

Report of the

**EIGHTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE  
FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

---

Buenos Aires, 6-15 August 1984



**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

*FAO Member Nations serviced by the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean  
(at 15 August 1984)*

Antigua and Barbuda	Dominica	Nicaragua
Argentina	Dominican Republic	Panama
Bahamas	Ecuador	Paraguay
Barbados	El Salvador	Peru
Belize	Grenada	Saint Christopher and Nevis
Bolivia	Guatemala	Saint Lucia
Brazil	Guyana	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Chile	Haiti	Suriname
Colombia	Honduras	Trinidad and Tobago
Costa Rica	Jamaica	Uruguay
Cuba	Mexico	Venezuela

*Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for Latin America and the Caribbean*

First	—	Quito, Ecuador, 18 - 25 September 1949
Second	—	Montevideo, Uruguay, 1 - 12 December 1950
Third	—	Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1 - 10 September 1954
Fourth	—	Santiago, Chile, 19 - 30 November 1956
Fifth	—	San José, Costa Rica, 12 - 21 November 1958
Sixth	—	Mexico City, Mexico, 9 - 20 August 1960
Seventh	—	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 17 - 27 November 1962
Eighth	—	Viña del Mar, Chile, 13 - 29 March 1965
Ninth	—	Punta del Este, Uruguay, 5 - 16 December 1966
Tenth	—	Kingston, Jamaica, 2 - 13 December 1968
Eleventh	—	Caracas, Venezuela, 12 - 20 October 1970
Twelfth	—	Cali, Colombia, 21 August - 2 September 1972
Thirteenth	—	Panama City, Panama, 12 - 23 August 1974
Fourteenth	—	Lima, Peru, 21 - 29 April 1976
Fifteenth	—	Montevideo, Uruguay, 15 - 19 August 1978
Sixteenth	—	Havana, Cuba, 1 - 6 September 1980
Seventeenth	—	Managua, Nicaragua, 30 August - 10 September 1982
Eighteenth	—	Buenos Aires, Argentina, 6 - 15 August 1984

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Rome, 1985



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SUMMARY OF THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

FAO Programme in the Region

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

1. reiterated the importance and growing success of the Regional Office in promoting TCDC in the Region, particularly through its intensive activities in the establishment, sponsorship and support of the various technical cooperation networks among the various national institutions (para. 55).
2. pointed out that the share of the Region within the Regular Budget of FAO with respect to other regions should be corrected (para. 56).

Education and Training for Agricultural and Rural Development

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

3. recommended that rural education and training policies, strategies and programmes form a systematic part of the national development policy and strategy, and that the procedures and methodologies adopted include both economic and social, political, cultural and ethnic aspects (para. 31.1, App. E).
4. recommended that Governments set up adequate mechanisms for ensuring close liaison between research, education and rural extension services (para. 31.2, App. E).
5. recommended that greater recognition be given to the role played by women and young people in production processes and in other aspects of rural development, and that training for rural women and young people be strengthened and regarded as an important component of strategies to alleviate rural poverty and achieve food security (para. 31.3, App. E).
6. recommended that the points set out in Section IV of Document LARC/84/4 be considered as basic elements for the design and implementation of national rural education and training policies and strategies, provided that they are compatible with the national system prevailing (para. 31.4, App. E).
7. recommended that Governments request the United Nations Development Programme to continue to support programmes intended to help strengthen rural training, such as the Latin American Regional Aquaculture Centre, the Regional Project for Training, Programming and Analysis of Agricultural and Rural Development Projects, and the planned Regional Agricultural Extension Project (para. 31.5, App. E).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

8. recommended that, considering that the technical cooperation networks sponsored by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean was a mechanism which had proved effective in transferring appropriate technologies, it continue to devote attention to rural training and education (para. 31.6, App. E).

Agricultural Price Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

9. acknowledged the major impact of agricultural price policies on the level and structure of agricultural production, consumption patterns and income distribution. As the prices of products and inputs were one of the major economic incentives, agricultural price policies, to be effective, had to be in harmony with other policies relating to credit, marketing, taxation, exchange rates, etc. It was pointed out that these incentives were not usually beneficial to small farmers, unless pricing policies were specifically targeted at helping farmers and narrowing the gap between large and small producers (para. 34, App. E).
10. mentioned the following potential instruments for resolving the contradiction concerning the conflict between incentive farm prices and low prices for popular consumer foods: introduction of significant advances in technology lowering production costs; improvement in marketing efficiency; subsidies for selected inputs; subsidized credit; and direct consumer subsidies. In the latter instance, subsidies should be specifically targeted at the lower-income consumer groups (para. 37, App. E).
11. pointed out that setting floor or support prices for the major products was of fundamental importance to guarantee minimum returns to the farmers. However, due to the high rate of inflation in many countries of the Region, it would be advisable to establish mechanisms to maintain these support prices in real terms. It was also considered that price support measures, in order to be effective, required additional steps for their effective implementation such as sufficient resources in the hands of state marketing boards, buffer stocks and loans to producers to enable them to store their products until such time as better prices could be had (para. 38, App. E).
12. considered that the long-term trends and average levels of international prices did constitute an objective reality and one which ought to be kept in mind when formulating national agricultural price policies. Care should be taken to offset the effect of short-term fluctuations and distortions by export subsidies. These comparative international advantages should also be weighed against other objectives of agricultural policy and national security which might favour a high level of self-sufficiency in the supply of basic foodstuffs (para. 40, App. E).
13. recommended that price policies and other measures be adopted to avoid or minimize, except in emergencies, the adverse side-effects of food aid such as discouraging domestic production and fostering non-traditional patterns of consumption (para. 41, App. E).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

14. welcomed the initiative of the Director-General to undertake a world-wide in depth study on agricultural price policy. It was felt that the FAO study should analyze the objectives, issues, options and criteria of price policies, in order to provide a general framework and a set of guidelines for the formulation of price policies by individual countries. The Conference stressed the importance it attached to FAO technical assistance in the field of agricultural price policies (para. 34, App. E).

Food Security in Latin America and the Caribbean

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

15. emphasized that a sustained increase in national and regional food production, and an adequate redistribution of income, were a basic prerequisite to achieving self-reliance in food security. To achieve this, the developing countries needed to be offered adequate, constant and increasing technical and financial assistance. It was found regrettable that for lack of political will, the level of cooperation with



third world countries, particularly multilateral cooperation, was being lowered (para. 46, App. E).

16. recommended that all Latin American and Caribbean countries establish and implement national food security programmes, strategies or systems which would ensure adequacy and stability of food supplies and promote access of the poor to the basic food that they need (para. 56.1, App. E).
17. recommended that the countries of the Region cooperate with regional and subregional schemes concerning food security, agricultural development and agricultural and food trade within the framework of the Plan of Action of the Latin American Economic Conference held in Quito in January 1984 (para. 56.2, App. E).
18. recommended that programmes to support production and consumption be targeted at small producers. This would specifically involve research, technological progress, rural extension and training, credit, support prices and food security schemes oriented to meet the needs of small producers (para. 56.4, App. E).
19. recommended that the Conference request that the international community lend its support to national, regional and sub-regional actions to promote food security in the Region (para. 56.5, App. E).
20. recommended that the action of CASAR, CARICOM, CORECA, the Celestino Mutis Andean System and other regional efforts needed to be strengthened as much as possible, for which purpose FAO could provide a valuable contribution with a view to achieving the establishment of a regional system of food security to optimize the utilization of food resources, avoiding duplication and dispersion of efforts (para. 56.3 App. E).

WCARRD Follow-up: Small Farmer Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean:  
Problems and Prospects of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development -  
Fulfilment of Mandatory Activities under WCARRD

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

21. commended the positive attitude shown by the Government of the Republic of Argentina affirming its full support for the Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, and specifically recognized the important political decision made by the Constitutional Government in withdrawing the reservations introduced by the previous Government when the Declaration of Principles and the Programme of Action were adopted in Rome (para. 11).
22. pointed out that, with reference to activities of the transnational corporations in the areas of production, marketing and industrialization, there was a need for an in-depth study of this issue, including the causes, mechanisms utilized, and how these related to the problems of the rural sector, and, specifically, how to ward off the impact and influence of the transnationals on this sector. Stress was laid on the desirability of formulating a code of conduct for the transnational corporations for the purpose of obviating their adverse consequences (para. 74, App. E).
23. expressed its support for the various forms of association for production, whether cooperative, community or peasant organizations, as valid instruments for incorporating peasants into the process of development and as a vehicle for guaranteeing the rights of these sectors of the population (para. 75, App. E).
24. most delegates agreed that access to and/or grants of lands were the crux of agrarian reform, but emphasized that land was not the only proper claim of peasants, and that access to land was one important component of peasant development, but not the only one (para. 78, App. E).
25. recommended that special attention be paid to the incorporation of women in the processes of agrarian reform and rural development; at the same time giving full recognition to the role played by women in producing, preserving and marketing food (para. 84.3, App. E).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

26. expressed appreciation of the way in which FAO had exercised its leadership within the United Nations system in the area of agrarian reform and rural development, and reiterated the decision to fully back FAO's leadership (para. 69, App. E).
27. various delegations expressed the view that the formulation and application of agrarian reform and rural development policies and strategies on behalf of the countries of the Region would not produce the expected results unless the necessary measures were adopted for the establishment of a New International Economic Order. It urged the international organizations to continue working towards this goal (para. 72, App. E).
28. recommended that the necessary measures and actions be undertaken for the swift establishment and implementation of the Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for Latin America and the Caribbean (para. 71, App. E).
29. recommended that considering the satisfactory results produced to date by the technical cooperation networks sponsored by FAO, this mechanism be expanded and the networks reinforced as an instrument for accelerating agrarian reform and rural development in the Region (para. 84.2, App. E).
30. recommended that FAO continue to utilize inter-governmental consultations as a support mechanism for countries in the determination of their priority areas and requirements for technical assistance in the field of agrarian reform and rural development. In addition, recommended that FAO continue to organize inter-agency consultations as a means of achieving improved cooperation among the agencies of the United Nations system in the activities of the Region (para. 84.4, App. E).

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

31. The Conference decided to extend Colombia's term of office for two years and to nominate Argentina as the new country representating Latin America and the Caribbean (para. 64).
32. Attention was drawn to the desirability of Region's representatives on CGIAR being vigilant to ensure that the international research centres operating in the Region devoted their efforts to research work useful for the member countries and tackled problems of the developing countries instead of devoting themselves, as often happened, to very sophisticated research of little practical relevance for Latin America and the Caribbean (para. 65).
33. Attention was again drawn to the desirability of earmarking funds to cover the participation of the representatives of the developing regions at the meetings of CGIAR (para. 66).

\* \* \* \* \*

The Conference also adopted the Buenos Aires Declaration, the text of which is given in paragraph 68 to this Report.

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean was held in the Centro Cultural General San Martín in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 6 to 15 August 1984.

2. The Conference was attended by delegates from 26 Member Nations, Observers from other countries outside the region and representatives from other agencies of the United Nations system, specialized agencies, and non-governmental organizations. The Agenda of the Conference, List of Participants, List of Documents and the full text of the Report of the Technical Committee, respectively, are given in Appendixes A, B, C and D of this report.

