

Report of the

SIXTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Nicosia, Cyprus, 25-29 October 1982



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

FAO Member Nations in the Near East region (as at 29 October 1982)

Afghanistan	Lebanon	Somalia
Bahrain	Libya	Sudan
Cyprus	Mauritania	Syria
Djibouti	Morocco	Tunisia
Egypt	Oman	United Arab Emirates
Iran	Pakistan	Yemen Arab Republic
Iraq	Qatar	Yemen, People's Democratic
Jordan	Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of	Republic of
Kuwait		

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for the Near East:

First	—	Cairo, Egypt, 2-14 February 1948
Second	—	Damascus, Syria, 28 August — 6 September 1951
Third	—	Cairo, Egypt, 1-9 September 1953
Fourth	—	Damascus, Syria, 10-20 December 1958
Fifth	—	Teheran, Iran, 21 September — 1 October 1960
Sixth	—	Tel Amara, Lebanon, 30 July — 8 August 1962
Seventh	—	Cairo, Egypt, 19-31 October 1964
Eighth	—	Khartoum, Sudan, 24 January — 2 February 1967
Ninth	—	Baghdad, Iraq, 21 September — 1 October 1968
Tenth	—	Islamabad, Pakistan, 12-22 September 1970
Eleventh	—	Kuwait, Kuwait, 9-19 September 1972
Twelfth	—	Amman, Jordan, 31 August — 9 September 1974
Thirteenth	—	Tunis, Tunisia, 4-11 October 1976
Fourteenth	—	Damascus, Syria, 9-16 September 1978
Fifteenth	—	Rome, Italy, 21-25 April 1981
Sixteenth	—	Nicosia, Cyprus, 25-29 October 1982

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, 1982

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SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION

1. Situation of Food and Agriculture in the Region "Statement by the Director-General of FAO"

1.1. Importing countries in the Region were urged to avail themselves of the low cereal prices at present and increase their reserve stocks (para. 8).

1.2. Member countries were requested to double the present value of investment in agriculture and to increase investments over the next ten years in order to offset the increasing rate of inflation (para. 12).

1.3. Member countries were urged to pay more attention to agricultural research as being the cornerstone for viable investment and that a minimum 5 percent of all agricultural investment should be allocated for research (para. 13).

2. FAO Programme in the Region

2.1. Member countries in the Region endowed with high potential for expansion of agriculture under rainfed conditions were urged to make full use of the Regional Study on Rainfed Agriculture, which has been completed and distributed to all countries in the Region (para. 25).

2.2. Member countries were requested to increase their technical and material support to the Regional Commission on Desert Locust Control in the Near East (para. 29).

2.3. Member countries were called upon to strengthen and improve their veterinary services and to apply strict veterinary and animal health control measures on animal trade across the borders (para. 30).

2.4. Member countries which have not yet indicated their wish to participate in the second phase of the Regional Project on Animal Production and Animal Health were requested to do so as soon as possible and announce their financial contribution accordingly (para. 31).

2.5. Member countries were urged to fully utilize the excellent services at the FAO Investment Centre, in the identification of investment projects in the fields of food and agriculture (para. 35).

3. The FAO Near East Government Cooperative Programme (NECP)

3.1. Donor countries in the Region were urged to announce their pledges to the Second Phase of NECP, as soon as possible (Resolution 1/82, para. 46-I).

4. Near East Regional Commissions

4.1. Member countries were called upon to cooperate with the FAO Secretariat in promoting the work of the Regional Commissions (Resolution 2/82, para. 54-II).

5. Follow-up of WCARRD Programme of Action

5.1. Member countries were requested to continue their efforts towards improving the economic and social conditions of rural populations and to promote people's participation in all fields of rural development (para. 57).

5.2. Member countries were called upon to draw up policies and programmes which would provide the disadvantaged rural population with access to the necessary resources and to reform agricultural structures and land tenures and to encourage rural investments (para. 59).

5.3. Member countries were urged to expand their network of education, training and agricultural extension to improve the social and economic status of rural women, to give small farmers and farmers' organizations access to production inputs and services and to guarantee stable markets and fair prices for their products (para. 60).

5.4. Member countries were urged to ensure timely reporting to the next FAO Conference (1983) on progress achieved in their countries, to alleviate poverty of rural populations and to improve rural life (para. 61).

6. The FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development

6.1. Member countries of the Region should consider organizing a meeting, shortly before the holding of the technical phase of the Conference, to review matters of common interest and to harmonize national positions on technical issues and policies (para. 70).

7. Representation of the Region on CGIAR

7.1. Representatives of the Region on CGIAR should participate fully in its sessions, to convey the views of member countries and to report on this to the FAO regional conferences, through the Regional Representative of FAO for the Near East (para. 73).

8. The Regional Office for the Near East

8.1. Member countries were urged to take a clear and firm stand on the question of operating the Near East Regional Office from within the Region and to approach other FAO member countries in order to persuade them to accept their views and support a resolution at the next FAO Conference (1983) which would facilitate the reopening of RNEA in a country of the Region (paras. 74-78).

B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

1. FAO Programme in the Region

1.1. FAO is requested to translate into Arabic the Regional Study dealing with the ecological assessment of areas with a high potential for the expansion of rainfed agriculture (para. 25).

1.2. FAO should exert every effort with donors to ensure the resumption of the Regional Project on Land and Water Use (Phase II) and strengthen cooperation between national and regional projects and the relevant FAO technical divisions, along the lines that used to exist between the Land and Water Use Project and the FAO Land and Water Development Division (para. 26).

1.3. FAO is urged to continue its contacts with IFAD and other donors in order to secure enough funds for Phase II of the Regional Project on the Improvement and Production of Field Food Crops. In the case that sufficient funds are not made available, FAO is requested to integrate Phases I and II into one project which could be financed and implemented through funds which some countries in the Region have provided for it (para. 28).

1.4. FAO is requested to give increasing attention to locust control activities in the Region (para. 29).

1.5. FAO is urged to give special attention to help establish an Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa. It is also requested that the Arab CARIS Centre Project be implemented soon (para. 32).

1.6. FAO is urged to continue to support NENARACA within the means at its disposal (para. 33).

1.7. FAO is requested to increase TCP resources, now that it has proved its importance and effective response to urgent requests from developing countries (para. 36).

1.8. While appreciating the interest shown by the FAO Director-General in the recommendations of the Fifteenth Regional Conference for the Near East, and the action taken thereon, the Conference requested FAO to continue to report on action taken in response to recommendations issued by future sessions (para. 37).

2. FAO Near East Government Cooperative Programme

2.1. The Conference requested the FAO Director-General to continue his contacts with the donor countries in the Region, in the manner he deems appropriate, in order to ascertain their intentions regarding their contributions towards the activities of the Second Phase of the Programme, and the funds they intend to commit for this Phase. To this end, the Director-General is requested, if deemed necessary, to convene a special pledging conference (para. 46, Resolution 1/82).

2.2. The Conference authorized the Director-General of FAO to utilize the unused pledges, the balances of executed projects and the accrued interests available from the First Phase of the Programme, to cover the deficit suffered by uncompleted national projects, or to utilize such cash in financing new projects in consultation with donor countries (para. 46, Resolution 1/82).

3. Near East Regional Commissions

3.1. The Conference requested the Director-General of FAO to take the necessary steps to propose to the Council the establishment, under Article VI-I of the Constitution, of a new Regional Commission to be named "Near East Regional Commission on Agriculture", to take over the duties of the following Regional Commissions which are to be abolished:

- Near East Animal Production and Health Commission
- Near East Plant Protection Commission
- Near East/North Africa Horticulture Production Commission.

