

UPOV Press Release 136

Geneva, October 28, 2022

UPOV Council Holds its Annual Session

The Council of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) held its fifty-sixth ordinary session on October 28, 2022, under the chairmanship of Mr. Marien Valstar (Netherlands). The report of the session is provided in document C/56/15 (see https://www.upov.int/meetings/en/details.jsp?meeting_id=67788).

Mr. Daren Tang, Secretary-General, provided opening remarks, a copy of which are reproduced in Appendix I.

Round-up of key developments:

Ghana

Ghana deposited its instrument of accession to the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention on November 3, 2021, and became bound by the 1991 Act on December 3, 2021. On the occasion of the participation for the first time in the UPOV Council as a member, Ms. Diana Asonaba Dapaah, Deputy Attorney General and Deputy Minister of Justice of Ghana made a statement, a copy of which is attached in Appendix II.

Draft Law of Armenia

The Council took a positive decision on the conformity of the Draft Law on the Protection of Varieties of Plants of Armenia with the provisions of the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention, which allows Armenia, once the Draft Law is adopted with no changes and the Law is in force, to deposit its instrument of accession to the 1991 Act.

Procedure for selection of new Vice Secretary-General

The members of the Union selected the following candidates to be interviewed for the post of Vice Secretary-General:

Mr. Martin Ake EKVAD (Sweden)
Ms. Yolanda HUERTA CASADO (Spain)
Mr. Leontino REZENDE TAVEIRA (Brazil)

An extraordinary session of the Council will be held on March 23, 2023, to appoint the new Vice Secretary-General.

Developments in UPOV

A video presentation by the Vice Secretary-General on "Report on developments in UPOV", made for the fifty-sixth ordinary session of the Council, is available at the [C/56](#) webpage, in English, with subtitles in English, French, German and Spanish.

Events

Seminar on the role of plant breeding and plant variety protection in enabling agriculture to mitigate and adapt to climate change

On October 11, 12 and 26, 2022, UPOV organized a seminar on the role of plant breeding and plant variety protection in enabling agriculture to mitigate and adapt to climate change ("Seminar"), by a combination of virtual and hybrid means. Over 450 participants registered for the Seminar. A video of the seminar will be made available on October 31, 2022, on the [Seminar](#) webpage, with interpretation channels in English, French, German, Spanish (on October 11 and 12) and Chinese and Russian in addition (on October 26). All presentations are available on the Seminar webpage.

The proceedings of the Seminar will be published on the UPOV Website in English, French, German and Spanish.

Mr. Daren Tang, Secretary-General, provided the welcome and opening remarks, a copy of which are reproduced in Appendix III.

Mr. Marien Valstar, President of the Council, provided the following concluding remarks:

- Climate change is increasingly affecting everyone around the world: farmers, breeders and consumers. Effects are biotic (new pests and diseases) and abiotic (heat, drought, rain, seasonal changes).
- A range of strategies is needed to respond to the challenges. Plant breeding has a vital role to play in these strategies; farmers need new plant varieties to adapt to climate change but also to sustainably increase productivity in order to minimize climate change.
- Plant breeding is a long-term process that requires long-term investment from public institutions and from private companies. Plant breeders need a regulatory environment that promotes innovation and supports the conservation and utilization of genetic resources.
- The UPOV system enables plant breeders to provide farmers with the varieties they will need to feed the world in the face of climate change.

UPOV Performance Report 2020-2021

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 presented an unprecedented challenge in relation to the implementation of UPOV's program within the framework of the approved Program and Budget for the 2020-2021 Biennium. In response, the Office of the Union received strong support from members of the Union and observers to adapt its work processes to ensure continued delivery of its services and program of work.

The main impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was in relation to meetings of UPOV bodies, UPOV's training and assistance activities and external relations, because of the need to discontinue travel. In the case of meetings of UPOV bodies, members of the Union readily embraced the proposal to move to virtual meetings and to put in place procedures to enable consideration of documents by correspondence. These procedures enabled the work of UPOV bodies to continue as planned with no negative consequences for progress on substantial matters. Indeed, the move to virtual modalities resulted in significantly greater participation in Technical Working Party meetings (see figure 1). Another positive impact of the measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was a substantial reduction in UPOV's carbon footprint, which was halved from 2019 to 2020 (see figure 2). The wide availability of virtual meeting options also created new opportunities for meeting with colleagues and resulted in an overall increase in the frequency of contacts (see figure 3).

