



PART 1: Description and all information of the outcome/impact reported

TITLE

The 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopts benefit-sharing rules for digital sequence information using Bioversity-CIAT-led CGIAR contributions

YEAR

2024

OUTCOME IMPACT CASE REPORT

Study #GLO - 2403

Stage of Maturity of change reported: stage 2

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: GLOBAL



Comments: The outcome/policy change occurred in a global international policy-making forum (i.e., the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity). It decided to create new, globally applicable rules on benefit sharing from the commercial use of digital sequence information derived from genetic resources.

OUTCOME STORY/IMPACT STATEMENT

The 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted new rules for payments to, and disbursements from, an international fund, for benefit sharing from the use of digital sequence information. The decision excluded elements that CGIAR successfully lobbied against, which would have undermined agricultural research for development, following CGIAR objections. CGIAR, led by the genetic resources Policy team of the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, played a crucial role, providing scientific evidence through written submissions, side events, bilateral meetings, and participation in negotiations.

CGIAR INNOVATION(S) OR FINDINGS THAT HAVE RESULTED IN THIS OUTCOME OR IMPACT

CGIAR contributed to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) negotiations in various impactful ways. It submitted reports on behalf of CGIAR to negotiators across different bodies within the CBD framework. A CGIAR representative was selected to participate as a member of the 'Informal Advisory Group to the Co-Chairs of the Working Group on Digital Sequence Information (DSI)', participating actively in seven meetings. CGIAR also engaged in all formal negotiations and informal meetings organized by groups including the Meridian Institute and the Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) Capacity-Strengthening Initiative. During those meetings CGIAR representatives were in constant contact with delegates 'in real time' (on WhatsApp and in person) providing commentary on options under discussion. Additionally, CGIAR scientists: i) published articles in highly ranked peer-reviewed journals; ii) organized side events during negotiating meetings; and iii) collaborated with like-minded organizations in the DSI Scientific Network and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. In October 2024, CBD Executive Secretary, Astrid Schomaker, said: "The negotiations that led to the operationalization of the Multilateral Mechanism on DSI, including the Cali Fund, by COP 16 were supported by a broad base of multistakeholder engagement. CGIAR has conveyed the plural perspectives of agricultural research eloquently and made a remarkable contribution to forging consensus in Cali at the most vibrant and inclusive COP in the history of the Convention."

Contributing external partners:

- Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (UN FAO)
- The Digital Sequence Information Scientific Network
- Other CGIAR centers

ELABORATION OF OUTCOME/IMPACT STATEMENT

A key final decision adopted at COP 16 in October 2024 incorporated new elements supporting more effective global genetic resources conservation and use.

The CGIAR/ Alliance of Bioversity-CIAT's engagement in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework negotiations, and later, in the decision-making process to operationalize the Multilateral Mechanism for Benefit-sharing from DSI, had three main objectives:

a) Raising awareness of DSI's role in agriculture for research & development: CGIAR aimed to raise awareness among CBD negotiators about how DSI is used in agricultural research and development (AgR&D), highlighting its role in improving crops and animal breeding to address climate change, malnutrition, and poverty. Historically, the CBD has been driven by national ministries of environment and nature conservation NGOs with limited understanding of agrobiodiversity. CGIAR's advocacy sought to counter their tendency to favor benefit-sharing measures that did not fit the needs of AgR&D, thus ensuring DSI's role was properly understood and supported.

b) Promoting a Multilateral Mechanism for Benefit-sharing (MLM): A major focus of CGIAR's engagement was advocating for a multilateral approach to benefit-sharing, as opposed to bilateral systems favored by conservationists. Bilateral approaches—more suited to governing access to wild species for niche industries—would have been detrimental to agricultural R&D, which thrives on broad, multilateral access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA). CGIAR pushed for a more inclusive, widespread approach that supports international exchanges of PGRFA, without complex tracking and tracing systems.

c) Ensuring compatibility with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: Another crucial aspect of the engagement was ensuring that the new MLM recognized and exempted DSI benefit-sharing under the Plant Treaty, under which CGIAR's genebanks already operate.

Without this recognition, CGIAR and partners would have faced the challenge of adhering to conflicting regulations under two international frameworks, which would have created unfair requirements for the AgR&D sector generally. CGIAR/Alliance advocated for:

- Promoting a multilateral approach to benefit sharing
- Supporting payment triggers based on aggregated commercial values (such as GDP or the value of related sectors) with national governments enforcing payment obligations
- Advocating open access to DSI, avoiding restrictions on databases
- Ensuring the database managers were not required to track compliance with ABS laws, but rather that data depositors could make compliance declarations
- Exempting users already making benefit-sharing payments under other international agreements, including the Plant Treaty.

The final decision adopted at COP 16 incorporates all these elements, except that national governments are only encouraged (rather than required) to enforce payment obligations for companies [1-18,20].

To be able to participate so actively in the negotiations, it was necessary to keep informing CGIAR scientists and leaders about the ongoing negotiations. To that end, webinars open to all CGIAR staff were organized to provide information and obtain feedback [19-22].

GENDER, YOUTH, CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Gender relevance: 1 - Significant. The COP decision is that the funds from the multilateral mechanism will be dedicated to recipients in least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition. Up to 50% of those funds should be dedicated to supporting "self-identified needs of Indigenous peoples and local communities, including women and youth within those communities through government authorities or by direct payments through institutions identified by Indigenous peoples and local communities." The evidence is the COP 16 Decision itself. The quoted text is from Article 21 of the Decision [1].