The proposed Regional Commission on Agriculture will also assume the responsibilities and functions in other technical fields covered by the Agriculture Department of FAO, excluding those duties of the Land and Water Use Commission and the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust (para. 54, Resolution 2/82).

3.2. The Conference requested the Director-General of FAO to take the necessary steps to propose to the Council the establishment, under Article VI-I of the Constitution, of a new Regional Commission to be named "Near East Regional Commission on Economic and Social Policy" to take over the duties of the following Regional Commissions which are to be abolished:

- Near East Regional Food and Nutrition Commission
- Near East Commission on Agricultural Planning
- Near East Commission on Agricultural Statistics.

The proposed Regional Commission on Economic and Social Policy will also assume other responsibilities and functions in other technical fields covered by the Department of Economic and Social Policy in FAO (para. 54, Resolution 2/82).

3.3. The Conference recommended to the Director-General of FAO that the Commission on Land and Water Use in the Near East and the Regional Commission on Forestry should continue as at present under Article VI-I, while the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust should continue according to the agreement concluded under Article 14 (para. 54, Resolution 2/82).

4. Follow-up of WCARRD Programme of Action

4.1. The Conference invited FAO to continue its assistance to the countries in the Region through fielding various missions including high-level and technical ones (para. 58).

4.2. The Director-General of FAO is requested to obtain detailed information from the three countries offering to host the proposed Regional Centre for Integrated Rural Development (Egypt, Jordan and Somalia), regarding the premises, facilities and other means of support they are prepared to place at the disposal of the Centre, and to transmit this information to the Plenipotentiary Conference, in order to assist the latter in deciding where the Centre should be located (para. 63).

4.3. The Conference welcomed the invitation extended by the Jordanian Delegation to hold the Plenipotentiary Conference in Jordan, and requested the FAO Director-General to take the necessary measures to convene the Meeting during the first half of 1983, to conclude the agreement of the establishment of the Regional Centre for Integrated Rural Development (para. 64).

5. The FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development

5.1. The Conference strongly supported the FAO Director-General's decision to convene the FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development, and to hold the Conference in two phases, a technical one in October 1983 and a high-level policy one in May 1984 (para. 66).

5.2. The Conference endorsed the broad objectives of the World Fisheries Conference and agreed that major ones should include the formulation of strategies and programmes to achieve optimum utilization of fishery resources, the attainment of higher economic and nutritional benefits from rationally managed fisheries, and the promotion of the self-reliance of developing countries (para. 67).

5.3. The Conference shared the view of the Director-General of FAO that while the World Fisheries Conference would provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge and experience, it should lead to a practical and concrete outcome (para. 69).

6. Representation of the Region on the CGIAR

6.1. The Conference approved in principle the Director-General's proposal that the term of office of the two selected regional representatives should be a minimum of four years, with the possibility of a two-year extension for one of the representatives, in order to allow some overlap between the new and the outgoing representatives (para. 71).

6.2. The Conference decided to extend the term of office of the representative of Iraq and the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, for a further period of two years, 1983-84 (para. 72).

7. The Regional Office for the Near East

7.1. The Director-General of FAO was requested to take note of the recommendation urging countries of the Region to take a clear and firm stand and to approach FAO member countries, in order to persuade them to accept their views and make possible the issuance of a relevant resolution during the Twenty-second Session of the FAO Conference due to be held at FAO Headquarters in November 1983 (para. 78).

8. Date and Place of the Seventeenth Regional Conference for the Near East

8.1. The Director-General of FAO was requested to determine the date and place of the Seventeenth Regional Conference, after consultation with the Member Governments of the Region (para. 80).

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. The Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East was held in Nicosia from 25 to 29 October 1982.

Opening of the Conference

2. The Conference was opened by H.E. Spyros Kyprianou, President of the Republic of Cyprus, in the presence of the Director-General of FAO, Mr Edouard Saouma. Also present were the Heads of Delegations and Representatives of FAO Member Nations in the Region, as well as Observers from a number of other Member Nations and from regional and international governmental and non-governmental organizations and bodies. H.E. President Kyprianou delivered a statement in which he welcomed the FAO Director-General and all participating delegations. He underlined the importance of holding the Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East at a time when much cooperation among the countries of the Region was badly needed in the various fields of agricultural development. H.E. President Kyprianou commended the major and effective role played by FAO in assisting developing countries all over the world in their efforts to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, and raise the standard of living of the rural population. In conclusion, the President referred to the valuable assistance which was being provided to his own country by FAO. He urged the countries of the Region to intensify their efforts in the field of food and agricultural production in order to secure the maximum degree of food security in all countries of the Region. He also called for closer cooperation and agricultural integration among these countries.

Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen and Appointment of the Rapporteur

3. H.E. Dr Dimitrios Christodoulou, Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources of the Republic of Cyprus, was unanimously elected Chairman by the Conference, and the Heads of Delegations of member countries were elected Vice-Chairmen.

4. H.E. Dr Dimitrios Christodoulou expressed his thanks and appreciation for his election as Chairman of the Conference, and thanked the FAO Director-General for the efforts being exerted by the Organization in the field of agricultural development in the Region and for the close collaboration it had maintained with the countries of the Region. He wished the Conference every success, welcomed all delegations to Cyprus and stressed that his staff would dedicate themselves to facilitating the work of the Conference.

5. The Conference appointed Mr Amir Abdullah Khalil, Sudan, Rapporteur.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

6. The Conference adopted the Provisional Agenda (Appendix A) as well as the Timetable, after introducing some amendments.

Statement by the Director-General

7. The Conference heard a statement by the Director-General of FAO (Appendix D), who expressed his thanks and appreciation to H.E. Mr Spyros Kyprianou, President of the Republic, for inaugurating the Conference, and to the Cyprus Government for hosting it. He also congratulated H.E. Dr Dimitrios Christodoulou, Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources of Cyprus, on his unanimous election as Chairman, and wished him and the Vice-Chairmen every success in directing its sessions. The Director-General then welcomed the Heads of Delegations and accompanying members.

8. The Director-General then reviewed the world food, agricultural and economic situation, noting that world agricultural production showed some progress in 1981/82 as the annual rate of growth amounted to 2.9 percent, whereas the rate of growth never exceeded 2.5 percent in the seventies. Regarding world cereal stocks, the Director-General remarked that these stocks rose from 231 million tons in 1981 to nearly 270 million tons in 1982 (equivalent to 18 percent of world annual consumption requirements). He urged importing countries to avail themselves of the low cereal prices and increase their cereal reserve stocks.

9. The Director-General warned that this rather optimistic view concealed other gloomy aspects of the world economic situation. Inflation and economic recession witnessed by the industrialized countries have been seriously affecting developing countries and this is manifested by various constraints to development such as high interest rates on loans, reduced development aid, increased debt burdens in non-oil exporting developing countries and the dependence of their economies on agricultural and raw material exports which suffer from instability, declining prices in international markets, and from the protectionist policies which reduce their export revenues. All these factors have contributed towards the serious deterioration of their trade with the developed countries and created difficulties in their balance of payments.

