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INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NEW VARIETIES OF PLANTS
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**TECHNICAL WORKING PARTY ON AUTOMATION AND
COMPUTER PROGRAMS**

**Twenty-Ninth Session
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VARIETY DESCRIPTIONS DATABASES

Document prepared by the Office of the Union

1. The purpose of this document is to report on developments concerning variety description databases.

Background

2. At its forty-fifth session, held in Geneva from March 30 to April 1, 2009, the Technical Committee (TC) noted from the developments reported in document TC/45/9 "Publication of Variety Descriptions" that members of the Union were developing databases containing morphological and/or molecular data and, where considered appropriate, were collaborating in the development of databases for the management of variety collections, particularly on a regional basis. The TC agreed that it could be beneficial to offer the possibility for members of the Union to report on that work in a coherent way to the TC, the Technical Working Parties (TWPs) and the BMT. On that basis, the TC agreed to replace the agenda item "Publication of variety descriptions" with an item for "Variety description databases" on the agendas of the forthcoming sessions of the TC, TWPs and the BMT. In that respect, it recalled the importance of the list of criteria for consideration for the use of descriptions obtained from different locations and sources as set out in document TC/45/9, paragraph 3. The TC also agreed that the information presented would not need to be related to the publication of descriptions (see document TC/45/16 "Report", paragraph 173).

3. At its forty-sixth session, held in Geneva from March 22 to 24, 2010, the TC noted the information on variety description databases provided to the Technical Working Party for Vegetables (TWV) and the Technical Working Party for Fruit Crops (TWF) at their sessions in 2009, and the report from the Delegation of the European Union that a new functionality would be added to the Community Plant Variety Office of the European Union (CPVO) database on applications and titles granted, which was available to the public through its official webpage (see document TC/46/16 “Report”, paragraphs 158 to 162).

Developments in the Technical Working Parties at their sessions in 2010

4. At its forty-fourth session, held in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, from July 5 to 9, 2010, the Technical Working Party for Vegetables (TWV) discussed the review of grouping characteristics in the Test Guidelines for Pea (document TG/7/10), on the basis of documents TWV/44/33 and TWV/44/33 Add., which contained the replies to the questionnaire survey on grouping characteristics in the Test Guidelines for Pea, prepared by Mr. François Boulineau (France).

5. In response to the observation of Mr. Boulineau that the results of the questionnaire indicated substantial potential benefits in developing a database containing pea variety descriptions from members of the Union, at least for grouping characteristics as a first step, the TWV agreed that Mr. Boulineau should make a presentation on his concept at the forty-fifth session of the TWV. The TWV agreed that Mr. Boulineau should organize an exchange of a common set of variety descriptions for grouping characteristics, and possibly a ring test, to examine if grouping characteristics were sufficiently reliable for such an approach. It noted that it would be important to involve the TWA experts in that work (see document TWV/44/34 “Report”, paragraphs 80 and 81).

6. At the forty-third session of the Technical Working Party for Ornamental Plants and Forest Trees (TWO), held in Cuernavaca, Morelos State, Mexico, from September 20 to 24, 2010, the expert from the European Union reported that, as a part of its process of moving to a paperless office, it was creating a database with variety descriptions that would enable variety descriptions to be published in an efficient way. Before starting to publish variety descriptions and also to publish information on applications, it had needed to consider a number of issues, such as confidentiality with regard to parentage and descriptions of parent lines, but those matters were being addressed and variety descriptions would be published (in English). The expert from Brazil reported on the work that had been done on developing and publishing a database of some 600 soybean variety descriptions for 15 characteristics, based on information provided from different sources. The feedback had been very positive and a similar initiative was being developed for other crops, such as rice, cotton and sugarcane. An expert from the Netherlands reported that there had been a delay in publishing variety descriptions as a result of the need to resolve certain IT matters and also because some of the descriptions were only available in Dutch and were based on botanical descriptors rather than UPOV characteristics (see document TWO/43/29 Rev. “Revised Report”, paragraphs 80, 83 and 84).

