International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Prelims – *Current events of national and international importance | General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity and Climate Change*

Mains – *GS-III (Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment)*

Why in news?

The 13th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is discussing controversial amendments that could dilute benefit-sharing provisions.

- International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, also called as *Plant Treaty*.
- **Objective** – Conservation and sustainable use of all plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use.
- It is in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, for sustainable agriculture and food security.
- It is *signed by many countries including India*.
- **Multilateral System (MLS)** – It is *administered by the ITPGRFA*.
- It is a global system facilitating access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) and ensuring fair and equitable benefit-sharing among countries.
- It is the International Treaty's truly innovative solution to access and benefit-sharing, which includes *64 of the world's most important crops*.

Proposed Amendments & Concerns

- The Proposed Change *Allow all plant species to be included* if they have traits useful for food/forage breeding.

Implications on Developing Countries

- **Loss of Sovereignty** – Developing countries, rich in biodiversity, fear losing sovereign rights over their plants.
- The proposal could force them to share everything under a Standard Material Transfer Agreement, reducing their say.
- **Unfair Benefits** – The current system ensures benefits return to providers. Expanding access might dilute this, favouring richer nations or corporations.
- **Bio piracy Risk** – Free access could lead to exploitation, including "digital bio piracy,"

where genetic data is used without permission.
- **Food Security Threat** – Instead of protecting food crops for global hunger, this might weaken local farmers and seed systems.

Reference

Down to Earth | Plant Treaty