10. In reviewing the question of food aid and the International Emergency Food Reserve, the Director-General noted that the annual food aid target has not yet been achieved. The target has been set at 10 million tons of cereals since 1974, but this figure is now considered modest, and should be increased to nearly 18 million tons of cereals. However, the 1982/83 estimated target will not exceed 9 million tons. The figure for the International Emergency Food Reserve (IEFR) set at 500 000 tons annually since 1975 was achieved only this year, thanks to the generous contribution by the EEC which amounted to 100 000 tons of cereals, and to OPEC which contributed \$25 million for the years 1981 and 1982, in response to a proposal by the Director-General. The Director-General noted that the value of food aid granted during 1981/82 through the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Emergency Food Reserve (IEFR) to some of the countries of the Region which suffered natural disasters like floods and drought or man-made disasters like wars, was more than US\$ 191 million.

11. The Director-General expressed his concern about the food and agriculture situation in the Near East Region. He explained that the rate of increase of agricultural production was 2.3 percent in 1980 and 1.9 percent in 1981, while the global rate of growth was around 2.9 percent. Taking into consideration the high rate of annual population growth this will mean a continuous decrease in per capita food production in the Near East area. The data available for 1982 harvests show that cereal production for this year will be below that of last year and that it would not exceed 1.6 percent. This discouraging situation will force most of the countries of the Region to import most of their cereal requirements from outside the Region, which will adversely affect their balance of payments.

12. The Director-General then referred to the unusual circumstances under which the Region now lived and which affect development efforts in one way or another. Wars in many parts of the Region destroy everything and huge amounts of funds are being spent on destructive hardware rather than on agricultural development and food production. In such circumstances, it is agriculture that suffers most.

13. The Director-General reviewed briefly the activities of FAO in the Region and drew attention to the fact that they had been accorded a separate item on the Agenda due to their crucial importance, and would be presented by the Assistant Director-General. He added that the Conference would note, in reviewing this Programme, that several important activities had been undertaken during the last biennium, and that FAO had responded to the recommendations of the previous Conference and has been implementing them. The Director-General emphasized that appropriate investments in agriculture, as well as an effective body for scientific and agricultural research, were an essential prerequisite for any increase in agricultural production. He stressed the need to double the present value of investments in agriculture and that governments should meet the increasing rates of inflation in the future through a corresponding increase in investments over a period of at least ten years, so that steady intensive investments might bear fruit. He noted that scientific and agricultural research in the Region was deteriorating rather than improving, and stressed that agricultural research was the cornerstone for viable investments. He underlined the fact that without an integrated body for research and development, productive investment would be a risky and fragile undertaking. He suggested, therefore, that governments should allocate a minimum of 5 percent of all agricultural investments in support of scientific research and development bodies and direct them towards effective participation in the process of agricultural development.

14. The Director-General informed the Conference of the activities carried out by FAO in the follow-up of the Plan of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, especially the recommendation of the Fifteenth Regional Conference concerning the establishment of a regional centre for integrated rural development for the Near East. He said that several important phases had been completed in this respect and that FAO was now arranging to convene a conference of plenipotentiaries, now that the draft agreement for the establishment of this centre had been well received by the governments of the Region.

15. The Director-General commended the success achieved by the Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP) and said that he considered it a fine example of serious work and fruitful cooperation between the countries of one region. He noted that FAO was able to carry out twenty national and seven regional or sub-regional projects in a number of countries in the Region, through NECP. He recalled that the majority of these projects were carried out according to their plans of action, and that all remaining projects would be implemented by the end of this year, by which time it would not be possible to continue with the Programme, because its financial resources would have been exhausted.

16. The Director-General recalled that the Conference had made recommendations at its Fourteenth and Fifteenth Sessions in favour of maintaining this Programme and appealed to donor countries to provide the necessary funds for a second cycle. He asserted that in view of the importance of this matter, the Cooperative Programme was accorded a separate item on the Agenda. He expressed the hope that the deliberations of the Conference would lead to the support and maintenance of the Programme.

17. Acting upon the recommendation of the previous conference, the Director-General said that the Secretariat had prepared an assessment of the Regional Commissions' activities. He added that the document would be presented to the Conference. He expressed the hope that the Conference would pay special attention to this item and that its recommendations would reflect the aims for which regional commissions were created.

18. The Director-General turned to the FAO World Conference on the Management and Development of Fisheries to be held in 1984, and stressed the importance of that Conference to the countries of the Region. He said that a document concerning this Conference would be presented to this session and hoped that the latter would make appropriate recommendations or provide guidance which might contribute towards the success of the World Conference.

19. The Director-General stated that FAO had entered into agreements with several major regional governmental organizations such as the Arab League and its specialized agencies in the field of food and agriculture. The framework of such collaboration was under constant review in order to achieve more flexibility and to expand the scope of cooperation.

20. In closing, the Director-General referred to World Food Day, saying that the observance of this Day helped to remind each and every one, especially the rich - whether individuals or countries - that the mission of FAO was to liberate man from hunger and malnutrition. He added: "We must produce our food within our regions and rely on ourselves and our capacities". He assured the Conference that FAO was ready to place its capabilities at the disposal of the region and to collaborate with its governments in drawing up development programmes and projects.

Statement by the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP)

21. The Executive Director of WFP referred, in his statement, to the assistance which was and is still being provided by WFP to the countries of the Region. He praised the achievements of those countries in various fields of activity, notably in the agricultural sector through the optimal use of WFP assistance. The Executive Director also referred to the important role played by FAO in support of WFP activities.

FAO Programme in the Region: Statement by the Regional Representative

- Report on the FAO Activities in the Near East Region including Actions taken on the Main Recommendations made by the Fifteenth Regional Conference
(Document NERC/82/2)

22. The Conference noted with satisfaction that the Near East Regional Office (RNEA) continued to serve the interests and needs of the countries of the Region in accordance with the overall priorities proposed by the Director-General and endorsed by the Twenty-first FAO Conference (November 1981).

23. The Conference commended the programme increase to the Regular Programme of Work and Budget for the Near East for 1982/83, and expressed its hope that this increase in figures would be translated into activities that were useful to the Region.

24. The Conference expressed its concern over the expected shortage in the extra-budgetary resources, especially from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It hoped that affluent countries inside and outside the Region would take the initiative to forestall such a shortage by increasing their contributions to international development programmes, trust fund arrangements, and through NECP.

25. The Conference regarded the completion of the regional study dealing with the ecological assessment of areas with high potential for expansion of agricultural production under rainfed conditions as an outstanding achievement. It urged the countries of the Region which are endowed with such potential to make the maximum use of the findings of this study, which specifies ways and means of increasing and improving the productivity of rainfed agriculture, and requested the translation of this study into Arabic.

26. The Conference expressed its satisfaction at the cooperation which exists between the Regional Project on Land and Water Use and the FAO Land and Water Division in all fields, including the organization of regional and national training courses on improved irrigation techniques, water consumptive use of crops, land reclamation and prognosis of salt-affected soils. The Conference urged such cooperation between national and regional field projects on the one hand and the relevant FAO technical divisions on the other. The Conference requested that FAO exert every effort with donors to ensure the resumption of this project.

27. The Conference commended the FAO Seed Review which was conducted in several countries of the Region in order to update information on cultivar improvement, evaluation and release, seed quality control, production, marketing and promotion.

28. The Conference urged FAO to keep up its contacts with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and other donors in order to secure enough funds for Phase II of the Regional Project on the Improvement and Production of Field Food Crops which was adopted by the Fifteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (Rome, April 1981). In case enough funds were not made available for the implementation of Phase II, Phase I of the original project should be reformulated as a single integrated project which could be easily financed and implemented through funds provided for the project by countries in the Region.