Figure 1. Number of TWP participants

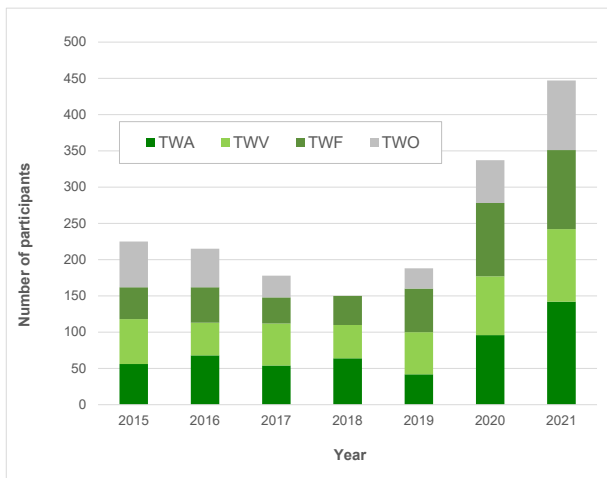


Figure 2. UPOV's carbon footprint

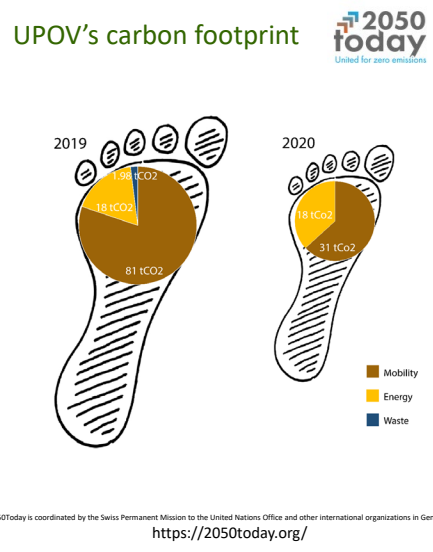
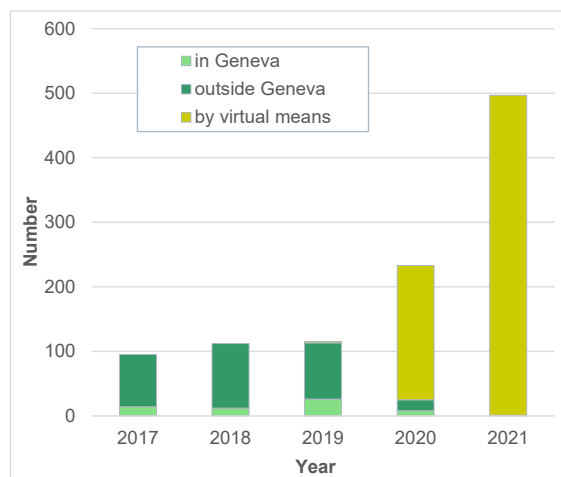


Figure 3. Number of missions, activities and meetings involving UPOV



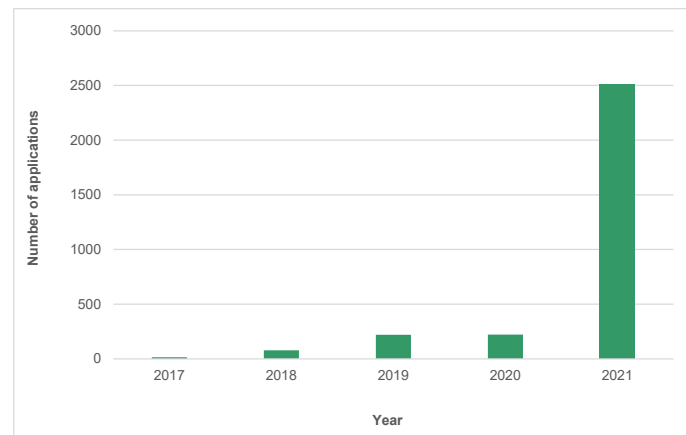
In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing concerns about food security and climate change, the adoption of the FAQ “[How does the UPOV system support sustainable development?](#)” proved to be timely. The FAQ recalls that the tremendous progress in agricultural productivity in various parts of the world is largely based on improved varieties.

A recent survey by the World Farmers’ Organisation (WFO) demonstrated the importance that farmers attach to new, improved plant varieties. The survey revealed that more than 7 in 10 farmers that responded to the survey used new, improved plant varieties, with more than 90% of those farmers considering such varieties to be important for the success of their farm. More than 9 out of 10 of the farmers considered that new, improved plant varieties were important to respond to climate change and for the sustainability of food systems.

UPOV PRISMA online application tool

UPOV PRISMA (see <https://www.upov.int/upovprisma/en/index.html>) is an on-line tool to assist in making plant variety protection (PVP) applications to PVP Offices of participating UPOV members, thereby helping to increase the introduction of new plant varieties to farmers in UPOV members. By the end of 2021, 36 members of the Union, covering 75 States, were participating in UPOV PRISMA and there has been strong growth in the use of UPOV PRISMA since its launch in 2017 (see figure 4).

Figure 4. Number of applications using UPOV PRISMA (annual)



Adoption of documents

The Council adopted revised versions of the following documents:

UPOV/EXN/DEN	Explanatory Notes on Variety Denominations under the UPOV Convention
TGP/5	Experience and Cooperation in DUS Testing Section 6: UPOV Report on Technical Examination and UPOV Variety Description
TGP/8	Trial Design and Techniques Used in the Examination of Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability
TGP/12	Guidance on Certain Physiological Characteristics
UPOV/INF/16	Exchangeable Software
UPOV/INF/22	Software and Equipment Used by Members of the Union

All adopted documents will be published in the UPOV Collection (see http://www.upov.int/upov_collection/en/).

Award of medals

Mr. Marien Valstar (Netherlands) was awarded a UPOV Gold Medal on completing his term as President of the Council, from November 2, 2019 to October 28, 2022.

Mr. Patrick Ngwediagi (United Republic of Tanzania) was awarded a UPOV Silver Medal on completing his term as Chair of the Administrative and Legal Committee, from 2020 to 2022.

Mr. Nik Hulse (Australia) was awarded a UPOV Silver Medal on completing his term as Chair of the Technical Committee, from 2020 to 2022.

