

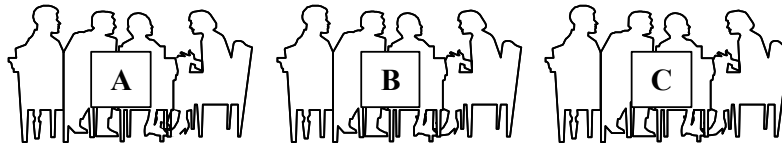
## Exercise 1A. Developing Goals, Priorities and Strategies for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Agro-Biodiversity in the Mashreq Region (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine): A hypothetical case

*The aim of this exercise is to produce proposals for regional co-operation. The proposals should focus on using policy/legal tools to conserve agro-biodiversity in the Mashreq region.*

1. Form three groups of participants. (5 minutes)

### Phase 1. Defining roles (10 minutes)

2. Read Handouts 1A.6 and 1A.7 to carry out this exercise.



3. The groups will work on the hypothetical case below and will play the following roles:
  - **Group A** (MA-UN) plays the role of the Mashreq University team. The group prepares a presentation (using a flipchart) to *convince* the audience that its proposal is the best. It will enhance the performance of the National Committee and will make the national activities concerning plant genetic resources related to food and agriculture highly successful. The group can use all sorts of arguments, including their own experience, concepts, assumptions, etc.
  - **Group B** (FC-UN) plays the role of a competitor (Fertile Crescent University). The group prepares a presentation (using a flipchart) to *convince* the audience that its proposal is better than Group A's proposal. They will argue that their proposal will not only enhance the performance of the National Committee and make the activities highly successful, but that it will also restore public confidence in the Minister's proactive and innovative performance.
  - **Group C** (RG-CO) plays the role of the Regional Committee.
    - (a) The group members agree on the criteria for deciding which proposal is best.
    - (b) The group listens attentively to the two proposals in order to make a decision.
    - (c) The group examines the pros and cons of the proposals presented by groups A and B.
    - (d) Finally, the group 'votes' on the basis of the credibility of the proposals.

## **Phase 2. Preparing for the meeting (60 minutes)**

4. Groups A (MA-UN) and B (FC-UN) prepare a presentation to convince Group C (RG-CO) that their proposal is best.
5. Group C (RG-CO) meet to discuss the hypothetical case thoroughly so they can judge the proposals to be presented by Groups A (MA-UN) and B (FC-UN).
6. The hypothetical case presents the following situation:

Remember that the project has come to an end in the year 2005. The University of Mashreq and the University of Fertile Crescent have been invited to prepare a proposal for reviewing and developing goals, priorities and strategies to conserve agro-biodiversity in the Mashreq region.

A regional committee formed by the Ministries of Environment in the four countries will be responsible for selecting the most appropriate proposal of the two proposals that will be presented by the universities. The winning institution will play the role of permanent technical adviser to the Regional Committee for conserving agro-biodiversity in the Mashreq region.

## **Phase 3. Conducting the review (2 hours 50 minutes)**

In preparation, the room is arranged in a U-form to accommodate Group RG-CO sitting as Chair at the top of the U, with the other two groups on either side.

### **Role-Play**

7. Group A (MA-UN) is invited by the Chair to present its proposal. (15 minutes)  
Group B (FC-UN) is invited by the Chair to present its proposal. (15 minutes)
8. Both Groups A (MA-UN) and B (FC-UN) are given the chance to share views before debating. (15 minutes)
9. Both Groups A (MA-UN) and B (FC-UN) are given the chance to debate. (20 minutes)
10. Group C (RG-CO) asks questions for clarification. (10 minutes)
11. Group C (RG-CO) meets to discuss the proposals while Groups A (MA-UN) and B (FC-UN) list the lessons learned from the debate. They use flipcharts to record their lessons. (10 minutes)
12. Group C (RG-CO) can ask additional questions, if necessary, before the members vote (by secret ballot) and announce the results. They provide feedback on the proposals and how and why they came to their conclusions. (20 minutes)
13. Groups A (MA-UN) and B (FC-UN) have 15 minutes each to present the lessons learned, give comments on the results of the session, and provide feedback on the process of this exercise. (30 minutes)
14. The trainer invites the participants to continue the discussion by relating this case to their own national programmes on genetic resources management. (20 minutes)
15. The trainer distributes Handout 1.A.9 to the participants and invites them to discuss the major issues related to the 'practical considerations' of this exercise and provides feedback on the effectiveness of the exercise and closes the session. (15 minutes)