29. The Conference noted that FAO's continuous support of the activities of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East helped to achieve great success in monitoring and controlling locusts. It hoped that FAO will give increasing attention to locust control activities in the Region. It urged the countries of the Region which are members of the said Commission to continue to extend material and technical support for control activities within the framework of the Commission.

30. The Conference urged member countries to apply strict veterinary and animal health control measures on animal trade and drew attention to the importance of providing adequate veterinary services at country level. It called upon Member States to coordinate inter-country action to arrest the spread of disease and epizootics across borders.

31. The Conference noted the availability of funds for the second phase of the Regional Animal Production and Health Project, which will begin in 1983. While welcoming this information, which underlined the importance of coordinated joint action in this field in the Near East Region, the Conference urged Member Nations which have not yet announced their desire to participate in the second phase of the project to do so as soon as possible and to announce their financial contributions as well.

32. The Conference welcomed the intention to hold a Technical Consultation on strengthening cooperation in agricultural research in the Near East. It also welcomed the proposal to establish an association for agricultural research institutions in the Near East and North Africa, and urged FAC to give special attention to help establish this association. It also expressed particular interest in the "Arab CARIS Centre" project and requested that it be implemented soon.

33. The Conference commended the increasing activities of the Near East/North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA), whose headquarters are in Amman, in various fields such as arranging seminars, symposia and training courses as well as issuing information bulletins about the activities of the Association, etc. It commended both the technical and material support which had been provided by FAO to the Association since its inception, and urged FAO to continue that support within the means at its disposal.

34. The Conference commended the activities of the FAO Investment Centre related to the identification or preparation of development projects in a number of countries in the Region. It called upon the countries of the Region to utilize the skills and capabilities of the Centre in this respect.

35. The Conference also appreciated the interest shown by the Investment Centre in the follow-up of UNDP projects executed by FAO which are considered to have investment potential. The objective is to ensure that such projects reach the feasibility stage and attract investment from financing institutions.

36. The document referred to many other activities undertaken by FAO on regional and sub-regional levels and which covered several fields. In this respect, the Conference expressed its appreciation for the efforts exerted by FAO in the Region, and called upon it to increase these efforts. It made a special reference to FAO/TCP and requested that its resources be increased now that it had proved its importance and effective response to urgent requests from developing countries.

37. While reviewing the action of FAO on the recommendations of the Fifteenth Regional Conference for the Near East (Rome, April 1981), the Conference noted that all these recommendations had actually been implemented or had reached the last stages of implementation. The Conference appreciated the great interest shown by the Director-General in these recommendations. It noted that this interest had an impact on their rapid implementation by the appropriate units in the Organization. It requested FAO to continue reporting on action taken in response to recommendations made by Near East Regional Conferences.

SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

FAO Near East Government Cooperative Programme: Evaluation of Past Experience and Plans for the Future

38. The Conference took note of document NERC/82/3 on the NECP which was prepared in accordance with a recommendation made by the Fifteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East, in order to review and evaluate the NECP's progress and achievements as well as the impact of its current activities. The document showed that NECP projects were grouped under four main objectives: promoting food production, conducting pre-investment studies, strengthening national institutions, and training. In this document, an analysis of results of the first cycle of the Programme, both positive and negative, was discussed, and the action taken to implement Resolution 81/4 adopted by the Fifteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East was reviewed.

39. The Conference expressed its satisfaction that regional and national projects financed by NECP had been executed according to plan and, in this respect, a number of delegates noted that mistakes or difficulties confronted should be taken as expected, natural and acceptable occurrences during the execution of some of these projects particularly since the Programme, itself, was a new experience to both the donor and recipient countries in the Region.

40. The Conference took note of the conditions and circumstances that prevailed during the establishment of the Ministerial Committee which the Fifteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East had recommended the Director-General to establish with the aim of undertaking contacts and visits to donor countries in the Region to ascertain their long-term pledges for the Second Phase of the NECP.

41. The Conference expressed its regrets for the failure to establish the proposed Committee and commended both the Director-General of FAO and the Minister of Trade and Agriculture, State of Bahrain, who was to lead the proposed Committee, on their efforts in this respect. The Conference also expressed the hope that the absence of such a Ministerial Committee should not be an obstacle to resuming contacts with the donor countries in the Region in any appropriate manner.

42. Some delegates proposed the establishment of a joint Technical Committee from the donor and recipient countries to evaluate the NECP and formulate regional and national projects for the Second Phase, and to undertake contacts with the donor countries accordingly.

43. The FAO Regional Representative for the Near East explained to the Conference that the document submitted to the Conference on this subject in its current session is, in itself, an evaluation of the previous phase of the Programme and that interim evaluations had also been undertaken in the past and discussed during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Regional Conferences for the Near East. Hence, there is no apparent need for the establishment of a special committee to undertake a new evaluation. He also explained that FAO had already prepared and formulated a number of regional and national projects in consultation with the recipient countries in the Region and at their request; and that these projects are ready for execution provided necessary funds were available and, therefore, to prevent duplication and repetition, there is no need for the preparation of new projects lists. The FAO Regional Representative pointed out that the Conference may wish to authorize the Director-General to conduct contacts to this end with the donor countries in the Region in the manner he deems appropriate.

44. The Conference endorsed the above proposal of the FAO Regional Representative, and some delegates suggested that one way the Director-General might proceed in his contacts with the donor countries could be through convening a special pledging conference.

45. The Conference discussed the proposal submitted by the Secretariat of FAO to authorize the Director-General to utilize unobligated balances of NECP. The balances remaining in terminated national and regional projects and the accrued interests available for the Programme could be used either to cover the deficit of national projects uncompleted due to insufficient funds having been allocated in the original individual plans of operation, or to finance new projects in consultation with donor countries.

The Conference endorsed this proposal in principle.

46. In the light of the above the Conference adopted the following resolution:

RESOLUTION 1/82

FAO Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP)

The Regional Conference

Having heard the review and evaluation of the activities and achievements of the first phase of NECP;

Reaffirming its appreciation and gratitude to donor countries in the Region which had provided the necessary funds for the implementation of country and regional projects in different countries of the Region during the First Phase of the Programme;

Expressing its satisfaction with the manner in which FAO had implemented the projects of the First Phase of the Programme;

Recalling that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Regional Conferences for the Near East had expressed their hope that generous contributions would continue to be made, in order to enable the Programme to carry out the projects to be included in its Second Phase;

Commending the efforts of the Director-General in this respect;

Recommends that:

1. The donor countries of the Region announce their pledges to the Second Phase of the Programme as soon as possible;
2. The Director-General continue his contacts with the donor countries in the Region, in the manner he deems appropriate, in order to ascertain their intentions regarding their contributions towards the activities of the Second Phase of the Programme, and the funds they intend to commit for this phase;
3. The Director-General of FAO be authorized to utilize the unused pledges, the balance of funds allocated to projects that had been executed and accrued interest available from the First Phase of the Programme, to cover the shortfall in funds available to finance certain country projects that were currently operational or to utilize such funds to finance new projects, in consultation with donor countries.

Near East Regional Commissions:

- Review of Performance and Proposals to Improve Effectiveness
- Report on the Sessions planned for the 1980-81 Biennium

47. The Conference discussed document NERC 82/4 and reviewed the performance of the Near East Regional Commissions since their inception. The Conference noted, in particular, that many of these Commissions had fallen short of their objectives for the reasons outlined in the document.

48. The Conference took note of the reasons for the exclusion by FAO Secretariat of the Near East Forestry Commission and the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust from the proposed merges.

