



WORLD AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION - WAHF

Combining wisdom and science,  
safeguarding the legacy of the past, to present, and for the future

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The World Agricultural Heritage Foundation - WAHF is dedicated to policy and technical support to countries and institutions that cherish the **Globally and Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems** for present and future generations through sustainability science, higher education, research and development aimed to promote safeguarding of these world's agricultural heritage sites and systems.

## AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE: LEGACY FROM THE PAST, PASSPORT FOR THE FUTURE

*Important contribution to food and livelihood security of smallholders family farmers and indigenous communities*

GIAHS are resilient, built up and maintained through local resources, hard labour and knowledge, individual and community investment and commitment. These smallholding, family farm-scale, agro-pastoral, forest and fisheries systems have survived the test of time and continue to be the basis of food security and livelihoods of the majority of the farmers around the world.

*A reservoir of agro-biodiversity and associated biodiversity*

A growing body of scientific evidence demonstrates that indigenous and traditional agricultural systems, feature a high degree of biodiversity and genetic resources for food and agriculture. GIAHS systems often reflect rich and globally unique agricultural biodiversity, within and between species but also at ecosystem and landscape level. Such systems are often located in centers of crop diversity, and they contain wealth of biological resources, both domesticated and adapted land-races, as well as wild and weedy relatives of crops. The richness of biodiversity in any form, can only be effectively maintained, adapted and conserved with the human management systems that have created it, including indigenous knowledge systems and technologies, specific forms of social organization, customary or formal law and other cultural practices.



### *A body of traditional knowledge*

GIAHS contain a set of practices, knowledge, institutions, technologies, skills, traditions, beliefs and values proper to a farming community. The traditional and indigenous knowledge systems employed in GIAHS are foundation and basis of managing the agro-ecosystem, including processes and functions, to keep maintaining the general ecosystem and landscape integrity. As such, agricultural system evolved, co-evolved with the human communities, handed down from one generation onto another, refined and continuously fine-tuned, primarily as a response to the specific natural environment change where they need to gain their livelihood, minimizing their risks and reducing their vulnerability to uncertain conditions.



### *Cultural diversity*

GIAHS have many values beyond production of foods, fibers, conservation of biodiversity and other provisioning services. These evolving systems and communities have kept their distinct identities on the strength of unifying values such as family, community, history, religion, and a sense of belonging to their natural and cultural habitats. What sets apart the agricultural heritage systems from the UNESCO world heritage sites which are based on “outstanding universal value”, is that GIAHS are not static or frozen in time or space. They represent living, dynamic, socio-economic, cultural and institutional mosaic of how humans have adapted over centuries to the demands of dramatic advances in human civilization, while preserving and conserving to this day a rich heritage of customs, rituals, dances, songs, livelihood patterns and rural landscapes.

### *Remarkable landscapes with aesthetic values*

GIAHS have evolved over time specific and highly adapted forms of social organization through which the ecosystems and landscapes management takes place, and cultural identity is preserved. These agricultural systems have resulted in outstanding landscapes with remarkable aesthetic values. Some of these GIAHS landscapes appear to satisfy the objectives of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The Ifugao Rice Terraces of the Philippines is one example of GIAHS and a World Heritage Site. This system is an epitome of an agricultural legacy dated from more than 2000 years ago. The spectacular rice terraces' landscapes allows protection and conservation of significant and important agricultural biodiversity and associated biodiversity, features marvellous engineering systems and innovativeness, promotes tourism, as well as expressing the conquered and conserved harmony between humankind and the environment. The system is also called the “Living Cultural Heritage.”



## GOALS AND STRATEGY OF WAHF

The mission of WAHF is to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development through policy and technical assistance, networking, research, training and education for safeguarding and dynamic conservation of the world's agricultural heritage systems and sites.

The Goals of WAHF:

- Support countries and UN-FAO in building a major international platform to identify, recognize and safeguard "Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems" around the world
- Promote science-based evidences of the resiliency, productivity and viability of smallholders, family farming and indigenous communities and communicate their knowledge systems
- Promote higher education in sustainability science and agriculture heritage systems



The strategy of WAHF:

- Promote science-based, agroecological and dynamic conservation – methodological framework for agricultural heritage systems and sites
- Support the establishment of a strong, stable and growing national, regional and global network to support GIAHS sites through guidance and advice to training, education, policy advocacy, and best practices in governance and management of agricultural heritage systems
- Building networks and alliances for dynamic conservation of diverse agricultural heritage sites and systems and a network of in-situ conservation of agro-biodiversity harboured in GIAHS and NIAHS around the world.



### TO KNOW MORE

[www.worldagriculturalheritage.org](http://www.worldagriculturalheritage.org)

## CONTACTS

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