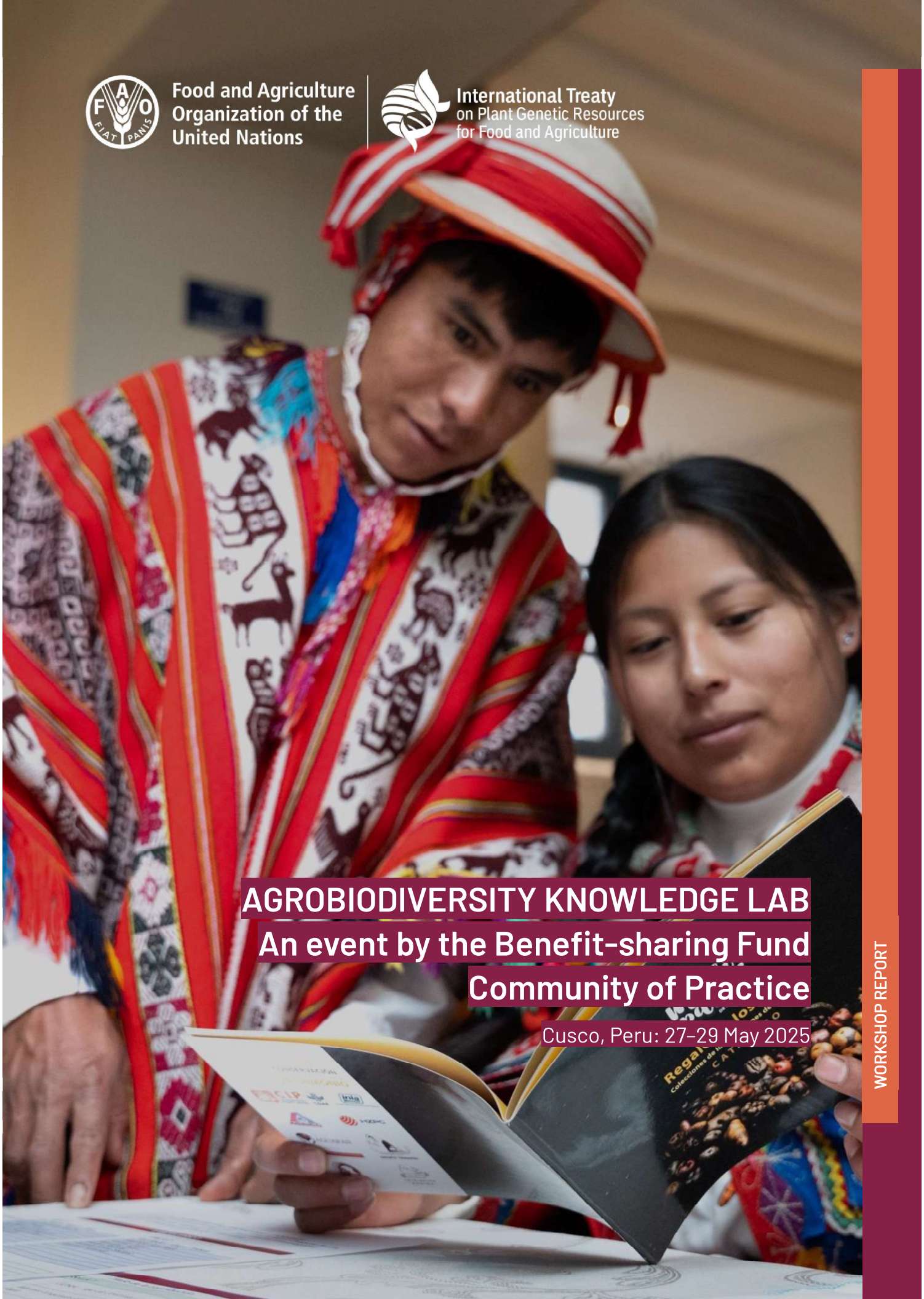

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

AGROBIODIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE LAB

An event by the Benefit-sharing Fund Community of Practice

Cusco, Peru: 27–29 May 2025

WORKSHOP REPORT

This document reports on the Agrobiodiversity Knowledge Lab, a workshop organised by:

With the support of:

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to present this report on the Agrobiodiversity Knowledge Lab, held in Cusco, Peru, from 27 to 29 May 2025. This event brought together over 60 participants from more than 30 organizations and 15 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. It was convened through the combined efforts of the Secretariat of the FAO International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, FAO in Peru, the Peruvian National Institute for Agrarian Innovation (INIA), the International Potato Center (CIP), and Oxfam.

Held during the Andean harvest season in a country recognized as a center of origin for key crops like potato, maize, and quinoa, the Lab created a unique space to bridge traditional knowledge and scientific innovation. Peru's leadership in models of conserving crop diversity—through *ex situ*, *in situ*, and on-farm approaches—offered an ideal context for reflection and exchange.

The Latin American and Caribbean region is home to a large number of innovative experiences in agrobiodiversity for food and agriculture. This first Agrobiodiversity Knowledge Lab, organised under the umbrella of the Community of Practice of the Benefit-sharing Fund of the International Treaty, sought to promote learning and the exchange of knowledge and expertise among different actors in order to accelerate the transfer of

successful approaches and multiply initiatives that benefit actors committed to the sustainable use of crop diversity. The Lab, as model for evidence-based and participatory dialogue, focused on analysing proven innovations and solutions for the management and conservation of plant genetic resources.

Over three days of intensive interaction, including thematic laboratories, peer exchanges and a field visit, participants addressed various strategic areas that are urgent for the region and essential for consolidating resilient, inclusive and sustainable seed and seed-to-food systems.

The Lab also served to strengthen regional momentum ahead of the **11th Session of the Governing Body** of the Treaty, to be held in Lima in November 2025. We see this as a unique opportunity to amplify the experiences of a diversity of actors, project the region's achievements and highlight Peru as a global reference for agrobiodiversity conservation and sustainable use. We hope to continue this catalytic momentum in the region and to continue working in other regions using the pioneering laboratory model developed in the region.

We extend our gratitude to the participants who contributed to the success of this meeting. The results of the meeting that are reflected in this report show not only the wealth of shared knowledge, but also the strength of collaboration and the commitment to safeguarding agrobiodiversity as the foundation for livelihoods, sustainable agriculture and food and nutrition security.