49. The Conference endorsed the FAO proposal to retain the two Commissions, by virtue of the special functions of the Forestry Commission and the executive functions of the Commission for Controlling Desert Locust, as separate independent Commissions from the proposed new Regional Commissions. In this respect some delegates proposed to merge the Forestry Commission in the proposed Regional Commission on Agriculture. The majority, however, did not endorse the proposal.

50. As to the proposal to establish two new Regional Commissions to encompass a number of the present Regional Commissions, the Conference endorsed an amended proposal to continue, for the present, the Near East Land and Water Commission partly due to its importance and partly because the Secretariat document confirmed the interest shown by the countries in the Region in the functions of the Commission since its inception as evidenced by attendance in its sessions.

51. A large number of delegates noted that the establishment of the two new Regional Commissions opens up new fields of activities not previously covered by existing Regional Commissions, such as mechanized agriculture, agro-industries, agricultural marketing and credit, field food crops, food security, integrated rural development and follow-up of the WCARRD Programme of Action, etc.

52. Some delegates suggested that it would be better to establish the new Commissions under Article XIV of the Constitution rather than Article VI-1, in order to enhance their power in the implementation of various recommendations. The majority, however, noting that the functions of the Commissions remain advisory and not executive, proposed to establish them under Article VI-1.

53. As to the establishment of the Near East Commission on Fisheries, the Conference decided to postpone discussion of the matter since Member countries in the Region are, presently serviced by similar regional bodies.

54. The Conference took note of the recommendations of the Seventh Session of the Near East Plant Protection Commission (Rome, 31 August - 4 September 1981); it endorsed the recommendations and requested the Director-General to take them into consideration.

The Conference adopted the following resolution:

RESOLUTION 2/82

Near East Regional Commissions

The Regional Conference

Having taken note of document NERC/82/4 relating to the performance of regional commissions established for the Near East, and containing a review of the constraints which had prevented some of these commissions from fully achieving their objectives;

Recalling the recommendations of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Regional Conferences for the Near East regarding these commissions;

Having considered the proposals set forth in document NERC/82/4 which were designed to activate and enhance the effectiveness of these regional commissions in the future;

Expressing its firm conviction that such regional commissions constitute one of the main channels through which the countries of the Region can communicate their views, recommendations and proposals to the Director-General and to the governing bodies of the Organization and draw attention to high priority problems related to agricultural development and food production in the Region;

Noting that such commissions constitute an effective channel through which the results of successful experiments in other regions can be conveyed to the Near East Region;

Re-affirming the significant role played by regional commissions as important fora for the exchange of technical experience and information among countries of the Region, and

Considering, therefore, that it is necessary for measures to be adopted to promote and enhance the effectiveness of such regional commissions by re-structuring certain extant ones;

Recommends that:

I

1. (a) The Director-General take the necessary steps to propose to the Council that it establish, under Article VI.1 of the Constitution, a new regional commission to be known as the "Near East Regional Commission on Agriculture", which would assume the functions of the following regional commissions which would be abolished:
 - Animal Production and Health Commission in the Near East
 - Near East Plant Protection Commission
 - Commission on Horticultural Production in the Near East and North Africa.
- (b) In addition to the above functions, the proposed Near East Regional Commission on Agriculture should carry out functions in areas corresponding to those covered by the Agriculture Department of FAO, with the exception of those areas which fall within the terms of reference of other Commissions, namely the Regional Commission on Land and Water Use in the Near East and the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East.
2. (a) The Director-General take the necessary steps to propose to the Council that it establish, under Article VI.1 of the Constitution, a new regional commission to be known as the "Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission", which would assume the functions of the following regional commissions which would be abolished:
 - Regional Food and Nutrition Commission for the Near East
 - Near East Commission on Agricultural Planning
 - Near East Commission on Agricultural Statistics
- (b) In addition to the above functions, the proposed Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission should carry out functions in areas corresponding to those covered by the Economic and Social Policy Department of FAO.
3. The Regional Commission on Land and Water Use in the Near East and the Near East Forestry Commission should continue to operate under Article VI.1 of the Constitution, and the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East should continue to carry out its functions in accordance with the Agreement concluded under Article XIV of the Constitution by which it was established.

II

Calls upon the countries in the Region to cooperate with the Secretariat of the Organization, in promoting the work of the regional commissions and in strengthening the links between the Secretariat and the regional commissions, since such cooperation would redound to the benefit of those countries.

Follow-up of WCARRD Programme of Action and Progress made in the Establishment of the Regional Centre on Integrated Rural Development

55. The Conference took note of the progress achieved by FAO in its support of the follow-up activities to the WCARRD Programme of Action, especially the progress made in the establishment of a Regional Centre on Integrated Rural Development for the Near East as reported in document NERC/82/5.
56. The Conference commended FAO's support at both country and regional levels for the implementation of the Recommendations of the Fifteenth Regional Conference concerning rural development, as well as FAO's assistance to countries of the Region in this field or in the formulation, planning and implementation of agricultural reform and rural development policies and programmes, in addition to assistance in support of people's participation - including women - in the development process.

57. The Conference urged all countries in the Region to continue their efforts towards improving the economic and social conditions of rural populations, and to promote people's participation in production activities especially among the disadvantaged groups. It considered people's participation one of the basic prerequisites for rural development.
58. The Conference invited FAO to maintain its assistance to the countries in the Region through fielding various missions, including high-level and specialized technical ones.
59. The Conference underlined the importance of drawing up policies and programmes which provide the disadvantaged rural population with access to the necessary resources; and help to reform agricultural structures and land tenure systems, encourage rural investment and streamline programmes at the national level.
60. Countries of the Region were urged to expand their network of education, training and agricultural extension, to improve the social and economic status of rural women, to give small landholders and farmers' institutions access to production inputs and services, and to guarantee stable markets and fair prices for their products.
61. The Conference acknowledged FAO's efforts towards helping the governments of the Region to set up an appropriate mechanism for monitoring the progress achieved in alleviating rural hunger, and in reporting their progress to the FAO Conference (1983) in accordance with the recommendations of WCARRD. It also urged Member Nations to ensure timely reporting.
62. The Conference welcomed the progress made towards the establishment of a Regional Centre on Integrated Rural Development for the Near East and in particular the formulation of a draft agreement on the establishment of this Centre with a view to enhancing regional cooperation. Some delegates suggested that the proposed centre be called Regional Centre for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. The Conference, however, deferred any decision on that matter to the forthcoming Conference of Plenipotentiaries.
63. The Regional Conference noted that three Governments - Egypt, Jordan and Somalia - have reiterated their desire to act as host to the proposed Regional Centre. In this connection, the Regional Conference invited the Director-General to obtain detailed information from the three Governments concerned regarding the premises, facilities and other means of support that they are prepared to place at the disposal of the Regional Centre and to transmit this information to the Plenipotentiary Conference in order to assist the latter in deciding where the Regional Centre should be located.
64. The Conference approved the following:
- a. To reaffirm its support of the FAO Programme on the follow-up of WCARRD and to expand its activities and maintain its priority in the Region.
 - b. To follow up efforts to accelerate the establishment of the Regional Centre for Integrated Rural Development.
 - c. The Conference welcomed the invitation by Jordan to host the Conference of Plenipotentiaries and requested the Director-General of FAO to convene the said Conference during the first half of 1983 to sign the agreement of the Centre.