### Inaugural Ceremony

3. Dr Edouard Saouma, the Director-General of FAO, took the floor. He drew special attention to the presence of the President of Argentina, Dr Raúl Alfonsín, and expressed appreciation for the warm and generous hospitality of the Government and people of Argentina. In his brief address he made special mention of the role of the President of Argentina, who had become a leader and symbol of the political renaissance of his country and in the region. He pointed out that the concern of the Government of Argentina with finding solutions to social problems coincided with the objectives of FAO. He praised the measures of support to the agricultural sector, announced the previous evening by President Alfonsín, and also thanked the President for his public acknowledgement of the work of FAO during his inaugural address to the Palermo Rural Fair. He pointed out that the presence of high-level delegations constituted a stimulus to FAO's work. He then called on the President of the Republic of Argentina to address the Conference.

4. The President welcomed the many delegations present. He expressed his appreciation for the selection of Argentina as site of the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. The President pointed out that FAO was an exceptionally important UN agency, not only because it dealt with an issue vital to humanity - agricultural development for food production and the welfare of rural people - but also because of its active presence worldwide. He particularly stressed the effective leadership of Dr Edouard Saouma, Director-General of FAO, who had made the Organization into one of the international community's major tools for eliminating hunger and malnutrition.

6. The Conference was of particular importance, he pointed out, in terms of both the number and quality of the delegations represented and content of the four technical documents before the Conference. These dealt with such highly significant topics and issues for the countries of the Region as education and training, agricultural prices, food security, and agrarian reform and rural development. He emphasized that at the present stage of economic development of the Region, the countries should grant priority to consolidating agricultural production by means of internal mechanisms and external strategies. Internally, he pointed out that what was needed was to create a set of circumstances to stimulate farmer productivity and generate a sufficiently remunerative income to make possible the necessary investments in technology, though of course these circumstances had to be compatible with the internal conditions of national economies. Externally, he reminded the Conference of the Cartagena Consensus whereby the countries of the Region reiterated their determination to comply with foreign commitments and to make the necessary national economic adjustments without, however, renouncing their sovereign responsibility to pursue the welfare of their peoples and to preserve social stability.

7. He pointed out that as long as protectionism in the industrialized world prevented free access to Third World exports; debt payments were not tailored to the real possibilities of the borrower countries; and rising interest rates continued to aggravate an already critical situation, dialogue between lenders and borrowers would remain inconclusive. He indicated that the international community had to devise procedures to reorient economic relations among nations in juster, more equitable terms than those now prevailing.

8. The President expressed the view that the countries of the Region had to design external strategies to successfully confront the autarchic food surplus practices of the economically more powerful countries, and to seek a solution in which enough foreign currency could be saved to ensure adequate levels of nutrition. He pointed out that trade was a keynote of the economic recovery of the borrowed countries, and that the objective of his country's agricultural policy was to promote a sustained increase in the growth of agricultural production to meet the needs of domestic consumption and to generate a growing, exportable surplus.

9. The President invited the representative of the countries present to work together to devise workable, appropriate action within the context of this forum which would help achieve the common objective. He acknowledged that there was great diversity among the production structures and socio-economic levels of the countries of the Region. He urged FAO to continue, through its programmes, to focus its efforts on those sectors with the greatest social problems.

10. He referred to the fact that the Region absorbed a comparatively small part of the financial resources of the Organization, and stated that, in his opinion, appropriate measures should be taken to gradually correct this situation.

11. The President expressed his pleasure in announcing that Argentina no longer had any reservations about specific points of the Declaration of Principle and the Programme of Action adopted at the FAO World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development held in Rome in 1979.

12. Lastly he stated that he was pleased to declare the Conference open.

#### Opening of the Conference

13. Dr Edouard Saouma, Director-General of FAO, opened the Conference.

#### Election of the Chairman, Vice Chairmen and Rapporteur

14. The Conference unanimously elected Lucio G. Reca, Secretary of Agriculture of Argentina, as Conference Chairman. In brief acceptance speech, Mr Reca expressed his appreciation to the delegates who had chosen him to lead the discussions.

15. The Conference proceeded to unanimously elect as Vice-Chairmen: the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of Barbados, Mr Richard L. Cheltenham; the Minister of Agriculture of Colombia, Mr Gustavo Castro Guerrero; and the Minister of Agricultural Development of Panama, Mr Ramón Sieiro Murgas. Mr Juan Carlos Hurtado M., Minister of Agriculture and Food of Peru, was elected Rapporteur.

#### Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

16. In addition to approving the Agenda and Timetable, the Conference agreed not to set up a Drafting Committee but, as proposed by the delegation of Mexico, to set up a special Committee to draft the Buenos Aires Declaration, which would include the major problems affecting the region as illustrated by the delegates.

#### Statement by the Director-General of FAO

17. The Director-General referred to the background of economic crisis of this Conference. He mentioned the serious indebtedness of the Region which had been made possible by ample international liquidity and which unfortunately had been destined in great measure not to investment, but to financing imports for popular consumption, including luxury items. The Director-General pointed out that the debt crisis had been, in part, precipitated by the weakness of commodity markets and gave examples of price declines and their impact in terms of losses in export earnings.

18. The Director-General pointed out that the situation of the poorest social strata of the Region was disturbing, with unemployment rates as high as 20 - 25% of the economically active population. He pointed out that the birth rate has been trending downwards, but at about 2.5 percent per annum, it was still very high.

19. The Director-General emphasized that the mounting difficulties were due to a conjunction of major short-term problems with difficult long-term trends. In the face of this situation, many governments had chosen to cut social expenditures. He reminded the Conference that the economic strength of major industrialized countries and groupings enabled them to elbow the more vulnerable nations out of world markets and transfer part of the burden of economic adjustment from rich nations to the poor.

20. The Director-General questioned the existence of rationality in a world where the daily expenditure for armaments was US\$ 2 700 million, in which expenditure developing countries were also participating, denying themselves social expenditures and investments in development to cover the cost. Social tension was increased by spending on arms what should have been devoted to development, and to contain the explosive force generated within the society as a result, arms expenditures were increased yet again.

21. The Director-General reviewed the food and agriculture situation in Latin America and the Caribbean and pointed out that the figures from recent years had shown a slowing down of the growth of output. These results were largely due to two unavoidable phenomena: a series of natural disasters and a drop in demand brought about by the economic crisis. He emphasized that though it was possible to expand the agricultural frontier by increasing agricultural production, it was hoped that in the future greater stress would be laid on increasing yields, because some countries no longer had any unused land suitable for agriculture and the settlement of new areas required daunting investments in infrastructures. He emphasized the high priority which the protection of soils and other natural resources deserved, and concluded that the major unsolved food problem remained the existence of a large, undernourished population.

22. The Director-General examined the issues presented for consideration by the Regional Conference, highlighting the work which had already been carried out by the Technical Committee. He pointed out that the four substantive items all had a bearing on agricultural policy and what to do about the gap between traditional and modern farming.

23. The Director-General indicated that food security was an even broader issue than price policies. He recalled that the ultimate objective of food security was defined as ensuring that all people at all times had both physical and economic access to the basic food they needed. He pointed out that regional plans could complement but not substitute for national programmes. He mentioned the new initiatives discussed by the FAO Committee on World Food Security, particularly his proposal for a World Food Security Compact.

24. With reference to the divergence between large-scale and traditional agriculture, he justified the priority assigned to small farmers. He explained that even without land redistribution, much could be done to improve the access of small farmers to extension, credit, inputs and markets.

25. The Director-General emphasized that on this occasion, the specific question of education and training for rural and agricultural development had been dealt with in greater depth, as there was an urgent need for new guidelines in both teaching and extension to overcome the present shortcomings.

26. Though it did not appear on the Agenda of the meeting, the Director-General referred to the World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development, convened by FAO, which had constituted a historical event for world fisheries, and which had approved a global fisheries development and management strategy and comprehensive package of Special Action Programmes, designed to help developing countries as they strove for greater self-reliance in fisheries. He indicated that it would be worthwhile to examine progress achieved in this field at the next FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean in 1986.

27. The Director-General expressed his belief that many countries were still underestimating the importance of the agricultural sector in the overall process of development, and pointed out that redoubled efforts had to be made to open up new markets for commodity products for countries which exported mainly agricultural products, for instance in the Third World or perhaps in the developing countries with centrally planned economies. He emphasized the need to adopt a new approach to development aimed explicitly at the requirements of the neediest sectors of the population, and that FAO was very willing to do what it could to help, but that the burden of responsibility fell upon those who had the power of decision at the national level.

28. Lastly the Director-General concluded that while other sectors might dazzle, agriculture was the work-horse which could carry the Region forward. But this in turn required a fair deal for the Region in terms of access to world markets; in terms of reasonable prices for exports; and in terms of sharing the cost between lenders and borrowers of the mistakes which both had made together in the past.

PLENARY SESSION ITEMS

General Debate on the Situation and Outlook of Food and Agriculture in the Region

29. Most of the delegations spoke on this item of the Agenda, providing up-to-date information on the food and agriculture situation in their respective countries and various factors affecting it.
30. The Conference agreed with the Director-General's statement regarding the importance of agriculture in solving problems connected with the high external debt, revitalizing exports and improving access to foreign currency, and achieving food security and rural development in the Region.
31. There was unanimous support for the action taken by the Director-General and the Regional Representative and for the work carried out by the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.
32. The Conference emphasized the heavy burden of the enormous external debt, which had become a formidable impediment to the economic and social well-being of the Region, the deterioration in terms of trade; external credit restrictions, and the fall in export returns, which taken together had drastically affected the availability and use of currency in reactivating national economies and supplying food and the inputs required for food production.
33. The Conference reiterated its condemnation of protectionist measures, subsidized sales and the increase in obstacles to free international trade imposed by the developed countries, because of the depressive effect these have on the efforts being made by the Latin American and Caribbean countries to increase agricultural production.
34. The delegations pointed out that the continual increase in interest rates considerably raised the cost of servicing the external debt and made it necessary to use for this purpose a growing proportion of the foreign currency earned by the countries of the Region, thus limiting their capacity to import indispensable goods, inputs and food, and to provide the financial resources required by their agricultural sectors.
35. Some delegations emphasized that the economic recovery of the industrialized countries was being achieved to the detriment of the interests of the developing countries.
36. The Conference repeated its condemnation of the use of food and agricultural inputs as an instrument of political pressure, and of the political and military actions that had interfered with the normal supply of these commodities to the countries of the Region. These, in turn, had hampered a sustained and developing agricultural output and had therefore seriously affected food security.
37. Some delegations stressed the negative influence of the transnational corporations, reflected in the control they exerted over the production and marketing of food and inputs, the design and dissemination of technological packages, changes in land use and crops grown, and changing food consumption patterns.
38. Several delegations expressed their concern at the fact that the agrarian structure prevailing in most countries of the Region excluded the mass of the rural population from access to land, inputs, markets and support services -- an inequity that had been aggravated by the negative repercussions of the financial crisis on agricultural income and employment levels.
39. Many delegations stressed that the agrarian problem was extremely complex and that present agrarian processes had originated from legal provisions and the pressure exerted by peasant demands, and from a combination of factors and circumstances that affected integrated rural development processes.
40. The Conference ratified its support for the universal consensus on the broader concept of food security. It expressed its great interest in the initiative taken by the Director-General of FAO to establish a World Food Security Compact, and supported the FAO Food Security Action Programme (FSAP) as a mechanism for the preparation and implementation of national food security programmes and the mobilization of external assistance for these programmes.

