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GENÈVE, SUISSE

UNIÓN INTERNACIONAL
PARA LA PROTECCIÓN
DE LAS OBTENCIONES
VEGETALES

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INTERNATIONAL UNION
FOR THE PROTECTION
OF NEW VARIETIES
OF PLANTS

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UPOV RELEASES REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION

A report launched this week by the Geneva-based International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) shows that plant variety protection under the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants, the so-called “UPOV Convention”, generates substantial economic benefits, and shows great potential particularly for the development of rural areas.

The report concludes that plant variety protection under the UPOV system is an effective incentive for plant breeding and results in the development of new, improved varieties of benefit to farmers, growers and consumers. The report, the first of its kind since the adoption of the UPOV Convention in 1961, includes a study on the effects of plant variety protection in five countries, namely, Argentina, China, Kenya, Poland and the Republic of Korea.

The report also includes an overview of the evolution of the UPOV system which is designed to encourage the development of new varieties of plants by granting breeders an intellectual property right on the basis of a set of clearly defined principles.

Commenting on the report, Dr. Idris, UPOV Secretary-General, said “some very clear messages have emerged from this study, perhaps the most important being that the introduction of the UPOV system of plant variety protection and membership of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) can open a door to economic development, particularly in the rural sector.”

Dr. Idris added, “an important feature of the study is that it indicates the range of ways in which plant variety protection can produce benefits and also demonstrates that the benefits differ from country to country, reflecting their specific circumstances.” He said that “alongside the use of other forms of intellectual property, the plant variety protection system has been used to underpin advances in plant breeding technologies which increase the scope for plant improvement.”

The President of the Council of UPOV, Miss Enriqueta Molina Macías from Mexico, welcomed the study which she said “demonstrated a range of beneficial impacts”, in particular, the fact that under the UPOV system “farmers, growers and breeders have access to the best varieties produced by breeders throughout UPOV member territories”. Miss Molina Macías added, “under the UPOV system, a breeding cycle of progression can continue to maximize the benefits of plant variety protection and plant breeding for the future.”

Benefits of Plant Variety Protection

The report states that the benefits of new plant varieties are many and varied, and include, economic benefits, for example, through varieties with improved yield leading to reductions in the price of end-products for consumers, or improved quality, leading to higher value products with increased marketability; health benefits, for example through varieties with improved disease resistance or stress tolerance; and even pure pleasure, for example with ornamental plants.

An effective plant variety protection system can also provide important benefits in an international context by removing barriers to trade in varieties, thereby increasing domestic and international market scope. Breeders are unlikely to release valuable varieties into a country without adequate protection such as that provided under the UPOV system. With access to such valuable foreign-bred varieties, domestic growers and producers have more scope to improve their production and to export their products. Moreover, as a consequence of the breeders exemption (whereby acts done for the purpose of breeding other varieties are not subject to any restriction) in the UPOV Convention, domestic breeders also gain access to valuable varieties for use in their breeding programs. This international aspect is an important means of technology transfer and effective use of genetic resources, the report notes.

The Role of Plant Variety Protection

An effective system of plant variety protection offers an incentive for the development of new varieties of plant where there is commercial viability. Such a system also stimulates new breeders and new breeding work and may serve as a basis for more effective breeding work at the domestic level. Where potential commercial markets exist, an effective plant variety protection system can lead to the creation and increased availability of new varieties which allow a market demand to be met which could not otherwise be met by farmers and growers using existing varieties. Where there is no commercial market for a particular crop, but where plant breeding is still considered necessary, breeding may be supported by the public sector. Such a situation in a particular crop should, however, be seen alongside the overall benefits of the plant variety protection system in relation to the availability of improved varieties for farmers and growers in commercially viable crops. In this respect, the system plays a key role in developing the rural economy in a way which helps farmers to break out of the cycle of subsistence farming.

About UPOV

UPOV is an intergovernmental organization with a mandate to provide and promote an effective system of plant variety protection, with the aim of encouraging the development of new varieties of plants, for the benefit of society. UPOV currently has 60 members:

Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, European Community, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay and Uzbekistan.

A summary of the report is available at <http://www.upov.int/en/news/index.html>. A copy of the UPOV Report on the Impact of Plant Variety Protection (UPOV Publication No. 353(E)) can be obtained from the Office of the Union.

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