Report on the Preparation of the FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development

65. The Conference considered this item on the basis of document NERC/82/6 and of the additional information provided by the Secretariat on the discussions already held on the same subject by the Regional Conferences for Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, Africa and Europe.
66. The Conference expressed its strong support for the convening by the Director-General of the FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development, and for the holding of the Conference in two phases: a technical one in October 1983 and a high-level policy

one in May 1984. It considered that the World Fisheries Conference would be timely in view of the fundamental changes in the regime of the oceans with regard to fisheries, as embodied in the Convention on the Law of the Sea adopted in April 1982. At the same time, the Conference emphasized that the World Fisheries Conference should not only play an essential role in the practical implementation of the new regime, but also cover the problems and prospects of inland fisheries and aquaculture.

67. The Conference endorsed the broad objectives of the World Fisheries Conference as outlined in document NERC/82/6. It agreed that major ones should include the formulation of strategies and programmes to achieve optimum utilization of fishery resources, the attainment of higher economic, social and nutritional benefits from rationally managed fisheries and the promotion of the self-reliance of developing countries. In this connection, it stressed the need for international cooperation among developing countries, particularly at regional level, and also between developed and developing countries.

68. The Conference reviewed the items and issues which should receive priority attention in the light of the recommendations already made by the other Regional Conferences. It laid particular emphasis on stock assessment, the improvement of artisanal and coastal fisheries, the conditions of access to fishery resources in Exclusive Economic Zones including the role of joint ventures and bilateral agreements, the institutional aspects of the management of shared stocks at sub-regional or regional level, and the handling, processing and marketing of fish and fishery products. The suggestion was also made that serious consideration should be given to the establishment of large joint ventures, including a joint fleet, among the countries of the region.

69. The Conference shared the view of the Director-General that while the World Fisheries Conference would provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge and experience, it should lead to practical and concrete results. To this end, the World Fisheries Conference could formulate a fishery management and development strategy at national, regional and world levels, as well as elaborate an extensive training programme aimed at promoting the self-reliance of developing countries. Such a programme would require the active participation and support of bilateral and multilateral donor or financing agencies.

70. It was suggested that the countries of the Region should consider organizing a meeting shortly before the holding of the technical phase of the World Fisheries Conference, so as to review and harmonize national positions on technical issues.

Representation of the Near East Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

71. The Conference considered document NERC/82/7 and approved in principle, the Director-General's proposal that the term of office of the two selected regional representatives should be a minimum of four years, with the possibility of a two-year extension for one of the representatives in order to allow some overlap between the new and the outgoing representatives.

72. The Conference decided to extend the term of office of the representatives of the Republic of Iraq and The Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for a further period of two years (1983-84).

73. The Conference emphasized once again that the representatives of the Region should participate fully in the meetings of the Group, to convey the views of the member countries of the Region and to ensure proper feedback by circulating to them a report on each meeting of the CGIAR attended. In this connection, the regional representatives should take full advantage of the facilities and assistance provided by the Near East Regional Office and/or FAO Headquarters. The Conference decided that it shall have the right, in the forthcoming session, to terminate the membership of any representative who fails, for one reason or another, to participate in the activities of the group for two successive sessions, and the election of a replacement to the membership of the group.

The Near East Regional Office

CONCLUDING ITEMS

74. The Conference noted that the purpose of setting up FAO Regional Offices to operate from within the regions was to emphasize the need and importance of firmly establishing the concept of cooperation and coordination between the countries of the region concerned in all fields related to agricultural and rural development as well as food production.

75. The Conference also noted that the fact that these Offices perform their duties from within the Region reflects one aspect of the decentralization policy followed by FAO in the last few years and is a logical result of this policy.

76. The Conference also noted that it was abnormal and unusual for the Near East Regional Office to continue performing its duties from outside the Region following a Resolution adopted by the Twentieth FAO Conference (Rome, November 1979).

77. The Conference therefore emphasized the importance of reopening the Regional Office as soon as possible in one of the countries of the Region.

78. However, in view of the fact that such a decision falls exclusively within the competence of the FAO Conference, the Sixteenth FAO Conference for the Near East urged the countries of the Region to take a clear and firm stand on this matter and to approach other FAO member countries - through the channels they deem appropriate - in order to persuade them to accept their views and make possible the issuance of a relevant Resolution during the Twenty-second Session of the FAO Conference due to be held at FAO Headquarters in November 1983.

Date and Place of the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

79. The Head of the delegation of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen expressed the desire of his country to host the Seventeenth Regional Conference. The Conference welcomed this kind invitation. The Conference was informed that the Secretariat had received a telegram from the Kingdom of Morocco also offering to host the Conference.

80. The date and place of the Seventeenth Conference will be determined after consultation between the Director-General and the governments of the two countries concerned.

Adoption of the Report

81. The Conference adopted the present Report after minor modifications.

Closure of the Conference

82. His Excellency Dimitrios Christodoulou, Conference Chairman, in his address, thanked the Director-General and the Regional Representative for the Near East, and commended the Conference Secretariat on their efforts to ensure the smooth running and success of the Conference. He also thanked all participant delegations and expressed the wish that they will continue their efforts within their countries for continued cooperation between the countries of the Region for the development of the agricultural sector, and the betterment of the lives of their people. The Conference Chairman also expressed gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the Conference by preparing its documents and facilitating its work.

83. The Conference Chairman was followed by some Heads of Delegations and Observers who expressed their appreciation to the Republic of Cyprus for hosting the Conference, the facilities provided and its hospitality. They commended, in particular, the increasing interest shown by the Director-General in the Region, and commended the Conference Secretariat for its efforts in preparing the documents and facilitating its work.

84. The Regional Representative for the Near East in his address thanked the Conference Chairman and his Deputies for their valuable efforts in steering the meetings of the Conference, thanked delegates of member countries for their constructive discussions and proposals, and observers from other countries and organizations for their attendance and participation. He expressed special gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Cyprus for hosting the Conference and commended the National Preparatory Committee for their great efforts, and all others who, directly or indirectly, contributed to its success.

85. The Conference Chairman announced the Conference terminated at 18.00 hours on Friday 29 October 1982.

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Opening of the Conference
2. Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen and appointment of the Rapporteur
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

II. STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

III. OTHER STATEMENTS

1. Statement by the Executive Director of WFP
2. Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in the Near East

IV. FAO PROGRAMME IN THE REGION: STATEMENT BY THE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

1. Report on the FAO Activities in the Region including Action Taken on the Main Recommendations made by the Fifteenth Regional Conference
2. FAO Programme of Work for 1982-83

V. SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

1. FAO Near East Government Cooperative Programme; Evaluation of Past Experience and Plans for the Future.
2. Near East Regional Commissions:
Part I: Review of performance and proposals to improve effectiveness
Part II: Report on the sessions planned for 1980-81 biennium
3. Follow-up of WCARRD Programme of Action and Progress made in the Establishment of the Regional Centre for Integrated Rural Development
4. Report on the Preparation of the FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development
5. Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

VI. CONCLUDING ITEMS

1. Any other business
2. Date and Place of the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East
3. Adoption of the Report
4. Closure of the Conference

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LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

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Rapporteur Amir Abdullah KHALIL (Sudan)

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NERC/82/1	Provisional Annotated Agenda
NERC/82/2	Report on the FAO Activities in the Region including Action taken on the Main Recommendations made by the Fifteenth Regional Conference
NERC/82/3	FAO Near East Government Cooperative Programme; Evaluation of Past Experience and Plans for the Future
NERC/82/4	Near East Regional Commissions: I: Review of Performance and Proposals to Improve Effectiveness II: Report on the Sessions Planned for 1980-81 Biennium
NERC/82/5	Follow-up of WCARRD Programme of Action and Progress made in the Establishment of the Regional Centre for Integrated Rural Development
NERC/82/6	Report on the Preparation of the FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development
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APPENDIX D

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Mr Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Heads and Members of Delegations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Gratitude to the President and Government of Cyprus

It gives me great pleasure to express, on behalf both of FAO and of yourselves, our gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency President Spyros Kyprianou, and the Government of Cyprus, for so generously playing host to this Conference.