Election of the new Chairpersons

The Council elected, in each case for a term of three years ending with the fifty-ninth ordinary session of the Council, in 2025:

- (a) Mr. Yehan Cui (China)
President of the Council
- (b) Mr. Anthony Parker (Canada)
Vice-President of the Council

- (c) Ms. María Laura Villamayor (Argentina),
Chair of the Administrative and Legal Committee
- (d) Ms. Minori Hagiwara (Japan)
Vice-Chair of the Administrative and Legal Committee
- (e) Ms. Beate Rücker (Germany)
Chair of the Technical Committee
- (f) Ms. Nuria Urquía Fernández (Spain)
Vice-Chair of the Technical Committee

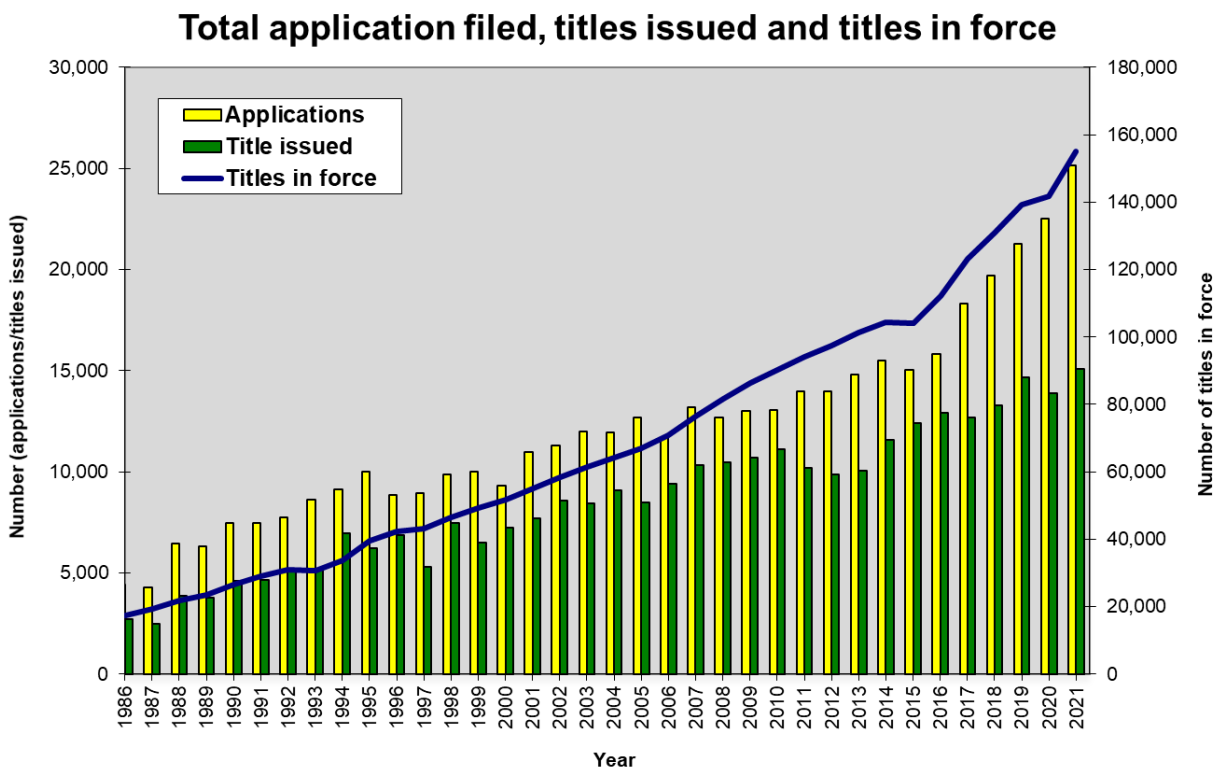
Plant Variety Protection Statistics

The number of applications for plant variety protection increased from 22,512 in 2020 to 25,135 in 2021 (12 percent increase).

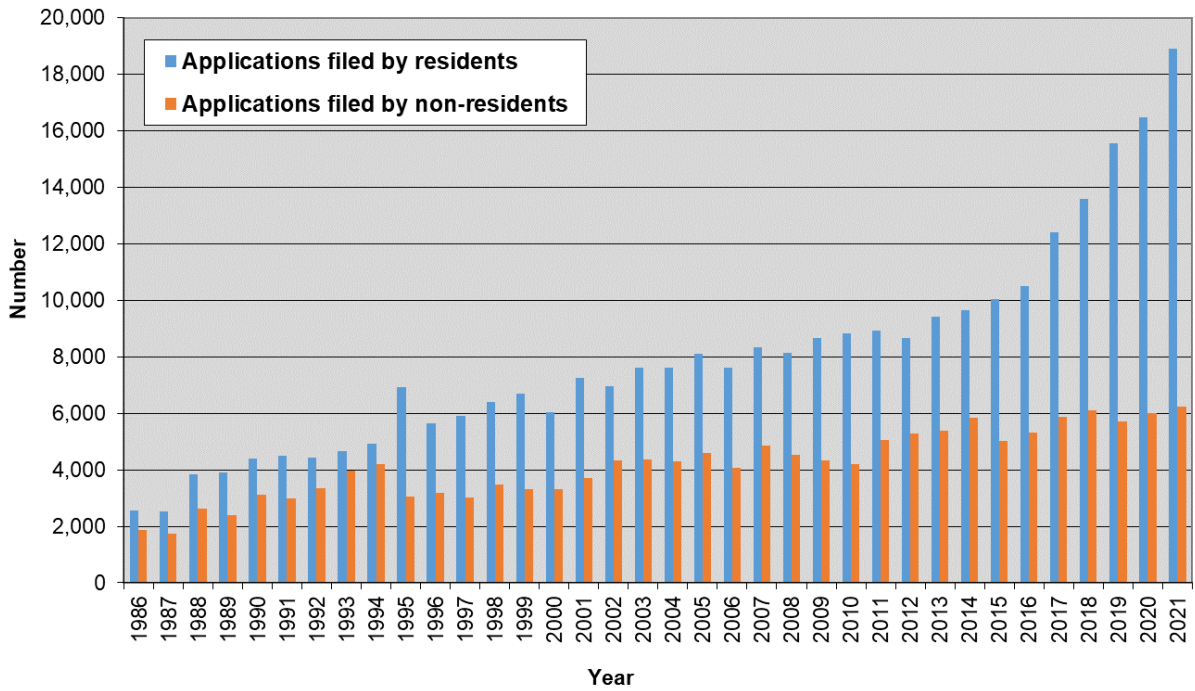
The number of titles issued increased from 13,873 in 2020 to 15,081 in 2021 (8.7 percent increase).

