



Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)

Introduction

During the Second Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG), held in Rome from 10 to 12 October 2016, new criteria for selection and Action Plan were discussed. As a result of a deep discussion and considering the GIAHS experience in the past years of implementation of the concept, the Members of SAG have revised and updated the GIAHS Selection criteria. The new criteria will become operational in 2017. All the countries starting the preparation of a GIAHS proposal from 1st January 2017, must follow the new criteria.

Selection Criteria and Action Plan

The proposed site should be of global importance. This is a composite criterion under which the overall value of an agricultural¹ system with historical background and contemporary relevance² is recognized as a heritage of human kind.

The features of the system should be summarized in terms of their agricultural and cultural heritage value, their relevance to global concerns addressing sustainable development, biocultural diversity³, including agro-biodiversity and ecosystems management.

Five criteria have been developed to represent the totality of the functionalities, goods and services provided by the system. The criteria reflect the complex relationships and linkages between the system's elements as an integrative holistic system.

The proposed GIAHS site will be assessed based on the following five criteria and an action plan. The assessment will take into account a wide variation in the specific features of the proposed site which has been formed and developed in different geographic, climatic, and socio-economic conditions.

¹The term "agriculture" and its derivatives include fisheries, marine products, forestry and primary forestry products (From Paragraph 1, Article I of the FAO Constitution).

² The systems'/sites' contemporary relevance is established by its present and future capacity to provide food and livelihood security, to contribute to human well-being and quality of life, and to generate other local, national and global economic and environmental goods and services to its community and wider society. This relates to the relevance of an agricultural system/site to global or national policy and sustainable development challenges, most prominently achieving food security, human well-being and environmental goals, such as climate adaptation, carbon sequestration, water, land and biodiversity conservation. It should highlight particular lessons learnt or principles that can be derived from the system/site, which might be applied elsewhere.

³ Biocultural diversity is a dynamic place based aspect arising from the links between cultural and biological diversity. It results from the combination of historical and on-going environmental and land use processes and cultural heritage. The GIAHS sites are multifunctional landscapes and/or seascapes providing a crucial and effective space for integration of biological and cultural diversity for human wellbeing.



Criteria for Selection of GIAHS

1. Food and Livelihood Security

The proposed agricultural system contributes to food and/or livelihood security of local communities. This includes a wide variety of agricultural types such as self-sufficient and semi-subsistence agriculture where provisioning and exchanges take place among local communities, which contributes to rural economy.

2. Agro-biodiversity

Agricultural biodiversity, as defined by FAO (*) as the variety of animals, plants and micro-organisms that are used directly or indirectly for food and agriculture, including crops, livestock, forestry and fisheries. The system should be endowed with globally significant biodiversity and genetic resources for food and agriculture (e.g. endemic, domesticated, rare, endangered species of crops and animals).

(*) FAO defines agro-biodiversity as follows: The variety and variability of animals, plants and micro-organisms that are used directly or indirectly for food and agriculture, including crops, livestock, forestry and fisheries. It comprises the diversity of genetic resources (varieties, breeds) and species used for food, fodder, fibre, fuel and pharmaceuticals. It also includes the diversity of non-harvested species that support production (soil micro-organisms, predators, pollinators), and those in the wider environment that support agro-ecosystems (agricultural, pastoral, forest and aquatic) as well as the diversity of the agro-ecosystems.”

3. Local and Traditional Knowledge systems

The system should maintain local and invaluable traditional knowledge and practices, ingenious adaptive technology and management systems of natural resources, including biota, land, water which have supported agricultural, forestry and/or fishery activities.

4. Cultures, Value systems and Social Organisations (1)

Cultural identity and sense of place are embedded in and belong to specific agricultural sites. Social organizations, value systems and cultural practices associated with resource management and food production may ensure conservation of and promote equity in the use and access to natural resources. Such social organizations (2) and practices may take the form of customary laws and practices as well as ceremonial, religious and/or spiritual experiences.

1. Social organization is defined as individuals, families, groups or communities that play a key role on the agricultural systems' organization and dynamic conservation.

2. Local social organizations may play a critical role in balancing environmental and socio-economic objectives, creating enhancing resilience and reproducing all elements and processes critical to the functioning of the agricultural systems.