I avail myself of this opportunity to declare that FAO is impressed by the excellent performance achieved by this ancient agricultural country, and to commend the resolute efforts made by the Cyprus Government in the agricultural sector.

Congratulations to Conference Chairman

I should also extend my personal congratulations to His Excellency Dimitrios Christodoulou, Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources of Cyprus, on his unanimous election to the Chair of this session. I wish him and the Vice-Chairmen all success in guiding this Conference and in coordinating its activities.

It also gives me great pleasure to welcome all the distinguished heads and members of delegations, and the observers.

World Food, Agricultural and Economic Situation

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to begin my speech with a general review of the world food, agricultural and economic situation and, in particular, that of the Near East Region.

Progress of agricultural production

There was some progress in world agricultural production in 1981-82; the rate of annual growth was 2.9 percent, compared with 2.5 percent in the seventies.

World cereal stocks

World cereal stocks also increased from 231 million tons in 1981 to an estimated 270 million tons in 1982 (i.e., 18 percent of estimated annual world consumption).

It should be pointed out that the current decrease in cereal prices, particularly that of wheat, provides a golden opportunity for importing countries to replenish their stocks and increase their cereal reserves.

However, this rather optimistic view conceals other gloomy aspects of the world economic situation.

Inflation and economic recession, in the industrialized countries, are seriously affecting developing countries and are reflected in diverse constraints to development: for example, high interest rates and reduced development aid. There is a decrease of about 30 percent in resources available for development from the World Bank, UNDP and IFAD.

Moreover, the burden of debts in non-oil-exporting developing countries, the dependence of their economies mainly on agricultural and raw material exports which are unstable and suffer from declining prices in international markets, and the protectionist policies which reduce the export revenues of those countries, all these contribute to the serious deterioration of their trade with developed countries and to difficulties in their balance of payments.

Food Aid

In the midst of this crisis-prone economic situation, the annual target for food aid has not, so far, been achieved.

You will recall that this target was set at 10 million tons of grain in 1974. This figure, in my opinion, is no longer adequate and should be raised to 17 or 18 million tons for 1985.

Also, it should be mentioned that the estimated actual contributions for 1982/83 will not exceed 9 million tons.

International Emergency Food Reserve

The figure for the International Emergency Food Reserve (IEFR), set at 500 000 tons annually in 1975, was achieved only last year thanks to a generous contribution by the EEC, which granted 100 000 tons of cereals, and to the response by OPEC countries to my proposal to contribute US\$ 25 million in 1981 and 1982.

This agreement with OPEC provides for the possibility of food aid being purchased from developing countries and being shipped in their own vessels; this food aid may also be used for development projects if it is not required for emergencies.

Under the World Food Programme (WFP) and the IEFR, all countries in the Region afflicted by natural disasters such as flood or drought or by man-made disasters such as war were granted important quantities of food aid. Of the disaster-stricken population 80 percent or 3 million people were refugees in Pakistan; they were supplied with US\$ 191 million of food aid.

On the other hand, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) responded positively to my proposal, submitted within the framework of my Five Point Plan of Action for World Food Security, which called for the provision of financing facilities and credits to facilitate cereal imports required by low-income countries suffering from deficits in their balance of payments.

Food and agricultural situation in the Near East

This was a short review of the world food, agricultural and economic situation. In the Near East Region, however, the food and agricultural situation remained below our expectations. During 1980/81, the rate of agricultural production lagged behind that of other regions; in the first year the growth rate amounted to 2.3 percent, while it was only 1.9 percent in the second year, as against a global growth rate in agricultural production of about 2.9 percent.

Considering the high annual rate of population increase in the Near East, this means that actual per caput food production in the Region has continued to dwindle.

Progress achieved by some countries

The Region is also witnessing great discrepancies in agricultural production from one country to another. Saudi Arabia and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya made significant progress in increasing their wheat production, as a result of their price support policies.

However, data available so far for 1982 indicate that cereal production this year will be lower than last year's levels, because of lower production in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, the Yemen Arab Republic and in

North Africa. This drop in cereal production is estimated at about two million tons. As for cotton, production this year will also decrease in both Turkey and the Arab Republic of Egypt, with better prospects for Syria and the Sudan.

In general, the total growth of agricultural production in the Region will not exceed 1.6 percent in 1982.

Cereal imports

Because of this discouraging situation, most countries in the Region will have to import the major part of their cereal requirements, and will suffer adverse effects on their balance of payments.

The drought in North Africa

The drought which hit North Africa, especially Morocco, worsened the food situation in these countries. Pastures and the whole livestock sector were severely hit.

Floods in P.D.R.Y.

By contrast, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen was affected by floods during March of this year, which caused great damage to crops, livestock, irrigation projects and dams.

Desert Locust

Heavy rains that fell in the Gulf of Aden area during this period led to the multiplication and propagation of the desert locust in Djibouti, north-western Somalia and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Such multiplication was also noticed in some areas of Iran and Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, in the Western Desert and northern Mauritania. However, I am relieved to report that the situation does not cause much concern at present.

Mr Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The tragic situation in the Region

When examining the agricultural situation in the Region, I cannot ignore the exceptional conditions that prevail in this area, conditions which certainly affect everything related to the development process and especially to agricultural development.

Wars on every side cause destruction and devastation.

Huge sums of money are being spent to buy destructive machines, instead of being devoted to agricultural development and food production.

Millions of innocent people are fleeing the spectre of war in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Somalia, the Sudan and other countries; they are left homeless and without food.

The Regional Programme

Accomplishments during the last two years

Now a few words about the Regional Programme. The Assistant Director-General will speak on this topic, which will be discussed under a separate agenda item. We will listen carefully to your comments, which will be taken into consideration when we prepare the Programme of Work for the next biennium.

In reviewing this Programme, the Conference will note the large number of important activities undertaken during the last two years, and the response of FAO to the previous Conference's recommendations and the actions undertaken to implement them.

The future programme

However, in spite of all these efforts and good intentions, agricultural production in the Region has not yet progressed sufficiently to satisfy the increasing need for food.

And there is still a long way to go before the gap between production and consumption can be bridged.

I cannot over-emphasize that there will be no increase in production without sufficient agricultural investment and proper scientific research institutions to serve as the basic reference for the development process.

Investment in agriculture

Investment in agriculture has not, so far, been given the necessary priority by the countries of the Region.

Although there has been a notable increase in investments in agriculture during the last two years, this increase falls short of the mark because a large part of it is being eroded by inflation.

If technical and administrative shortcomings are added to that, the general picture of agricultural investment is not very encouraging. It shows, on the contrary, that the present trend toward increased dependency in feeding the people of the Region will continue and become worse in time, unless governments become aware of the negative implications of such a trend and take action to mobilize their potential and their energies for agricultural investment.

Increasing investments

It is my belief that it is necessary, first of all, to double the value of present investments in agriculture.

Thereafter, governments should undertake to increase the value of investments over a period of ten years to keep pace with inflation, until such intensive investment bears fruit.

Scientific research

With regard to scientific research in agriculture, reports of experts show that this important sector of agricultural infrastructure in the Region is deteriorating rather than improving.