The total of 155,122 titles in force at the end of 2021 represented a 9.3 percent increase on figures for 2020 (141,888).

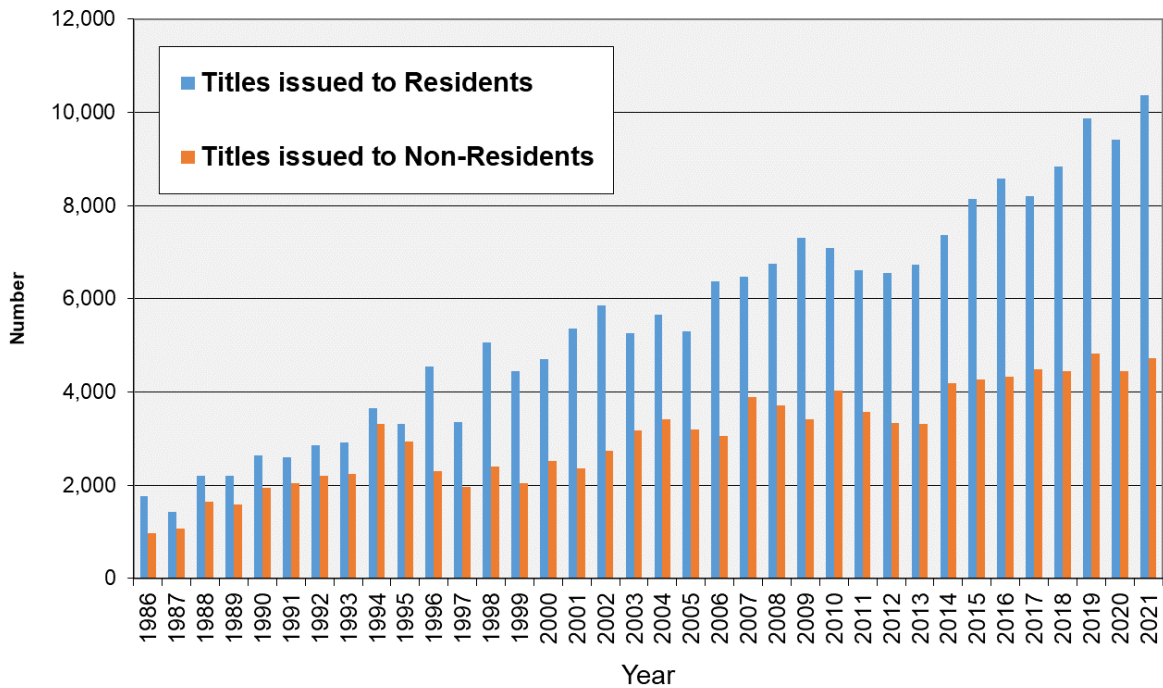
The following graphs indicate trends in applications filed and titles issued since 1986. Information is also provided on the top 10 members of the Union receiving the largest number of applications in 2010, 2020 and 2021 and an analysis of applications by residence of breeders for the same years.



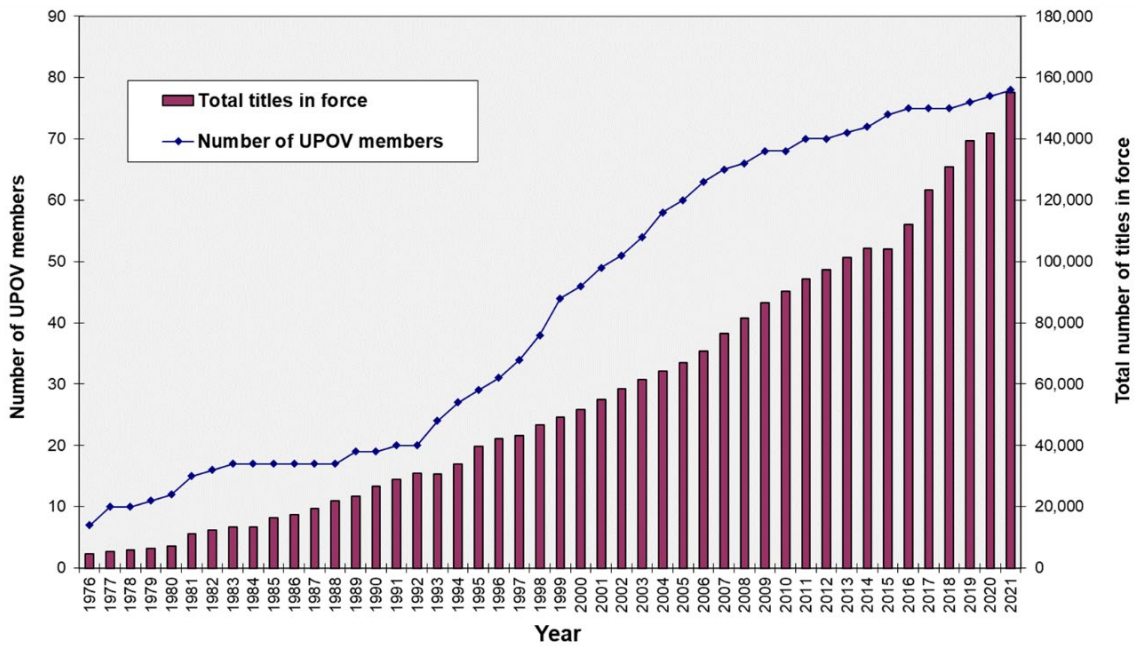
Applications filed by residents/non-residents