Mariana Escobar
Representative for Peru, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

Álvaro Toledo
Under-Secretary, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

ABBREVIATIONS

AGUAPAN	Association of Guardians of the Native Potato of the Central Andes
AGROSAVIA	Colombian Agricultural Research Corporation
ASOCUCH	Association of Organisations of the *Cuchumatanes*
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CIAT	International Centre for Tropical Agriculture
CIP	International Potato Center
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
CONABIO	National Biodiversity Commission Mexico
CONCYTEC	National Council for Science and Technology Peru
COPROFAM	Confederation of Family Farming Organisations of the Expanded Mercosur
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GRISEN	National Seed Group Peru
INIA	National Institute for Agricultural Innovation
INIAP	National Institute for Agricultural and Livestock Research Ecuador
MERCOSUR	South American Common Market
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ReSCA	Remuneration for Agrobiodiversity Conservation Services
SERNANP	National Service for Protected Natural Areas Peru
ITPGRFA	FAO International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
UNTRM	Toribio Rodríguez de Mendoza National University of Amazonas
UNALM	La Molina National Agrarian University
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society

INTRODUCTION

The mountainous region of the Andes can historically be seen as a vast "innovation laboratory" for agrobiodiversity. Its immense biological and agricultural diversity, combined with the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and an ancestral culture deeply rooted in the region, has given rise to a vibrant and dynamic process of ongoing innovation and creativity. Complemented by contemporary research centres and extension efforts, Andean farmers and peasants continue to innovate and adapt, conserving genetic diversity while generating essential goods (e.g. crops) and services (e.g. healthy soils, water sources) in an almost continuous cycle.

Understanding the foundations of this creative process—recognising the role of the different actors involved and learning from the many experiences where agrobiodiversity, Andean culture and external contributions from research centres and civil society organisations converge—is essential to further strengthen, consolidate and raise awareness of this remarkable phenomenon of co-innovation in the Andes. The city of Cusco ("navel of the world") and its surrounding region, with their rich culture, agricultural traditions and ancestral farmers, embody and synthesise many of these Andean values that extend across the continent. As a centre of origin and diversity for numerous crops, Cusco's successful experiences in the conservation, sustainable use and responsible consumption of agrobiodiversity serve as a benchmark for Latin America, the Caribbean and beyond.

The Agrobiodiversity Knowledge Lab — an event of the Community of Practice of the Benefit-sharing Fund of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA, 2001) — was held in Cusco as a participatory, transparent and inclusive space. It brought together diverse forms of knowledge, experiences and initiatives on the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity in the Andes and across the region. Through dialogue, participants exchanged lessons and challenges, identified new pathways, and highlighted good practices that can be replicated and scaled up where feasible and appropriate.

With participants from nearly twenty countries, including Indigenous Peoples and farmers from the Andes of Peru, the Agrobiodiversity Knowledge Lab falls under the general umbrella of the ITPGRFA, as well as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022). These international instruments establish objectives, targets and normative principles that give impetus to national and local efforts to ensure food security, fair distribution of benefits derived from agrobiodiversity conservation, maintenance of agroecosystems and varietal diversity, maintenance of vibrant and dynamic local knowledge systems and recognition of Farmers' Rights, among other aspects.

The Agrobiodiversity Knowledge Lab has opened the way for fruitful exchanges and connections between different actors who will gradually form a Community of Practice that essentially shares interests in agrobiodiversity and the desire to contribute – with knowledge and expertise, good practices, protocols, scientific evidence, technical assistance and financial resources – to the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity.

LABORATORY METHODOLOGY

For this first laboratory, four major topics of current interest to Peru, the region and beyond were selected:

- Laboratory 1: Monitoring and documentation of agrobiodiversity;
- Laboratory 2: Financial tools and schemes to support guardians of agrobiodiversity;
- Laboratory 3: Youth participation and value chains; and
- Laboratory 4: Policy and governance.

Each topic was introduced through posters that presented different approaches from a wide range of institutions and organisations.

Following the poster presentations, participants engaged in short group discussions to identify lessons, challenges and common elements across the experiences shared. These conversations were guided by prompting questions. After the small-group sessions, the groups "harvested ideas" for presentation in the corresponding plenary discussions. Unlike a typical workshop, the laboratory format required participants to synthesise the poster content and engage in a guided, highly focused exchange within strict time limits. This allowed many topics to be addressed, information to be shared, and discussion and debate to be stimulated.

To complement the laboratory sessions, INIA organised a field visit to the Andenes Agricultural Experimental Station. There, small-scale farmers presented their perspectives on practical issues related to the laboratory discussions, reinforcing the participatory and collaborative approach that characterises agrobiodiversity management in Peru. The visit provided an opportunity to observe first-hand the progress, challenges and difficulties these farmers face in their daily agricultural work, and to connect these realities with the discussions from the laboratory sessions—linking theory directly to practice in the field.

This report provides a summary of the wealth of valuable information and discussion that took place during the workshop sessions. It describes the exchanges between participants, includes some examples to illustrate the sessions, and offers some reflections on the topics addressed and the future challenges for continuing these efforts in creativity and social and technological innovation.

Key concepts

Agrobiodiversity	A broad term that includes all components of biological diversity that are important for food and agriculture and that constitute agricultural ecosystems, also called agroecosystems: it refers equally to the variety and variability of animals, plants and microorganisms, in genetics, species and ecosystems, which are necessary to maintain the key functions, structure and processes of the agroecosystem. (Adapted from FAO, 2004)
Conservation farmers or guardians of agrobiodiversity	A group of farmers and smallholders who focus their agricultural work on preserving and caring for crop and seed diversity as a value in itself, which also contributes to food security, crop improvement and resilience to climate change, as well as empowering these farmers and affirming Andean and ancestral culture.
Peasants or "campesinos"	A concept that encompasses people who are engaged, individually or in association with others or as a community, in small-scale agricultural production for subsistence or trade. They rely heavily on the labour of family members or those around them and other non-monetary forms of work organisation and also have a special bond of dependence and attachment to the land. In some cases, peasants are part of Indigenous Peoples. (Adapted from United Nations, 2018)
Agrobiodiversity knowledge lab	A participatory, transparent and horizontal space where different forms of knowledge, experiences and initiatives on agrobiodiversity conservation in the Andes "converse" with each other, lessons are learned and challenges are identified.
Small farmers or family farming	"Family farming (which encompasses all family-centred agricultural activities) is a form of organising agricultural, forestry, fisheries, livestock and aquaculture production that is managed and administered by a family and depends mainly on the capital and labour of its members, both women and men. The family and the farm are interrelated, evolve together and combine economic, environmental, social and cultural functions." (FAO and IFAD, 2019)
Indigenous peoples	Groups of people considered Indigenous "by virtue of being descended from populations that inhabited the country or a geographical region to which the country belongs at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of current state borders and who, whatever their legal status, retain all or part of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions." (ILO Convention 169)

Note: These are, in some cases, reference and unofficial concepts. They allow for a broader understanding of the report.