Certain research institutions which provided great services in the past are beginning to show signs of premature ageing for paucity of funds, dispersed efforts, lack of planning, neglect of training and weakening links between research and application - and so forth.

The updating process, the cornerstone for adapting innovative agricultural technology to suit local conditions, has almost come to a halt.

And all this has taken place during a time when agriculture in developed countries has greatly advanced.

While calling for an increase of investment in agriculture, we must realize that agricultural research is the essential prerequisite for good investment.

In the absence of an integrated system of research and development, investments in production will always be fragile and risky.

Five percent for agricultural scientific research

Therefore, I believe that governments should allocate a minimum of 5 percent of investments in agriculture to support research and development systems, which will contribute actively to the development of agriculture.

Agricultural price policy

However, all these efforts to increase agricultural investment and to develop research should be accompanied in some countries of the Region by an agricultural policy designed both to ensure a fair income for the producer, which covers his production costs and leaves a reasonable profit margin, and to fix the price of agricultural products within the purchasing power of the consumer.

Needless to say, such a price policy will be rather burdensome and can only be adopted by the richer countries. However, its consequences are in the best interests of both producer and consumer.

Follow-up to the WCARRD Programme of Action

And now I take up the item of the follow-up to the WCARRD Programme of Action.

Recommendations of the previous Conference

The Conference may recall that during its Fifteenth Session it expressed satisfaction with FAO's activities in the follow-up to the WCARRD Programme of Action. It gave special importance to the programme for assisting nations in setting up social and economic indicators for measuring progress, and for gradually alleviating poverty in rural areas.

Tunis meeting

I am pleased to record that an Expert Consultation on Socio-economic Indicators for the Follow-up and Evaluation of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in the Near East Region was held recently in Tunis, with the participation of experts from several countries in the Region.

Within the context of the WCARRD Programme of Action, high-level missions were carried out in Somalia, Jordan, Oman and the Yemen Arab Republic to assist in drawing up agrarian reform and rural development policies.

Many significant achievements have been made since your last Conference recommended initiating measures aimed at the establishment of a regional centre for integrated rural development. We are now arranging to convene a conference of plenipotentiaries, as the draft agreement for the establishment of this centre was welcomed by the governments of the Region.

Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP)

Mr Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As regards the NECP, you are all aware that this programme emerged as a genuine idea for regional cooperation between the affluent nations of the Region and those in need of aid and assistance.

This programme followed the line of cooperative agreements between FAO and other donor countries such as Scandinavia, Italy, Switzerland, Canada, etc.

The idea materialized at the Eleventh Regional Conference held in Kuwait in 1972, and the Programme itself was approved at the Twelfth Regional Conference held in Amman, Jordan in 1974.

In the following year the Programme became operative when the more prosperous countries of the Region pledged US\$ 29 million as a first step.

Since then FAO has carried out 20 national and 7 regional or sub-regional projects in a number of countries in the Region.

The majority of regional and national projects has been satisfactorily carried out according to their plans of action, and all remaining projects will be implemented by the end of this year.

However, by the end of this same year the Programme will not be able to continue, because its financial resources will be exhausted.

Your Conference issued resolutions and recommendations at its Fourteenth and Fifteenth Sessions to maintain this Programme and appealed to donor countries to provide the necessary funds for a second cycle.

In view of its importance, this subject has been accorded a separate item on the agenda. All that I wish and look forward to is that your discussions should support and maintain the Programme. This Programme has been and is still, in my opinion, a living example of fruitful cooperation between Near East countries. The conclusion of its first cycle, which was only an experimental phase, should certainly not mean the end of this Programme.

Regional Commissions

Acting upon a recommendation of your previous Conference, the Secretariat has prepared an assessment of the regional commissions' activities since their establishment. The document is before you for discussion.

In fact, these commissions are technical bodies set up under the FAO Constitution to give representatives of member nations an opportunity to exchange views, advice, experience and information on technical matters relevant to the respective areas.

Matters for consideration

The persistent question that faced the previous two sessions and still looms large on this present occasion is: Have these commissions undertaken their assigned tasks? In other words, did the countries in the Region participate sufficiently in the activities of these commissions so as to justify the efforts required? If the answer is negative, what are the drawbacks and how can they be remedied? I believe that the Conference will attach special importance to this item and discuss it objectively, and that its recommendations will further the basic aims of these commissions.

World Conference on the Management and Development of Fisheries

I now turn to the World Conference on the Management and Development of Fisheries. For despite the vast potential in the Near East, its fish production is still short of the required level. Moreover, it has not benefited from the new prospects that opened up with the creation of the Exclusive Economic Zones adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. The FAO World Conference, to be held in 1984, will take up a host of development problems that are related to this important sector in developing countries. FAO has been preparing for this World Conference through consultations with relevant committees and through contacts with countries. Discussing this World Conference as a separate item on your agenda, and on other Regional Conference agendas, is only a part of such consultations. It is meant to identify the issues which the countries wish the World Conference to deal with and the desired practicable results. I really feel that your Conference will come up with recommendations and guidelines which will help to make the World Conference a success.

Collaboration with Regional Organizations and Commissions

FAO attaches great importance to the promotion of close collaboration with regional organizations, aiming thereby to serve the interests of member countries through its assistance to such organizations. FAO is fully aware that good coordination with such organizations in joint activities will eventually lead to the solution of innumerable problems relating to agriculture, forestry and fisheries throughout the Region.

FAO/Arab League agreements

FAO has entered into cooperative agreements with several major regional governmental organizations such as the Arab League and its specialized agencies in the field of food and agriculture.

Arab Regional Organizations

The scope of such collaboration is under constant review in order to secure more flexibility and to expand cooperation. To cite only one example, FAO last September signed a cooperative agreement with the Council of Arab Economic Unity in replacement of the document signed in 1968. Cooperative agreements were more recently signed with the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development in Khartoum. Final steps are being taken to sign a similar agreement with the Islamic Conference Organization in Jeddah. In addition, FAO cooperates satisfactorily with other organizations and commissions: the General Secretariat of the Conference of the Arab Ministers of Agriculture of the Gulf States and Arabian Peninsula; the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council; the Arab Gulf Fund; and other development funds in other countries.

It is clear to all concerned that cooperation between FAO and regional organizations has no limits. FAO is always seeking more cooperation and pledges its experience and expertise to this end, within the available financial resources.

World Food Day (WFD)

Lastly, I wish to mention World Food Day, which was observed the world over only a few days ago. All peoples took part in celebrating that day which I regard as a reminder for each and everyone (especially the rich), both countries and individuals, that our mission is to liberate man from hunger and malnutrition. What an enormous challenge! But it is an inescapable one that has to be faced with commensurate will and determination.

What inspires optimism is the fact that we already have a genuine and honest conception of how big the food problem is in the world. We are fully aware, too, of what is incumbent upon each of us, an awareness which I believe to be the first step in the eradication of hunger.

Conclusion

I repeat that we must work harder to produce our food inside our Region, relying on ourselves and our potential.

Investments in agriculture should be doubled or else the situation will deteriorate drastically.

However, such investments must rest on sound bases and on in-depth studies, so that they will not be more smoke than fire. FAO is willing to place itself at your disposal and to collaborate with your respected governments in drawing up development programmes and projects.

We do not claim omnipotence nor can we satisfy all the demands for development, but FAO's past record of creative and efficient initiative is the guarantee that we will always strive to do our best as sincere partners.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, may I wish all success to you and to your Conference.

Thank you.

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