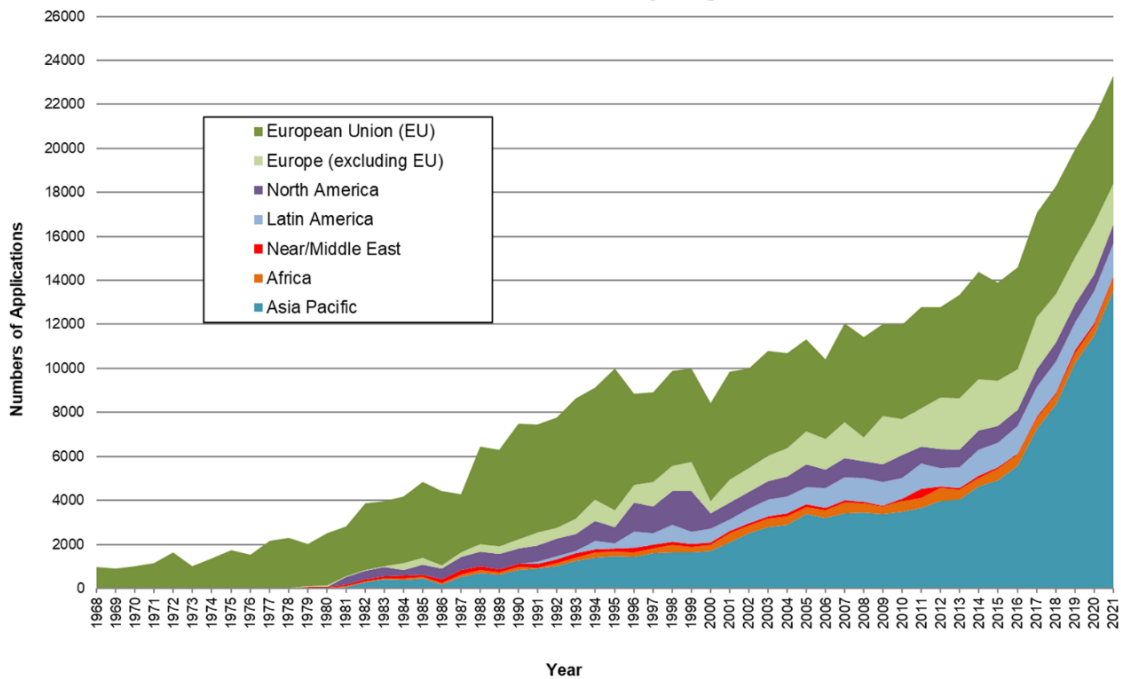
Titles issued to residents/non-residents



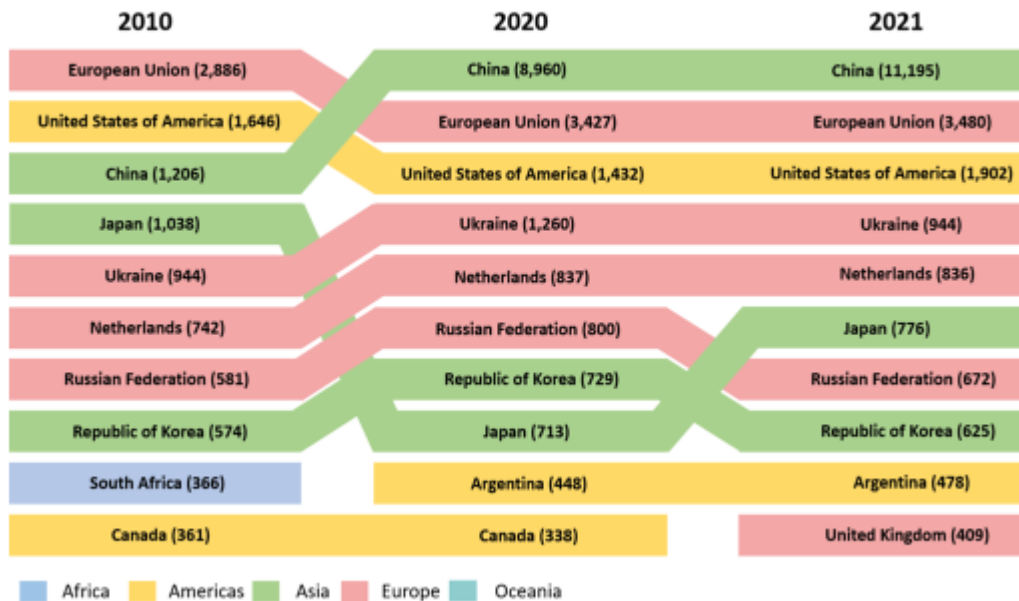
Titles in force / Number of UPOV members



