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EXPLANATORY NOTES ON  
THE NULLITY OF THE BREEDER'S RIGHT  
UNDER THE UPOV CONVENTION

*Document prepared by the Office of the Union*

*to be considered by the Council  
at its forty-ninth ordinary session, to be held in Geneva on October 29, 2015*

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Note for Draft version

**Strikethrough (highlighted)** indicates deletion from the text of document UPOV/EXN/NUL/1 that has been approved by the Administrative and Legal Committee (CAJ).

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**Footnotes** to be retained in the published version of the document.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES ON THE NULLITY OF THE BREEDER'S RIGHT  
UNDER THE UPOV CONVENTION

PREAMBLE

1. The purpose of these Explanatory Notes is to provide guidance on the “Nullity of the Breeder’s Right” under the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV Convention). The only binding obligations on members of the Union are those contained in the text of the UPOV Convention itself, and these Explanatory Notes must not be interpreted in a way that is inconsistent with the relevant Act for the member of the Union concerned.
2. Section II provides guidance on certain aspects of the provisions on the nullity of the breeder’s right contained in Article 21 of the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention and Article 10(1) and (4) of the 1978 Act of the UPOV Convention.

SECTION I: PROVISIONS ON THE NULLITY OF THE BREEDER'S RIGHT

3. The provisions on the nullity of the breeder's right contained in Article 21 of the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention and Article 10 (1) and (4) of the 1978 Act of the UPOV Convention are reproduced below:

Article 21 of the **1991 Act** of the UPOV Convention

**Article 21**

**Nullity of the Breeder's Right**

(1) [*Reasons of nullity*] Each Contracting Party shall declare a breeder's right granted by it null and void when it is established

(i) that the conditions laid down in Articles 6 or 7 were not complied with at the time of the grant of the breeder's right,

(ii) that, where the grant of the breeder's right has been essentially based upon information and documents furnished by the breeder, the conditions laid down in Articles 8 or 9 were not complied with at the time of the grant of the breeder's right,<sup>[1]</sup> or

(iii) that the breeder's right has been granted to a person who is not entitled to it, unless it is transferred to the person who is so entitled.<sup>[2]</sup>

(2) [*Exclusion of other reasons*] No breeder's right shall be declared null and void for reasons other than those referred to in paragraph (1).

Article 10 of the **1978 Act** of the UPOV Convention

**Article 10**

**Nullity [and Forfeiture] of the Rights Protected**

(1) The right of the breeder shall be declared null and void, in accordance with the provisions of the national law of each member State of the Union, if it is established that the conditions laid down in Article 6(1)(a) and (b) were not effectively complied with at the time when the title of protection was issued.

[...]<sup>[3]</sup>

(4) The right of the breeder may not be annulled [or become forfeit] except on the grounds set out in this Article.

<sup>1</sup> There is no corresponding provision to Article 21(1)(ii) of the 1991 Act in the 1978 Act.

<sup>2</sup> There is no corresponding provision to Article 21(1)(iii) of the 1991 Act in the 1978 Act.

<sup>3</sup> Provisions in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 10 of the 1978 Act concern the forfeiture of the rights protected (see Explanatory Notes on the Cancellation of the Breeder's Right under the UPOV Convention (document [UPOV/EXN/CAN#4](#))).

SECTION II: CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE PROVISIONS ON THE NULLITY OF THE BREEDER'S RIGHT

5-4. The use of the word "shall" clarifies that the competent authority must declare the breeder's right null and void if the criteria set out in Article 21(1) of the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention and Article 10(1) of the 1978 Act of the UPOV Convention are met.

4-5. When a breeder's right is declared null and void, it is equivalent to pronouncing that it was an invalid right and should not have been granted in the first instance. ~~In~~ By contrast, a breeder's right which is cancelled was valid until the date of cancellation and was, in particular, valid at the time of granting (see Explanatory Notes on the Cancellation of the Breeder's Right under the UPOV Convention (document [UPOV/EXN/CAN/4](#))).

Nullity proceedings and decisions

6. Nullity proceedings may be initiated in response to a request made by a third party, or *ex officio* by the competent authority of the member of the Union concerned.

7. The authority, or authorities, with competence to decide on matters concerning nullity of breeders' rights (e.g. authorities granting breeders' rights, judicial authorities) will be determined by the relevant legislation of the member of the Union concerned. The relevant legislation might, in addition to the legislation governing breeders' rights, include other legislation on substantive and procedural matters (e.g. civil legislation, criminal legislation).

8. The UPOV Convention requires that the nullity of breeders' rights be published (see Article 30(1)(iii) of the 1991 Act and Article 30(1)(c) of the 1978 Act.).

Retroactive effects

9. The decision to declare a breeder's right null and void invalidates the right from the date of grant, although the decision of nullity by the competent authority will occur at a later date. Therefore, nullity has, in principle, retroactive effects. The retroactive effects of nullity may vary in practice. The remedies concerning the retroactive effects of nullity will depend on the relevant legislation of the member of the Union concerned and may also depend on contractual arrangements. In some cases, such as in cases of fraud or wilful abusive acts by the holder of the breeder's right, reimbursement of royalties paid and/or other remedies may apply. In some other cases, reimbursement of royalties received by the holder of the breeder's right may not be applicable.

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