7. The TWO noted the interest in developing a UPOV database of variety descriptions, but recalled the concerns that had been raised with regard to the use of descriptions obtained from different locations and sources, as set out in document TC/45/9. However, it noted that the TWV, at its forty-fourth session, held in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, from July 5 to 9, 2010, had discussed the substantial potential benefits in developing a database containing pea

variety descriptions from members of the Union, at least for grouping characteristics as a first step, and had agreed that Mr. Boulineau (France) should make a presentation on his concept at the forty-fifth session of the TWV. The TWO agreed that it would be useful to receive a report on that initiative at its forty-fourth session (see document TWO/43/29 Rev. “Revised Report”, paragraphs 82).

8. At its forty-first session, held in Cuernavaca, Morelos State, Mexico, from September 27 to October 1, 2010, the Technical Working Party for Fruit Crops (TWF), noted the developments reported in document TWF/41/6 and heard that the TWV, at its forty-fourth session, held in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, from July 5 to 9, 2010, had discussed the substantial potential benefits in developing a database containing pea variety descriptions from members of the Union, at least for grouping characteristics as a first step, and had agreed that Mr. Boulineau (France) should make a presentation on his concept at the forty-fifth session of the TWV. The TWF agreed that it would be useful to receive a report on that initiative at its forty-second session. With regard to the information provided in document TWF/41/6, paragraph 5, on the project on the “Management of peach tree reference collections”, the TWF noted that the database would not be restricted to protected varieties because it was intended to include varieties of common knowledge (see document TWF/41/30 Rev. “Revised Report”, paragraph 78).

9. The TWF noted that the development of standard references provided in document TWF/41/8, would be a good basis for exchanging variety description information in an efficient way for different languages. It also noted that it would be important for the date and place where the variety description was produced to be included. The TWF also confirmed the importance of publishing a disclaimer concerning the information on the status of such documents, as well as its appropriate use (see document TWF/41/30 Rev. “Revised Report”, paragraph 79).

10. The representative of the International Community of Breeders of Asexually Reproduced Ornamental and Fruit Plants (CIOPORA) at the TWF reported that CIOPORA and the International Seed Federation (ISF) were not in favor of the publication of variety descriptions before the grant of the breeder’s right. The expert from the European Union explained that, with regard to the CPVO database reported in document TWF/41/6, paragraphs 6 and 7, descriptions of varieties protected since December 2008 would be published, but the descriptions of parent lines would not be published (see document TWF/41/30 Rev. “Revised Report”, paragraph 80).

Technical Committee

11. The TC, at its forty-seventh session held in Geneva from April 4 to 7, 2011, noted the information provided on variety description databases at the sessions of the TWV, TWF and TWO, as set out in this document.

12. The TC, at its forty-seventh session held in Geneva from April 4 to 7, 2011, agreed to request the experts from France to present the concept of a database containing pea variety descriptions of member of the Union to the Technical Working Parties at their sessions in 2011 and to the Technical Committee at its forty-eighth session (see document TC/47/26 “Report on the Conclusions”, paragraph 34).

Comments of the Technical Working Parties at their sessions in 2011

13. The Technical Working Party for Agricultural Crops (TWA), at its fortieth session, held in Brasilia, Brazil, from May 16 to 20, 2011, considered documents the information provided in documents TWA/40/6 and TWA/40/13. The expert from France presented a concept of a database containing pea variety descriptions as the first step for the set up of the variety description database. The TWA agreed that the project for pea was a good example for the development of a variety description database and encouraged the French expert to continue its development. However, the TWA stressed that a good knowledge needed to be acquired with regard to the reliability of at least the grouping characteristics, before the presented concept could be applied for other species (see document TWA/40/23 “Report” paragraph 57).

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