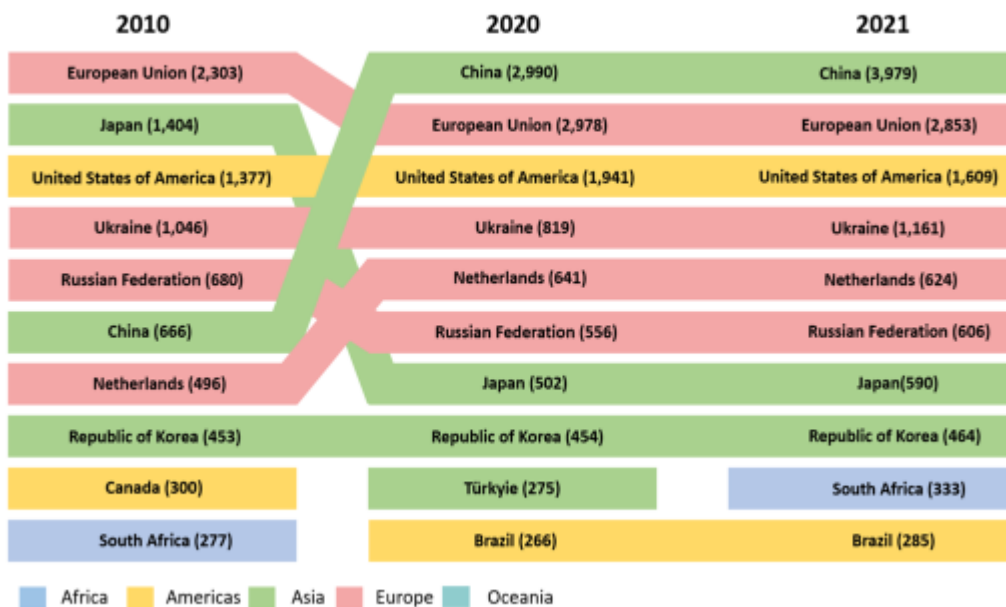
Applications received by region

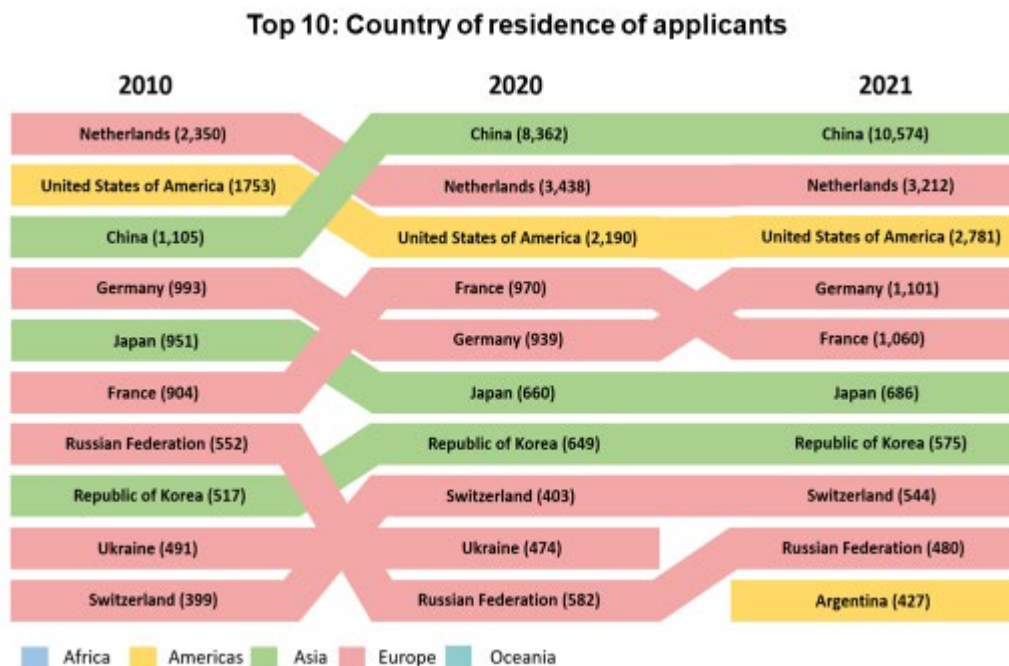


Top 10: UPOV members by number of plant variety protection applications received



Top 10 UPOV members by number of plant variety protection titles issued





NOTES TO EDITORS

UPOV is an intergovernmental organization based in Geneva.

The purpose of UPOV is 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 has 78 members covering 97 States. The members of UPOV are:

African Intellectual Property Organization, Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

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Social media



Twitter account: @UPOVint



LinkedIn account: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/upov-official>

[Appendices follow]

APPENDIX I

OPENING REMARKS OF MR. DAREN TANG, SECRETARY-GENERAL,
AT THE FIFTY-SIXTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE COUNCIL

Mr. Marien Valstar, President of the UPOV Council,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Welcome to the fifty-sixth session of the UPOV Council, and a warm welcome back to Geneva and in-person meetings for many of you attending in person. A warm welcome as well to those of you joining us virtually from around the world.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the invaluable contribution to UPOV of our President, Marien Valstar. As many of you are aware, these are Marien's final sessions as President of the UPOV Council and I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude for the guidance and support you have provided to me and the Office of Union during your tenure. Navigating the challenges brought about by the pandemic has not been easy, but this task would have been even tougher without your wise counsel.

