

What are some things that Guyana is doing in relation to Agricultural Biodiversity?

Guyana has acceded to the Biosafety Protocol which would aid in the conservation of its' agricultural genetic resource.

The EPA is developing a Strategy to assess the impacts of agricultural activities on biodiversity.

A Fisheries Management Plan has been developed.

The Ministry of Agriculture has a strong focus on improving breeds of livestock to aid the industry's growth and its diversification.

There has been increased weed control to improve drainage and irrigation.

There is an increased focus on promoting cash crop farming.

There has been increased focus on support services to small farmers.

A Draft National Policy and Regulations on Access to Genetic Resources (ABS).



Agricultural produce for sale at Stabroek Market.



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Agricultural Biodiversity and the Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD)



What is the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) about?

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an agreement among several countries to promote sustainable development.

The three main objectives of the Convention are:

1. Conservation of Biological Diversity.
2. Sustainable use of its components.
3. Fair and equitable sharing arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

The Convention was signed by 150 countries, including Guyana, at the Rio Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in December 1992. Guyana later ratified the Convention on August 29, 1994. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the National Focal Point for the Convention.

There are now 190 Parties to the Convention who are committed towards achieving the objectives of the Convention and the 2010 Biodiversity Target (to reduce significantly by 2010 the loss of biodiversity).

To enable more focused actions on specific aspects of biodiversity, the CBD operates through seven thematic programmes of work. These are:

1. Forest Biodiversity.
2. Agricultural Biodiversity.
3. Inland Waters Biodiversity.
4. Marine and Coastal Resources Biodiversity.
5. Mountain Biodiversity.
6. Island Biodiversity.
7. Dry and Sub-Humid lands Biodiversity.

There are also several "cross-cutting issues", which include: Traditional knowledge, Innovations and Practices, Invasive Alien Species, Ecosystem Approach, Protected Areas, etc.

This brochure provides information on the Agricultural Biodiversity programme area.



What is Agricultural Biodiversity?

Agricultural biodiversity is a broad term that includes all components of biological diversity of relevance to food and agriculture. It also includes all components of biological diversity that support the ecosystems of which agriculture is a part (agro-ecosystems): the variety and variability of animals, plants and micro-organisms, at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels, which are necessary to sustain key functions of the agro-ecosystem, its structure and processes.

Agricultural Biodiversity itself has several major dimensions. These include:

1. Genetic resources for food and agriculture, including: microbial and fungal genetic resources, plant and animal genetic resources.
2. Components of agricultural biodiversity that support the provision of ecosystem services upon which agriculture is based. These include a diverse range of organisms that contribute, at various scales to: nutrient cycling, pest and disease regulation, pollination, maintenance of hydrological cycle, and erosion control.
3. Abiotic factors, which have a determining effect on agricultural biodiversity, such as physical landscapes within which agriculture occurs, or the way in which agricultural activities influence landscapes.
4. Socio-economic and cultural dimensions since agricultural biodiversity is largely shaped by human activities and management practices and large numbers of people depend on agricultural biodiversity for sustainable livelihoods. These include: Cultural factors which influence the sustainability of agricultural biodiversity, and traditional and local knowledge of biodiversity.

Agricultural biodiversity has its distinct features and problems which require distinct solutions. Some distinct features include:

Agricultural biodiversity is essential to satisfy basic human needs for food and livelihood security; Agricultural biodiversity is managed by farmers; many components of agricultural biodiversity depend on this human influence; indigenous knowledge and culture are integral parts of the

management of agricultural biodiversity;

There is a great interdependence between countries for the genetic resources for food and agriculture;

For crops and domestic animals, diversity within species is at least as important as diversity between species and has been greatly expanded through agriculture;

A lot of biological diversity is conserved *ex situ* in gene banks or breeders' materials; and,

The interaction between the environment, genetic resources and management practices that occurs *in situ* within agro-ecosystems often contributes to maintaining a dynamic portfolio of agricultural biodiversity.

Why is it important?

Agricultural biodiversity provides not only food and income but also raw materials for clothing, shelter, medicines, breeding new varieties, and performs other services such as maintenance of soil fertility and biota, soil and water conservation, and pollination, all of which are essential to human survival.



What does the Agricultural Biodiversity Work Programme of the CBD entail?

The goals of the work programme are:

1. Promote the positive effects and mitigate the negative impacts of agricultural practices on biological diversity in agro-ecosystems and their interface with other ecosystems.
2. Promote the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources of actual or potential value for food and agriculture.
3. Promote the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.