41. The delegates reported on the policies and actions adopted and being implemented by their countries to increase the production of food and agricultural commodities, such as remunerative prices, strengthening development and support services particularly research, extension and rural training, the supply of agricultural inputs, market information and agricultural credit. Many delegations emphasized the priority their countries were assigning to solving agricultural marketing problems, so as to enable the farmers to obtain better prices whilst improving the conditions for supplying food to urban centres.

42. Some delegations emphasized that their countries, agrarian reform and rural development programmes and actions were based on considerations of social justice and productive efficiency as advocated both in the Programme of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development and in the broader concept of food security formulated by FAO.

43. The Conference exhorted the developed countries to recognize the need to observe the principles and general rules that should govern access to and the use of genetic resources. It recalled that at the Twenty-second FAO Conference, held in Rome in 1983, Resolution 8/83 had been adopted relating to an international undertaking of plant genetic resources, together with Resolution 9/83 for the establishment of a high-level Commission, the implementation of which resolution would make it possible to monitor the state of stocks and to propose strategies to enable these resources to make their full contribution to the world food security.

44. One delegation called attention to the main objectives and results of the World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development organized by FAO in Rome in June 1984. It also reminded delegates that its country had been designated as the host for the Ninth World Forestry Congress, which would be held in July 1985 and urged that this Congress be promoted through national committees.

45. After emphasizing the need for the importance of setting up the Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for Latin America, the delegation of Honduras repeated the offer made during the meeting of the Technical Committee that Honduras host this Centre and the possible Conference of Plenipotentiaries that would change the location of the Centre as a first step towards bringing it into operation promptly.

46. Several delegations emphasized their support for cooperative activities of sub-regional and regional scope in connection with food, and stated that their countries were willing to contribute opinions and actions to strengthen and expand this cooperation. They also drew attention to the importance of sub-regional and regional food security mechanisms.

47. Appreciation was expressed of the assistance received by countries from FAO in their efforts to increase agricultural output and productivity and achieve food security and rural development.

48. It was pointed out that the economic difficulties also derived from the fact that the international agencies responsible for promoting agricultural development were financially worse off than formerly: UNDP, the major provider of funds, had been assigning less funds to the agricultural sector than previously the FAO budget had barely escaped zero growth during the last biennium; and IFAD was still trying to find a solution to the problem of replenishing its funds.

49. Some delegations stressed that the Latin American economies were progressively deteriorating, victims of a set of international relationships which rendered them dependent, and of certain national structures which could only be changed if far-reaching internal changes were enacted to overcome dependency and correct economic distortion.

50. When the members of the Conference had completed their statements, five observers, representing one country and international, regional and sub-regional organizations, also made statements.

Report of FAO Activities in the Region in 1982-83 including Measures Adopted in Compliance with the Principal Recommendations of the Seventeenth Regional Conference and the Programme of Work and Budget for 1984-85

51. Mr Mario E. Jalil, Assistant Director-General of FAO, Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, introduced both items, referring to the background documents LARC/84/2 and LARC/84/3. He stressed that his description of the programme of activities of FAO in the Region referred to the work of the Organization as a whole in Latin America and the Caribbean.
52. He reported in detail, giving figures, on current projects financed by the Regular Programme or with extra-budgetary funds; on national, regional and sub-regional missions carried out by Regional Officers, on missions undertaken by the FAO Investment Centre, on World Food Programme projects and on TCDC activities sponsored by the Regional Office within the framework of the technical cooperation networks.
53. He then described the structure, composition and modus operandi of the Regional Office, stressing the multidisciplinary approach to specific problems adopted where appropriate. He then listed the major technical meetings, round tables, workshops, etc., carried out in the Region and those planned for the on-going biennium 1984-85.
54. He concluded his presentation with a detailed account of action taken in compliance with the recommendations of the Seventeenth Regional Conference held in Managua, Nicaragua, in 1982.
55. The Conference concluded its consideration of the FAO Programme in the Region by unanimously backing the work of the Organization. The Conference considered FAO's role in the progress of the regional and sub-regional cooperation and integration schemes as one of outstanding importance and its collaboration with other regional organizations as a model of international cooperation. It reiterated most emphatically the importance and growing success of the Regional Office in promoting TCDC in the Region, particularly through its intensive activities in the establishment, sponsorship and support of the various technical cooperation networks among the various national institutions.
56. Several delegations pointed out that in their view the retrograde motion of the Region within the Regular Budget of FAO with respect to other regions should be corrected.
57. The Conference reported on the Third Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of Codex Alimentarius for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Havana, Cuba, and took note of the programme and preparations for the Fourth Meeting of the Coordinating Committee to be held in Havana in April 1985.
58. The Conference recommended that, in future, the document on FAO activities in the Region be distributed beforehand for consideration by delegations.

Consideration and Adoption of the Conclusions of the Technical Committee

59. The Conference considered the report of the Technical Committee and endorsed its conclusions and recommendations. The text of the report of the Technical Committee, as approved by the Conference, is included as Appendix E of the Report of the Conference.
60. The delegation of Colombia stated that it reiterated its support for Ecuador being the host country for the Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for Latin America and the Caribbean, and that it understood the situation described by the delegation of Ecuador caused by the recent change of government. It pointed out that it also understood the position of Honduras, which wished to make known its interest in being considered as the host country for the Centre and for the possible Conference of Plenipotentiaries to consider the change of site. Finally, it stated that it wished to inform the Conference of Colombia's interest in also being considered as host for the Centre and for the Conference of Plenipotentiaries. It requested that the Conference take note of Colombia's offer so that it could be taken into account in reaching a decision on this matter.
61. The delegation of Cuba expressed its support for the statement of the delegation of Colombia. The conference took note of the offer made by Colombia.



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

62. In introducing this item the Secretariat referred to document LARC/84/8, giving detailed information on the composition, structure, objectives and financing of CGIAR and the situation regarding participation by the developing countries.

63. The Secretariat then stated that the present representatives of the Region on the Group, Cuba and Colombia, were now completing their term of office, and it was necessary either to elect two new representatives or to extend the term of office of one of the representatives for two years and elect one new representative.

64. The Conference decided to extend Colombia's term of office for two years and to nominate Argentina as the new Country representing Latin America and the Caribbean.

65. Attention was drawn to the desirability of the Region's representatives on CGIAR being vigilant, to ensure that the international research centres operating in the Region devoted their efforts to research work useful for the member countries and tackled problems of the developing countries instead of devoting themselves, as often happened, to very sophisticated research of little practical relevance for Latin America and the Caribbean.

66. Finally attention was again drawn to the desirability of funds being raised to finance the participation of representatives of the developing regions at meetings of the CGIAR.

CONCLUDING ITEMS

Date and Place of the Nineteenth Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

67. The Conference was pleased to note the offer of the delegation of Barbados to host the Nineteenth Regional Conference.

68. The Director-General thanked the delegation of Barbados for their generous invitation and mentioned that the date would have to be determined in consideration of other equally important meetings to be held in 1986.

Adoption of the Report

69. The Chairman of the Conference submitted the draft report presented by the rapporteur for consideration by the Conference. The Conference, after considering each section of the draft report and introducing the modifications which were incorporated into this final version, unanimously approved the Report.

Approval of the Buenos Aires Declaration

70. During its final session, the Conference, after introducing certain modifications to the original text prepared by a top-level Working Party and presented by the Rapporteur, approved the following Declaration:

THE BUENOS AIRES DECLARATION

We, the Ministers of Agriculture of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, or their representatives, meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, at the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean held from 6 to 15 August 1984.

CONSIDERING

- i) That the present inequitable international economic order and the profound economic crisis have severely affected development conditions and prospects in the region.
- ii) That, as a result of high interest rates and a reduction in credit facilities, public and private resources for development finance and for essential imports of food and indispensable inputs have been reduced, considerably aggravating the problems of poverty and under-nutrition;
- iii) That the economic recovery of the developed countries is to a large extent being achieved at the expense of the developing countries;
- iv) That the terms of trade for several of the principal staple agricultural commodities exported by the region have deteriorated or continue to be unsatisfactory, and that export earnings, including those for agricultural commodities from the region, continue to encounter increasing marketing restrictions (tariff and non-tariff) and unfair competition on the part of the developed countries through the subsidizing of their exports;
- v) That growing difficulties have been encountered in the adoption of effective international agreements, such as the International Wheat Agreement, agreements on cereals in general, the International Sugar Agreement and agreements on other basic products, that contain economic clauses;
- vi) That, to ensure the food self-sufficiency of our nations and overcome the serious problems of hunger, a progressive and sustained improvement in the conditions and opportunities of the international economic system is required, and a systematic struggle against the socio-economic phenomenon of extreme poverty which affects tens of millions of households in the region;
- vii) That the rural majorities in the region usually have limited access to land, water, credit and other inputs and services, and to income security and the minimum essential calories consumption;
- viii) That a lasting peace, the non intervention by foreign governments in the internal affairs of our countries and an effective reduction in the arms race, would, by releasing funds for development, enable us to fulfil our obligations to solve the problems of hunger and malnutrition;
- ix) That the defence of our populations; right to food security is the director responsibility of the Governments of the region;

RECALLING the Quito Declaration and Plan of Action signed by the Heads of State of the region in January 1984, and the region in January 1984, and the Cartagena Consensus in June 1984, on the unprecedented economic crisis confronting the region, which emphasized the close interrelation between debt, financing and marketing problems, and the deterioration of food and agricultural development and regional food security;

WELCOMING with approval the adoption by the World Conference of Fisheries Management and Development held in Rome in June-July 1984 of strategy and special programmes of action designed to ensure that developing countries make the fullest use of their resources in order to achieve self-sufficiency in this regard;

