Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

The International Treaty ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 9.1 of the Provisional Agenda

EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Rome, Italy, 11 – 16 November 2019

Report of the Results Oriented Monitoring Missions undertaken on behalf of European Union for the Third Call for Proposals of the Benefit-sharing Fund

Executive Summary

This Addendum contains the consolidated Report of the Results Oriented Monitoring Missions (ROMs) undertaken on behalf of the European Union to selected projects that are funded under the Third Call for Proposals (CFP-3) of the Benefit-sharing Fund of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources on Food and Agriculture. European Union is one of the main donors to the CFP-3.

The ROMs have been undertaken to selected project sites in Turkey and Uganda and to the Secretariat of the International Treaty in Rome. The objective of the ROM missions was to provide an external opinion on the implementation of the CFP-3 programme in order to support project management and implementing organizations through advice and recommendations. In this context, ROM reviews have assessed the selection process of the CFP-3 projects, the status of portfolio implementation, reporting and monitoring tools, including impact and results through an analysis of project documentation and meaningful consultation with all stakeholders involved at the field level. Four criteria have been examined during the ROM review missions: Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability and a score has been assigned to CFP- 3 performance in each of them. The Report of the Results Oriented Monitoring Missions for the Third Call for Proposals of the Benefit-sharing Fund does not reflect the opinion of the European Union.

ROM report

Type of ROM review	**Projects and Programmes**
Project title	**"Leading the Field" The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA)**
Project reference	**C-260148**
Unit in charge	**DEVCO C 01**
Status	**Final**
Report date	**25/01/2018**

Project - Key Information	
Domain (instrument)	FOOD - Food Security
DAC Sector	41030 - Bio-diversity
Zone Benefitting from the Action	Strategic partners
Action Location	worlwide
Type of Project/Programme	Thematic
Geographic Implementation	Multi-country
Entity in Charge	DEVCO C 01
OM in Charge	KNOTH JOACHIM
Contracting Party	THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Project - Financial data on 10/11/2017			
Total budget	0 €		
EU contribution	5,000,000 €		
Paid Amount	4,536,133 €	**Date of last payment**	22/02/2017

Project - Dates				
Contractor Signature Date	22/12/2011			
Activities	**Start Date**	22/12/2011	**End Date**	21/06/2020
Final Date for Implementation (FDI)	31/12/2021			

ROM review - Key information				
Reason for ROM review	Problematic			
Countries visited	Italy, Turkey, Uganda			
ROM expert(s) name(s)	**PHYLACTOPOULOS Andronicos**			
Field phase	**Start Date**	13/11/2017	**End Date**	08/12/2017

Project Synopsis

Context

Over the last 100 years, more than three quarters of all crop diversity has disappeared. Crop diversity provides the raw material for plant breeding the tools for adaptation. These unique attributes, acquired over millennia – including the ability to survive hot summers or cold winters, to thrive in dry conditions or in areas prone to flood, to withstand pests and disease – are being irrevocably lost, putting global food security and economies at risk.

Although the known agro-biodiversity is bigger than ever before, as breeders constantly bring new varieties to the market, with improved yield and often improved disease resistance, two-thirds of the world's food is generated from only twelve (12) plants and five (5) animal species. Within species, as a result of neglect and ignorance, the world is now dangerously reliant on only a few varieties, for instance rice, potatoes, maize, wheat, and other staple foods. The loss of global crop diversity has become a major threat to food security and health globally.

The global exchange of genetic material ensures nations can adapt to environmental and socio- economic changes. Nations are already interdependent in terms of their crop diversity; all depend on the genetic diversity in crops from other countries and regions. The current rate of climate change heightens this interdependence between countries and coupled with the loss of diversity of crops, it threatens the world's ability to feed a growing population. The importance of the exchange and use of genetic material has been constantly recognised over time.

The loss of crop diversity endangers agricultural productivity, food security and our ability to adapt to the pace of environmental change. Conservation and use of crop diversity globally strengthens farmer's capacity to adapt to a changing climate and to feed a growing population.

The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), the Treaty, has been established as a direct international response to these global challenges. It directly contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goals 2 and 15 related to the conservation, access and benefit-sharing of genetic resources as means of ending hunger and ensuring environmental sustainability. ITPGRFA sees 143 Governments and the European Commission (EC) working together as Contracting Parties to promote for the conservation and sustainable use of crop diversity for enhanced food security in the context of climate change.

"Leading the Field" (the Project) is a multi-donor joint management action with an international organisation financed by The Food Security Thematic Programme - Component 1: Research, Technology Transfer and Innovation to Enhance Food Security, and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as covered by the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA) signed between the United Nations and the EC. The choice of FAO takes into consideration its specific expertise in agricultural research and biodiversity conservation and the fact that FAO hosts the ITPGRFA Secretariat and provides administrative and financial support to its operation.