LABORATORY 1. MONITORING AND DOCUMENTING AGROBIODIVERSITY

This laboratory presented different experiences of systematic documentation and monitoring of agrobiodiversity and discussed the reasons why these are useful for different actors, including farmers and peasants, and for various purposes. The starting point was the premise that in order to conserve, it is essential to first *understand and document*.

Documentation experiences included INIA's national register of native seeds; repositories of indigenous knowledge and expertise; CIP's *in situ* toolbox and catalogues of native varieties and citizen science with applications such as VarScout; DATAR – a diversity assessment tool for agrobiodiversity and resilience; and chronological assessments, among others.

These experiences showed how documentation and monitoring serve different actors in various ways, with collaboration in their design and application a fundamental element for their proper functioning and overall implementation.

Monitoring

Younger generations of farmers showcased creative and practical uses of technologies to track and monitor different variables within ecosystems.[1] Monitoring by local actors themselves, with complementary support from research institutions, international cooperation, etc., was viewed positively. In this regard, it was evident that there are a multitude of valuable tools for monitoring and documenting agrobiodiversity that are mainly useful in specific local contexts.[2] These monitoring mechanisms were seen as particularly valuable for monitoring and tracking patterns related to climate change, genetic erosion and crop loss, etc. [3]

Poster example: Catalogues of varieties in microcentres of diversity (CIP, AGUAPAN, YANAPAI Group)

These catalogues provide a reliable source of information on the state of native potato diversity at the microcentre, community or district level, through relevant data and information including: morphological descriptions, common names of the variety, meaning, other names or synonyms, molecular "quipus"[4] and general information on culinary uses, associated customs, beliefs about varieties, origin, etc. Fifteen catalogues have been produced in different locations, with the active participation of farmers, NGOs and research centres. It is hoped to begin a process of cataloguing different crops, specifically targeting the ten Agrobiodiversity Zones currently recognised by the Peruvian State.

Poster: View poster at https://bit.ly/4mQMzQO

[1] Local seed diagnosis methodology (ASOCUCH); Agrobiodiversity index (Bioversity Alliance/CIAT)
[2] Citizen science for varietal monitoring of native potatoes: Varscout and WikiPapa (CIP, AGUAPAN, CONCYTEC, YANAPAI Group); Agrobiodiversity information system (CONABIO)
[3] Use of transects and Indigenous knowledge for monitoring and evaluating the adaptation of native potatoes to climate change (Association of Potato Park Communities)
4 A "quipu" is a record keeping device used by the Incas, based on a series of strings and knots which signify magnitude, numbers, orders. See: https://www.worldhistory.org/Quipu/

Documentation

The experiences presented show that there is abundant data and information, systematised, classified, and managed in different ways with varied objectives, according to the needs of the actors involved.[5] This abundance and diversity makes standardisation difficult but to some extent necessary to make temporal and spatial comparisons. Although in many cases there is evidence of direct participation by farmers in the generation and application of information through technology, some concerns remain regarding trust, feedback, the use of this information outside local contexts and accessibility. In this regard, the discussion also addressed the challenge of centralising information and using repositories versus more decentralised options, based on different nodes at the local and regional levels.[6]

This is linked to a recurring concern: the need for and challenge of legal protection of the traditional knowledge and expertise of these farmers and communities through registries and other mechanisms.

Several participants suggested that for farmers, lively exchanges and direct dialogue tend to have more impact than the 'packaging' of data and information in various catalogues and repositories. This is also related to the idea of how to integrate this information and possible nodes into truly dynamic exchange networks that directly serve farmers and rural communities.

The interaction that often occurs between research centres, including *ex situ* collections and agrobiodiversity custodians, was viewed positively.

Finally, the big question that arose was how the results of documentation and monitoring inform political decision-making processes and to what extent they can influence and be integrated into the options under consideration in the political arena.[7] The laboratory provided several ideas and recommendations for the future.

[5] Varietal catalogues for microcentres of diversity (YANAPAI Group, AGUAPAN, CIP); Toolkit for baseline documentation and systematic monitoring of varietal variability in microcentres (CIP, YANAPAI Group, AGROSAVIA); Catalogue of native tree seeds from the tropical montane forest of northern Peru (Toribio Rodríguez de Mendoza National University of Amazonas – UNTRM)

[6] Strengthening interaction with small Chilean and Mapuche farmers to rescue ancestral crops and traditions for their use and commercialisation (INIA Chile)

[7] Regional Healthy Eating Baskets (CONABIO)

Poster example: Regional baskets of healthy eating (CONABIO, Mexico)

This poster explained how CONABIO collects data and information on the diversity of dishes and drinks consumed daily or seasonally and during festivities and even those at risk of loss in various regions of Mexico. These baskets contributed to the recognition and appreciation of agrobiodiversity linked to the customs, traditions and identity of people from different regions of the country. This documentation was carried out by multidisciplinary teams that include NGOs, traditional cooks in local communities and populations, research centres and universities. The baskets are constructed from data sheets that include information on the ecosystems where the foods come from, types of foods, uses, recipes, links to ceremonies or festivities, communities where the dishes originate, etc. It is a participatory process that also allows for the generation of baselines associated with the agrobiodiversity used in dishes. There are 20 documented regional baskets that can be easily accessed via a QR code. This experience has been scaled up to a national law for the recognition and greater promotion of this multipurpose tool (promotion, baseline, social recognition, visibility, etc.).

Poster: See poster at https://bit.ly/4o0Vwfm

Thumbnails of the posters from Laboratory 1

Note: The posters were created by workshop participants. You can view and download all the posters in full size at: https://bit.ly/LCA-Lab1

LABORATORY 2. FINANCIAL TOOLS AND SCHEMES TO SUPPORT GUARDIANS OF AGROBIODIVERSITY

This laboratory analysed how different tools to compensate and reward actions to conserve agrobiodiversity function at different levels.

In this regard, the cases of the Association of Guardians of the Native Potato of the Central Andes (AGUAPAN) and the participation in monetary benefits received from the international private sector through "bonds" or "agrobiodiversity credits" were presented, as well as the model of Retribution for Agrobiodiversity Conservation Services (ReSCA), and distributive funds such as the International Treaty's Benefit-sharing Fund and the Fund for Research on Agrobiodiversity, Seeds and Sustainable Agriculture in Ecuador, among others.

Projects and financial compensation schemes

The experiences presented varied in function and scale. They were classified in general terms according to beneficiaries, the type of experience and the forms of benefits shared.