RESOLVE

- 1) To endorse actions intended to reformulate financial and trade relations in accordance with the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order;
- 2) To support the recent initiatives by various Latin American governments in urging the world community to halt the financially debilitating arms race and reduce the danger of a nuclear holocaust, demanding a drastic cut in resources assigned to armaments, in favour of economic and food development;
- 3) To condemn the use of food as an instrument of political pressure on our nations, and also the implementation of politico-military actions of any kind which obstruct the normal supplies of food and inputs to our countries;
- 4) To urge the developed countries and international financing institutions to take the necessary measures as regards loan conditions, particularly the time allowed for repayment and interest rates, to reduce the serious effects of problems resulting from external debt and the lack of currency and credit facilities on the growth of agricultural production, the level of nutrition and regional food security;
- 5) To request the developed countries to show their political will by eliminating protectionist measures and every kind of restriction on trade in agricultural commodities exported by the countries of the region, bearing in mind the Guidelines for International Agricultural Adjustment approved at the last FAO Conference;
- 6) To recommend to the countries of the region the expansion of cooperation and mutual trade in silvi-agricultural products, with innovative mechanisms, as a way of improving the levels of nutrition of their inhabitants and reaching greater stability on world markets for these products;
- 7) To urge the developed countries to facilitate the negotiation and conclusion of new international agreements on basic products with economic clauses, as foreseen by the UNCTAD Integrated Programme for Commodities, and take the necessary administrative and legal measures to make the Common Fund operational as soon as possible;
- 8) To request all countries concerned to strengthen the international agreements now in force on basic products, renewing their efforts through economic measures for the new international agreement on sugar, and facilitating the work at present being undertaken by the FAO Intergovernmental Group to negotiate an international banana agreement;
- 9) To ensure that food and the agricultural sector receive the highest priority in the economic development programmes of our countries, and at the same time to increase the supplies of essential inputs;
- 10) To make progress in implementing the WCARRD Programme of Action in order to increase agricultural incomes and employment, to achieve greater equity in the distribution of rural wealth, to combat poverty and promote greater popular participation in rural development, within the national reality of each country, and to intensify efforts to increase the participation of rural women in the production, marketing and distribution of agrarian produce;
- 11) To formulate at national level programmes and projects for specific products that would guarantee, on the one hand, a timely and adequate supply of food, and, on the other, the possibility of generating an exportable surplus. Also, such programmes and projects should give special attention to relatively less developed areas;

- 12) To strengthen national research systems, involving them more closely with concrete activities such as testing, transfer and diffusion of technology, in the light of the agro-ecological, socio-economic and cultural conditions of each country, making more efficient use of regional and international agricultural research efforts;
- 13) To develop at all levels educational programmes for professional training and social communication, with special emphasis on training and full integration of women and young people in the processes of agrarian reform and rural development in each country, in accordance with its own reality;
- 14) To encourage credit systems leading to greater access to finance in the short and long term, with differential interest rates, depending on the agrarian policy of each member country;
- 15) To support as far as possible the specific programmes intended to achieve regional food security, strengthening organizations such as CASAR, CARICOM, CORECA, the celestino Mutis Andean System and other regional efforts;
- 16) To urge the competent multilateral fora to make renewed efforts to analyse the role of transnational corporations in the production, supply and marketing of food in Latin America and the Caribbean, and accelerate the formulation of an international code of conduct for transnational corporations all this with a view to facilitating the establishment by each country of conditions and agreements to ensure that transnational operations are in the interest of the food security of the nation, and its foreign investment policy;
- 17) To confirm our support for the Director-General of FAO and express our satisfaction at the valuable contribution made by FAO assisted programmes and activities for the development of the food and agriculture sector in the region;
- 18) To call upon the international community to support the initiative of the Director-General of FAO in emphasizing the importance of food and agriculture for a just and equitable solution of the problems of trade, debt, repayment periods and interest rates, and interdependence in achieving food security in the world economy, all of which is of fundamental significance for our countries; to this end, to make an appeal to the international community to support the formulation of a world food security pact;
- 19) To urge all multilateral organizations and the international community in general to contribute to the implementation of these proposals.

### Closure of the Conference

71. Mr Lucio Reca, the Secretary of Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Argentina, who chaired the Conference, took the floor. He emphasized the vigorous way in which FAO was striving towards its objectives even at this difficult time. He stressed the aptness of the concept of food security proposed by the Director-General of FAO, in which national agricultural development has top priority as an indispensable means of achieving food security.

72. After reviewing the measures taken by Argentina to modernize agriculture and promote rural development, which matched the proposals of FAO and of this Conference, and were echoed in the Buenos Aires Declaration, he stated that national action was the cornerstone of food security, but needed to be backstopped by regional plans.

73. The Chairman of the Conference spoke against protectionism and the practice of dumping by developed countries, a twin menace which awoke our solidarity. These practices emarginated surplus producers who were sound, sure suppliers of food, and the other drawback was the implied risk for the deficit countries that the supplies would be furnished only by countries which could afford to produce dearly; if such policies were imposed the price of their inefficiency would be paid by the hungry.

74. He emphasized that, when the practices of protectionism and direct and indirect subsidies were added to the burden of servicing the external debt, with its rising rates of interest, then a new, overwhelming obstacle for the development of our people loomed, because the external debts of our countries could not be handled, as it seemed some were trying to claim, by further curtailing the productivity of our countries. The only possible outcome was to consolidate the backwardness and unjust international system now darkening the future of mankind.

75. The Director-General of FAO, Dr Edouard Saouma, took the floor to close the Conference. He expressed his satisfaction that the topics he had covered in his opening statement had found ample echo during the Conference. Many complex economic aspects had also been clarified and light cast on criteria for the progress of food and agriculture in the region.

76. The Director-General emphasized that the Buenos Aires Declaration echoed the analysis of the real situation made by this Conference and faced governments with their responsibilities for, and intentions about this situation, and did so by giving agricultural development the deserved priority in social and economic development policies and programmes.

77. The Director-General expressed his appreciation for the response of most of the countries to his proposal to implement national level food security measures, and for the expressions of support for the extension of these measures to regional and sub-regional food security agreements.

78. He also thanked the Conference for the expressions of support to himself and to FAO in the Buenos Aires Declaration, which encouraged him to continue his constant efforts in favour of Member Nations, the cause of development and the pursuit of a more just, more equitable society. It was also a stimulus to the Organization as a whole to redouble its efforts in the Region and in favour of the Region. He stated that these efforts were reflected in the smaller Regular Programme (which could not be hoped to grow much in the near future), but to a much greater extent in cooperative efforts with the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the other financing agencies as well as the United Nations Development Programme and other donors.

79. The Director-General expressed his satisfaction that the work of the FAO Regional Office in backstopping efforts by Member Nations at national and regional level had been recognized. He pointed out that Africa required special efforts as it was the poorest and most desperate of all the regions, but that other regions could not and would not be neglected.

80. Lastly, he thanked the officers of the Conference and the group of Latin American Ambassadors for their cooperation, and the Argentine Government for its hospitality, and offered his hopes for success in the difficult but noble work they were doing for their countries and for the Region.



AGENDA OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

(6-10 August 1984)

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Opening of the Technical Committee
2. Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

II. TECHNICAL ITEMS

4. Education and Training for Rural and Agricultural Development
5. Agricultural Price Policies
6. Food Security
7. WCARRD follow-up: small farmer sector in Latin America and the Caribbean: Problems and prospects of agrarian reform and rural development: fulfilment of mandatory activities under WCARRD
8. Adoption of the Report

AGENDA OF THE PLENARY SESSION

(12-15 August 1984)

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Inaugural Ceremony
2. Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur and appointment of the Members of the Drafting Committee
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement of the Director-General
5. Country statements and general debate on the food and agriculture situation in Latin America and the Caribbean
6. Report by the Regional Representative of FAO on activities in the Region, including action taken on the main recommendations made by the Seventeenth Regional Conference and the Programme of Work and Budget for 1984-85.

III. CONCLUDING ITEMS

7. Consideration of the Report of the Technical Committee
8. Representation of the region on the CGIAR
9. Any other business
10. Date and Place of the Nineteenth FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean
11. Adoption of the report
12. Adoption of the Buenos Aires Declaration
13. Closure of the Conference





APPENDIX B

ANNEXE B

APENDICE B

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS  
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS  
LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES

OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE  
BUREAU DE LA CONFERENCE  
MESA DE LA CONFERENCIA

Chairman  
Président  
Presidente  
Lucio G. Reca (Argentina)

Vice-Chairmen  
Vice-Présidents  
Vicepresidentes  
Richard L. Cheltenham (Barbados)  
Gustavo Castro Guerrero (Colombia)  
Ramón Sieiro Murgas (Panamá)

Relator  
Rapporteur  
Juan Carlos Hurtado M. (Perú)

OFFICERS OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE  
BUREAU DU COMITE TECHNIQUE  
MESA DEL COMITE TECNICO

Chairman  
Président  
Presidente  
Pedro Elbio Olmos (Uruguay)

Vice-Chairman  
Vice-Président  
Vicepresidente  
Harold Lionarons (Suriname)

Relator  
Rapporteur  
Javier Gazzo (Perú)

MEMBER NATIONS SERVICED BY THE REGIONAL OFFICE  
PAYS MEMBRES DESSERVIS PAR LE BUREAU REGIONAL  
ESTADOS MIEMBROS ATENDIDOS POR LA OFICINA REGIONAL

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Luis M. Molinas Asunción  
Director Administrativo  
Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería

PERU - PEROU

Jefe de Delegación  
Juan Carlos Hurtado Miller Lima  
Ministro de Agricultura y Alimentación

Suplente  
Javier Gazzo Roma  
Embajador del Perú ante la FAO

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OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE PLENARY

Mr Chairman,

On behalf of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, it is my pleasure and privilege to express our gratitude to the Government of the Argentine Republic for the welcome which has been extended to us. Just thirty years after FAO's Fourth Regional Conference, which was held in Buenos Aires in September 1954, we have an opportunity to assemble again in this historic city.

History evokes the memory of two outstanding sons of Argentina, two leaders of the continent: General Jose de San Martin and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. In these difficult times the example of their courage and wisdom, placed at the service of kindred peoples, can be an inspiration to all countries seeking common solutions to shared problems.

The arrangements made for the Regional Conference will certainly favour a fruitful outcome of our debates. I hope I may ask His Excellency the Secretary of Agriculture to convey to the Government and people of Argentina our deep gratitude for the hospitality which they have once again extended to us.

A background of economic crisis

Mr Chairman, the background to our meeting offers scant reassurance or comfort. The economy of the region is dominated by the disastrous burden of external debt. All too many countries are trapped in a situation which makes it impossible for them to meet both their international obligations towards their creditors, and their domestic responsibility to promote economic and social progress. The way out of this appalling dilemma has not yet been found.

Let me briefly recall that the external debt of the region increased from 70 billion dollars in 1970 to 330 billion in the first quarter of this year. In 1982, debt servicing absorbed no less than 53 percent of the region's export income. Upward pressure on interest rates, as currently being experienced, brings further threats: an increase of one percent represents an extra cost to the region of 10 million dollars per day. A country's obligations can thus be influenced, in an arbitrary and unpredictable manner, by events entirely outside its control.

Unfortunately, the huge increase in foreign borrowing since 1970 - made possible by ample international liquidity - was destined in great measure not to investment but to financing imports for current consumption, including luxury items. The paradox is that, in making the harsh adjustments necessary to service debts, governments have had to slash imports, not only of luxuries but also of sheer necessities.

The debt crisis has been, in part, precipitated by the weakness of commodity markets. Prices of the primary commodities exported by the region (other than oil) fell disastrously between 1980 and 1982. For sugar, bananas, coffee and cocoa combined - key exports of many of your countries - the price decline amounted to a massive 34 percent, while for wheat, maize and meat exported from the temperate-zone countries of the region prices fell by 24 percent on average.

