



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)

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What's in News?

- The **ninth session of the governing body** of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) began in Delhi.

The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture:

- The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was adopted by the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations November 3, 2001**.
- It entered into force on June 29, 2004 and currently has **149 Contracting Parties, including India**.
- The International Treaty is **the first legally-binding international instrument** to formally acknowledge the enormous contribution of indigenous people and small-holder farmers as traditional custodians of the world's food crops.
- It also calls on nations to **protect and promote their rights to save and use the seeds** they have taken care of for millennia.
- The multilateral system **supports agricultural research and development** as well as global food security by providing each member access to important food and forage crops.
- The treaty provides solutions to **achieve food and nutritional security as well as climate resilient agriculture**.
- Under this system, a global pool of plant genetic resources has been created and made available to all members.
- A total of 64 crops species are included in this pool and these account for as much as 80 per cent of global food required.
- This Treaty led to the formation of **Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway**, which acts as a safety backup of the world's major crops and plants for future food security.
- The Article 9 of ITPGFRA specially deals with farmers' rights and India is fully compliant with it and relevant provisions are enshrined in **The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001**.

Aim of the Treaty:

The Treaty aims at:

i) **recognizing the enormous contribution of farmers** to the diversity of crops that feed the world;

ii) **establishing a global system to provide farmers, plant breeders and scientists with access to plant genetic materials;**

iii) **ensuring that recipients share benefits they derive** from the use of these genetic materials.

Benefits of the Treaty:

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- The International Treaty also guides access and benefit-sharing that may arise from the commercialisation of plant genetic resources.
- The benefits can be both non-monetary and monetary in nature.
- In case of **monetary incentives**, any person or institution that commercialises a new crop or variety using the genetic resources needs to pay a share to the benefit fund.
- In situations where the new variety developed is not made available to others (for example, due to patents), the breeder / developer has to pay a share of profits to the Benefit-sharing Fund.
- The rate of compensation is 0.77 per cent of gross sales.

News Highlights:

- The parties to this treaty have come together after nearly three years to discuss governance of agricultural biodiversity and global food security.
- The theme of the meeting is **‘Celebrating the Guardians of Crop Diversity: Towards an Inclusive Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework’**
- There, has been a lack of consensus on issues like benefit sharing of germ plasm which will provide access to better quality seeds
- India member countries to make headway eliminating the north-south divide and have reiterated that people around the world have conserved priceless genetic resources and the treaty must support access and exchange of all crop genetic resources.
- Member countries must stress on conservation and utilisation of minor millets, under-utilised potential crops as well as crop wild relatives before it is too late
- The pandemic and ongoing conflicts are affecting the way the world produces, supplies and consumes food, he pointed out.
- They have shown us how fragile our agri-food systems are and have put our global supply chains under pressure.
- To deal with these **challenges**,

1. we must increase the use of diverse and resilient crops and their genetic resources.
2. We must conserve the source of our food and agriculture, our seeds and other plant genetic material.

Way Forward:

The public and private sectors, farmers, and academia must work together to make genetic diversity and sustainability available to breeders and researchers in order to enable innovation