The Project is led by the Governing Body of the Treaty, creating a multilateral Fund, the Benefit-sharing Fund, supported by member governments, the private sector and international foundations, which invests in high impact projects aimed at helping farmers in developing Contracting Parties to face the effects of climate change and at ensuring food security.

Description of the Intervention Logic

The initiative addresses food security and preservation of on-farm biodiversity in the context of adaptation to climate change, by supporting smallholder farmers and their communities in developing countries.

The Project overall objective (OO) is to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its targets 2.5 and 15.6.

The Project purpose (PP) is to improve adaptation to climate change and enhance the food security of resource-poor farmers in selected developing countries, by strengthening the sustainable conservation and management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).

The outputs / Expected Results (ERs) are: ER1) Locally adapted varieties or other genetic material successfully conserved and used; ER2) Technologies for conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA co-developed by and/or transferred to selected developing country PGRFA institutions; ER3) Information created, disseminated and accessed by lead institutions on scientific, technical and environmental matters related to PGRFA, including genotypic and phenotypic data; ER4) Increased capacity of resource-poor farmers to conserve and manage PGRFA in specific areas vulnerable to climate change; ER5) Increased capacity of PGRFA institutions and researchers to conserve and manage PGRFA; ER6) Evidence-based plans and priorities to help resource-poor farmers adapt to climate change, developed by consortia of PGRFA institutions as building blocks for future policy development and investment; and ER7) Awareness on the ITPGRFA and value of PGRFA to meet future challenges is raised at the national, regional and international levels.

Indicative activities include: 1) project cycle management (design and opening of Call for Proposals (CfP) supported by the Treaty's extensive network in more than 132member countries; development of the methodology for the screening and appraisal of pre-proposals and full project proposals in support of the work of the independent Panel of Experts; screening and response to pre-proposals; appraisal of project proposals by an independent Panel of Experts; approval by the Treaty Bureau of projects for funding within the project cycle and public announcement (meeting the criteria established by the Treaty Governing Body, to which the EU is a member and which is supported by an international respected scientific counsel); preparation and signature of contractual agreements for the funded projects ; project implementation and disbursement of tranche payments); 2) roll-out of three regional help-desk workshops on development of full project proposals, project monitoring and reporting;
3) back-stopping missions to review project progress (output-based project monitoring and supervision), if required; 4) development and dissemination of knowledge sharing products (publications; maps, website; workshops; feedback from donors, grassroots/national organisations, development partners); 5) independent evaluation of the portfolio.

PP level indicator is the number of evidence-based policies and projects on plant genetic resources to support the effective integration of climate change adaptation and food security in specific countries. At the output / ER level indicators include: number of new plant varieties (e.g. wheat, maize, beans, sorghum, finger millet etc.) from gene banks and breeding programmes analysed, phenotyped, introduced, tested and disseminated on the basis of promising properties; number of plant varieties characterized and evaluated against resistances to biotic and abiotic stresses; number of plant varieties phenotyped and genotyped for traits of potential value, particularly those relevant for farmers adaptation to climate change; number of useful alleles discovered and number of genotypes exploited in the development of new varieties; number of community seed distribution management committees established; number of technologies co-developed and transferred (e.g. marker assisted selection systems, methods and techniques for genetic improvement and conservation, bioinformatics, etc.); number of PGRFA institutions in developing countries benefiting from improved access to technologies and knowledge associated to adapted genetic material; number of resource-poor farmers (disaggregated by gender) directly benefitting from supported activities for on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA; number of resource-poor farmers (disaggregated by gender) trained and involved in the development of new varieties and other relevant technologies for climate change adaptation and strengthening food security; number of community conservation systems developed (e.g. community seed banks); number of capacity development activities organised; number of local and national institutions with strengthened capacity to conserve, manage, improve and disseminate plant genetic resources; number of scientists strengthened in the use of information management systems; number of new evidence-based studies analysing the negative consequences of climate change on food security developed and disseminated; number of strategies developed for the diversification of local agricultural and food systems through the use of a wider range of locally adapted crops and varieties; number of participants in awareness raising sessions; number of training materials and other information products created to support national / regional awareness-raising strategies.

The organizations eligible to apply for funding under the third round of the Benefit-sharing Fund, include non-profit farmers' organisations, governmental or non-governmental organisations, research institutions and regional and international organisations based in any of the developing countries that are Contracting Parties of the Treaty.

The primary beneficiaries are rural farm communities in developing countries facing the challenges of adaptation to climate change and food insecurity. Farmers, as managers of genetic diversity, have much to offer to both their own communities and the world at large as a result of their efforts to conserve PGRFA, improve them through breeding and selection, and by making them available for use by other actors.

Findings

1. Relevance

Global food security remains an ever-pressing issue with population growth, increased reliance on fewer and fewer crops, reduction in the achieved yields due to climate change, reduced soil fertility, and reduced pest and disease resistance. Therefore, crop diversification and the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA are key in ensuring that the world will produce enough food to feed its growing population in the future.