As examples, it is estimated that price falls in these two years cost Colombia 320 million dollars in lost receipts from coffee exports. Brazil's losses for this same product amounted to 950 million dollars. In the case of Argentina, although the volume of meat exports increased by 13 percent their value dropped by 16 percent, making a loss of more than 275 million dollars. Such price declines represent in effect a huge transfer of resources from the region, mainly to developed countries.

The situation of the poorest social strata in the region was already disturbing despite three decades of economic advance up to 1980. Now, it has been greatly aggravated by the economic adjustments made to cope with the crisis. Social tensions have increased,

both in cities and in rural areas. Unemployment has risen to as much as 20 or 25 percent of the economically active population, and many of those with work face a decrease in their living standards.

The rate of population increase is trending downwards, but at about 2.5 percent per annum is still very high. The pressure of demography continues to propel great numbers of people from the countryside to urban areas: even in the current recession, the flight to the cities continues, and may perhaps have accelerated. Many of the problems involved are being examined right now at the International Conference on Population which is underway in Mexico City.

Mounting difficulties have resulted in all parts of the region from a conjunction of major short-term problems with difficult long-term trends. In the face of this situation, some governments have chosen to lessen the strain on their budgets by cutting social expenditures.

While measures to tackle major issues must be taken in the first instance by the governments concerned, some of the region's most pressing problems can ultimately be resolved only in a global framework. Unfortunately, the global environment is anything but promising. We still do not know how firmly based is the economic recovery which has now reached various stages in different industrialized countries. In most of those nations, unemployment remains high and continues to generate pressures for increased protectionism. While some commodity prices have improved, this has generally been the result of special factors affecting supply, and has not been the sign of a sustained recovery in demand.

The economic strength of major industrialized countries and groupings enables them to elbow more vulnerable nations out of world markets, sometimes with the help of subsidies. For instance the European Economic Community, which at the beginning of the seventies was the largest beef importer and the second largest sugar importer in the world, is now the main sugar exporter to the free market and the world's second largest beef exporter. In effect, part of the burden of economic adjustment caused by the current crisis is transferred from rich nations to poor.

We may further doubt the existence of rationality in our world when we consider, on top of all this, the vast allocation of resources to the arms race. The global expenditure on arms is now estimated to have reached almost one trillion dollars per annum, or 2.7 billion dollars daily. It is not only the great powers that participate in this headlong race to destruction. Developing countries also are allocating enormous amounts to maintaining and equipping military forces, and denying themselves social expenditures and investments in development to cover the cost.

This road leads to the logic of the absurd: social tension is increased by spending on arms what should have been devoted to development, and, to contain the explosive force generated in the midst of society as a result, arms expenditures are increased yet again.

#### Agriculture and food in Latin America and the Caribbean

Mr Chairman, in sketching out certain features of the world situation, I have moved far away from food and agriculture. Perhaps we may now look at the record of the region in this sector.

Agriculture has shown here a greater dynamism than in many other areas of the Third World. During the sixties and seventies, it responded ably to a rapidly growing and evolving demand, which was stimulated by massive urbanization and widespread increases in incomes. In particular, producers were able to cope with the growing popularity of such choice items as meat, eggs, dairy products, and fruit and vegetables.

The figures for the last few years have shown a slowing-down in the growth of output. For instance, in the period 1980-83 agriculture as a whole barely kept pace with population growth, while per caput food production actually declined. However, these disappointing results are mainly due to two phenomena which can be expected to pass: a series of natural disasters, including drought and floods; and a drop in demand brought about by the economic crisis. The sector retains its potential for a much more rapid rate of growth.



Recent increases in production have been achieved in approximately equal measure by the cultivation of new areas, and by improved yields. The region still contains vast tracts of land to be opened up, and indeed our study "Agriculture: Toward 2000" suggests that the arable area in Latin America will increase more, between 1975 and 2000, than that of the other regions combined. Nevertheless, we expect that in future there will be a growing emphasis on increasing production through the achievement of higher yields, as distinct from extending the area under cultivation. There are several reasons for this.

Some countries no longer have suitable unused land, and in many cases the best land is already under the plough. Furthermore, the settlement of new areas requires daunting investments in infrastructure, notably for such purposes as transport, communications or irrigation. Countries will, I believe, be well advised to place greater emphasis than in the past on ensuring the most rational use of the agricultural land already available.

At the same time, protection of the soil and other natural resources must continue to be given high priority. The region contains some of the world's most vulnerable areas in terms of erosion. Recent FAO studies have shown that, if no conservation measures were to be taken, the long-term loss of productivity in rainfed agriculture could amount to about 25 percent in South America, and almost 45 percent in Central America. Only a high level of vigilance, and appropriate measures in the technical and policy spheres, can guard against this peril.

In the Caribbean, a number of countries now face uncomfortably high bills for the import of food. In the interest, not only of food security, but also of their development as a whole, it is essential for these nations to stimulate a more rapid growth of domestic production. A ton of extra food that is grown and not imported means that much more money is available for investment: the farmer is mining gold.

In the region as a whole, the major unsolved food problem remains the existence of a large undernourished population, a substantial part of which is also unemployed. The productivity of the region has not yet been utilized effectively for the benefit of its most vulnerable and most impoverished inhabitants. Ways of doing so must be found if the problem of undernutrition is to be overcome.

#### Questions before the Regional Conference

Mr Chairman, certain key problems of the region are reflected in the subjects to be considered by the Regional Conference.

In its present form, the agenda is the result of informal but extensive consultations by the Regional Office, and takes into account the recommendations of previous Conferences. We have had to make a rigorous selection from among the themes of primary importance to the region. All subjects have been reviewed by the Technical Committee, which has admirably prepared the discussion at Ministerial level.

The four substantive items all have a bearing on two very broad issues of central concern to the region. The first is how to evolve a stronger policy framework for the agricultural sector. The second is what to do about the gap between modern, commercial farming and the backward, traditional producers.

Let us look first at the question of strengthening the agricultural policy framework of the region. A key issue which every country has to confront is how to handle price policies.

The subject is a complex one, and individual country situations vary too widely for a common approach to be considered. Nevertheless, I believe that the Regional Conference can identify a number of considerations which need to be taken into account by governments.

An important issue is the balance to be struck between subsidies to reduce the cost of inputs, and incentive prices for production. Another is the optimal relationship between domestic price levels and those prevailing on international markets. On the overall question of whether price incentives in the region need to be raised, the available information is insufficient for any firm conclusions to be reached.

Tentatively, our work does suggest that some improvement in price levels is needed in a number of cases, particularly for basic foods. The views of governments on these and other specific issues will help us in finalizing our global study for submission to the FAO Conference next year.

Even broader than price policies is the question of food security. It will be recalled that the ultimate objective of food security is defined as ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food they need. This requires a set of policies dealing effectively with a wide range of activities, notably production, the stability of markets and the consumption requirements of disadvantaged groups.

Action at national level is the indispensable foundation for building up food security. I hope that the document we have prepared for the Regional Conference, together with the recommendations of the Technical Committee, will help governments in drawing up national programmes or plans to strengthen their food security. Regional schemes, such as those being organized by the Andean countries, CARICOM and CASAR, can complement but not substitute for national programmes. FAO is particularly interested in the efforts of CASAR to establish a Regional Food Security System, and has been providing assistance under the Technical Cooperation Programme. CASAR was given strong political support in the Quito Declaration and Plan of Action, adopted last January at the level of Heads of State and Ministers by the Latin American Economic Conference.

At the global level, several new initiatives have been under discussion in the FAO Committee on World Food Security. Among these, I would make particular mention of my proposal for a World Food Security Compact, aimed at improving the policy environment for action on food security. The Compact would be based on the existing agreements relating to food security, and would be designed primarily to create greater public awareness of the issues. Although a complete consensus could not be reached on this proposal, the Committee on World Food Security has asked me to start work on the preparation of a draft Compact for consideration next year.

Mr Chairman, the divergence between commercial and traditional agriculture is the second broad area of concern which I mentioned just now. The two sectors are not always clearly demarcated, and figures are subject to controversy. However, using carefully developed criteria, the Joint FAO/ECLA Agriculture Division has estimated that the campesino economy contains about four fifths of all agricultural production units in the region, although only one fifth of the agricultural land. Small farmers produce more than half the region's maize, beans and potatoes, and about a third of its rice. However, for reasons which are analysed in our document, they have not shared adequately in the boom of the continent's food markets.

The reasons for doing more for campesino agriculture lie both in equity, and in the need to staunch the outflow of people from rural areas to the cities. The types of measure required were set forth in the Programme of Action adopted in 1979 by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, and are recalled in the document before the Regional Conference on WCARRD follow-up.

Land redistribution is, of course, a highly-charged political issue in most parts of the region: I can only regret that more countries have not made real progress towards the WCARRD goals. However, even without it much can be done to improve the access of small farmers to extension, inputs, credit, and markets. Research can be oriented towards problems encountered in campesino agriculture. Off-farm rural activities can be promoted more aggressively. And new initiatives can be carried out for the specific benefit of women.

I am well aware of certain major attempts in the region to bring progress to the campesino sector, including improved levels of nutrition. The economic crisis, in this as in other fields, has made it anything but easy to channel additional resources into such efforts. Nevertheless, they must be kept up. And the countries of the region would do well to keep an eye on the techniques which are evolving to assist the development of small farmers in other areas, especially Asia. In many aspects of development, Latin America and the Caribbean are relatively advanced; small-farmer development is one field in which the region can not only teach but also learn.

A specific subject which is dealt with in more depth on this occasion is education and training for agricultural and rural development. Our document analyses the shortcomings widely found in national systems of education: curricula are not adapted to rural needs; barely six percent of the agricultural population accede to intermediate-level education; and even in agricultural schools and colleges there is little contact with the reality of a sector in rapid evolution. New approaches are badly needed, both in education and in extension. We have described a few examples, and I hope that our efforts will help countries both to recognize problems and to work out ways of solving them. Improved education and training are fundamental for the development of human resources, which in turn must be a major element in any long-term approach to the problems of the campesino sector, and of dualism in agriculture.

#### World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development

Although it is not on your agenda, I would like to say something about the World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development, convened by FAO, which concluded its work just four weeks ago. The Conference was a historic event for world fisheries. For the first time virtually all nations, from every economic and geographical grouping, came together to discuss the basic issues confronting the sector, both as a provider of food and as a source of employment and income.

The Conference adopted by consensus a global Strategy for Fisheries Management and Development. It approved an integrated and comprehensive package of special Action Programmes, designed to help developing countries as they strive for greater self-reliance in fisheries. And it adopted a series of resolutions covering various key aspects of fisheries development. I am pleased to report that the United Nations Economic and Social Council has just invited me to present the report of the Conference to the General Assembly.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean were well represented at the Conference and made major contributions to its success. I would like to pay a special tribute to the wise and firm guidance of His Excellency Pedro Ojeda Paullada, Secretary of Fisheries of Mexico, who served as Conference Chairman.

The decisions and recommendations of the Conference call for intensive follow-up measures by member countries, FAO, our sister agencies and other international organizations. I intend to include proposals for FAO action in my Programme of Work and Budget for 1986/87. It would certainly be useful to make a review of progress at the next Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, in 1986.

#### Concluding observations

Mr Chairman, I would like in conclusion to make a few additional points that delegations may wish to consider.

