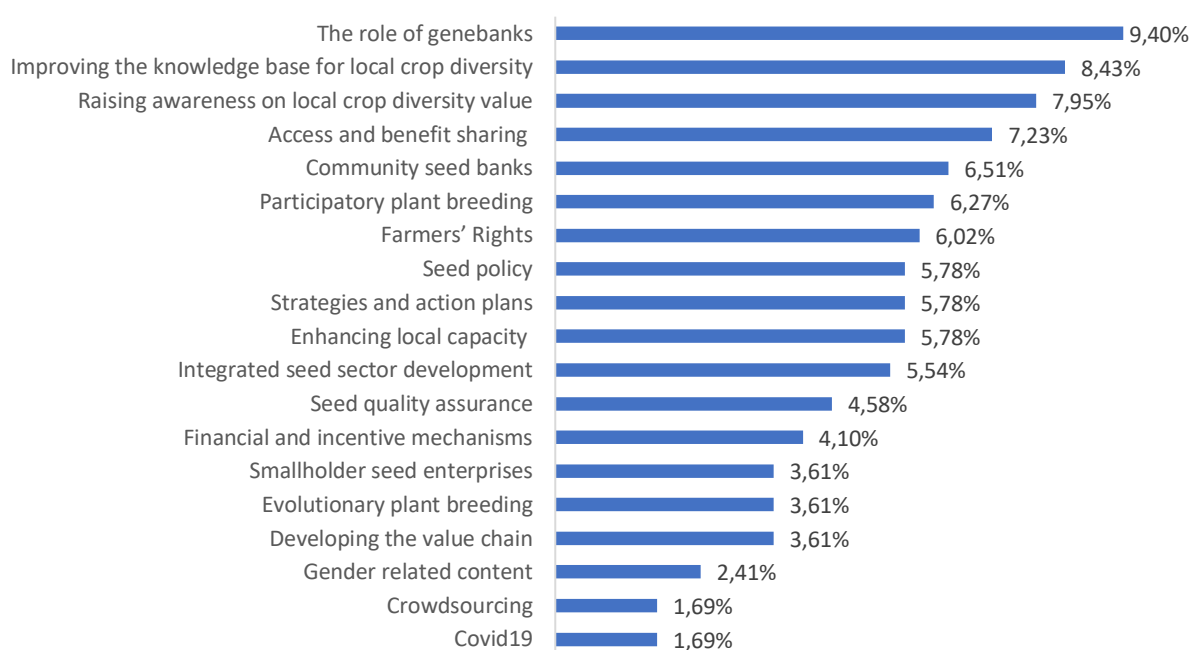| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| The role of genebanks | 9,40% |
| Improving the knowledge base for local crop diversity | 8,43% |
| Raising awareness on local crop diversity value | 7,95% |
| Access and benefit sharing | 7,23% |
| Community seed banks | 6,51% |
| Participatory plant breeding | 6,27% |
| Farmers' Rights | 6,02% |
| Seed policy | 5,78% |
| Strategies and action plans | 5,78% |
| Enhancing local capacity | 5,78% |
| Integrated seed sector development | 5,54% |
| Seed quality assurance | 4,58% |
| Financial and incentive mechanisms | 4,10% |
| Smallholder seed enterprises | 3,61% |
| Evolutionary plant breeding | 3,61% |
| Developing the value chain | 3,61% |
| Gender related content | 2,41% |
| Crowdsourcing | 1,69% |
| Covid19 | 1,69% |

*Figure 9: Subject categories in the Toolbox that are relevant to the respondents' work on PGRFA.*

21. Eighty-seven per cent of the respondents find the subject areas and categories in the Toolbox to be adequate for their work in sustainable use of PGRFA (Figure 10). Whereas the remaining 13% percent of the respondents indicated that the toolbox does not cover an adequate range of "subject categories/areas" they needed to support their work in the field of sustainable use of PGRFA. These respondents have provided their suggestions as to what they thought was missing or needed to be included. Below, are the suggestions received, and enumerated in no specific order or ranking:

- Categories are adequate but content can be improved and regularly updated;
- The need for additional category on linkages between formal and informal seed systems;
- The role of the private breeding sector and their contribution to sustainable use of PGRFA;
- The need to include information on crop wild relatives and wild edible species;

- Missing or the need to have sufficient information on seed system dynamics, transitions from underdeveloped to developed systems, as well as information resources on the economics of seed systems especially in an international context;
- Information on traditional crops may need to be included;
- Information about traditional crop rehabilitation could be added, where researchers in genebanks can study the characteristics of the resources by evaluating them and determining the good traits, especially what suits the local tastes, market demands, and redeploying their cultivation among farmers, especially in areas of small holdings and for local varieties that have deteriorated and their use has decreased; and
- Information on training courses or postgraduate studies for developing countries in the field of sustainable use of PGRFA.