Poster example: Fund for Research on Agrobiodiversity, Seeds and Sustainable Agriculture in Ecuador (FIASA)

FIASA is a fund created under the Organic Law on Agrobiodiversity, Seeds and Agricultural Development in Ecuador (2017). It is the first fund of its kind in Latin America, specifically dedicated to activities related to agrobiodiversity conservation. It is a public financial tool to promote activities related to research, plant breeding, seed production and technology transfer from public budget allocations. FIASA is administered through INIAP and the amounts allocated to it correspond to 1% of the national agricultural GDP. In the last four years, almost USD 15 million has been spent, resulting in 134 research projects, five new varieties generated, 1,273 accessions collected, 77 scientific articles published, 104 theses written, 15,000 people trained, 52 technical publications produced, four ventures launched, 60 demonstration plots prepared, 31 seed banks created, three biofactories created, two production plants developed, and 340 tonnes of seeds successfully produced.

Poster: See poster at https://bit.ly/47J1WGu

The beneficiaries are small-scale farmers, usually through a representative body; in other cases, civil society organisations or research institutions facilitate activities and channelling of resources.

The types of experiences and projects vary greatly: in some cases, they are *in situ* conservation projects,[8] in other cases, they are economic ventures that yield monetary

[8] Rescue of local agrobiodiversity in El Salvador (CENTA); Guidelines for Moving Quality Sweet Potato Planting Materials in CARICOM (IICA)

benefits and in other cases, they involve strengthening specific self-management capacities of guardians or supporting conservation[9] and even rural education.[10]

Finally, the financial resources come from international cooperation, various funds,[11] payments for commercial activities, remuneration for agrobiodiversity services,[12] etc.

The preference indicated by farmers and rural workers was for monetary benefits and the prioritisation of profitability as a central variable for the sustainability of any effort that does not remain what some called "welfare".

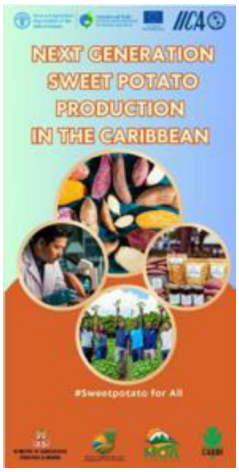
[9] The AGUAPAN model: investing in the leadership of organised guardians and voluntary direct distribution of benefits without access (AGUAPAN, CIP, YANAPAI Group); Farming families led by women who care for biodiversity and agroecological production, supporting good human and environmental health (Confederación Campesina del Perú)
[10] Field school methodology in participatory plant breeding and rescue of underutilised foods (NUS): evaluations (OXFAM/FOVIDA); Sharing knowledge to strengthen the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity in Argentina (INTA)
[11] Indigenous autonomous funding model that provides grants to its partners from Baja California to Tierra del Fuego, including the largest biomes in Meso and South America. These grants are focused on promoting Sumac Kausay/Buen Vivir through the strengthening of indigenous food systems, crops, and ancestral seeds (Indigenize Fund)
[12] Two tools to reward the guardians of the AGBD (Bioversity Alliance/CIAT)

Poster example: The AGUAPAN model – investing in the leadership of organised guardians and voluntary direct distribution of benefits without access (CIP, AGUAPAN, YANAPAI Group)

AGUAPAN is an innovative and dynamic model through which a group of conservationist farmers of native potatoes generate income (share in profits) for their activities to preserve, conserve and care for native potato varieties in the central Andes of Peru. AGUAPAN maintains a constant relationship, based on a long process of building trust and mutual respect, with international companies such as HZPC, AGRICO and EUROPLANT. With a Support Group including CIP, SPDA, INIA, Grupo YANAPAI, and others, a unique experience has been forged with elements of potential scaling up. Since 2014 the payment of monetary bonuses has consolidated as real, neutral and freely usable compensation according to the needs of each family. Indirectly, this mechanism has made the model sustainable and provided technical assistance for the informed association of AGUAPAN members. It has also promoted creative initiatives such as the creation of a collective brand – *Miski Papa* – to position the agro-diverse production of these guardians of agrobiodiversity. AGUAPAN currently comprises 101 families in nine regions of the country. When it was founded in 2014, there were 50 families. Another important aspect is that it is the farmers themselves who have self-organised, thereby increasing leadership and self-management.

Poster: See poster at https://bit.ly/45pdygv

Thumbnails of the posters from Laboratory 2



Note: The posters were created by workshop participants. You can view and download all the posters in full size at: https://bit.ly/LCA-Lab2

LABORATORY 3. YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND VALUE CHAINS

Two topics were discussed during this laboratory. First, the trends and role of youth participation (men and women) in agriculture, especially in the context of small-scale and conservationist farmers. The experiences of JORA, the Network of Youth for Agrobiodiversity in Peru, work with schools and agrobiodiversity in Colombia (AGROSAVIA), among other initiatives, were discussed, in which young people from farming communities take on leadership roles in different projects and carry out educational campaigns in schools and rural contexts with children.

Secondly, in the search for mechanisms to keep children and, later, young people in the countryside and leading enterprises and initiatives, several experiences were presented to revalue agrobiodiversity and strengthen and consolidate related value chains, including examples of collective brands (*Miski Papa*), biocultural tourism in the Potato Park, designations of origin to protect native chillies (UNALM), the role of gastronomy and agrobiodiversity, among others.

Youth participation

The variable "young people" was repeatedly mentioned as essential to ensuring the future *in situ* conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity. While young farmers and rural workers, especially women, demonstrated active and informed participation in projects and experiences involving documentation, monitoring, the creation of technological tools, training, advocacy, leadership, etc., the phenomenon of increasing depopulation in search of other life opportunities was also mentioned.

How can these actors be encouraged and motivated to remain in the countryside, thus enhancing agrobiodiversity conservation and use? The need for young people to see agrobiodiversity as an opportunity, almost an enterprise, to substantially improve their quality of life and that of their families was mentioned.

This requires among other things, capacity building,[13] early involvement of youth in processes of advocacy and visibility of agrobiodiversity, organisation[14] and access to markets and fair prices for agrobiodiversity products and services, the interaction of young people through networks to share experiences[15] and funds to start projects, and support for a wide variety of ventures that can trigger sustainable production processes. At the same time, the national government needs to invest in basic non-agricultural services such as education, electricity, water, health and connectivity to create an enabling environment for rural vitality.