In the first place, I believe that many countries are still underestimating the importance of the agricultural sector in the overall process of development. In particular, there is a widespread need for greater priority to be given to domestic food production. Current shortages of foreign exchange show all too clearly the dangers of relying on imports to cover constantly mounting national food deficits.

We have also seen the catastrophic effect of collapsing commodity prices on countries which export mainly agricultural products. While improvements must continue to be sought in the global trading system, I believe that redoubled efforts should also be made to open up new markets, for instance in the Third World and perhaps also in the developed countries with centrally planned economies.

When prosperity reigned, and growth rates were high, the target of providing food for all, and especially for the undernourished, remained unfulfilled. Now, in the depths of a major recession, far more energetic action is needed if that objective is to be attained.

Need for a new model of development

Indeed, I believe that many countries would do well to adopt a different approach to development from that which has guided their economies in the last two decades. Considerations of equity apart, there is a point at which strong rates of growth based on the concentration of income and the marginalization of broad social groups must generate such tensions as to threaten the very fabric of society. Extravagant consumption, the export of capital, and the neglect of social problems can only discredit the development model within which they flourish, and must set in train a process to which repression provides no answer.

The formulation of a new model of development, and the transition to policies aiming explicitly at greater economic and social progress for the neediest groups, is no easy matter. For our part, we in FAO are ready to do what we can to help. But the burden falls on those who have the power of decision at national level.

Agriculture must help to resolve the economic crisis

Mr Chairman, the Regional Conference takes place at a difficult, and even dramatic, moment in the history of Latin America and the Caribbean. Economic crisis has not only brought intolerable strains, it has also prompted a number of basic questions about the past and even more about the future. In this debate, the role of agriculture and the resolution of food problems should be important themes.

Agriculture is the workhorse of the economy in Latin America and the Caribbean. Other sectors may dazzle, agriculture gets on with the job. Including forestry and fisheries, the sector contributed exports worth 30 billion dollars to the regional economy in 1982. Only the workhorse agriculture can carry the region's intolerable burden of debt, while at the same time making possible a resumption of economic and social progress. But this in turn requires a fair deal for the region in terms of access to world markets; in terms of reasonable prices for exports; and in terms of sharing the cost between lenders and borrowers of the mistakes which both made together in the past.

I believe that our Conference can help to clarify certain issues, and suggest certain courses of development, that will enable agriculture to play its role more effectively, and thus contribute towards alleviating the agony of a continent. Agriculture must help to draw the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean forward into a new era of growth and prosperity.

REPORT OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

(Buenos Aires, Argentina, 6 - 10 August 1984)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Technical Committee of the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean met in the Centro Cultural General San Martín, Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 6 to 10 August 1984.

Opening of the Technical Committee

2. The Assistant Director-General, FAO Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, Dr Mario E. Jalil, opened the meeting of the Technical Committee on the morning of 6 August, in accordance with the Provisional Timetable. On behalf of the Director-General of FAO, Dr Edouard Saouma, and in his own name, he welcomed the delegates and expressed appreciation of the warm and generous hospitality extended by the Government and the people of the Republic of Argentina.

3. He stated that in this year's Conference the Technical Committee would have the special characteristic of analysing all the items to be discussed by the Conference, thus making it possible to reduce the time necessary for the Plenary Session.

4. He then pointed out that the items to be considered by the Technical Committee fully harmonized with FAO's objectives.

5. He stressed how important the opinion of the national delegations were for the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean and then invited the delegates to proceed to elect the officers for the Technical Committee.

Election of officers

6. The Committee unanimously elected Mr Pedro Elbio Olmos, director of Agricultural Programming and Policy, Uruguay, as Chairman; Mr Harold Lionarons, Surinam, as Vice-Chairman; and Mr Javier Gazzo, Peruvian Ambassador to FAO, as Rapporteur.

Adoption of Agenda and Timetable

7. The Technical Committee unanimously adopted the Agenda and Timetable, without change.

8. The Committee expressed its sincere thanks to the Argentine Permanent Representative to FAO in Rome for the valuable assistance he had offered to government representatives in connection with the holding of the Conference.

9. It also expressed its gratitude to the Director-General of FAO, Dr Edouard Saouma, for his continuing interest and concern for the success of the Conference, and for the assistance afforded to the delegations by him and his colleagues.

II. TECHNICAL ITEMS

Education and Training for Agricultural and Rural Development

10. In introducing this item the Secretariat pointed out that a review of education and training had been included in the Agenda for this and the other Regional Conferences in order to give countries an opportunity of analyzing, reflecting and exchanging experiences on, the present situation regarding national policies, programmes and systems for rural education, training and extension. Achievements and deficiencies should be analysed in the light of the requirements for growth with equity agreed on in the Programme of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. It was hoped that consideration of this item would make it possible to reach conclusions on the points and factors to be taken into account by governments in formulating policies and strategies for rural education and training.

11. Document LARC/84/4 on this item contained background information on the characteristics of the problem in the Region as a whole, and provided information on some national experiences in rural education and training, as well as on the efforts being made by FAO to cooperate with governments in this field. It put forward considerations and elements that might serve for the strengthening or restructuring of rural education and training policies, programmes and systems.

12. One of the major factors singled out was the size of the Region's population. The total population of the Region had risen from 158 million in 1950 to 352 million at the beginning of the eighties, and according to FAO estimates the present agricultural population was about 130 million. The small farmer and landless labourer groups should be the main potential beneficiaries of rural training programmes and activities. It was important to analyse specifically the integration of women in rural education and extension programmes, and training in forestry and fisheries, which analysis had shown to be deficient in the content and coverage of the training provided at present.

13. During discussion of this item, the delegations stated that they agreed with FAO's concern that a thorough review be made of the present situation regarding rural education and training in the countries of the region, and that there should be an exchange of experiences and opinions on the strategy to be followed to strengthen and improve national programmes and systems, which should focus on basic education and training for peasants.

14. The Committee drew attention to the disparity between the academic content of basic education, usually based on urban models, and the real training needs of the rural population.

15. The Committee also referred to the inadequate liaison and coordination between agricultural research and extension services and rural training programmes.

16. Another aspect referred to by several delegations was the migration from country to town resulting from insufficient access to the means of production, lack of employment opportunities and the shortage of health infrastructures and other services in rural areas. This had resulted in congestions of the towns which were unable to provide work for this mass of migrants. Reference was also made to the migration within rural areas of landless labourers, whose numbers were growing and whose possibilities of access to production resources and to education and rural training were decreasing.

17. The Committee agreed that careful attention must be devoted to the key factors affecting the quality and intensity of rural education and training, particularly the lack of equity and the emargination from which the peasants suffered. Rural education and training must therefore form part of a development system and not be conceived as isolated programmes or activities. This system constituted the basis for revising or evaluating national education and training plans so as to ensure that they were closely adapted to the stage of development of each country or region and to its specific circumstances, possibilities and needs, and targeted preferably at the small peasant farmers and agricultural labourers.

18. Attention was drawn to the risk of rural education and training programmes being slanted towards production and neglecting the social aspects of development essential to improving living conditions in the countryside.

19. The Committee was concerned at the low priority accorded to rural education and training programmes and activities by some countries. It stated that the efforts being made in this connection by FAO and other international agencies would not produce positive results unless governments accorded them the necessary priority, accompanied by the adoption of adequate policies and assignment of the resources needed to implement them adequately.

20. Emphasis was also put on the need for governments to avoid the duplication of efforts that sometimes occurred in the implementation of training programmes and policies, between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture, and in some cases also autonomous bodies set up for such purposes.

21. Some delegations mentioned the work of the non-governmental organizations which, in an adverse situation, were carrying out important direct action for the benefit of the "minifundistas". It was stated that these organizations had done much to promote the use of participatory model, and were playing a catalytic role in introducing continuing and non-formal types of training.

22. The Technical Committee emphasized the need for effective and dynamic measures to improve and make more operative education and training programmes for rural women. They also stressed the important role played by women in agriculture and other rural production activities, and stated that steps should be taken to avoid a continuation of the present discrimination resulting from a failure to appreciate the role of women as agents of development.

23. The Committee recognized the importance of rural extension services and considered that remedying their weaknesses and deficiencies did not necessarily entail far-reaching institutional changes or the allocation of substantial resources. Governments had at their disposal experience, knowledge and other elements that could be used to broaden the scope and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these services.

24. The Committee agreed that the points made in Section IV of document LARC/84/4 were important elements that should be taken into account in improving rural training programmes. They should all be considered fundamental and be incorporated in national education and training systems, and consequently should not be applied in isolation.

25. During the debate, the delegations enriched the discussion with ample and detailed references to national experiences in rural education and training, including such aspects as procedures and methods used in education and training at different levels, and ways of evaluating training needs on the basis of differentiated agricultural employment requirements. They also stated that with FAO assistance specific training activities for government technical staff had been relaunched, and training programmes for farmers strengthened. Some delegations expressly stated that training in agricultural and rural development planning had been organized with the assistance of the joint FAO/UNDP/ECLA Regional Project for Training in Planning.

26. Some of the national experiences described showed important achievements in cooperation and coordination between the Ministries of Agriculture and Education, and in the incorporation of private bodies connected with the primary production process and the processing and marketing of food. Other countries had included rural workers, skilled and unskilled, heads of holdings and their wives in their training programmes. One country had a specific programme for training the sons of small farmers as agricultural technicians. Reference was also made, as positive examples, to the dairy promotion and training projects in Chile, and to the Audio-Visual Teaching Services for Training Centre (CESPAC), with headquarters in Peru, which had been given a regional dimension, and received considerable financial assistance from the country in which they were located.

27. The Committee stated that it was important to learn from the success achieved by some countries in their rural education and training programmes. This could be done through the technical cooperation networks sponsored by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

28. One delegation emphasized the need for the networks to be coordinated by government representatives so that cooperation in the real sense of the term, i.e. transfer of technology, would be directed toward areas assigned priority by the national development programmes of each country participating in the networks.

29. In concluding the debate, the Secretariat, in addition to replying to questions put forward by the delegations, emphasized some activities of FAO and other UN agencies aimed at providing assistance to countries in this field. As an example, reference was made to the FAO Interdepartmental Training Committee, whose main task was to assist the Director-General in designing and formulating the programmes carried out by the Organization in this field.

30. The Secretariat also pointed out that FAO's field projects usually had a training component, which was now being revised in order to strengthen it. Another point emphasized by the Secretariat was training in indigenous languages, since in certain cases broad sectors of the rural population could not be provided with adequate training if the official languages

were used. Mention was also made of the FAO/ILO/Unesco Coordination Group on Agricultural Education and Training, through which technical information on these matters was exchanged and institutional assistance to projects or overall programmes assisted by these organizations was coordinated.