I would also like to pay tribute to Mr. Peter Button, who has served as Vice Secretary-General since 2010, since this will be his last appearance before us at an ordinary session of the Council. Over these 12 years, Peter has been instrumental to the growth and development of UPOV and he has worked tirelessly to move the Organization forward.

During his time in office, Peter witnessed a substantial increase in the reach and use of UPOV. UPOV members grew from 68 to 78, and we just welcomed Ghana as our latest member of the UPOV family. Applications grew from about 13,000 in 2010 to 22,000 in 2020. And titles in force have surged from 90,000 to over 140,000 now.

The response under his stewardship, and with your support as UPOV members, has been to create new tools to better serve users of the UPOV system, PRISMA and e-PVP being two such examples that have been transformational. The Office of the Union has facilitated Members in producing numerous guides and other materials that help the UPOV system continue being up to date. With the increase in interest in the PVP system, Peter has also had to reach out to forge new partnerships with stakeholders, as well as revamped the way UPOV engages and communicates.

Having worked with him for the past 2 years, I have had the chance to witness Peter's singular qualities – a deep professionalism, openness, transparency, and above all, elegance, humility and self-effacement. The team he leads may be small but it is tight-knit and highly effective, and it is these qualities he demonstrates that allows them to shine collectively. So Peter, let me put on record our gratitude and thanks to you, and while it is not time to say farewell yet, it is never too early to wish you all the best.

Global Context

Dear Colleagues,

When we gathered last year, the international community was still beset by the COVID-19 crisis. While the threat from the pandemic has begun to recede, it seems that there has been no break in the storm clouds overhead.

The range of socio-economic challenges that we face today are as complex and profound as any that have emerged in recent decades. Whether it is inflationary, supply-chain or energy pressures, the urgent threat of a warming planet, or geopolitical stresses, we seem to have entered a new and more volatile era.

In such a world where food security and sustainability are increasingly important, it is even more critical that we support innovation in the agricultural and agrifood sectors.

But this does not happen by itself. Rather, the creation of a vibrant innovation ecosystem requires attention, care and support, so that great ideas that can help feed our people, address climate change and bring color and taste into our lives, will have a chance to become reality. Plant variety protection is a critical component in such an ecosystem. PVP supports long-term investment in plant breeding and provides a framework for the development of seeds and new varieties that advance farmers' needs and those of society as a whole.

Indeed, the benefits provided by the UPOV system have long played a role in building momentum behind the UN Sustainable Development Goals. New varieties of plants with features such as improved yield or an ability to better adapt to climate stress, not only support agricultural productivity but also benefit communities worldwide.

That is why it is vital that in the face of global headwinds we come together to reaffirm and reinforce the importance of UPOV's work.

With this in mind, allow me to highlight three areas of strategic significance, and where our efforts can create tangible impact on the ground.

Creating Impact

First, ensuring global food security and supply.

Due to rising prices and disruption to patterns of international trade and production, the threat of food shortages is increasing in many parts of the world. The number of people experiencing acute food insecurity is projected to rise to over 220 million by the end of the year.

Investment in plant breeding and improvements in new kinds of crops and varieties are critical to reversing this trend and making food systems more resilient. Bolstering food security featured prominently in last year's seminar on strategies that address policies involving PVP and plant breeding. Let us be ready to explore what more we can do together to support agricultural productivity and sustainable food production, particularly among developing nations, which often have the most vulnerable food systems.

Second, spurring economic development in rural areas through plant breeding and PVP.

Agriculture is the backbone of many of your economies and a significant source of employment for rural populations. Take the case of Kenya, where agriculture contributes a third of GDP and 7 in 10 rural jobs.

Stimulating breeding activities among farmers is an important driver of agricultural growth. Since Viet Nam joined UPOV in 2006, the annual income of farmers has increased by around 25 percent, with plant breeding activities now supporting more than 2.5 percent of Viet Nam's GDP.

These economic benefits open up new opportunities and transform lives. One of the strengths of the UPOV system is that it is equally relevant for individual breeders, small and medium enterprises and larger breeding institutes and firms. We will continue to uphold and raise awareness of the system so that it benefits more farmers' and communities around the world.

And third, harnessing UPOV's global reach to generate further action on climate change.

As the most recent IPCC report states with high confidence, rising temperatures are a serious threat to human life, biodiversity and infrastructure. With this in mind, UPOV recently held a productive session on the role of plant breeding and PVP in supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation.

We heard how more than 8 in 10 farmers surveyed by the World Farmers' Organization have identified improved plant varieties as an important tool in responding to climate change. And how PVP systems - such

as the EU's Community Plant Variety Rights (CPVR) system – are reducing greenhouse gas emissions, in this case by over 60 million tons a year.

Together, we look forward to building momentum behind this conversation and to using UPOV's expertise, and position as a global, neutral convener, to drive climate action forward.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

UPOV's mission is 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.

These last three words are absolutely critical. Supporting your people and economies to navigate a challenging global environment will continue to be at the very heart of our strategic approach in the years ahead.