**Q8) Does the toolbox cover an adequate range of subject categories / areas needed to support your work in the field of sustainable use of PGRFA?**



NO
13%

YES
87%

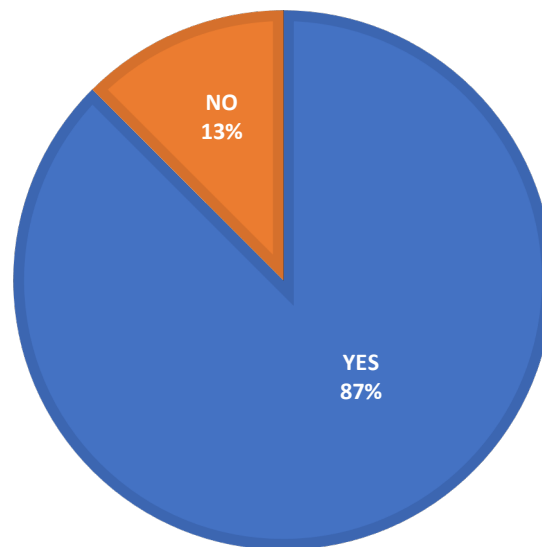*Figure 10: Adequacy of the range subject categories/areas needed to support the respondent's work in sustainable use of PGRFA.*

22.     Overall, 84% of the respondents find the Toolbox to contain information resources very relevant to their work on sustainable use of PGRFA while 10% and 6 % consider the resources to be somewhat relevant and not so relevant to their work, respectively (Figure 11).

**Q10) Does the Toolbox contain information resources relevant to your work on sustainable Use of PGRFA?**
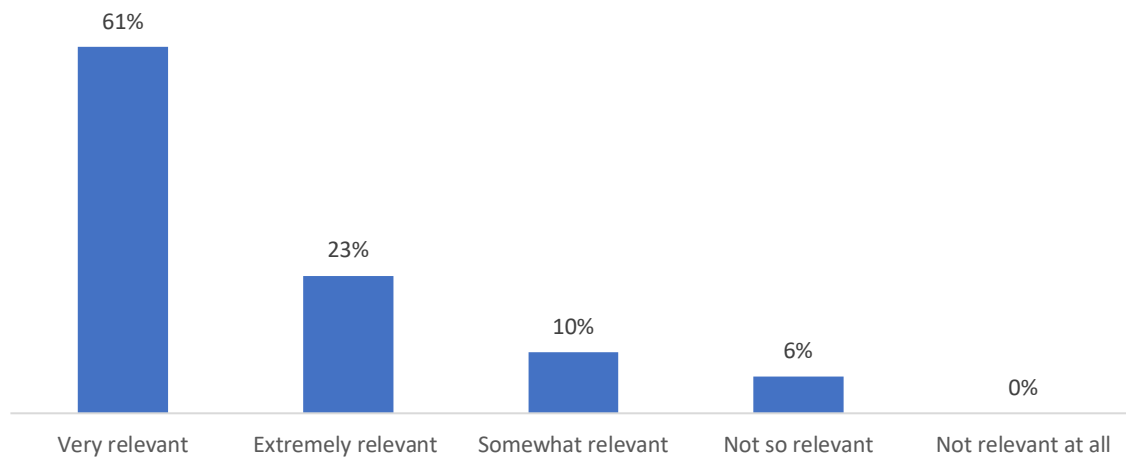


*Figure 11: Relevance of the information resources found in the Toolbox for the respondents' work on sustainable use of PGRFA.*

23.      Ninety-two per cent of the respondents find the Toolbox to contain knowledge and resources that can improve their understanding on sustainable use of PGRFA whereas the rest of the respondents (8%) were neutral (Figure 12).