**Closure:** The trainer asks the participants to tell one of their neighbours two things they might do differently as a result of what they have learned. Choose some volunteers to give examples. Make a transition to the next session. (10 minutes)

## Background Reading for Exercise 1A

### Facts to consider during the exercise

According to the seventh progress report of the Agro-Biodiversity Project, the Mashreq region is well known for its rich diversity of important food crops and pasture species, such as wheat, barley, oat, lentil, vetch and medics. These species have been cultivated and selected over 10,000 years, under rough conditions of temperature and drought, and adapted to specific niches. This unique richness of genes forms the genetic material upon which future breeding efforts are based. However, during the last few decades, agro-biodiversity has been seriously threatened because of a loss of genetic resources and the degradation of natural habitats.

A strong and active movement to halt the loss of plant diversity and to enhance its utilization started in many countries all over the world. These efforts were strengthened by the establishment of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1992. The CBD does not only expound the need to conserve biological diversity, but also links conservation to exploitation and utilization for the benefit of humanity.

The four Mashreq countries are developing countries in the CWANA region. They have typical farming systems and average per capita income for the region. The population in Syria and Palestine is predominantly rural, but the urban centres, especially in Jordan and Lebanon, are growing rapidly. The official language in the four countries is Arabic; however, English is practiced as a second language in Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon. All four countries have a significant national debt. While the legislative system in the four countries is similar in that there are legislative councils and parliaments elected by the people, the ruling political system in each country is different. Jordan is a Kingdom, Syria and Lebanon are republics and Palestine is a newly established state that needs lots of support. Only in Jordan are there several opposition parties.

There is a regional genebank hosted by ICARDA in Aleppo, Syria, which is well equipped with all facilities. This genebank can be accessed, through certain procedures, by all countries that are members in ICARDA's board, including the four Mashreq countries. Most of the material was collected in the CWANA region. The main focus of the genebank is field crops, and it has good passport information.

According to the information provided by ICARDA, since its foundation the genebank has mounted 71 collecting missions in 40 countries and currently holds over 110,000 accessions of its mandate crops (55,000 cereals, 27,000 food legumes and 28,000 forages). These collections are held in trust in the Centre's cold store under the auspices of FAO. Each year, ICARDA distributes on average of over 30,000 samples to researchers worldwide. ICARDA has duplicated its long-term base collection of unique samples at other locations and institutions around the world, including the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the Austrian National Genebank, and at the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) in India.

In Jordan and Syria especially, the national research programmes have upgraded their facilities in recent years, and ICARDA is still playing a vital role in repatriating large collections of cereals, forages and food legumes to their countries of origin, to be conserved

by national genetic resource units and to be available for use in national breeding programmes.

It is assumed that the directors of the genebanks in Syria and Jordan participated in international negotiations at FAO, followed by the signing and ratification of the IT. The Ministries of Environment in the four countries participated in the meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The genebank directors also attend yearly regional network meetings.

In each of the four countries, there is a national agricultural research centre. Except for Palestine, the agricultural research centres have qualified breeders and researchers with higher education degrees. The research programmes in the four countries focus on both rainfed and irrigated agriculture.

The private sector in the four countries is well developed, especially in Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. State-owned agricultural companies dealing with seeds are found only in Syria. Seed and other input companies import their supplies for the commercial agricultural sector.

NGOs, co-operatives and farmers' unions are found in the four countries. However, the political situation in each country differs, as does the decision-making process.

## The Mashreq Region

The Mashreq region is well known for the diversity of important food crops and pasture species, which have been cultivated and selected for over 10,000 years. It is believed that the region is the centre of origin for many species, including wheat and barley.<sup>1</sup>

The Mashreq countries form the major part of the Fertile Crescent and have suffered from a high loss of several plant species as a result of the degradation of natural habitats from overgrazing, urbanization and harmful traditional farming practices. The governments of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine have become aware of the threat that is facing plant genetic resources if present trends continue, which will result in further deterioration of the region's natural resources and a loss of food security. To face these threats, a five-year regional project involving all four countries was funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and is near completion.