With these words, I wish the Council every success in its deliberations today and pledge the Office's continued support, commitment and dedication, under the direction of UPOV's members, so what we do here will truly benefit all peoples and regions of the world.

Thank you.

[Appendix II follows]

APPENDIX II

INTERVENTION BY THE DELEGATION OF GHANA
AT THE FIFTY-SIXTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE COUNCIL

President, Secretary-General,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Ghana, the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana appreciates the warm welcome into the UPOV family. We are very honoured to be a member of UPOV.

On November 3, 2021, Ghana, deposited its instrument of accession to the UPOV Convention (1991 Act). On December 3, 2021, Ghana became the Seventy – Eight (78) member of UPOV.

The Plant Variety Protection Act, (Act 1050) 2020 of Ghana entered into force on 29th December 2020. On September 4, 2021, the Council of UPOV took a positive decision on the conformity of the Plant Variety Protection Act, Act 1050 of 2020 with the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention.

Plant breeders' rights in Ghana fall under the responsibility of the Registrar- General's Department, Ministry of Justice. The Office has the appropriate legal and institutional framework for the grant of protection of plant breeders' rights. Experts received excellent training in Wageningen in the Netherlands, USPTO and UPOV in the field of plant breeders' rights.

As of today, in Ghana applications can be filed for all plant genera and species.

I would like also to share the reasons why it is important for Ghana to be a UPOV member. Agriculture is one of the important sources of livelihood in Africa and particularly so in Ghana. Ghana recognizes the progress made in breeding activities at the national level, which is key to meeting society needs in the agricultural sector. Also, Ghana recognizes the UPOV System as offering an effective protection of new varieties of plants.

The government of Ghana is committed to improve breeding activities and develop the seed sector, provide protection to breeders and use agriculture to provide for food and jobs in the rural sector and farming communities. Ghana's accession to the UPOV Convention to become a UPOV Member is not only opportune but critical to its food and nutrition security as well as meeting its national development goals.

I would like to emphasize our gratitude for the assistance received by Ghana from many well-wishers in the accession procedure to the UPOV Convention. The Delegation also wishes to thank all who had given their support and technical assistance over the last couple of years to the country's effort to have in place an effective system for the protection of new varieties of plants in accordance with the UPOV Convention. In this regard we in particular want to thank the UPOV Secretariat, Switzerland, Netherlands, France, European Union and the United States of America.

The Delegation of Ghana wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the Council of UPOV and to all the delegates for the warm welcome extended to Ghana as the 78th UPOV member.

Thank you.

[Appendix III follows]

APPENDIX III

UPOV SEMINAR ON THE ROLE OF PLANT BREEDING AND PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION IN
ENABLING AGRICULTURE TO MITIGATE AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Geneva, October 11, 12 (by virtual means) and 26 (in hybrid format), 2022

Opening Remarks of Mr. Daren Tang, Secretary-General, UPOV

Mr. Marien Valstar, President of the UPOV Council,

Dear Participants, Dear Colleagues, Dear Friends,

Warm greetings from Geneva. It is a great pleasure to speak to you today.

The challenges presented by climate change are clear and considerable.

As the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states with high confidence, rising temperatures are a serious threat to human life, biodiversity and infrastructure.

Extreme weather is exposing millions of people to food and water scarcity, especially in the global south.

Plants and animal species are experiencing changes in their ranges, seasonal patterns and habitats.

Economies are being hit by the increasing frequency of heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires and other climate hazards.

And shifts in temperature and rainfall patterns threaten key crop yields.

In response, we must sow the seeds of climate action across all sectors of the economy.

The role agriculture can play in mitigating and adapting to the climate threat was a theme that emerged strongly from last year's UPOV seminar on the policy impact of plant breeding and plant variety protection.

We heard how PVP is enhancing food security and improving farmers' livelihoods in China, Kenya and Mexico.

We heard how PVP is supporting the development of the European Union's flagship Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy.

And we heard how agritech is progressing innovative solutions, including through the authorization of a new agricultural R&D authority in the United States.

This led the UPOV council to agree to bring the global community together for a session dedicated to the role of plant breeding and PVP in combatting climate change.

In so doing, we are building momentum behind one of the key recommendations from the IPCC's special report on climate change and land.

The report surveyed various policy options and concluded that, in this context, boosting soil carbon and increasing food productivity are amongst the most effective climate responses at our disposal.

New and improved plant varieties have an important role to play on both fronts.

On soil carbon, improved rotation and the development of deeper rooting varieties are two concrete ways in which plants can regenerate soil fertility and protect natural ecosystems.

While on food productivity, we know that plant breeding and PVP help increase yields in a sustainable way.

A study of Viet Nam's experience after a decade of UPOV membership, found that the use of inputs per hectare in arable farming had decreased, at the same time as crop yields grew.

Meanwhile, a recent EU paper revealed that the CPVR (Community Plant Variety Rights) system is helping to lower annual greenhouse gas emissions by over 60 million tons each year.

These are just two examples of how plant breeding and plant variety protection are increasing food productivity in a sustainable way.

Our work now must be to build on this momentum and to use innovation, technology and improved practices to further accelerate climate action for the benefit of all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the next the few days, we will hear from expert speakers from every region of the world.

I urge you to use this opportunity to continue to share best practices and to learn from one another.

It is your engagement, in the work of UPOV and beyond, that will help to shape effective policy responses and put the planet on a more sustainable footing.

Thank you very much and best wishes for a productive seminar.

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