[13] Schools, young people, and education (SERNANP, YANAPAI Group)
[14] Set of practices for the dissemination of agrobiodiversity (Youth Network for Agrobiodiversity)
[15] JORA - Network of Organised and Resilient Youth of Aguapan (AGUAPAN, YANAPAI Group); Knowledge of agrobiodiversity, native potatoes and climate threats associated with the Cumbe Educational Institution of the Cumbal Indigenous Reserve in the department of Nariño, Colombia (Colombian Research Corporation)

Poster example: Youth, Agroecology and Value Chains (Andes Association, Yachay Kuychi, Community Agroecology Network)

During this poster presentation, the role played by young farmers and rural workers in promoting agroecology, demanding food sovereignty and defending their land was highlighted. In this regard, the results of the 11th Exchange of the International Network for Community Agroecology (2024) were presented as an experience with concrete results, including through the strengthening of leadership capacities and the creation of networks of more than 100 young farmers. This took place within the framework of field work in the Potato Park (Pisac, Cusco) as an inspiration for good practices. During this visit, the young people participated in a collective preparation of the Pachamama, where they integrated ancestral practices and knowledge from different countries with reflections on the earth, collective memory and the community. They were also exposed to real examples of monetary benefits through agro-ecotourism and non-monetary benefits through commitments to guarantee food security, vindicate resilience capacities and integrate diverse knowledge about agroecology among small farmers.

Poster: See poster at https://bit.ly/41euALS

Value chains

The different experiences presented also agreed that value chains are essential for connecting agrobiodiversity with sustainable sources of income. In this regard, the tools available showed how value can be added to agrobiodiversity through ventures involving: agro-ecotourism,[16] connections between chefs/restaurants and conservationist farmers and peasants, production and marketing of native and traditional crop seeds, distinctive signs,[17] protection of biocultural spaces,[18] among other possibilities.

To this end, ideas were put forward on how public policies and regulatory frameworks should create conditions that enable and promote these efforts. The experiences presented showed that, even if still limited in scope, the use of these tools has a positive impact on the daily lives of farmers and rural workers in the Andes.

[16] Agro-ecotourism that supports cultures (Bioversity/CIAT Alliance)
[17] Distinctive biodiversity-friendly knowledge and flavours in traditional agroecosystems (CONABIO); Collective trademarks for heritage blends: the experience of Miski Papa (AGUAPAN, YANAPAI Group, CIP); A designation of origin to conserve and promote a traditional chilli pepper from the north coast of Peru (UNALM, Ají Mochero Promotion Group)
[18] Model for visiting and tourism of biocultural heritage focused on the conservation of native potato-producing habitats and their genetic diversity (Association of Communities of the Potato Park)

Example: The MATER case

Under the "MATER" brand, a diverse set of projects/initiatives emerging from the Peruvian gastronomic movement are being promoted. Chacra Mil, for example, deals with collaborative processes in the communities of K'acllaraccay and Mullak'as Misminay in Moray, where agricultural research, the rescue and appreciation of ancestral practices, and the identification of seeds resistant to climate change are integrated. Qollqas, on the other hand, is another project that seeks to rescue ancestral Andean systems of seed and food storage and conservation by designing and building a repository similar to those used (Qollqas) during the Inca period, also in the Moray area. Finally, through an Ethnobotanical Catalogue that includes 40 useful plants from Moray, the aim is to give back to the three communities mentioned above and recognise their invaluable contribution – through their knowledge and expertise – to the improvement and development of cuisine, in this specific case at the MIL Centro Restaurant in the area. This type of project and initiative seeks to consolidate a virtuous and culturally respectful model of relationship between the countryside and farmers with gastronomy and their own social and economic dynamics.

Source: PDF presentation "Mater" (2025), https://bit.ly/475iGaU

On the other hand, when discussing challenges, it was pointed out that, although the barriers to creating and reaching markets with agrobiodiversity products and services are high, with adequate and well-directed strategies and planning (e.g. communications, promotion, socialisation) for certain actors and specific segments, the chances of success are also high. Agrobiodiversity and associated culture are currently better positioned in the collective consciousness of countries that are more responsive to these issues.

Poster example: Collective marks for heritage blends: The experience of "Miski Papa" (AGUAPAN, CIP, YANAPAI Group)

In this poster, AGUAPAN presented an experience of revaluing ancestral knowledge such as "Chaqru", combining it with digital tools and new forms of marketing through specialised value chains. Through the creation and organisation of a collective mark – Miski Papa – it has been possible to promote a gradual process of awareness-raising, product differentiation in the market and the strengthening of a specific rural identity as guardians of agrobiodiversity – at the level of goods and services. The collective brand has made it possible to strengthen the AGUAPAN-consumer alliance, add value to agrobiodiversity (native potatoes), increase sales in Lima by 25%, and diversify the production of native potatoes for different markets (local, regional, and national). The Miski Papa brand integrates the biocultural heritage of AGUAPAN farmers in a culturally respectful manner into traditional and niche markets.

Poster: See poster at https://bit.ly/3JpJ9pW

Thumbnails of the posters from Laboratory 3

Note: The posters were created by workshop participants. You can view and download all the posters in full size at: https://bit.ly/LCA-Lab3

LABORATORY 4. POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

In this laboratory, which has a cross-cutting theme, examples were presented of experiences and initiatives in the field of public policy, legislation and institutional development aimed at creating enabling frameworks for the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity.

The wide variety of examples from different countries demonstrated the vitality and momentum of policies and regulations in contributing to conservation efforts. Agrobiodiversity and similar zones in Peru and Ecuador, regulations on native seeds in Mexico, the formation of the Confederation of Family Producers' Organisations of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) (COPROFAM), the reflection of regional healthy eating baskets in Mexican legislation, among others, reflected the critical importance of public policies and legislation as an adequate and timely reflection of initiatives and processes for the recognition, valuation and scaling up of experiences in the field.

Public policies and legislation

During the discussion phase of this laboratory, comparative legislation on agrobiodiversity was highlighted as a source of inspiration for alternatives and options to be considered by different countries. In this regard, there has been much progress in different places.

Likewise, emphasis was placed on how legislation includes ordinances and resolutions issued by municipalities, corporations, regions, etc. at the subnational level, where it is sometimes easier and more effective to insert and regulate issues.

As part of this, it was noted that spaces for "bottom-up" political dialogue must be sufficiently powerful to bring about advocacy, policy proposals and regulations born out of the needs and expectations of farmers and rural workers in particular.

The presentation of different experiences and cases on policies and regulations and their positive effects on the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity demonstrated the possibility of recognition and scalability/replication of these experiences at different levels and in different geographical areas. This also involves the possibility of responding through these experiences to national policies, strategies and plans on agrobiodiversity and related issues that have already been determined.

