



10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the  
Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

*“Healthy wetlands, healthy people”*

Changwon, Republic of Korea,  
28 October-4 November 2008

**Resolution X.31**

**Enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies as wetland systems**

1. RECOGNIZING that rice is grown in at least 114 countries worldwide and, as the staple diet for over half the world’s population, has contributed to about 20% of the total calorie supply in the world;
2. AWARE of recent concern over global food supplies and costs and the need for increasing food production, and ALSO AWARE that Resolution X.23 on *Wetlands and human health and well-being* highlights the interdependencies between human health, food security, poverty reduction and sustainable wetland management and calls for Contracting Parties to “strengthen collaboration and seek new partnerships between the sectors concerned with wetland conservation, water, health, food security and poverty reduction”;
3. RECOGNIZING that rice paddies (flooded and irrigated fields in which rice is grown), a typical agricultural landscape for a significant proportion of world rice cultivation, have provided large areas of open water for centuries in regions with a variety of rice-growing cultures, and, in addition to producing rice, also provide other animal and/or plant food sources and medicinal plants, thus acting as wetland systems and helping to sustain livelihoods and human well-being in these regions;
4. NOTING that rice paddies in many parts of the world support important wetland biodiversity, such as reptiles, amphibians, fish, crustaceans, insects and molluscs, and play a significant role in waterbird flyways and the conservation of waterbird populations;
5. FURTHER RECOGNIZING that aquatic biodiversity associated with rice paddies can make an important contribution to the nutrition, health and well-being of rural populations;
6. RECOGNIZING ALSO that in some particular regions, it is important that irrigated rice paddies remain connected to surrounding natural/semi-natural habitat, in particular to wetlands, for the sake of biodiversity;
7. RECALLING that “rice fields” are included in the Ramsar Classification System for Wetland Type as a human-made wetland (“Type 3 Irrigated land; includes irrigation channels and rice fields”) and thus, where appropriate, may be designated as, or included in, Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites), and that at least 100 designated Ramsar sites around the world include rice field habitats that play important ecological

- roles and support a range of biodiversity, including supporting internationally important populations of breeding and non-breeding resident and migratory waterbirds;
8. NOTING that some sites associated with rice paddies are or could be included in the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) Programme, which was initiated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and promotes the dynamic conservation of areas important for indigenous techniques and cultural and biodiversity values, and RECOGNIZING that such sites could provide examples of wetland wise use;
  9. CONCERNED about current and potential threats to the role of rice paddies as sustainable wetland systems, as well as about the potential and current impacts to the surrounding environment, caused by factors such as inappropriate agricultural practices relating to water management and change of natural flow, as well as introduction of new taxa, including invasive alien species, use of high levels of harmful agricultural chemicals, and the impact of inappropriate conversion of rice paddies to other land uses;
  10. NOTING that some water management approaches, such as flooding of rice paddies when they are not in use for rice production, have been adopted in order to provide suitable habitat for some fauna, including migratory waterbirds, and to control weeds and pest insects;
  11. ALSO CONCERNED that inappropriate conversion of wetland to paddy field may have potential negative impacts on local biodiversity and related ecosystem services, and AFFIRMING that this Resolution is not to be used to justify conversion of existing natural wetlands into human-made wetlands, nor to justify inappropriate conversion of land to human-made wetlands;
  12. ALSO AFFIRMING that the focus of this Resolution is specifically on the maintenance and enhancement of the ecological and cultural role and value of appropriate rice paddies as wetland systems, consistent and in harmony with the Convention, internationally agreed development goals, and other relevant international obligations;
  13. RECALLING that Resolution VIII.34 (2002) highlighted, *inter alia*, the importance of ensuring that agricultural practices are compatible with wetland conservation objectives and that sustainable agriculture supports some important wetland ecosystems, and AWARE of the work currently being undertaken in response to Resolution VIII.34 by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the Guidance on Agriculture-Wetlands Interactions (GAWI) initiative with the FAO, Wageningen University and Research Centre, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Wetland Action, and Wetlands International, including the preparation of a framework for guidance related to interactions between wetlands and agriculture; and
  14. NOTING that information and products related to rice paddy farming are available through the work and publications of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on agriculture and biodiversity, including agri-biodiversity indicators; that information on wetland, water and rice farming is available in the Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture (CA); and that the analyses of distribution and representativeness of Ramsar wetland types, currently being

undertaken by the IWMI for the STRP, include, *inter alia*, rice paddies as human-made wetlands;

#### THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

15. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to promote further research on flora, fauna and ecological functions in rice paddies and on the cultures that have evolved within rice-farming communities that have maintained the ecological value of rice paddies as wetland systems, in order to identify sustainable rice paddy farming practices that reinforce wetland conservation objectives and provide ecosystem services such as groundwater recharge, climate moderation, flood and erosion control, landslide prevention, provision of plant and or animal food resources and medicinal plants, and the conservation of biodiversity;
16. INVITES Contracting Parties to consider offering recognition and/or protection to such sites through, for example, their designation as Wetlands of International Importance and through mechanisms such as the FAO Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems Programme, and FURTHER INVITES Contracting Parties to disseminate and exchange information on these practices and sites amongst governments, farmers and conservation agencies, in order to support improvement of sustainable rice farming practices and water management;
17. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to:
  - i) identify challenges and opportunities associated with managing rice paddies as wetland systems in the context of the wise use of wetlands, also paying attention to the concept of connectivity between rice paddies, natural wetlands and river basins, as well as to the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, and furthermore to encourage conservation authorities to collaborate with agriculture authorities and those agencies responsible for rice production and disease prevention to identify and actively promote planning, farming practices, and water management in rice paddies that serve to enhance the natural biodiversity, ecosystem services, and sustainability of rice paddies, while also contributing to improved nutrition, health and well-being of farming household members and surrounding community members and to the conservation of waterbird populations;
  - ii) ensure that such planning, farming practices, and water management are implemented wherever applicable, making appropriate use of the Ramsar guidance on wetlands and river basin management adopted in COP10 Resolution X.19 so as to ensure that river basin processes and possible upstream and downstream effects of rice paddy farming are considered, while being conscious of the need for food production and the interests of local communities;
  - iii) ensure that planning, farming practices, and water management associated with rice paddies do not lead to loss of existing natural biodiversity and ecosystem services through inappropriate conversion of natural wetlands or other habitats to human-made wetlands; and
  - iv) consistent with the measures identified above, seek appropriate environmentally sustainable ways of minimising risks to human health associated with waterborne

diseases, disease vectors (including Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza), and excessive and inappropriate use of agricultural chemicals in rice paddies; and

18. REQUESTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, working with other interested organizations, to:
  - i) prepare a technical report on the role of rice paddy in supporting the conservation of wetland biodiversity and the delivery of wetland ecosystem services, taking into account differences in the ways in which rice fields are managed, considering also the work of the GAWI partnership; and
  - ii) review, disseminate, and exchange available guidance and information related to rice paddy planning, management practices and training on sustainable rice farming that protect or enhance wetland biodiversity and ecosystem services while also supporting essential food production, in collaboration especially with FAO, IWMI, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the Africa Rice Centre (WARDA), the GAWI partnership, and others.