

Institutionalizing Global Genetic Resource Commons: Towards Alternative Models for Facilitating Access in the Global Biodiversity Regime

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Abstract:

The proliferation of intellectual property rights has led to increasing restrictions and commercial pressures on access to and use of genetic resources. These changes present a formidable challenge for the incipient commons-based sharing practices for genetic resources on a global scale amongst scientists, breeders, and between ex-situ collections of microbial genetic material, which have been made possible by new technological breakthroughs. This paper presents a comparative analysis of three cases of global genetic-resource commons, in the fields of microbial, plant and animal genetic resources, with the aim to contribute to the understanding of the challenges faced and to analyze possible institutional solutions. The analysis in this paper shows that, under conditions of appropriate quality control, the use of standard contracts against misappropriation and an initial investment in the creation of social networks, global genetic resource commons can be a desirable and effective solution to manage and provide essential knowledge assets that contribute to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity with major benefits both for developing and industrialized countries.

Keywords: Microbial genetic resources, Plant genetic resources Animal genetic resources, Biodiversity, Access and benefit sharing, Intellectual property, Open source licensing.

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