At the level of public policy and legislation, participants raised the idea that issues that generate consensus need to be identified, including the implementation of Farmers' Rights under the ITPGRFA,[19] the development of new native seeds laws in different countries,[20] implementing "Buen Vivir" or Good Living principles, supporting the protection of

[19] Introducing Farmers' Rights in Colombia (National University of Colombia); Proposed regulations on the governance of plant genetic resources (Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries of Uruguay); The rights of Indigenous Peoples to genetic resources, seeds and other resources. Art. 31 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Guatemala)

[20] Proposed Law on Traditional Native Seed Systems in Peru (GRISEN); Law on Native Seeds from Indigenous Peoples and Peasants in Mexico (CITI); Research Fund for Agrobiodiversity, Seeds and Sustainable Agriculture in Ecuador (INIAP)

agroecosystems and spaces as a mechanism for the conservation of cultural and natural heritage[21] and a guarantee for adaptation to climate change,[22] among others.

As general principles for these processes, it was proposed that prior consultation, the use of the concept of "Indigenous Peoples," participation in benefits, and the recognition and strengthening of rights should form the basis of regulatory efforts.

Finally, it was proposed that agrobiodiversity governance and management systems should respond to the local and customary practices of farmers and rural workers themselves.

Poster example: Introducing Farmers' Rights in Colombia (University of Colombia, AGROSAVIA, Ministry of Agriculture)

During the presentation of this poster, it was pointed out that Colombia's recent signing of the ITPGRFA has opened the possibility of using Farmers' Rights as a general umbrella to claim rights and promote legal measures to protect native and creole crop varieties. Through workshops to raise awareness of the ITPGRFA and the scope of Article 9, efforts have been directed towards networks of seed guardians or custodians at the national or departmental level for greater impact. These include training through the Seed Guardians Network and the Quindío Seed Custodian Families Network. We have reached 300 people/farmers who see Farmers' Rights as a complementary tool and specific legal basis to justify their *in situ* conservation actions.

Poster: See poster at https://bit.ly/3Uy5wM6

[21] Conservation areas for 25 Andean crops in Ecuador (INIAP); Governance in the Andenes de Cuyocuyo Agrobiodiversity Zone (WCS)
[22] In situ conservation of agrobiodiversity as a policy measure for climate change adaptation and commitment to the UNFCCC in Bolivia and Peru (Helvetas)

Poster example: Governance in the Cuyocuyo Agrobiodiversity Zone – Puno, Peru (WSC)

This poster presented the practical implementation of a relatively new legal concept in Peru: Agrobiodiversity Zones. The rural communities of Cuyocuyo organised themselves and formed the Cuyocuyo Agrobiodiversity Zone Management Committee (2023). The Quechua communities of Puna Laqueque, Puna Ayllu, Cojene Rotojoni, Ura Ayllu, Juansayani Cumani and Ñacoreque are part of this Zone. This Committee agreed to develop the Zone's plan, implement it and present the Agrobiodiversity Zone as a successful model of Other Effective Area Conservation Measures (OMEC). Specific actions in the plan to be implemented from 2024 onwards include: holding annual seed fairs, creating community seed banks, registering native varieties in national registers, and constructing infiltration strips, among others. The Cuyocuyo Agrobiodiversity Zone is, in practice, a model of territorial management that requires informed agreements between communities and organisational and local management efforts; these capacities are not always present in rural communities and therefore require the support of institutions such as WCS. The Cuyocuyo Agrobiodiversity Zone is the first zone to be legally recognised as such by MINAGRI through the 2016 regulation (DS. 020-2016-MINAGRI). This regulation is a pioneer in the recognition and legal protection of spaces or areas with a high concentration of agrobiodiversity, including culture, plant genetic resources, ancestral conservation practices, etc. MIDAGRI and INIA have jurisdiction over its formal recognition and technical support, respectively.

Poster: See poster at https://bit.ly/4107cnY

Institutional framework

On the institutional side, it was clear that the association and organisation of farmers and rural workers is a necessary condition for promoting advocacy processes whether it be at the local, regional, national or international levels.[23]

In this regard, it was emphasised that community governance following local practices of conservation, resource management, community work, etc. is an essential component for the success of any model. [24]

Top-down imposition disincentivizes efficient and culturally acceptable governance and management behaviours.

The need to articulate and coordinate actions among different actors involved in agrobiodiversity conservation was also recognised as another factor for the success of any planned activity.

[23] Coordination between agricultural institutions and family farming organisations in governance models: The experience of COPROFAM (Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia)
[24] Autonomous governance model for indigenous biocultural heritage territories, including agrobiodiversity zones (Association of Communities of the Potato Park)

Poster example: Coordination between agricultural institutions and family farming organisations in governance models. The COPROFAM experience.

This poster presented the work and progress of the Confederation of Family Producers' Organisations of the Expanded MERCOSUR (COPROFAM), which brings together 10 national organisations from 7 countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay). This initiative (implemented in Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay), which is supported by the TIRFAA Benefit Sharing Fund, promotes coordination between farmers and national research centres through a participatory research approach focusing on a series of crops pre-selected in each country. Likewise, in order to highlight and learn from experiences and practices, processes are systematised, leaders and producers from the organisations are trained, and political dialogue and participation in the governance of local (communities, local research centres and municipalities), national (research centres, academia and national governments) and regional (REAF and CAS, among others) processes is promoted. The results in the first year have been very significant: 40 varieties of 10 crops are in the process of participatory research; 8 family farming organisations from 4 countries are leading the process; 30 research and government institutions are supporting the actions; 348 direct beneficiaries, mostly farmers (42% are women) and 967 indirect beneficiaries are participating in workshops and visibility and socialisation activities.

Poster: See poster at https://bit.ly/41MmL01

Thumbnails of the posters from Laboratory 4

Note: The posters were created by workshop participants. You can view and download all the posters in full size at: https://bit.ly/LCA-Lab4

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES FROM FARMING COMMUNITIES AND FARMERS: LESSONS FROM A FIELD VISIT

The field visit offered a valuable opportunity to connect directly with the knowledge, practices and perspectives of conservationist farmers living and working in Peru's Agrobiodiversity Zones, as well as with rural associations and communities in Cusco.

This experience, held at INIA's Andenes Agricultural Experimental Station in Cusco, made it possible to observe in the field how ancestral knowledge is combined with modern tools, and how communities manage agricultural diversity in a holistic way—as part of their daily lives, cultural identity and vision for the future.