At the same time access to seeds or, more broadly speaking, to plant genetic resources is being compromised, considering the multi-faceted definition of access in terms of availability (choice of varieties that are suitable for needs, preferences and local conditions of smallholder farmers); accessibility (through reliable distribution systems of guaranteed quality and in a timely fashion); affordability of price; utilisation (in terms of provision of agronomic advice through extension services and capacity development opportunities); rentability (i.e. profitability potential from farming with access to output markets); and autonomy (farmers being end-users but also producers of seeds). Climate change, gradual loss of genetic diversity, commercial breeding, patented and protected seeds are exerting pressure and reduce access to seeds particularly to the most vulnerable resource-poor farmers in the developing world.

The adoption in 2004 of the legally binding Treaty, to which the EU is a Contracting Party, resulted in an instrument that could: i) act as a catalyst in the recognition of the role of the farmers in edible crop diversity, ii) establish a global system to provide access to plant genetic materials for farmers, plant breeders and scientists, and iii) ensure that recipients of genetic materials share benefits deriving from their use with the countries of origin of the genetic materials. The Treaty objectives include the support of actions for the benefit of farmers and local communities in developing countries and countries with economies in transition that work towards maintaining and increasing the use of PGRFA.

The development of new plant varieties is a long-drawn process and the revenue generation from royalties leaves, for the time being, a gap in covering the Treaty implementation. The Project, as an initiative of the Treaty, is financed by the EC for supporting the 3rd round of the funding cycle of the Treaty's Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF), with the objective to strengthen the sustainable management of PGRFA, and thus contributing to the eradication of extreme poverty and to environmental sustainability.

The first two rounds of the BSF that have financed 39 projects with a budget of 10,346,143 million USD have been successful in promoting the Treaty objectives. The 22 projects approved for funding under the BSF III involve a total of 44 developing countries that are facing challenges related to climate change such as irregular rainfall patterns (Eastern Africa), increased incidence of storms (South East Asia and South West Pacific), prolonged droughts and proliferation of pests and diseases (Near East and North Africa), with negative effects on the livelihoods of the most vulnerable communities.

BSF stakeholders include governmental or non-governmental organisations, including farmers and farmers' organisations, gene banks and research institutions, as well as regional and international organisations, based in countries that are Contracting Parties to the Treaty. Target groups of the projects under the BSF III include local and national governments, policy makers, research institutes, breeders, researchers, local government, extension agencies, community NGOs, and smallholder / vulnerable farmers.

The relevance of the BSF III objectives remains extremely high among the targeted groups and end-beneficiaries. This is demonstrated by the interest generated among relevant stakeholders to participate in the Call for Proposals (270 eligible pre-proposals screened, a total of 188 pre-proposals appraised leading to 64 full project proposals submitted, and 22 projects selected for financing). Furthermore, the BSF III objectives continue to be aligned with the Treaty objectives as updated at the seventh session of the Treaty's Governing Body held in Kigali, Rwanda (2017).

The 22 projects under BSF III represent innovative partnerships between universities, institutes for biodiversity conservation, international organisations, governmental and non-governmental organisations, gene banks and national and international research institutes. These projects have been designed by the respective partners in line with their capacities and interests. Additionally, the engagement of national institutes ensures alignment with national priorities and increased level of ownership.

The Secretariat of the Treaty effectively coordinates the Project implementation, manages the reporting to the EC and oversees the implementation of the 22 projects under the BSF III, while at the same time ensures the implementation of the Treaty Governing Body decisions (presented in the draft multi-year programme of work (MYPOW) 2018-2025 of the Treaty). At country level, the overall coordination is ensured through the respective ministries of agriculture, which oversee activities in the field of plant genetic resources from drafting relevant policies to regulating plant genetic resources distribution and quality control. The participation of relevant national institutes in the BSF III projects facilitates the coordination process and the flow of information to national decision and policy makers.

Overall, the Secretariat of the Treaty with the FAO support has a solid understanding of the action's expectations and the capacity to execute. In addition, the BSF III project partners, through their proposals have demonstrated the necessary familiarisation with the implementation environment.

The initial Project logframe provides a good overall description of the intervention logic, but understandably is rather generic, since Expected Results / outputs depend on the actual implementation of project proposals from the BSF III, while at the activities level, the Project logframe concentrates on the Treaty Secretariat's / BSF administrative activities, which are not directly linked to the envisaged outputs. Subsequently, once the BSF III projects became operational, the Treaty Secretariat initiated the preparation of an aggregated Project logframe to capture the achievements of these projects throughout their implementation. Nevertheless, this task has not been finalised yet, so there are inconsistencies between the indicators of the initial aggregated Project logframe, which was formulated based on the project proposals, and the indicators of the individual BSF III projects that are now operational.