**Q11)  Does the Toolbox contain knowledge and information that improve understanding on sustainable use of PGRFA?**



*Figure 12: The Toolbox containing knowledge and information that can improve understanding on sustainable use of PGRFA.*

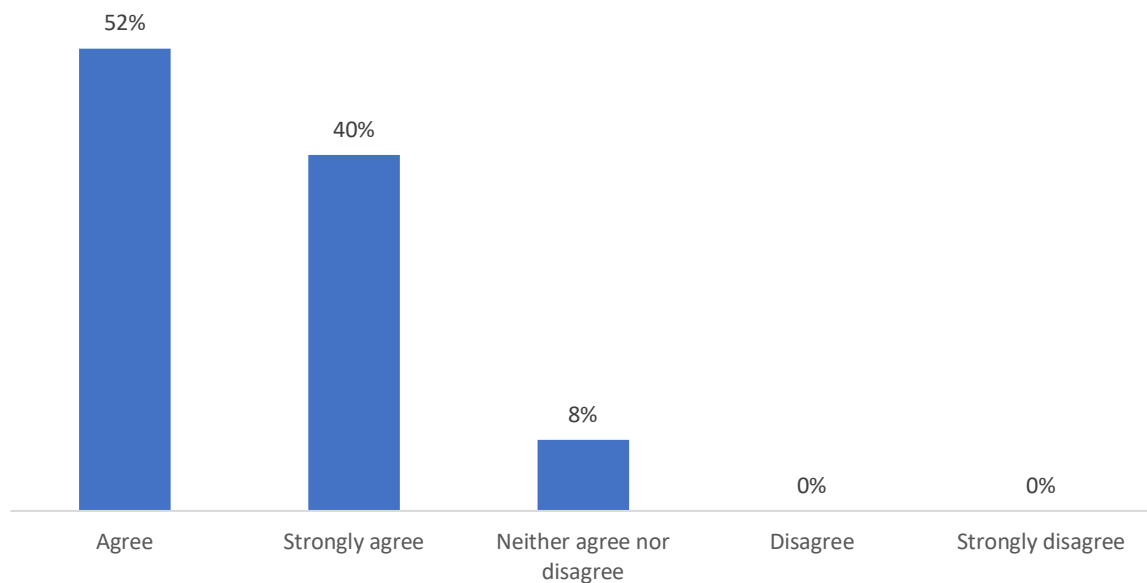24.      On the ease of navigating the Toolbox, only 12% of the respondents experienced some technical difficulties (Figure 13). They provided feedback to help improve their experience while using this database.

**Q12) On navigating the Toolbox, did you experience any technical difficulties?**
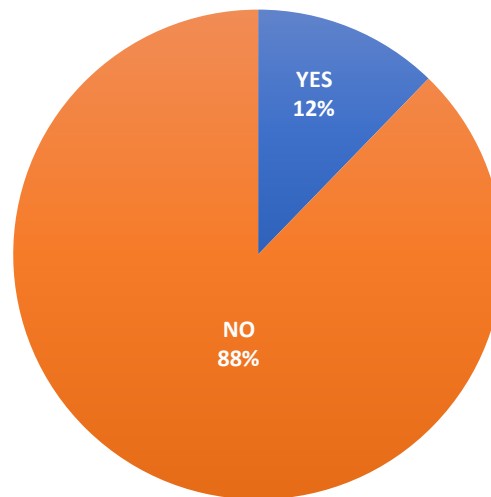


*Figure 13: Respondents who experienced technical difficulties while using the Toolbox.*

25.      Majority of the respondents highlighted the need for the Toolbox be updated on a regular basis and made more user-friendly. Specific suggestions on how it can be improved to support their work, are summarized and enumerated below in no specific order or ranking:

- Creating an advanced search function with filter on the topics;
- Users would benefit from a more detailed presentation of the results, on the results page, to include the publication year, author (along with Subject area and Subject category);
- A download function of the full citations would be useful to do a first screening and selecting of results;
- Checking for potentially outdated resources;
- Inclusion of information and material on the contribution of the private seed sector to sustainable use, this information to be visible and searchable under relevant categories/subjects;
- Promote and disseminate the use of the Toolbox including by conducting virtual training workshops;
- Include information on conservation strategies and resources on access and benefit-sharing and Farmers' Rights;
- Carry out reviews (and validate with users and potential users) of the toolbox on a regular basis so as to incorporate new ideas;
- Select only the best and relevant resources for PGRFA;
- Make the Toolbox more visual or interactive, more user friendly, develop a manual on how new users can use of the tool;
- Ensure that the information is accurate, objective, and up-to-date.