#### Recommendations

31. The Technical Committee recommended:

1. That rural education and training policies, strategies and programmes form a system that to be part of the national development policy and strategy, so that the procedures and methodologies adopted include both economic and social, political, cultural and ethnic aspects.
2. That the governments set up adequate mechanisms for ensuring close liaison between research, education and rural extension services.
3. That greater recognition be given the role played by women and young people in production processes and in other aspects of rural development, and that training for rural women and young people therefore be strengthened and regarded as an important component of strategies to alleviate rural poverty and achieve food security.
4. That the points set out in Section IV of document LARC/84/4 be considered as basic elements for the design and implementation of national rural education and training policies and strategies, provided that they are compatible with the national system prevailing.
5. That governments request the United Nations Development Programme to continue to support programmes intended to help strengthen rural training, such as the Latin American Regional Aquaculture Centre, the Regional Project for Training, Programming and Analysis of Agricultural and Rural Development Projects, and the planned Regional Agricultural Extension Project.
6. That the technical cooperation networks system sponsored by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, a mechanism which has proved effective in transferring appropriate technologies, continue to devote attention to rural education and training.

#### Agricultural Price Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean

32. This item was introduced by Mr Nurul Islam, Assistant Director-General Economic and Social Policy Department. The analysis of the agricultural pricing policies in the region was part of a world-wide, in-depth study undertaken by FAO and the outcome of the discussions in the Technical Committee would constitute a valuable input for the improvement of the study. Mr Islam drew the attention of the Committee to the main issues highlighted in the document. He also emphasized the need to achieve balance and coherence in agricultural price policies in the context of agricultural development strategy and in harmony with overall monetary fiscal and exchange rate policies which have an impact on agricultural prices.
33. The Committee welcomed the initiative of the Director-General to undertake a world-wide, in-depth study on agricultural price policy and looked forward to discussion of this subject at the next FAO Conference. It was also mentioned that the study might include price stabilization measures through food buffer stocks within and among countries which, like some countries of the region, are comparable in terms of imports, exports and traditional sector-related issues. The Committee stressed that pricing policies were essentially country specific, depending, inter alia, on the structure of agriculture, the degree of urbanization the relative importance of foreign trade and socio-economic objectives. The Committee felt that the FAO study should analyze the objectives, issues, options and criteria of price policies in order to provide a general framework and a set of guidelines for the formulation of price policies by individual countries in the light of their objectives, resources and constraints. The Committee stressed the importance it attached to FAO Technical assistance in the field of agricultural price policies.
34. The Committee acknowledged the major impact of agricultural price policies on the level and structure of agricultural production, consumption patterns and income distribution. Experience in Latin America indicated that producers reacted positively to economic incentives.<sup>4</sup> As the prices of products and inputs were one of the major economic incentives, agricultural price policies, to be effective had to be in harmony with other policies relating to credit, marketing, taxation, exchange rates, etc.



35. Many delegates reported to the Committee on their country's objectives and criteria in formulating agricultural price policies. They emphasized the complexity of these problems, dependent as they were not only on considerations specific to the agricultural sector but also on overall macro-economic factors such as exchange rates, tariffs, taxation requirements and monetary balance. Some delegates drew attention to recent trends in their countries to establish more realistic rates of exchange or to reduce export taxes on agricultural products.

36. Several delegates pointed out that as a result of the heterogeneity of national production structures, small farmers were not in a position to benefit from the incentives of fixed agricultural prices. They therefore recommended that pricing policies be targeted at helping the small farmer and narrowing the gap between large and small producers. In this connection the importance of non-price measures such as credit, supply of inputs and services, marketing and the organization of cooperatives, was particularly stressed.

37. Some delegates stated that more attention should be paid to the effects of agricultural prices on consumption, including home consumption of food produced by small farmers. Stress was laid on the problem of striking a proper balance between conflicting objectives, such as increasing production and productivity through adequate prices and whilst avoiding negative repercussions on the standard of living of poor consumers -- both urban and rural -- and on industrial labour costs. Some countries, they indicated, had been able to resolve this contradiction - at least during certain periods - thanks to significant advances in technology which, by lowering production costs, had made it possible to hold food prices at certain levels and even lower them, without depressing producer income and hence reinvestment in production. Other potential instruments for resolving this contradiction might be improvement in efficiency and the reduction of marketing costs, subsidies for selected inputs such as fertilizers, credits, etc. Another alternative might be direct consumer subsidies. Several delegates pointed out that where direct consumer subsidies were concerned, subsidies should be specifically targeted at the lower income consumer groups, and that this had not always been the case in the region in the past.

38. Several delegates reported on their country's efforts to simplify government interventions in agricultural prices, either directly or by means of subsidies. However, they indicated that setting floor or support prices for the major products was of fundamental importance to guarantee minimum returns to the farmers. However due to the high rate of inflation in many countries of the region, it would be advisable to establish mechanisms to maintain these support prices in real terms, thus ensuring an adequate return to farmers. Price support measures, in order to be effective, required additional steps for their effective implementation, such as sufficient resources in the hands state marketing boards, buffer stocks, and loans to producers to enable them to store their products until such time as better prices could be had.

39. Some delegates pointed out that production costs were still a major criterion for fixing floor and support prices. It was, however, recognized that production costs had to be periodically updated to ensure that support prices guaranteed an adequate return to farmers and also brought about improvements in agricultural productivity. Concerning the point it was emphasized that in many cases costs were difficult to estimate because of the existing variations in conditions and productivity between, for example, various regions of the same country or different kinds of producers, or the quality of the resources available.

40. Some delegates cautioned against the over-hasty use of international prices as a basis for fixing domestic support prices. Other felt that the long-term trends and average levels of international prices did constitute an objective reality and one which ought to be kept in mind when formulating national agricultural price policies. This did not mean, of course, that domestic prices should automatically reflect international prices, especially as the latter were subject to short-term fluctuations and in many cases were distorted by export subsidies. Some delegates did point out, however, that comparative international advantages should also be weighed against other objectives of agricultural policy and national security which might favour a high level of self-sufficiency in the supply of basic foodstuffs. Furthermore, there was a growing trend for the developed countries not only to apply protectionist measures (tariff and non-tariff barriers, import quotas and non-compliance with international commitments) but to elbow the exporting countries of the region out of the traditional and/or potential markets through highly subsidized exports. All this had a highly negative effect on domestic prices.

41. Backing was given to the concern expressed in document LARC/84/5 that, despite the short-term beneficial effects of food aid on actual food consumption -- particularly in exceptionally adverse circumstances such as natural disasters and other emergencies -- there was a risk that sustained food aid might prove contraproductive in the long run. Accordingly, food aid should be provided in the form of commodities traditionally consumed in the recipient countries, bearing in mind their plans for attaining higher levels of food self-sufficiency. Also, price policies and other measures should be adopted to avoid or minimize the possible adverse effects of food aid on domestic production.

#### Food Security in Latin America and the Caribbean

42. The Committee considered this item on the basis of document LARC/84/6 which had been prepared in the light of Resolution LARC/4/1982 adopted by the Seventeenth Regional Conference, as well as the broader concept of food security adopted by the FAO Committee on World Food Security at its Eighth Session in 1983 and endorsed by the Twenty-second Session of the FAO Conference in 1983. In analyzing the nature and dimensions of the problem of food security in Latin America and the Caribbean, the document had highlighted two main problems affecting the region: first, the paradoxical fact that although the region as a whole was a net exporter of food, numerous poor groups were seriously affected by malnutrition: more than 50 million people were estimated to be suffering from calorie-protein deficiency; second, the growing dependency of the region on imported food, which was accompanied by a reduction in many countries' import capacity, owing to the heavy burden of the servicing of the external debt, depressed terms of trade, and difficulties in increasing exports owing to protectionist policies and subsidized sales on world markets.

43. The document had also put forward, for consideration by the Committee, a set of suggestions for national, regional and sub-regional actions to make effective progress towards food security in the region.

44. The Committee expressed full agreement with the broader concept of food security adopted by the Committee on World Food Security, and expressed satisfaction with the fact that this concept had extended beyond the Organization and become part of the common patrimony of the United Nations system. While fully supporting the broader concept of food security, some delegates stressed the importance of availability and access to the technical inputs needed for agricultural production, such as fertilizers, pesticides, improved seeds and genetic material of both animal and plant origin, with a view to achieving food security.

45. Many delegates gave full and detailed descriptions of the actions and activities by their countries in the field of food security and illustrated the approaches followed in their programmes.

46. The Committee emphasized that a sustained increase in national and regional food production, and an adequate redistribution of income, were a basic prerequisite to achieving self-reliance and food security. Hence, objectives and measures to increase food production should be an explicit part of national food security programmes, plans and systems. In order to achieve increased production, the developing countries would need to be offered adequate, constant and increasing technical and financial assistance. Concerning this item, it was found regrettable that for lack of political will on the part of the developed countries, the level of cooperation with Third World countries, particularly multilateral cooperation, was being lowered. The Committee also stressed the need for modernizing national food supply, transport and distribution systems, not only to reduce food losses during the marketing process, but also in order to harness the production surpluses of the small producer sector.

47. The Committee stressed that the major constraint to regional food security today was the enormous external debt of the region. The outstanding feature of the debt was the enormous cost of servicing it, aggravated by constantly rising interest rates which absorbed a large portion of export earnings and made it impossible to scrape together the investments needed to increase food production. Concern was expressed over the fact that the economic recovery of the developed countries was being achieved at the expense of the developing countries.

48. The Committee expressed its deep concern at the fact that the problem of hunger and malnutrition which existed in most countries of the region was not only far from being resolved as anticipated in previous years, but had been aggravated. It agreed that the worsening of the food security situation in the region was closely connected with the economic crisis facing the countries of the region, including the heavy burden of servicing the huge external debt, the restrictions on access to the markets of the developed countries, and the dumping practised by the latter, which resulted in unfair competition for the exports of the Region in world markets.

49. The Committee noted that, although there were significant differences in the economic situations of the various countries, many were obliged by the pressing need to acquire foreign currency to give priority to encouraging an increase in export earnings. This fact had adverse consequences for the food security of the poor because of the Region's agrarian structures, characterized by a small number of business enterprises producing for export, while a large number of small farmers supplied the domestic market with food under conditions of considerable economic and social disadvantage.

50. Many delegates referred to the adverse effects of the operations of the transnational corporations on the food and agriculture sector, particularly on the rural sub-sector. It was also stressed that the transnational corporations contributed to the introduction of consumer habits alien to the region, thus displacing the demand for indigenous products in favour of imported foods. The Committee stressed the need for an in-depth study of the impact and influence of these companies on the development of peasant agriculture. Stress was laid on the need to move forward on the United Nations initiatives calling for the formulation of a code of conduct for the operations of the transnational corporations with a view to eliminating such adverse effects.

51. Stress was laid on the need for concerted regional action in the field of food security and the view was expressed that the countries of the region should backstop the work of the Action Committee on Regional Food Security (CASAR) of the Latin American Economic System (SELA). The Committee expressed its satisfaction for the decisive assistance which FAO had provided to CASAR since the latter's inception and expressed the hope that FAO would continue to assist CASAR in designing regional and sub-regional programmes for food security. The Committee respectfully urged those governments of the region not yet members of CASAR to become members as soon as they might be in a position to do so.

52. The Committee welcomed the establishment of the José Celestino Mutis food security system within the Andean Group, and the work being done in the same field by CARICOM and SIECA. Considering their joint objectives, these organizations should cooperate to the broadest possible regional extent and FAO provide assistance to all to the extent possible.