Assumptions presented in the overall logframe are by and large holding true (e.g. political commitment to address climate change and food security in a harmonized way, interest from potential executing entities to respond to the CfP, interest from targeted resource-poor farming communities to participate in project activities, projects involving partnerships between PGRFA institutions in different countries, etc.). Main risks include the limited interest to participate in the BSF III, the low quality of proposals, the poor implementation of the financed projects, and the timely disbursement of funds to the projects by the Secretariat. Overall, these risks have not been materialised.

Logframes at the individual project level remain generic (practically reporting on the template provided by the Secretariat) without expanding on the specificities of each project envisaged results / outputs. These logframes are not updated as part of the implementation process and do not extent to the activity level. Furthermore, in several cases there are no indicators for contribution to the achievement of the common specific objective of the "Leading the Field" initiative.

The Project has no plans for an exit strategy, considering that the Secretariat is expected to continue with the support of similar initiatives. In addition, the preparation of an exit-strategy is not explicitly required in the Terms of Reference of the CfP for BSF III projects, and therefore the opportunity to plan ahead and increase the potential sustainability of the implemented actions is not fully / systematically exploited.

2. Efficiency

The action is implemented under a contribution agreement with an international organisation (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO). This multi-donor joint management action provides adequate flexibility to the Secretariat of the Treaty to execute the envisaged activities and to oversee the implementation of the BSF III projects.

The BSF III consists of 22 approved projects of a total value of 10,078,580 USD (corresponding to a total budget of BSF III of about 11 million USD). The total value of the EC funded action is 6,844,084 EUR sponsoring a total of 13 projects, with the Contracting Authority (EC) financing 5,000,000 EUR and the remaining 1,844,084 EUR being secured through co-funding, provided by Norway. There is a separate budget line of 3,820,000 USD for the financing of the remaining 9 projects in the BSF III portfolio.

A small team of Treaty Secretariat staff is managing efficiently the BSF III with support from the FAO. This input is covered by the Secretariat and the FAO and is not budgeted under the Project. The BSF III is under the direct control of the 144 members of the Treaty Governing Body, including the EC, which meets every two years to provide overall guidance on the policies and procedures of the BSF. The Treaty Governing Body has delegated the authority for the implementation of BSF III to the Bureau of the Governing Body. The Bureau is formed by 7 governmental representatives, one for each FAO-region. The screening and appraisal of pre-proposals and full project proposals were performed by an independent Panel of Experts nominated by the Bureau from a roster of experts with expertise in plant breeding, climate change, plant genetic resource conservation, and development cooperation. The Bureau, on the basis of the recommendations of the Panel of Experts, approved the projects to be financed in BSF III. Letters of Agreement (LoAs) have been signed with the lead partner of each approved project. So far there have been 12 out of 13 LoAs signed from the EC funded portfolio of BSF III projects, with the signing of the LoA for a project in Costa Rica still pending. From the remaining 9 BSF III projects, 7 LoAs have been signed and two LoAs are still pending (Cuba and Fiji / Pacific Islands).

Following an initial two-year delay, until the co-financing to the EC funding could be secured, there have been no delays in the implementation of the BSF
III. Activities are implemented according to the plan and at this stage involve the reporting, monitoring, disbursement of funds, follow-up of and support to the implementation of the 22 BSF III projects. Also at the individual project level, the ROM review mission could not identify, to the extent possible, implementation delays in the visits to four projects in Turkey and Uganda. Overall, the BSF III projects under implementation report good progress without significant delays, which could affect their planned duration. The main challenge, which could create delays, relates to the transfer of genetic material across countries. Excessive rain, late set of rainfall and pest infestations have been some of the problems that could affect the implementation / effectiveness of field activities.

The implementation of individual projects (single or multi-country) is guided by the respective project teams and there is no involvement of the Treaty Secretariat in the management of these projects. Management structures vary from project to project (e.g. with or without a steering committee providing guidance).

The flow of financial resources has been without delays from the EC to the Treaty Secretariat through FAO. There have been some delays in the payments from the Treaty Secretariat to individual projects. However, these delays were more based on perceptions (e.g. payment received on time but later than initially envisaged due to delay in the signing of the LoA), or were due to problems in the financial reporting by the projects.

The Treaty Secretariat is in close communication with all projects, promptly responding to requests from the projects. There is good communication of the Project with the EC, while the individual concerned EU Delegations (EUDs) have limited, if any, information about the projects under implementation. The reporting at all levels, from BSF III projects to the Treaty Secretariat and from the Treaty Secretariat to the DEVCO OM has room for improvement, which would be necessary for the assessment of the performance of the individual projects, given the fact that the supervisory missions that the Treaty Secretariat is planning to implement the second quarter of 2018 would cover only selected projects.