Youth relevance: 1 - Significant. The COP 16 decision is that the funds from the multilateral mechanism will be dedicated to recipients in least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition. Up to 50% of those funds should be dedicated to supporting "self-identified needs of Indigenous peoples and local communities, including women and youth within those communities through government authorities or by direct payments through institutions identified by indigenous peoples and local communities" (Article 21) The evidence is the COP 16 Decision itself. The quoted text is from Article 21 of the Decision [1].

Other cross-cutting dimensions: With respect to Indigenous peoples, the COP 16 decision is that the funds from the multilateral mechanism will be dedicated to recipients in least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition. Up to 50% of those funds should be dedicated to supporting "self-identified needs of indigenous peoples and local communities, including women and youth within those communities through government authorities or by direct payments through institutions identified by Indigenous peoples and local communities." The evidence is the COP 16 Decision itself. The quoted text is from Article 21 of the Decision [1].

PART 2: Mapping to Alliance strategy and structure

KEY CONTRIBUTOR AND STRATEGIC OUTCOMES



Lever 4: Biodiversity for Food & Agriculture

SECONDARY CONTRIBUTOR

Gender, Youth and Inclusion

S03: National governments adopt policies and practices recommended for genetic resources management.

SDG TARGETS



1.4 - By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

PART 3: One CGIAR Alignment

LINK TO IMPACT AREAS AND GLOBAL TARGETS



Impact Area 3: Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion

- Close the gender gap in rights to economic resources, access to ownership, and control over land and natural resources for over 500 million women who work in food, land, and water systems.



Impact Area 5: Environmental Health and Biodiversity

- Maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed genebanks at the national, regional, and international levels.

PART 4: Evidence, References and COM material

PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS

- What is digital sequence information's role in agricultural research and benefit-sharing? (2024) available [here](#)
- Colombia could broker historic global agreement to share genetic diversity's digital wealth (2024) available [here](#)
- Researchers warn that biodiversity benefit sharing needs a radically new approach (2023) - available [here](#)
- Reporting from COP 15: Digital Sequence Information will influence who benefits from biodiversity (2022) available [here](#)

EVIDENCE AND REFERENCES

1. CBD/COP 16 Decision on 'Digital Sequence Information from Genetic Resources' – available [here](#)
2. Generation, use and sharing of digital sequence information in crop improvement. Policy brief (2024). – available [here](#).
3. Technical assistance to strengthen national agricultural research organizations' capacity to use digital sequence information. (2023) – available [here](#).
4. Issues for further consideration concerning digital sequence information. (2023) – available [here](#).
5. Digital sequence information is changing the way genetic resources are used in agricultural research and development: Implications for new benefit-sharing norms. (2022) – available [here](#).
6. Potential implications of the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources for the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. (2018) – available [here](#).
7. Synthesis of views pursuant to decision 15/9, CBD/WGDSI/1/2/Add.1 (2023) – available [here](#).
8. Case studies and examples of the use of digital sequence information in relation to the objectives of the Convention and the Nagoya Protocol, CBD/DSI/AHTEG/2018/1/2/Add.1 (2018) – available [here](#).
9. Synthesis of views and information on the potential implications of the use of digital sequence information, CBD/DSI/AHTEG/2018/1/2 (2018) – available [here](#).
10. Harmonize rules for digital sequence information benefit-sharing across UN frameworks (2024) – available [here](#).
11. Digital Sequence Information (DSI) data governance practices to support benefit-sharing and science (2024) – available [here](#).
12. New rules for sharing benefits from the use of digital sequence information (2024) – available [here](#).
13. New benefit-sharing principles for digital sequence information (2023) – available [here](#).
14. Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture: opportunities and challenges emerging from the science and information technology revolution (2018) – available [here](#).
15. Using genomic sequence information to increase conservation and sustainable use of crop diversity and benefit-sharing (2018) – available [here](#).
16. Sealing the deal on DSI access and benefit-sharing – Side event during CBD/COP 16, Oct–Nov 2025 – (link pending if available).
17. How to 'future proof' benefit-sharing from the use of DSI in agricultural research and development available [here](#).
18. DSI is changing the way genetic resources are used in agricultural research and development – (link pending if available).
19. Webinar 2024: COP16 decision on digital sequence information and benefit-sharing – available [here](#).
20. Webinar 2024: New benefit-sharing rules under the CBD and Plant Treaty – available [here](#).
21. Webinar 2024: Update on Plant Treaty negotiations to improve benefit-sharing – available [here](#).
22. Webinar 2023: Digital Sequence Information - Where are we now? – available [here](#).

CONTACT PERSON/ AUTHORS

- Michael Halewood, Principal Scientist, m.halewood@cgiar.org
- Isabel Lopez Noriega, Policy and Legal Specialist, i.lopez@cgiar.org
- Claudio Chiarolla, Legal Officer, c.chiarolla@cgiar.org
- Mathieu Rouard, Senior Scientist, m.rouard@cgiar.org

Produced with professional inputs from the Alliance's Performance Innovations Strategic Analysis for Impact, Strategic Performance and Results Management, and Science Writing Service teams'



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The Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) delivers research-based solutions that harness agricultural biodiversity and sustainably transform food systems to improve people's lives. Alliance solutions address the global crises of malnutrition, climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation.



The Alliance is part of CGIAR, a global research partnership for a food-secure future.

<http://alliancebioversityciat.org>

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