**Location of the four Mashreq countries**

The main focus of the implemented GEF project is on conservation of the agro-biodiversity in the region. The specific goal of the project is to conserve the landraces and wild species of the major field and tree-fruit species. Now that the project is nearing its end, the countries need to decide how to use the results and findings of the project to conserve the agro-biodiversity in the region.

<sup>1</sup> According to Article 2 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the term 'centre of origin' is defined as a geographical area where a plant species, either domesticated or wild, first developed its distinctive properties.

## Project Objective

The main objectives of the project on ‘Conservation and Sustainable Use of Dryland Agro-Biodiversity in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria’ is to promote the conservation and preservation of important wild relatives and landraces of agricultural species in the four countries by introducing and testing *in situ* and on-farm mechanisms and techniques of conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity, as well as testing, modifying and designing policies and legislation at the national and regional levels.

The project will be completed at the end of 2004. Several lessons have been learned from the national and inter-regional analysis, which could be summarized as follows:

1. Commonality in regional applicability of the policy framework
2. Managing the commonality of the ‘Agro-Biodiversity Entity’
3. Efficient exchange of national experts between the four countries facilitated by the meetings of the technical committees and the thematic groups
4. Establishing a database at the regional level through exchanging collected data and information
5. Learning from the experience of others: policymaking processes and methods of valuation

There are significant shortages in many areas including, legislative, legal and policy-making capacity. Additional efforts are still needed to address some of these problems.

Although the governments in the four countries have issued few laws related to plant variety protection (PVP), a model law should be developed with specific reference to the CBD and the TRIPS Agreement for each country. The model should be shaped as a *sui generis* regime aimed at providing each of the four countries with a legal framework for the formulation of a legal instrument relevant to its national interests, while providing for the protection of new plant varieties as required by the TRIPS Agreement. The proposed model should integrate the concept of farmers’ rights while making provisions to protect breeders’ rights.



## Practical Considerations for Exercise 1A

**(to be distributed after the Exercise has been completed)**

*After doing this exercise, participants are able to produce working proposals for regional co-operation. These proposals should focus on utilizing policy /legal tools to conserve the agro-biodiversity in their region. This implies that the participants should be willing to work hard to make certain decisions and to propose reasonable and rational solutions.*

### General issues

1. Presentation of the collected material is a crucial issue in this technique. This means that the two teams should prepare a good presentation to explain their positions in detail. To do so, the two teams should be aware of the relevant provisions in the CBD.
2. Presentation skills are another important factor in convincing the different parties about their cases. Since this exercise is a role-play based on what happens in the world in which most of these participants work or interact, they should be comfortable and fluent in selling their case to the audience. Other presentation instruments should also be used (flipcharts, cards, drawings, pictures, etc.).
3. The trainers should be looking to see that the teams recognize that the political systems in the countries in the region are different and that their approach is tailored and sensitive to these differences.
4. The trainer should be making sure that the participants are persuasive but that their arguments are based on true information or reliable assumptions. Personal experience and previous knowledge about the issue should be encouraged and fully utilized.

### Specific considerations

One of the important technical issues that the different teams should be aware of when they deal with agro-biodiversity as a policy instrument is the different ecological systems in the different countries. For instance, dryland agro-biodiversity is different from wetland agro-biodiversity in terms of the main crops produced in each zone, traditional knowledge of the communities and the sources of PGR. The trainer should be aware of the characteristics of dryland agro-biodiversity and how fragile it is compared to the wetlands in the region. In addition, the trainer should know how low rainfall in the drylands dictates the types of endangered landraces and species there are and how to conserve the degraded land and rangeland resources. Another consideration is whether there is any specific mention in the presentations and policy recommendations that reflects the differences between drylands and wetlands in the region.

Establishing regional co-operation among countries in one region is highly dependent on the set-up of the domestic policies and legislation in the countries involved. For instance, are the laws related to agriculture in the involved countries compatible with international policy tools such as the CBD? This fact should be one of the criteria for deciding which proposal is best for this exercise. The trainer should bring to the attention of the participants the increasing



interest and commitment of the governments to conservation of agro-biodiversity, to institutionalizing it within their systems, adopting the needed policies and legislation, and integrating agro-biodiversity conservation within their ongoing projects. Other issues for the trainer to explore include how applicable the CBD is to the national policies of the four countries. The expected answer in this case will rely on the availability of national resources for implementing and domesticating the convention and how the governments can benefit from the technical assistant offered by the CBD in this regard.