In particular, the progress reporting to the Treaty Secretariat by individual BSF III projects lacks consistency (e.g. progress reporting against the respective logframe target values, updated work plans of activities, and reporting of completed activities against planned activities in the reporting period analyzed by the ROM expert are not always included in the submitted reports). The lack of consistent reporting for a group of common indicators across the BSF III projects, makes the calculation of aggregate figures for the overall programme difficult for the time being

Activities that have been carried out by the Treaty Secretariat for launching the CfP and the identification of the projects to be financed under the BSF III are administrative / supportive of the overall initiative and therefore not included under outputs / expected results (ERs). In any case, the Secretariat completed: the drafting and launching the CfP; the development of the methodology for screening and appraisal of pre-proposals and full project proposals; the pre-screening of 270 eligible pre-proposals of the 394 received by the Secretariat; the review of 188 proposals eligible to apply for funding and the identification of 64 of those to submit full proposals; the review of the 64 full project proposals and the identification of 22 projects to be financed; the preparation and signature of the contractual agreements for the 22 approved projects; the establishment of Help Desk to support and facilitate the process of elaboration of pre-proposals and full project proposals; the provision of technical support through e-mail and phone in different Treaty languages to ensure an inclusive process to which all regions feel committed; the preparation and delivery of three regional workshops of two days duration in Quito (Ecuador), Cairo(Egypt) and Sengalor (Malaysia) to support applicants in the development of full project proposals (a total of 59 out of 64 persons invited attended the workshops); the development of communication products on BSF III portfolio. The preparation of LoAs and the contracting of the individual projects was carried out by the Secretariat, according to the established FAO rules and procedures and in cooperation with relevant FAO units. In 2017, the Secretariat organised three webinars to train project partners in EC verifications (financial reporting responsibilities). The Secretariat has also prepared the Terms of Reference for the Supervision Missions of the BSF III projects, visibility material for the BSF III, and a communication and visibility plan.

From the available progress reporting of the 19 operational BSF III projects, the information received regarding the degree of completion of activities is limited since in most cases an updated logframe or work plan or both are missing. In any case, the Secretariat assured that the update of the individual project logframes and the related workplans is an integral part of the reporting and monitoring requirements for the forthcoming reporting periods. In addition, the ROM review field visits in Turkey and Uganda could confirm the overall reported good progress of activities achieved so far, with minimal delays and positive outputs generated.

The budget of the Project does not have the necessary analysis to allow the calculation of the cost-efficiency of the produced outputs. However, with almost 88% of the available budget allocated to the financing of the 13 projects in the EC portfolio the cost efficiency of output production appears to be good (for the 9 projects covered by non-EC funds 74% of the available budget is allocated to the project grants). This argument is further reinforced considering that the administrative and managing effort for the BSF III portfolio is not budgeted under the “Leading the Field” initiative. As of June 30 2017, the initiative’s total expenditure is 5,733,772 USD (or 84% of the total budget).

The Secretariat has already received a no-cost time extension for the implementation of the Project, and in an effort to ensure that the action would be completed by the set deadline, the Secretariat has allocated to the EC portfolio the 13 BSF III projects that are least likely to have implementation delays. Furthermore, the BSF III projects are expected to submit along with the progress reports, a Risk Assessment Matrix for the early introduction of corrective measures as necessary. A complementary questionnaire developed by the Secretariat and completed by the BSF III projects facilitates the cross-checking of the validity of the reported data.

3. Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the Project has improved dramatically since the time of the previous ROM mission in September 2013. The Secretariat was able to successfully complete within the set deadlines the launching of the CfP and the identification / selection and contracting of 19 out of 22 projects (the signing of three more contracts is still pending) from the initially submitted 394 pre-proposals and the subsequently submitted 64 full proposals. Out of the 19 contracted projects, one project from the
portfolio of the 9 non-EC funded projects has already been completed. Final Progress and Financial reports have been submitted and approved by the Secretariat and the final disbursement processed (Development of Biomarkers Tools for Improved Production and Climate Change Resistance in Indonesian Rice, with a budget of 150,000 USD implemented in Indonesia).

The produced deliverables so far from the BSF III projects are promising regarding the contribution to the expected outcomes. After the first year of implementation of activities, the BSF III projects report 18,252 farmers, researchers, breeders, gene bank curators, governmental officials, students and lectures have been directly involved and benefited from initiatives funded in BSF III (under ER4 and ER5); around 100 institutions have been partnering in the execution of project activities and are being involved in all stages of portfolio implementation (under ER5); more than 4,040 varieties of target crops (wheat, barley, cassava, sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet, pigeon pea, ground nuts and apples) have been evaluated by farmers and scientists as to reveal adaptability to biotic and abiotic stresses (under ER1); a total of 2,300 varieties have been subject to molecular characterization in research institutes and incorporation of identified genotypes for resistances to biotic and abiotic stresses is underway (under ER1, ER2 and ER3); two of new evidence-based studies analysing the negative consequences of climate change on food security developed and disseminated (under ER6); training and capacity development on the value of agro- biodiversity, on-farm conservation, modern techniques for the study of genetic diversity and importance of value added information on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) has been delivered to 6,710 stakeholders through a total of 280 sessions (under ER6 and ER7); a wide range of communication and visibility products have been developed and used by the Secretariat to raise awareness about the purpose of the action, the EU support of the action and of project results and impact in the countries where they are being implemented, and beyond (under ER7).

