1. **Plant genetic resources are the raw materials used to create new crop varieties.**

More than three-quarters of the increased crop productivity of the past 30 years is the result of breeding. Therefore, the availability and conservation of plant diversity is important to help improve food and nutrition security.

Climate change, new plant pests and diseases, growing populations, scarce natural resources are all currently challenging our food security. These issues highlight the vital importance of plant genetic resources, which play a strategic role in helping agriculture adapt to different environments and new challenges.

Drought-resistant crop varieties, for instance, contribute to saving scarce water resources, thus allowing more water for other crops.

The diversity of plants also represents the basis of good nutrition. Around the world, some 2 billion people, mostly women and young children, suffer the debilitating effects of diets deficient in micronutrients.

Genetic resources can be used both to increase dietary diversity through new crops, and to increase the nutrient value of existing crops.

2. **The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is the foremost global instrument to address the challenge of global food and nutrition security in the context of climate change and progressively scarce natural resources.**

The Treaty was adopted by FAO in 2004 with the aim of enabling farmers, plant breeders and scientists to conserve and sustainably use plant genetic resources.

The Treaty is an unprecedented, global commitment by governments to meet the food security needs of a growing world population. It facilitates the exchange, among signatory countries, of a pool of plant genetic resources from the 64 most important crops that together account for over 80% of all human consumption.

By ratifying the Treaty, countries agree to make their plant genetic diversity and related information about the crops, stored in their gene banks, available to all through the **Multilateral System (MLS).**

3. **By facilitating exchange of resources, the Treaty’s Multilateral System sets-up opportunities for countries to build on what has already been accomplished in terms of plants for food and agriculture.**
The resources exchange takes place through a global genepool whose accession currently amounts to 1.6 million, with up to 800 transfers of seeds and other material per day worldwide!

Those who access the materials agree that they will freely share any new developments with others for further research or, if they patent the new products for commercialization, they agree to pay a percentage of the benefits into the Benefit-Sharing Fund that supports conservation and the further development of agriculture in the developing world.

4. The Benefit-Sharing Fund (BSF) of the Treaty invests directly in high impact projects, technology transfer and capacity building, to support developing countries in accelerating the conservation and use of plant genetic resources.

The Benefit-Sharing Fund is currently funding 19 projects in 31 developing countries. Local farmers, plant breeders and civil society organizations in Asia, Africa, the Near East and Central & South America are the direct beneficiaries and stakeholders of such interventions.

Projects are supporting countries in the formulation of strategic actions plans and the implementation of immediate action projects to address climate change adaptation of key food crops.

The total voluntary donations to the Treaty’s BSF, since 2011, is over 13 million USD with voluntary contributions from Norway (approximately 6.5 million USD), the European Union (approximately 6.5 million USD), Italy (over 1 million USD) and others.

Member countries at the Fifth Session of the Treaty’s Governing Body, which will take place from 24 to 28 September 2013, plan to discuss many issues, including:

(1) The possible expansion of the Treaty’s global genepool to include more, or perhaps even all food crops;

(2) The expansion and addition of new benefit-sharing mechanisms, which will add more income to the Treaty’s Benefit-Sharing Fund.