53. The Committee noted with appreciation the assistance provided to the countries of the Region by FAO's Food Security Assistance Scheme to strengthen food security at the national level. It made special mention of the contribution to food security of the System of Latin American Technical Cooperation Networks sponsored by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. This System facilitated the exchange of valuable national experiences in fields related to food production, marketing and supply; the rational use of natural resources; agro-energy and other areas.

54. Several delegations pointed out that the vulnerable status of the developing countries was also due to technological dependency at the various links of the food supply chain. The dependency was a threat to national sovereignty equal to or greater than the dependency on food imports. They also condemned the action of one developed country in the Western Hemisphere which cited political reasons as its justification for refusing to lend genetic materials extracted from the Region itself for the purposes of study and improvement.

55. The Committee reiterated its repudiation of the use of foodstuffs and inputs as an instrument of political pressure, and condemned all military and political actions affecting the security of the countries of the Region both production and the supply of food and inputs from abroad.

## Recommendations

56. The Technical Committee recommended:

1. That all Latin American and Caribbean countries establish and implement national food security programmes, strategies or systems which would ensure adequacy and stability of food supplies and promote access of the poor to the basic food that they need.
2. That countries of the Region cooperate with regional and sub-regional schemes concerning food security, agricultural development and agricultural and food trade within the framework of the Plan of Action of the Latin American Economic Conference held in Quito in January 1984.
3. That the action of CASAR, CARICOM, CORECA, the Celestino Mutis Andean System and other regional efforts needed to be strengthened as much as possible, for which purpose FAO could make a valuable contribution with a view to achieving the establishment of a regional system of food security to optimize the utilization of food resources, avoiding duplication and dispersion of efforts.
4. That programmes to support production and consumption be targeted at small producers. This would specifically involve research, technological progress, rural extension and training, credit, support prices and food security schemes, oriented to meet the needs of small producers.
5. That the Conference request that the international community lend its support to national, regional and sub-regional actions to promote food security in the region.

WCARRD Follow-up: Small Farmer Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean:  
Problems and Prospects of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development; Fulfilment  
of Mandatory Activities under WCARRD

57. In introducing this item the Secretariat referred to document LARC/84/7, which laid stress on the situation of rural poverty, trying to explain its causes and introducing considerations for the formulation of policies and strategies by governments, pointing out that in 1970 there were approximately 112 million poor in the Region, of whom 72 million lived in rural 40 million in urban areas. It was estimated that should present circumstances persist, by 2000 there would be 170 million poor in the Region -- 100 million in the towns and 70 million in the countryside.
58. The development process had tended to attach greater importance to industrialization and urbanization problems, and consequently both public and private investments had given priority to urban-industrial activities. In addition, the outstanding feature of agricultural development had been that technical modernization was concentrated on a small group of farmers, which exclude the small farmer.
59. The magnitude and dimensions of peasant agriculture were emphasized. It was pointed out that there were probably some 13.5 million production units in the Region's peasant economy, covering a total area of about 145 million hectares, and with an average size of 11 ha, of which 4.2 ha would be suitable for cultivation.
60. It was also mentioned that, despite the land tenure situation and the limited governmental assistance they received, small farmers made a substantial contribution to the production of basic foodstuffs.
61. Several countries were implementing national food plans of which the main features were institutional coordination and the channelling of resources and provision of services to those who already had possibilities of increasing production in the short term. However, by neglecting measures to tackle one of the basic problems - access to resources - the inevitable result was exclusion of the small farmers and peasants from the food production process.

62. As regards the provision of support services, it emerged that prevailing policies had encouraged the persistence of financial and marketing middlemen, particularly in the provision of credit for the procurement of inputs and the marketing of agricultural commodities.

63. An account was given of FAO activities to support country efforts to implement the Programme of Action, in particular: inter-country consultations; inter-agency missions; case studies on rural poverty; the recent Round Table on Poverty Alleviation in Latin America; the Round Table on Rural Development Policies and Strategies in the Caribbean, to be held shortly the role of women in rural development; education, training and extension activities and inter-agency consultations.

64. Lastly, the members of the Committee were asked for guidelines for the prompt establishment and implementation of the Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for Latin America and the Caribbean.

65. During the extensive debate on the item, various aspects of agrarian reform and rural development policies were considered, in particular those connected with the programmes and machinery for implementing these policies and strategies.

66. The Committee commended the positive attitude demonstrated by the Government of the Republic of Argentina in affirming its full support for the Declaration of Principles and the Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, and specifically recognized the important political decision made by the present Constitutional Government in withdrawing the reservations introduced by the previous Government when the Declaration and the Programme of Action were adopted in Rome in 1979.

67. Most members of the Committee recognized the work being done by FAO to follow up the Programme of Action and expressed their appreciation of the document introducing the item, which they considered complete and satisfactory. The Committee also expressed its thanks to the Director-General of FAO for the reorientation of the resources of the Programme of Work and Budget and the procurement of extra-budgetary resources for implementation of the Programme of Action.

68. Most members of the Committee recognized that for several years FAO had been adopting measures and carrying out actions which reflected the importance of agrarian reform. It emphasized the establishment in 1969 of the Special Committee on Agrarian Reform, and the organization 10 years later of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development.

69. Most members of the Committee expressed appreciation of the way in which FAO had exercised its leadership within the United Nations, in the area of agrarian reform and rural development, and reiterated the decision to fully back FAO's leadership.

70. The Committee considered that the classification of small farmers presented by FAO reflected the prevailing conditions and real situations within the countries. It also considered that it would be useful to introduce a certain differentiation among minifundio types, based on the size of the holding and the amount of capital emphasizing certain structural features common to all minifundio units: insufficient capital and natural resources; insufficient income; family underemployment; unsatisfactorily low standard of living; predominance of precarious forms of land tenure; traditional technologies and extensive use of family labour; periodic recourse to off-farm labour markets and the permanent migration of the young members of the family; predominance of production for home consumption; subjection to harmful, unnecessary intervention by middlemen in the access to inputs, financing and marketing; lack of sufficient, timely institutional credit adapted to the requirements and characteristics of this type of producer; lack of research and technical assistance to minifundio production conditions.

71. Most of the country delegations spoke of the top priority they assigned to the establishment of a Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for Latin America and the Caribbean, and requested that the Director-General of FAO adopt the relevant measures for the swift establishment of this Centre. The delegation of Ecuador, which had been selected as the headquarters of this Centre, also expressed its awareness that the decision for establishing the Centre could not be put off indefinitely. Nevertheless, Ecuador, in view

of the approaching change of Government, requested that the countries of the region, in the name of brotherhood, give the new Government the opportunity to examine this item and come to a decision as soon as possible. Concerning this item, the Government of Honduras offered its expertise in agrarian reform to the countries of the Region, as well as the infrastructures and physical facilities for the establishment of this Centre. As the initial phase of this effort, it offered to host the Plenipotentiary Conference which would make the final decision as to where this Centre would be located.

72. Various delegations expressed the view that the formulation and application of agrarian reform and rural development policies and strategies on behalf of the countries of the region would not produce the expected results unless the necessary measures were adopted for the establishment of a New International Economic Order. It urged the international organizations to continue working towards this goal.

73. The Committee acknowledged the important role played by women in rural development, especially in the economy of peasant households. It also noted that women's participation in rural development processes was much smaller than their role in production would warrant. It was emphasized that policy and strategy formulation should take proper account of women's roles, particularly in the production, preservation and marketing of food.

74. With reference to the activities of the transnational corporations in the areas of production, marketing and industrialization, the Committee pointed out that there was a need for an in-depth study of this issue, which would include the causes, mechanisms utilized and how these related to the problems of the rural sector, and, specifically, how to ward off the impact and influence of the transnationals on this sector. The Committee stressed the desirability of formulating a code of conduct for the transnational corporations for the purpose of obviating their adverse consequences.

75. The Committee expressed its support for the various forms of association for production, whether cooperative, community or peasant organizations, as valid instruments for incorporating peasants into the process of development and as a vehicle for guaranteeing the rights of these sectors of the population.

76. The Committee considered that in order to achieve full, true rural development, it was important to incorporate as part of the studies for, formulation of and application of policies, not only activities specific to agriculture but also non-agricultural activities as well.

77. During the discussions, the delegates described the plans, programmes, actions and activities now being implemented in their own countries in the areas of agrarian reform and rural development. As part of their description, they analyzed the nature, approach and content of these plans and programmes, which included elements such as legal instruments to accelerate the processes; support to peasant organizations; people's participation; training; organization for production; enlisting the participation of women; the granting of land and title to land; the problems of permanent and temporary agricultural labourers; migration from rural areas to urban areas; the elimination of non-productive latifundios; settlement of government lands; technology transfer; incentives to production and productivity, particularly food production; farm modernization; and the social, economic and production aspects of the minifundio. As part of their presentations, the delegates also furnished statistics on the number of recipient families, the area of land involved in the agrarian reform process and title to new lands. Mention was made of the fact that agrarian reform had to be enacted through a harmonious balance between the technical side of the issue and the political decision essential to getting on with the process.

78. Most delegates agreed that access to and/or grants of land were the crux of agrarian reform, but emphasized that land was not the only proper claim of peasants, and that access to land was one important component of peasant development, but not the only one.

79. Some delegations pointed out that the interruption of democratic processes entailed delays in the further implementation of agrarian reform.

80. At the close of the discussions of the members of the Committee, statements were heard by three observers representing countries or organizations.

81. In closing the debate, the Secretariat thanked the delegates for their expressions of support and praise for the work undertaken by FAO in support of agrarian reform and rural development programmes.

82. It also emphasized the importance of the declaration of the Constitutional Government of the Republic of Argentina in which it gave its full support to the Declaration of Principles and the Programme of Action and withdrew the reservations which had been introduced by the previous Government regarding the adoption of these documents in 1979.

83. Lastly, the Secretariat thanked the Government of the Republic of Honduras for its offer to host an eventual Plenipotentiary Conference to reach a decision on the establishment of the regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for Latin America and the Caribbean. It also expressed understanding of the situation of Ecuador, which had been chosen as headquarters for this Centre, and expressed the view that the conference during next week's sessions might consider the advisability of coming to a decision on the new measures to be adopted for the establishment of the Centre.

#### Recommendations

84. The Committee recommended:

1. That the necessary measures and action be undertaken for the swift establishment and implementation of the Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for Latin America and the Caribbean.

2. That considering the satisfactory results produced to date by the technical cooperation networks sponsored by FAO, this mechanism be expanded and the networks reinforced as an instrument for accelerating agrarian reform and rural development in the Region.

3. That special attention be paid to the incorporation of women in the processes of agrarian reform and rural development: at the same time giving full recognition to the role played by women in producing, preserving and marketing food.

4. That FAO continue to utilize intergovernmental consultations as a support mechanism for countries in the determination of their priority areas and requirements for technical assistance in the field of agrarian reform and rural development. In addition, that FAO continue to organize interagency consultations as a means of achieving improved cooperation among the agencies of the United Nations system in the activities of the region.







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ISBN 92-5-102212-7