The work plan of the Secretariat for the implementation of the “Leading the Field” initiative provides a rough indication of planned activities and timelines. In any case, the Secretariat has completed the Call for Proposals process within the set deadlines. The work plans of the individual projects do not have adequate detail in terms of expected outputs and set deadlines. In this respect, it is not possible to assess the timeliness in the delivery of outputs at the level of the individual projects.

The quality of the Secretariat outputs (Call for Proposals for BSF III, Help Desk, training on EC financial procedures, support of the projects funded under the BSF III) has been very good, based on the review of the material produced and on the perceptions of project stakeholders interviewed during the ROM review field visits in Turkey and Uganda.

At individual project level, the preliminary outputs in the countries visited (Turkey and Uganda) have been of good quality, with the collaboration with national institutions and the engagement of scientists and farmers providing confidence about the development of solid results. What is encouraging, is the enthusiasm of farmers to contribute to the advancement of research by participating in field trials, which is expected to lead to practical contributions in improving their livelihoods.

In general, the close collaboration with national institutions allows not only the support / contribution to activities of the projects but also facilitates the development and transfer of new knowledge among scientists and the training of national staff. The active engagement of farmers in the identification of indigenous landraces and plant varieties with suitable properties to withstand climate change stresses is contributing to the delivery of robust outputs. The farmer participation in the project selection of plant varieties is further enhanced with the sharing of genetic resources / seeds with other farmers in the same community. Also, the visit exchanges of farmers within countries or regions increase the dissemination of farming best practices and the distribution of good seeds. The participation of scientists from national institutes in the research work guided by the BSF III projects, increases the accessibility to project deliverables and to state of the art technologies (e.g. searchable relational databases with digital object identifiers, DOIs relating to genetic material, genetic material from gene banks / high quality seeds with fully described characteristics).

The Project is expected to contribute to improved adaptation to climate change and enhanced food security of resource-poor farmers in selected developing countries, by strengthening the sustainable management of PGRFA. However, the logframe indicator at the PP level (the number of evidence-based policies and projects on plant genetic resources to support the effective integration of climate change adaptation and food security in specific countries) is not adequate to capture the breadth and depth of expected achievements. Furthermore, the present indicator depends on external factors rather than on the direct efforts of the implementing partners, in the sense that drafting of policies is not part of the BSF III projects’ activities.
Nevertheless, the BSF III projects are engaging multiple stakeholders at national, regional and international level, and the participation of national authorities and organisations in the implementation of these projects facilitates the access to national decision and policy makers for the presentation of findings and the influence on the drafting of relevant policies / policy revisions that would promote the objectives of the Project.

4. Sustainability

The various BSF III projects have assembled a wide range of stakeholders from scientists / researchers to farmers, with capacity development activities incorporated into the respective intervention logics. Such activities range from training farmers, including farmer exchange visits, engagement in participatory varietal selection and farmers' field schools, to training researchers and co-developing tools and methodologies specific to the needs of individual projects. The collaboration between researchers and farmers for the mutual exchange of information regarding crop analysis and selection for individuation of potentially useful traits, provided that the exchange is truly bi-directional, has the potential of contributing to reducing existing capacity and information gaps in the developing world.

The establishment of strong partnerships for multi-disciplinary project implementation with international and national research organisations, national authorities (e.g. national gene banks / national regulatory bodies), NGOs working at grassroots level, and farmers consolidates the uptake of promising tools and methodologies and the increased in-situ conservation of diverse PGRFA.

In general, the outputs of the BSF III projects are available to the various target groups free of charge. The activities under implementation include the development of databases, which would further facilitate the dissemination of results and the process of knowledge generation from the systematic and thorough presentation of data. The development of relational databases with open source software, which are easily maintainable as well as interoperable, and for which the hosting and updating responsibilities are early on established, are likely to continue to be in use beyond the present action. Community seed banks, the in-situ conservation of landraces, the exchange of seeds among farmers, and the identification / exploitation of new plant varieties that are climate change resistant are also likely to continue, as operating costs generated from community managed seed banks are relatively small and within the budget of the communities, and the other activities are part of current daily activities. Some of the research work is expensive to carry out; however, there is commitment among LoA partners to continue with such work, as demonstrated by investments in infrastructure and by the drafting of facilitating legislation.

Overall, it is not possible to assess the situation in all 44 countries, where BSF III project activities are implemented or are about to be implemented, nevertheless, the impression from the ROM review visits is that the objectives of the Project remain relevant, and there is interest in the generation of evidence-based practical solutions that lead to strengthened food security and climate change resilience. Funding of the identified measures to a large extent would continue to depend on the international donor community; however, there are approaches that have the potential to be sustained by the concerned communities (e.g. community seed banks / granaries, in-situ conservation of wheat landraces with desirable properties, training of trainers, establishment of farmer field schools, participatory variety selection and enhancement, establishment of open source climate-smart seed systems etc.).

