Guidelines for the distribution of genetic materials from the in-trust collections kept at CIAT

1. About approved purposes for the distribution of materials

According to the agreement between CIAT and the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of FAO of the United Nations, CIAT genebank operated by the Genetic Resources Program has mandate to distribute genetic materials from the in-trust collections following the instructions provided by the Parties of the Treaty. The purposes approved for distribution are related to food and agriculture, therefore the requests for agricultural production including commercial production, conservation, breeding, training, research for food and agriculture, are approved. Uses for industrial, pharmaceutical and other non-food purposes are postponed, because the Genetic Resources Program does not have any mandate to distribute for such purposes. The requests for such purposes are filed, and no material is distributed at this moment.

2. Steps to be fulfilled for the approval of a request

A successful request means a transfer of a plant genetic material from a Provider (= the Genetic Resources Program of CIAT) to a Receptor. This transfer can be done only upon the approval by the Receptor, of the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA); the text of the SMTA has been approved by the Parties. There are three ways to approve the SMTA: i) electronic approval through the web site of the Program, ii) keeping of the material by the Receptor who has been informed about terms and conditions of the SMTA when making his/her request (this has been documented), and iii) physical signatures by authorized representatives of the Receptor and the Provider. The transfer of material is becoming real if there is a list of the material(s) to be transferred, and if this(ese) material(s) are defined unambiguously (passport data, other descriptive data, link to the database available on Program’s web site). The transfer of genetic material is possible if the Receptor is fully identified (name, institution, country, trade name if applicable), including a full address where the samples will be sent. In relation to this point, it is important to check the correspondence between the person approving the SMTA and the actual receptor. In view of our periodical reporting to the Secretariat of the International Treaty and to some of our donors (e.g. the Global Crop Diversity Trust), we must have a clear purpose in line with the purposes approved by the Governing Body, not something ill defined. ‘Agronomy’, ‘Training’ are valid purposes, but in need of additional information because a precise purpose links with the amount of materials to be approved. Phytosanitary requirements must be spelled out and followed by the Provider and the Receptor, with Import Permit and Phytosanitary Certificate, as applicable. The points to be checked thus are: 1) the person asking for the germplasm is fully identified, and with full non confusing address, 2) the number and identity of requested material are fully defined (with one set per request), 3) clear purpose with enough elements of description, and in line with the purpose(s) approved by the Governing Body, 4) unambiguous approval of the SMTA, 5) phytosanitary regulations about the shipment are implemented in the country of the Receptor and in Colombia. The date of approval of the SMTA is the one taken into account for the periodic reporting to the Secretariat of the International Treaty, and for the compilation of statistics of distribution; it is therefore of critical importance to make sure that it has been duly registered.

3. About the materials that can be approved

As a matter of principle, any user can ask for any designated material from the in-trust collections for the purposes approved by the Governing Body of the International Treaty. However, the International Centers responsible for the in-trust collections made clear upon signing with the Governing Body that they might
limit availability of genetic materials when: i) the low number of seeds might put at risk the accession itself, ii) the phytosanitary conditions of the accession might represent a hazard for the agriculture of country of the Receptor, and iii) the amounts of requested materials are exaggerated. In these cases, the Centers will indicate to the person requesting materials that such materials are not available for the time being. The Centers must evaluate these situations carefully, as the potential user might rightly ask for explanation to the Centers and/or the Secretariat of the Treaty. These situations will be handled professionally along the three groups of quality criteria (genetic quality, physiological quality and phytosanitary quality).

The transfer will not become effective if there are serious doubts about the true final use of the material(s), in light of the objectives of the International Treaty, or in light of the excessive costs involved, or if there is a clearly identified risk for the user; for example when a farmer requests a landrace of Lima bean or a bitter cassava accession, with high content of cyanogenic glycoside.

Given the costs for the production of the germplasm, requests for the same material(s) by the same user within the same period of two (2) years will not be processed, but until the third year from the first request. On the other hand, the numbers of requested materials should be in line with the purpose and the trade name (when applicable). A farmer or any other user when requesting one (1) material will obtain it once the five aforementioned points are met. In like manner, an individual user can ask for up to five (5) materials for purposes such as ‘Agronomy’, ‘Training’ or ‘Conservation’. Institutions working in extension could obtain up to thirty (30) different materials for variety testing and similar trials. Universities, research institutions such as the CGIAR, or genebanks can request larger numbers of accessions, which will be studied from the viewpoints of frequencies and amounts. If the numbers are larger than two hundred and fifty (250), the requested number of accessions might be suggested to be split. In view of large requests, feedback about the results of the used accessions might be requested.

4. About the amounts that can be approved

Given the nature of its work and the size of the collections, the genebank of CIAT is not a facility for the multiplication of germplasm for third parties. It can only deliver small amounts of each requested material to each user. If a particular user needs large quantities of original germplasm, a special multiplication contract can be celebrated. For justified research purposes, one user may obtain more than the regular amount of germplasm, and it is expected that this delivery is reflected in the acknowledgements. For example, an individual farmer will normally receive twenty seeds of a specific variety of bean or four sticks of a landrace of cassava, enough planting material for multiplication up to his/ her needs. Finally, these guidelines apply to all requests which are dealt with along even conditions.

dgd; updated 24 Oct 2012.