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منظمة  
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# COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

## Twenty-fourth Session

Rome, 29 September - 3 October 2014

## The International Rice Commission

### Executive Summary

A Special Session of the International Rice Commission (IRC) was convened from 13 to 14 June 2013. The meeting adopted a Resolution in which it agreed to suspend all of the activities and operations of the Commission and recommended *inter alia* that a standing item on rice be included in the agenda of the regular meetings of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG).

This paper provides a brief background on the work of the Commission, the consultative process followed in preparing the Resolution adopted by the Special Session, including the recommendation to the COAG.

### Suggested action by the Committee:

The Committee is invited to take note of the outcome of the Special Session of the International Rice Commission in June 2013. In particular, the Committee may wish to:

- i) Note that the International Rice Commission suspended all of its activities and operations in June 2013;
- ii) Agree that a standing item on rice be included in the agenda of the regular sessions of COAG.

*Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:*

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## I. Introduction

1. This document provides a brief background to the International Rice Commission (IRC). It also describes the consultative process, initiated in 2012, that was the basis for the Resolution adopted by the Special Session of the IRC in June 2013 to suspend its activities and operations and the recommendation that a standing item on rice be included in the agenda of the regular sessions of COAG. The full text of the Resolution is set out in Annex A.

## II. Brief background on the IRC

2. The International Rice Commission was established in 1948 under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution with the objective to promote national and international action with respect to production, conservation, distribution and consumption of rice, except matters relating to trade. The work of the Commission evolved from an early emphasis on breeding and international nurseries, to the implementation during the 1970s and 1980s of a large number of rice development projects and programmes in support of the green revolution.

3. At the time the Commission was established, it was the only international mechanism for collaboration amongst countries and institutions on matters pertaining to rice. Since the early 1990s the Commission has struggled to retain relevance in the proliferation of other international and regional fora, networks, organizations and programmes addressing technical and policy issues related to rice production. The number of members participating in the Commission sessions steadily declined from 38 members at its 18<sup>th</sup> Session in 1994 (the last time there was a quorum for decision making) to 19 members at the 21<sup>st</sup> Session in 2006. In light of the foregoing, the Independent External Evaluation (IEE) of FAO in 2007 recommended that the Commission be wound up<sup>1</sup>.

4. The key objective of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session, originally scheduled for April 2012, was to discuss the future of the Commission. The meeting was subsequently postponed to November of that year when only 12 countries had confirmed their participation three weeks before the scheduled session.

## III. Consultative process on future of the IRC

5. In July 2012 a meeting of representatives from member countries of the Commission was convened to consider possible future directions of the IRC. Entitled the Global Roundtable on Rice, the meeting was attended by 27 experts from 22 member countries of the IRC, representatives of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Consortium and the Global Rice Science Partnership (GRiSP) which is led by the CGIAR. The report of the Roundtable<sup>2</sup> and an options paper on the future of the Commission<sup>3</sup> were prepared for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the IRC (29 to 30 November 2012), convened immediately prior to the 145<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Council to facilitate attendance. A briefing session was convened with the Permanent Representatives to FAO in October 2012 to inform them of the upcoming Commission meeting and respond to questions that they might have.

6. At its 22<sup>nd</sup> Session, the Commission struggled to reach a quorum and was unable to reach a decision on its future. In view of that, it did agree to establish a working group composed of representatives from each of the seven regional groups to develop a proposal on its future that would be considered at a special session of the Commission in June 2013 immediately prior to the 38<sup>th</sup> FAO Conference<sup>4</sup>.