Linkages of the BSF III projects with the respective in-country EUD and FAO offices are not actively pursued. In general, the EUDs have limited, if any, knowledge of the implemented activities and therefore, possible opportunities for building complementarities and synergies between EUD led interventions and the respective BSF III projects are currently being lost.

In general, the BSF III projects are seeking partnerships with the private sector, as long as seed access and affordability to farmers is not compromised. One example of the efforts of BSF III partners to forge responsible and innovative private-public partnerships that more effectively address farmers' needs is Biodiversity International's Agrobiodiversity Index (a long-term monitoring tool to measure and manage agrobiodiversity across three dimensions: diets, production and genetic resources), with the aim to facilitate decision-taking processes among stakeholders from governments, investors / companies, farmers and consumers –for more diverse and sustainable food systems.

The Secretariat of the ITPGRFA is planning to seek resources from the private sector for the funding of the upcoming fourth cycle of the BSF (e.g. the International Seed Federation, the European Seed Association).

The Treaty's approach to access and benefit-sharing is outlined in its Articles 10-13 that establish the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing (MLS). According to the terms and conditions of the MLS, a global genepool of the most important 64 staple crops that constitute the Annex 1 of the Treaty are made available at the global level for agricultural research and breeding activities. Upon ratifying the Treaty, countries agree to make their crop genetic diversity and related information about crops stored in their gene banks available to all Treaty members. So far, the MLS has more than 4,290,000 samples of plant material. The Treaty is committed to enhance the functioning of the MLS, by, inter alia, generating income on a sustainable and predictable basis. In general, the benefit sharing scheme with benefits reaching the members of the ITPGRFA has yet to be realised, and even though the membership to the Treaty has been steadily expanding from 130 members (in 2013) to 144 (in 2017), the long-term viability of the Treaty depends on the consolidation of the mechanisms for effective sharing of benefits.

While the Project focuses on environmental sustainability, the issue of nutritional value has been possibly overlooked as one of the criteria for the identification of promising crops, which could better adapt to climate change. Gender differentiation is not required in the Call for Proposals for BSF III projects. Nevertheless, in practice, some BSF III projects have already included in their intervention logic activities to better understand the different roles of men and women in farming practices in order to design approaches suitable to each gender, which would in turn facilitate the enhancement of food security among the targeted communities and the sustainable management of PGRFA.

Conclusions	
N°	**Conclusion**
C1	Relevance: The relevance of the objectives of “Leading the Field” / the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF) remains extremely high among the targeted groups and end-beneficiaries, as attested by the ROM review visits in Turkey and Uganda. The overall logframe indicators provide a good measure of the expected achievements, yet, in some cases, the reported indicators at individual project level lack the uniformity / comparability, which could facilitate the calculation of aggregated results / outputs.
C2	Relevance: The 22 projects under BSF III represent innovative partnerships between universities, institutes for biodiversity conservation, international organisations, governmental and non-governmental organisations, gene banks and national and international research institutes, in collaboration with farmers. There is strong commitment from the Secretariat of the ITPGRFA to follow closely and support the implementation of the BSF III projects; however, without exit-strategies envisaged at the Secretariat and in particular at the individual BSF III project level, the BSF III projects are not expected to expand the sustainability elements presented in their intervention logic beyond the financing from the Treaty.
C3	Efficiency: Following the initial delay in the start of the action, activities are implemented according to the workplan and there have been no delays worth noting. At the individual project level, the minor delays indicated in the two countries visited during the ROM review exercise are not expected to affect the overall implementation period.
C4	Efficiency: The structure of the overall budget does not allow the calculation of cost-efficiency in the production of outputs. In any case, the cost-efficiency of the programme is considered good given the fact that 88% of the available budget is allocated to the financing of the 13 BSF III projects in the EC portfolio, with overall expenditure standing at 84% of the budget (June 2017). Such a conclusion is further supported when considering that the administrative and managing effort for the BSF III portfolio is not budgeted under the “Leading the Field” initiative.
C5	Efficiency: The reporting at all levels, from projects to the Secretariat and from the Secretariat to the DEVCO Operational Manager (OM) has room for improvement, which would be necessary for the assessment of the performance of the individual projects, given the fact that the planned supervisory missions of the Secretariat, which are expected to take place in the second quarter of 2018, would only cover selected BSF III projects.
C6	Effectiveness: To the extent that the ROM review mission could verify, the quality of the services provided by the Secretariat have been perceived as good by the project implementing partners, particularly in clearing administrative issues and in understanding reporting procedures, with the implementation of webinars for the training of LoA partners in EC verification procedures / financial reporting. While BSF funded projects would benefit from the provision of increased technical support to project implementation, this goes beyond the capacities and the mandate of the Secretariat team responsible for the day-to-day follow-up of the BSF III projects.
C7	Effectiveness: In general, the assembly of multi-disciplinary and strong partnerships by the BSF III projects is a recipe of success, especially when based on long-standing relationships and in-country presence of the international partners, allowing the effective implementation of activities, the increased ownership from national authorities, the wider dissemination of knowledge among stakeholders, and facilitating the development and transfer of new knowledge among scientists and the training of national staff.
C8	Sustainability: The tools and methodologies that are expected to be developed by several BSF III projects could contribute to the increase of scientific knowledge and the advancement of “Leading the Field” objectives, provided that they are adequately disseminated among the relevant scientific community. The development of relational databases with open source software, which are easily maintainable as well as interoperable, and for which the hosting and updating responsibilities are early on established, are likely to continue to be in use beyond the present action.
C9	Sustainability: The issues of nutritional value and genetic diversity have been possibly overlooked as two of the criteria for the identification of promising crops (in terms of climate change resilience), which could be introduced for wider farming, thus creating a more comprehensive selection framework. Even though there are separate initiatives looking into the nutritional aspects of different crops, it appears that an integrated approach is missing in the crop selection and introduction to farmers for further testing, especially when in many cases farmers consider the taste as a more important attribute than the yield of a particular crop. Similarly, a promising crop’s DNA analysis could indicate the genetic diversity, if any, introduced by the identified new varieties.
C10	Sustainability: In general, the EUDs, in the countries where BSF III projects are implemented, have limited, if any, knowledge of the implemented activities and possible complementarities and synergies between EUD-led interventions and the respective BSF III projects cannot be explored.