- The greater value of the Toolbox is heuristic rather than providing guidance;
- Link the Toolbox with the GLIS Portal and avoid duplication;
- Make the Toolbox available *offline* for those who do not have reliable access to the internet; and
- Include a feedback form for the users.

26.     Finally, on rating their experience using the Toolbox, 27% of respondents were very satisfied, and more than half of the respondents expressed being somewhat satisfied (56%), 9% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and the rest (8%) were dissatisfied (Figure 14). In this particular question, most of the respondents provided suggestions that could improve the Toolbox. In addition, some of them provided a list of links for additional resources that they would like to be made available in the Toolbox.

**Q13) Overall, how would you rate your experience using the Toolbox?**

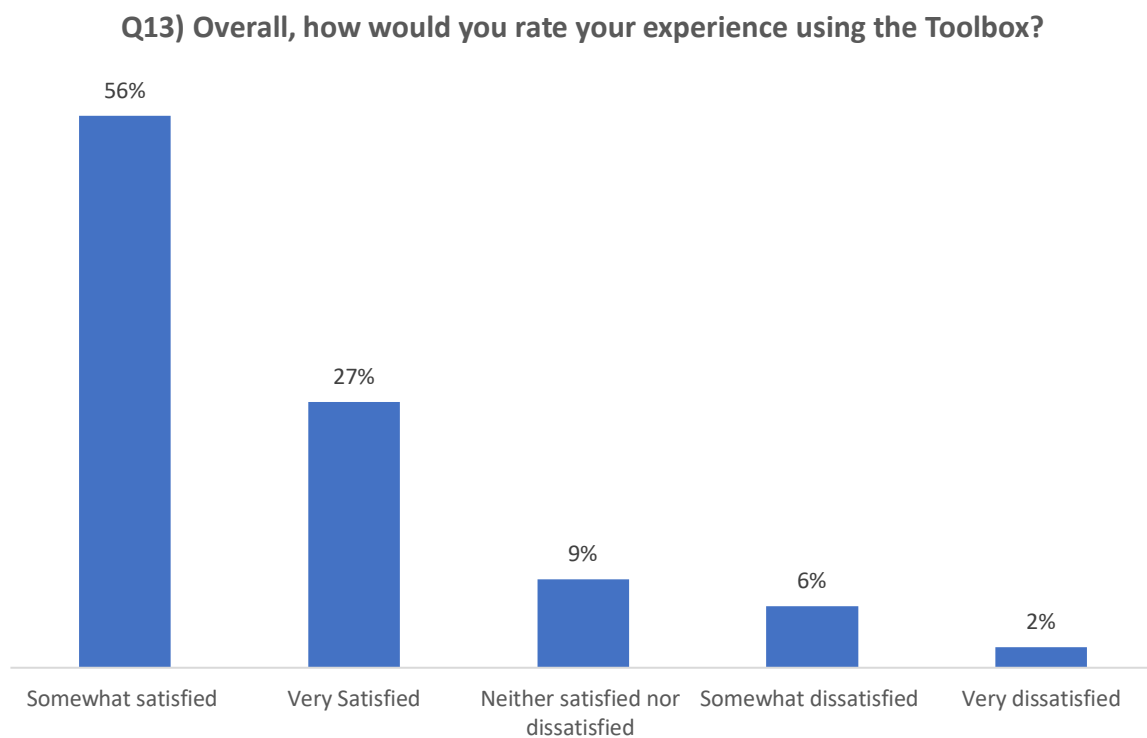| Somewhat satisfied | Very Satisfied | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | Somewhat dissatisfied | Very dissatisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 56% | 27% | 9% | 6% | 2% |

*Figure 14: Respondents' overall experience of using the Toolbox.*

*Annex*

## Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA – Feedback Survey

Recognizing the need to enhance activities relevant to the goals of Article 6 of the International Treaty, and to address specific constraints identified as negatively affecting the capacity of national and regional programmes for its effective implementation, the Governing Body of the Treaty requested the development of a toolbox to assist countries in designing and implementing measures to promote sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA). The needs of various stakeholders involved in different aspects of PGRFA use have been gathered and documented through surveys and consultations, and used as the basis for developing the online system—the **Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA.**

At its Eighth Session, the Governing Body decided to reconvene the Ad hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of PGRFA (ACSU). One of its tasks is to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the Toolbox.[5]

In this context, this survey is aimed at gathering information on the usage, relevance, and effectiveness of the Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA, as well as suggestions for its further improvement. The results of the survey will be consolidated, analysed, and presented at the fifth meeting of the ACSU, in June 2021.