The exchanges between farmers, technical experts, partner organisations and institutional representatives highlighted that agrobiodiversity conservation is not only a technical or environmental practice, but also a social, economic and political one, deeply rooted in the territories.

The visit also reinforced understanding of the strategic role of conservationist farmers and peasants as guardians of biocultural knowledge.

Finally, it underscored that the challenges they face cannot be addressed in isolation. They require territorial, intergenerational and intersectoral approaches, with youth, appropriate technology and the economic valuation of their activities as fundamental pillars.

CONCLUSIONS

The Agrobiodiversity Knowledge Lab allows us to draw several conclusions:

1. At a general level, the concept of a "**laboratory**" and the methodology applied achieved the objective of gathering valuable information and insights from many experiences, fostering inclusive dialogue and identifying issues of common interest and areas of consensus among the participants. In this sense, this "experiment" made it possible to identify: lessons and good practices; pending challenges; and opportunities for future multi-stakeholder interaction as part of a Community of Practice emerging from the discussions held in the Lab.

2. It is important to recognise the distinction between **conservationist farmers or guardians of agrobiodiversity** in the strict sense, and the broader group of Andean farmers and peasants who, although conservation-minded by nature, are not necessarily part of this specific niche focused on the conservation and recreation of agrobiodiversity as a personal, family and community mission. This nuance is critical, as many of the experiences presented in the Lab — though not all — address the needs of this particular group of actors. Put simply: almost all Andean farmers and peasants engage in conservation, but not all can be considered “conservationist” farmers or “guardians” of agrobiodiversity in the strict sense.

3. **The role of youth** — and the leadership and empowerment demonstrated by younger generations of farmers — emerged as a powerful asset that should be leveraged for future actions and partnerships. Young people’s experiences in creating and managing technology, their openness to external support for their communities, and their influence on the direction of local development make them fundamental actors in conserving agrobiodiversity and improving living conditions at the personal, family and community levels. This “youth factor” is particularly relevant in contexts where it is increasingly difficult to retain young people in agriculture, a path traditionally pursued by previous generations.

4. At the local level, **technology** in its various forms has become a fundamental tool for the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity. While not new, what is notable is the scale of adoption of technological solutions that complement the knowledge systems and innovation of Indigenous Peoples and communities. The Lab experiences showed how technologies are helping farmers and rural workers monitor the state of agrobiodiversity, create climate prediction models, develop seeds better adapted to climate change, and share successful experiences on a regular basis, among other applications.

5. Across the experiences presented and the discussions held, it became clear that beyond external interventions, support and innovative conservation methods, farmers and rural workers emphasised the need for their activities to **generate income and be profitable and sustainable over time**. The revaluation of agrobiodiversity requires that it be sufficiently valued to sustain itself. Mechanisms such as compensation for agrobiodiversity services, value chains that generate fair income, rural agro-ecotourism and gastronomy ventures, and agrobiodiversity areas as attractions are seen as

opportunities to ensure well-being and improved living conditions—particularly for conservationist farmers and rural workers, who play a critical role in conservation efforts.

6. The idea of "**scaling up**," in light of the experiences presented and discussed, must be approached with caution. Many of the experiences, tools and methodologies shared in the Lab are particularly successful in very specific local contexts and realities, even where communities and agroecosystems share common features. However, not everything can or should be scaled up or replicated. Diversity itself is a value and a defining strength of the Andes, and public policies and institutions relevant to agrobiodiversity must reflect this diversity rather than pursue uniformity. Despite the challenge, governments at different levels must take up this task with the right competencies, flexibility and continuous adaptation to keep pace with the dynamic developments proposed by agrobiodiversity and its actors, especially farmers and rural workers.

7. Conservation strategies **must be accompanied by real economic opportunities**. Initiatives such as rural tourism, differentiated products and culturally sensitive value chains, local markets and compensation mechanisms for agrobiodiversity services can strengthen the sustainability of, for example, Agrobiodiversity Zones, as a central feature of natural and cultural heritage conservation strategies.

LOOKING AHEAD: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

For decision-makers

1. Spaces for political dialogue should foster transparent, inclusive and well-informed conversation ("intercultural dialogue") that enables the development of public policies and legislation at different levels which adequately respond to the expectations and interests of the main actors: small farmers, their families and communities. These actors should see their proposals clearly reflected in such frameworks.

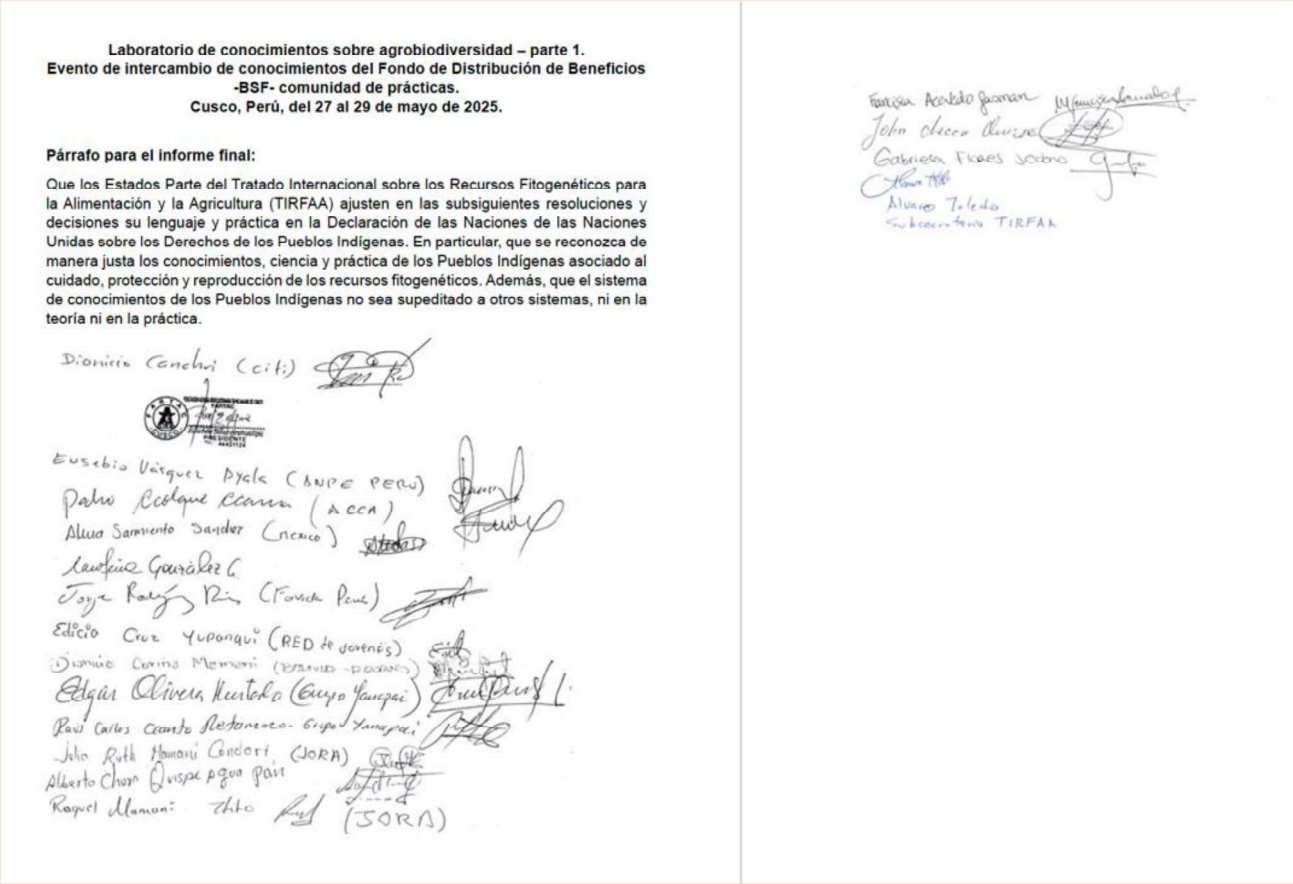
2. Public policy and legislative frameworks, at any level, should facilitate the conservation of agrobiodiversity and avoid creating regulatory, procedural or market barriers that result in additional steps and bureaucratic complexities which, in practice, hinder the achievement of their intended goals.