Recommendations	
N°	**Recommendation**
R1	Secretariat of the ITPGRFA: Refine and expand the logframe indicators at project purpose and expected results levels in order to better capture the achievements at individual country level. To this effect, similar indicators across the BSF III projects should be grouped together so that the presentation of consolidated values at the overall initiative level would be accurate (related to Conclusion C1).
R2	Secretariat of the ITPGRFA: Ensure that the submitted BSF III progress reports fully comply with the set reporting instructions. Updated logframes, work plans, reporting of achieved vs. planned activities and progress against the set target values of the logframe indicators need to be incorporated in the progress reports in order to facilitate the reporting from the Secretariat to the DEVCO OM and the presentation of aggregated data (related to Conclusion C5).
R3	Secretariat of the ITPGRFA: Ensure that the BSF III projects expand possible sustainability elements presented in their respective proposals into exit-strategies, which could safeguard the continuity of the stream of benefits, following the completion of these projects (related to Conclusion C2).
R4	Secretariat of the ITPGRFA: In collaboration with the partners of the BSF III projects, explore possibilities for the wider dissemination of tools and methodologies, developed under the BSF III, to be further utilised and validated by the scientific and farming communities at large, leading to broader recognition, revision and possible acceptance as standards / best practices. The development of tools and methodologies by BSF III projects could benefit from promotion through appropriate channels by the Secretariat. The organisation of a conference at the end of the third cycle of the BSF, with presentation of achievements could increase visibility, the uptake of tools / methodologies, and the formation of new partnerships (related to Conclusion C8).

Scoring overview											
Relevance	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7 a)	1.7 b)	1.7 c)	1.7 d)	1.7 e)
											
Efficiency	2.1	2.2	2.3 a)	2.3 b)	2.3 c)	2.4 a)	2.4 b)	2.4 c)	2.5	2.6	
											
Effectiveness	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4							
											
Sustainability	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7				
											

Comments from EC services

Date of EC services comments	15/02/2018

Comments on Synopsis

Comments on Findings

Criteria	Comments from EC services
Relevance	No further comments
Efficiency	No further comments
Effectiveness	No further comments
Sustainability	No further comments

Comments on Conclusions

N°	Comments from EC services
C1	We agree.
C2	We agree
C3	We agree
C4	We agree
C5	We agree
C6	We agree
C7	We agree
C8	We agree
C9	We agree
C10	We agree: The EU-DEL will be informed about the project implemented for complementarities and synergies

Comments on Recommendations

N°	Agreed	Comments from EC services
R1	Yes	
R2	Yes	
R3	Yes	
R4	Yes	

Quality of the report

Is the report complete, clear and well argued and does it allow operational follow-up?	
Well prepared report and helpful as a means to focus and advice on critical issues.	

Follow-up Plan			
Action	**Linked Rec.**	**Implemented by**	**Deadline**
Following our request the implementing partner produced a work plan to address the ROM recommendations. The actions to address this recommendation will be implemented according to the work plan	R2	Implementing partner	30/04/2020
Following our request the implementing partner produced a work plan to address the ROM recommendations. The actions to address this recommendation will be implemented according to the work plan	R3	Implementing partner	30/06/2020
Following our request the implementing partner produced a work plan to address the ROM recommendations. The actions to address this recommendation will be implemented according to the work plan	R4	Implementing partner	30/06/2020
Following our request the implementing partner produced a work plan to address the ROM recommendations. The actions to address this recommendation will be implemented according to the work plan	R1	Implementing partner	31/12/2019