5. Landscapes and Seascapes Features

GIAHS sites should represent landscapes or seascapes that have been developed over time through the interaction between humans and the environment, and appear to have stabilized or to evolve very slowly. Their form, shape and interlinkages are characterized by long historical persistence and a strong connection with the local socio-economic systems that produced them. Their stability, or slow evolution, is the evidence of integration of food production, the



environment and culture in a given area or region. They may have the form of complex land use systems, such as land use mosaics, water and coastal management systems.

Action Plan for Sustainability of the System

An Action Plan for a dynamic conservation of the proposed GIAHS site must be developed with the proposal. The recommended items to be included in the Action Plan would be an analysis of threats and challenges and detailed descriptions of the policies, strategies, actions and outcomes which are already under implementation and/or will be implemented in the area by various relevant stakeholders to promote dynamic conservation of GIAHS with the following supplementary information:

- Identify and analyze threats and challenges, including socio-economic pressures and environmental changes to the continuity of the existence, sustainability and viability of the system;
- What are the proposed policies, strategies and actions and how will they respond to the threats as described;
- How these policies, strategies and actions will contribute to the dynamic conservation of the proposed GIAHS site;
- How multi-stakeholders are involved, including local communities, and support the implementation of the Action Plan at local, national and international levels;
- How policies, strategies and actions can be used to leverage funding and/or mobilize resources at the local, national and/or international level;
- How monitoring and evaluation of the progress and the effect of the implementation of the Action Plan will be undertaken.



Designation Process

1. Preparation and Submission of GIAHS proposals

1.1. FAO member countries or other parties/stakeholders can develop a proposal to nominate GIAHS sites (GIAHS proposal) through effective participation of the relevant communities, and their prior and informed consent. The costs for the development of the proposal should be borne by the applicant. The GIAHS Secretariat serves as first entry point for information on the rules and procedures and guiding principles for possible GIAHS proposal.

1.2. GIAHS proposals should be submitted to the GIAHS Secretariat through the appropriate Government channel or GIAHS National Committee where they exist.

1.3. Proposal shall explain clearly the unique nature and specific features of agricultural practices and systems that exhibit remarkable characteristics in the proposed site, including but not limited to:

- i) Food and livelihood security;
- ii) Agro-biodiversity;
- iii) Local and Traditional Knowledge systems;
- iv) Cultures, Value systems and Social Organisations; and
- v) Landscapes and Seascapes features.

2. Acceptance and Screening of GIAHS Proposals

2.1. The GIAHS Secretariat receives proposal and acknowledges receipt through written notification;

2.2. Checks the proposal to verify that the proposal fulfils the requirements as stipulated in paragraph 1. The GIAHS Secretariat may request the applicant to revise the proposal to comply with the requirements or provide further information.

2.3. Forwards the proposal to the Scientific Advisory Group for evaluation if the proposal meets the requirements of paragraph 1.

3. Evaluation and Designation of the GIAHS sites² by the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG)

3.1. The SAG prepares an evaluation report based on the review of GIAHS proposal and the outcome of the expert visit to the proposed site.



3.2. The site visit will be conducted by expert(s) nominated by the SAG, facilitated and supported by the applicant. The site visit should include the participation of the local communities.

3.3. The SAG may request additional information to clarify substantial points in the proposal and may provide advice to the applicant to revise and resubmit.

3.4. The SAG can make one of the following three types of decisions:

3.4.1. Designation of the site;

3.4.2. Request revision and resubmission of the proposal to the applicant; and

3.4.3. Notification of declination of the proposal to the applicant.

3.5. The process from acceptance of the application by the SAG to the decision as described in paragraph 3.4 should preferably not take more than twelve months.

3.6. The SAG can also adopt its rules of procedure, guidelines and methodology for evaluation.

3.7. The SAG shall report its significant decisions including designation of GIAHS sites to the plenary session of the COAG.

4. Certification and Registration

4.1. The designation of a GIAHS site shall be certified by the award of a designation certificate, signed by the Director-General of FAO and the Chair of the SAG.

4.2. The designation shall also be recorded in the GIAHS Registry and published on the GIAHS website.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

5.1. Member countries which have designated GIAHS sites should monitor and evaluate the state and progress of implementation of the action plans for dynamic conservation of the GIAHS sites.

5.2. They should make a periodic report on the outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation to the GIAHS Secretariat.

5.3. The guidelines for monitoring and evaluation should be made by the SAG taking into account the capacity and feasibility in developing countries.