Contracting Parties and stakeholders including individuals, public and private entities, networks, researchers, and indigenous and local communities and farmers are invited to take part in this survey, to share views and feedback on the Toolbox.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete and will be open **from 10 to 30 April 2021**.

If you have any questions, please contact the Secretariat through: PGRFA-Treaty@fao.org or Mario.Marino@fao.org

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|---|---|
| **I. RESPONDENT'S INFORMATION** | |

1. **Please provide your name, affiliation (if applicable) and email address. Please be assured that no identifiable personal data will be published.**

| Surname | |
|---|---|
| Given name | |
| Position | |
| Affiliation (institution) | |
| Email address | |
| Country | |

2. **To which constituency do you belong?**

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[5] http://www.fao.org/3/nb783en/nb783en.pdf

☐ Contracting Party

☐ Intergovernmental Organization

☐ Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)

☐ Civil Society Organization (CSO)

☐ Private Sector

☐ Agricultural Research / Academia

☐ Farmers' organization

☐ Indigenous community

☐ Other (please specify) _____

3. **At which geographic level does your organization (or you as an individual) operate mainly? You may select more than one.**

☐ Community/local

☐ National

☐ Regional

☐ Global

## II. THE TOOLBOX FOR SUSTAINABLE USE OF PGRFA

**If you have not done so previously, please have a look at the <u>Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA</u>.**

It covers two major topics i.e. <u>Sustaining local crop diversity</u> and <u>Policy for Sustainable Use</u>, and several subject areas and subject categories as shown in the image below.
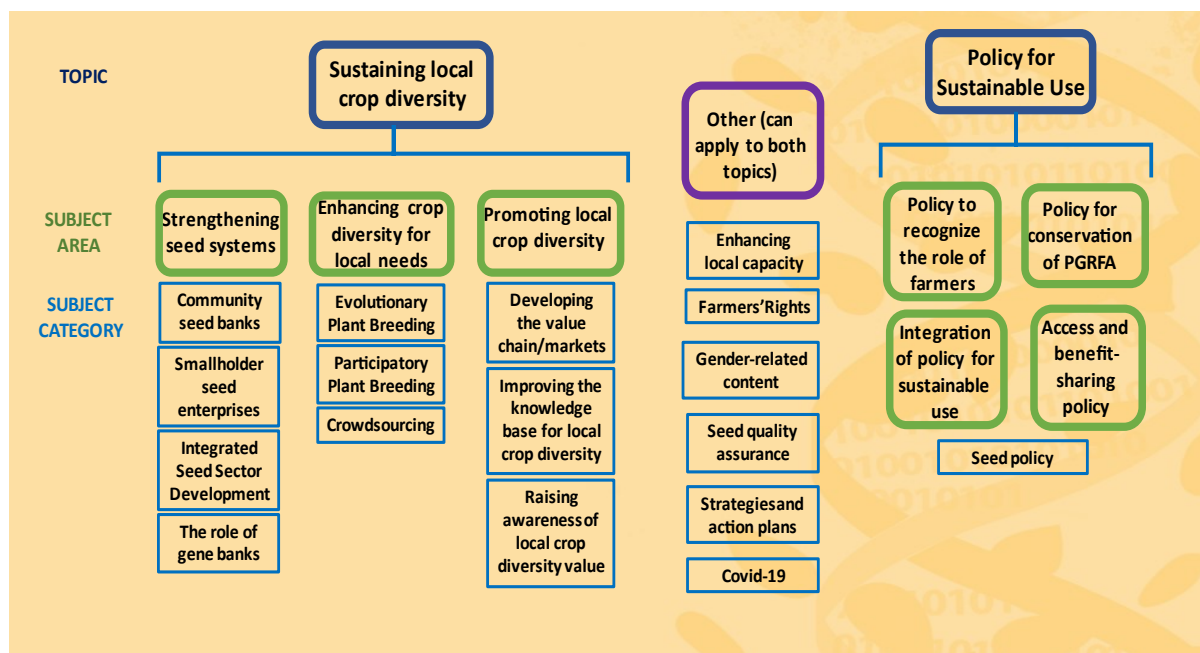
As of 4 March 2021, it contains 1330 resources:

- 949 <u>English</u> resources
- 171 <u>French</u> resources
- 210 <u>Spanish</u> resources

1. **Prior to this survey, have you accessed the Toolbox website?**
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

2. **If yes, how often?**
   - ☐ Only once
   - ☐ Two to five times
   - ☐ More than five times

3. **For what purpose did or could you use the Toolbox? Please select all that apply.**
   - ☐ To seek information or guidance on policies, strategies and activities on sustainable use of PGRFA
   - ☐ To access recent information on best practices, experiences and lessons learned on sustainable use of PGRFA
   - ☐ To support advocacy and promotion of sustainable use of PGRFA
   - ☐ To support research, extension work and awareness raising on the importance of local crop genetic resources
   - ☐ To find learning materials/education materials for teaching purposes
   - ☐ Other (please specify)

4. **Which of the following <u>resource type(s)</u> do you find most useful and relevant to your work on sustainable Use of PGRFA? Please select all that apply.**
   - ☐ Articles/Presentation

☐ Case studies
☐ Database/Platform
☐ Learning materials
☐ Methods
☐ Multimedia
☐ Videos, slide shows, audio clips and webinars
☐ Publications/Reports
☐ Tools

5. **Which of the primary components of the Toolbox do you find more useful to your work?**
   ☐ Sustaining local crop diversity
   ☐ Policy for sustainable use
   ☐ Both

6. **Which of the following subject areas do you find most relevant in your work? Please select all that apply.**
   ☐ Strengthening seed systems
   ☐ Enhancing crop diversity for local needs
   ☐ Promoting local crop diversity
   ☐ Policy to recognize the role of farmers and local communities
   ☐ Policy for conservation of PGRFA
   ☐ Access and benefit sharing policy
   ☐ Integration of policy for sustainable use into national frameworks
   ☐ All of the above

7. **Which of the following subject categories do you find most relevant in your work? Please select all that apply.**
   ☐ Access and benefit sharing
   ☐ Community seed banks
   ☐ Covid19
   ☐ Crowdsourcing
   ☐ Developing the value chain
   ☐ Enhancing local capacity
   ☐ Evolutionary plant breeding
   ☐ Farmers' Rights
   ☐ Financial and incentive mechanisms
   ☐ Gender related content
   ☐ Improving the knowledge base for local crop diversity
   ☐ Integrated seed sector development
   ☐ Participatory plant breeding
   ☐ Raising awareness on local crop diversity value
   ☐ Strategies and action plans
   ☐ Seed policy
   ☐ Seed quality assurance
   ☐ Smallholder seed enterprises
   ☐ The role of genebanks

8.  **Does the Toolbox cover an adequate range of subject categories / areas needed to support your work in the field of sustainable Use of PGRFA?**
    ☐  Yes
    ☐  No

9.  **If you answered no, what other relevant subject categories / area(s) that you think is missing or needed to be included? Please list.**

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10. **Does the Toolbox contain information resources relevant to your work on sustainable Use of PGRFA?**

    1  **Extremely relevant**

    2  **Very relevant**

    3  **Somewhat relevant**

    4  **Not so relevant**

    5  **Not relevant at all**

11. **Does the Toolbox contain knowledge and information that improve understanding on sustainable Use of PGRFA?**

    1  **Strongly agree**
    2  **Agree**
    3  **Neither agree nor disagree**
    4  **Disagree**
    5  **Strongly disagree**

12. **On navigating the Toolbox, did you experience any technical difficulties?**
    ☐  Yes
    ☐  No

**If yes, please specify.**

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13. **Overall, how would you rate your experience using the Toolbox?**

1. **Very Satisfied**
2. **Somewhat satisfied**
3. **Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied**
4. **Somewhat dissatisfied**
5. **Very dissatisfied**

14. **Do you have any relevant information resources that you would like to be made available in the Toolbox? If yes, please provide the links**

15. **How could we improve the Toolbox to support your work? Please share your views or suggestions.**

**Thank you for completing the Survey**