7. The Working Group (WG) met under the chairmanship of Mr. Lupino Lazaro of the Philippines. Observers from Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Iran, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand and the Chair of the Committee on Agriculture participated in one or more of the WG meetings. Representatives of the Secretariats of the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) and the

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<sup>1</sup> C 2007/7 A.1-Rev.1 paragraph 621b)

<sup>2</sup> Report Global Roundtable on Rice, 3-4 July 2012, Montpellier France

<sup>3</sup> IRC 2012/4

<sup>4</sup> IRC 2012/Report

Committee on Agriculture (COAG) were also invited to address the WG. An initial draft of the resolution, along with an explanatory power-point presentation were made available to the members of the WG to facilitate their consultation with members of their regional groups. The feedback from the regional groups was reviewed and based on this discussion the draft resolution revised. The revised draft was further discussed within the regional groups and the feedback reflected in the final draft of the resolution on the future of the IRC as agreed by members of the WG. The resolution was presented to the Special Session of the IRC along with brief background information on the working group including: its composition, how it operated, the information it considered and a brief rationale or background to the key political and technical issues that it took into consideration<sup>5</sup>.

8. The Special Session of the IRC agreed to adopt without change the text of the Resolution as prepared by the Working Group<sup>6</sup>.

9. The full text of the Resolution is included in Annex I to this document. It should be highlighted that in paragraph 2 of the Resolution, the Commission decided to suspend all its activities and operations, while in paragraph 3 it:

***RECOMMENDS** that a standing item on rice be included in the agenda of the regular session of COAG and CCP, as appropriate, to consider issues of global significance on rice production, conservation, distribution, consumption or trade.*

#### **IV. Suggested action by the Committee**

10. The Committee is invited to take note of the outcome of the Special Session of the International Rice Commission in June 2013.

11. In particular the Committee may wish to:

- i) Note that the International Rice Commission suspended all of its activities and operations in June 2013
- ii) Agree that a standing item on rice be included in the agenda of the regular sessions of COAG.

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<sup>5</sup> IRC 2013/3

<sup>6</sup> IRC 2013/Report

## **Annex A - RESOLUTION**

### **Future of the International Rice Commission**

THE INTERNATIONAL RICE COMMISSION,

**CONSIDERING** that the International Rice Commission (IRC) was established under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, through a Resolution approved by the FAO Conference, at its Fourth Session in 1948, with the purpose of promoting national and international action with respect to production, conservation, distribution and consumption of rice, except matters relating to international trade;

**NOTING** that the Constitution of the IRC came into force on 4 January 1949 upon acceptance by ten Member Nations of the Organization, and that at present 62 Member Nations have deposited instruments of acceptance of the Constitution, thus becoming Members of the Commission;

**RECOGNIZING** that the Commission has assiduously pursued and fulfilled the objectives for which it was established in 1948;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that there are currently two centres of the CGIAR Consortium, as well as a wide range of fora, programmes, specialized meetings, networks and regional strategies dealing exclusively with rice;

**BEING AWARE OF** the declining trend in the number of Members that participate in Regular Sessions of the Commission, and, in particular, the fact that since 1994 no Regular Session has obtained the necessary quorum;

**RECALLING** recommendations that the IRC should be wound up and that, subsequently, a process of reassessment of the need for the Commission was launched within FAO and by its Members;

**HIGHLIGHTING** that winding up the IRC should not be construed as a reduction in FAO's commitment to its Members with respect to increasing sustainable rice production and consumption;

**RECOGNIZING** that rice is the staple food of more than half of the world's population and its importance to global food security is acknowledged by FAO and its Members;

- 1) **EXPRESSES ITS APPRECIATION** for the work accomplished over the years by the Commission, its Members and FAO;
- 2) **DECIDES** that the International Rice Commission shall suspend all its activities and operations;
- 3) **RECOMMENDS** that a standing item on rice be included in the agenda of the regular sessions of COAG and CCP, as appropriate, to consider issues of global significance on rice production, conservation, distribution, consumption or trade;
- 4) **FURTHER RECOMMENDS** that in the event an issue of global significance on rice production, conservation, distribution, consumption or trade arises that cannot be addressed by a body within FAO, the Director General, within his authority, convene a meeting with all stakeholders;
- 5) **CALLS UPON** Members who so wish to submit notices of withdrawal from the Commission under Article XII paragraph 1 of the Constitution of the IRC so that under Article XIII of the Constitution it shall be terminated if and when the number of Members of the Commission drops below ten. Until such time the Commission shall remain in a state of suspension.