3. Alongside the development of public policies and legislation, it is necessary to determine how the measures and activities required for implementation and enforcement will be financed. Given the limitations of some national congresses in introducing public spending initiatives, and the need to link regulatory initiatives to existing national budgets (at different levels), it is essential to understand public financing processes and ensure the allocation of funds necessary to achieve these objectives.

4. With regard to legislative priorities, the Agrobiodiversity Knowledge Lab identified many issues requiring attention. Those highlighted for urgent integration into political and regulatory debates include: implementing Farmers' Rights nationally within the framework of the ITPGRFA; consolidating and strengthening initiatives in the Andes to maintain rural areas as vibrant spaces for culturally and socially appropriate innovation, cultural affirmation, empowerment and entrepreneurship; and developing measures to legally protect the traditional knowledge and skills of farmers and rural communities.

For "campesinos" and farmers

1. Farmers and rural workers—organised through their associations, networks and/or with the support of established organisations, and adequately informed—must continue to participate proactively in existing political spaces and demand the creation of such spaces where they do not exist. National arenas (e.g. congresses, parliaments or the executive branch) are often complex to access and influence. For this reason, it is important to also consider subnational levels (e.g. municipalities or regional governments), which are equally important sources of rights and regulations and may, in some cases, offer more practical opportunities for influence depending on the issues at hand.



Laboratorio de conocimientos sobre agrobiodiversidad – parte 1.
Evento de intercambio de conocimientos del Fondo de Distribución de Beneficios -BSF- comunidad de prácticas.
Cusco, Perú, del 27 al 29 de mayo de 2025.

Párrafo para el informe final:

Que los Estados Parte del Tratado Internacional sobre los Recursos Fitogenéticos para la Alimentación y la Agricultura (TIRFAA) ajusten en las subsiguientes resoluciones y decisiones su lenguaje y práctica en la Declaración de las Naciones de las Naciones Unidas sobre los Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas. En particular, que se reconozca de manera justa los conocimientos, ciencia y práctica de los Pueblos Indígenas asociado al cuidado, protección y reproducción de los recursos fitogenéticos. Además, que el sistema de conocimientos de los Pueblos Indígenas no sea supeditado a otros sistemas, ni en la teoría ni en la práctica.

Photo: Request from groups of farmer participants regarding the recognition of indigenous knowledge and know-how.

2. The participation and energy that young people bring to advocacy and campaigning must be promoted and encouraged by farmers' and rural workers' organisations. Empowering youth to carry messages and represent the interests of their communities is therefore essential.

3. In this context, the management, development and application of technological tools must be strengthened to reinforce messages and demands and to present arguments capable of convincing policymakers. Messages should be well defined, clearly communicated and backed with legitimacy.

4. In addition, raising awareness of the many experiences presented and discussed during the workshops—as well as other initiatives, campaigns and networks—is essential to generate broad support and understanding of how these efforts ultimately contribute to conserving agrobiodiversity and ensuring the sustainable use of its components.

5. Networks and exchanges of experience in political advocacy and in the preparation of regulatory or policy proposals are highly valuable mechanisms. They allow actors to learn about different approaches and alternatives that can, over time, help achieve the approval of a strategy, regulation or public policy.

For supporting actors

1. NGOs and research institutes have played, and continue to play, a critical role in supporting and complementing efforts to ensure the *in situ* conservation of agrobiodiversity and to promote the associated culture. Through research and participatory improvement, support for organisation and association, recognition of diverse knowledge systems, and the development of catalogues, databases, *ex situ* seed banks and other tools, these actors must remain the key facilitators and promoters of the scientific, legal and institutional measures required to advance *in situ* conservation.

2. In this regard, these organisations must maintain and deepen their support for farmers, rural communities and their organisations in advocacy processes and in projects and experiences that showcase good practices in conserving and sustainably using agrobiodiversity. Their accumulated experience, networks and trusted relationships are an indispensable asset for continuing to promote agrobiodiversity.

3. During the workshops and discussions, the value of providing feedback to farming and rural communities was confirmed as a mechanism for respect, transparency and balanced exchange of knowledge and perspectives. Feedback on results, information and impacts must become an essential requirement and obligation for any initiative or intervention involving farmers and rural communities.

General

Finally, in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, an expanded Community of Practice should be promoted. This Community should, both virtually and in person when feasible, continue to provide spaces for sharing experiences, lessons learned and protocols, while also strengthening contacts and links between the different actors who participated in the workshop and others who may join in the future.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. AGENDA OF THE MEETING

https://bit.ly/LCA-agenda

ANNEX 2. IMAGES OF POSTERS PRESENTED BY PARTICIPANTS

https://bit.ly/LCA-posters

ANNEX 3. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

https://bit.ly/LCA-resumen

ANNEX 4. STATEMENT ON THE USE OF THE TERM "INDIGENOUS PEOPLES"

https://bit.ly/LCA-Declaracion

Scan to view all workshop materials
https://bit.ly/LCA-materiales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