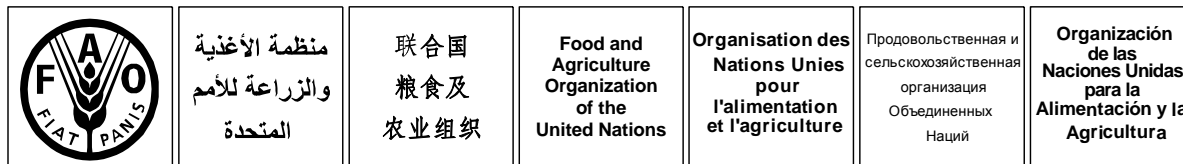


June 2013



# INTERNATIONAL RICE COMMISSION

## Special Session

Rome, Italy, 13-14 June 2013

## Report of the Special Session of the International Rice Commission

### I. Opening of the meeting

1. A Special Session of the International Rice Commission (IRC) was held at the Headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) from 13 to 14 June 2013.
2. M. Samba Kante of Senegal, First Vice-Chair of the Commission, opened the meeting at 10:15 am on Thursday 13 June 2013.
3. Opening statements were made by M. Kante (Senegal) and Mr. Ren Wang, Assistant Director General of the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department on behalf of FAO.
4. In his statement, M. Kante informed the meeting that as Ms. Alexandra Tonsmann of Peru was unavailable to chair the Special Session, he would do so as First Vice-chair. He welcomed delegates and noted the importance of the work before the meeting over the next two days.
5. Mr. Wang, in his statement, recalled the importance of rice to global food security and that he had served as Assistant Director General of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines for seven years. He drew the attention of the meeting to the fact that global rice production would outpace consumption in 2012-2013. He also noted the release of new high yielding varieties of rice in Africa and that from 2007-2012 rice production in Sub-Saharan Africa had increased by about 30%. He briefly reviewed the evolution of the International Rice Commission, noting that when it was created in 1948 it was the only international mechanism for work on rice and that since then the number of other international and regional organizations and programs working on rice had increased exponentially. He also noted the declining participation by member countries in meetings of the Commission and that the Independent External Evaluation of the FAO in 2007 had recommended that IRC be wound up. He recognized the efforts of the Working Group established at the last regular session of the IRC and reassured the meeting that rice remained a high priority for FAO.

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In concluding he drew the attention of the Commission to the important decision regarding its future that was before this meeting and wished participants a successful outcome to their deliberations.

## **II. Organizational matters**

### **a) Adoption of the agenda**

6. The Commission followed the provisional agenda contained in document IRC 2013/1 and set out in Annex I to this report.

### **b) Report on the credentials of representatives at the Special Session of the International Rice Commission**

7. Introducing the item the representative of the Secretariat recalled that, in accordance with Article V (Paragraph 2) of the Constitution, the presence of delegates representing a majority of the Members of the Commission (32 Members) constituted a quorum. In line with Rule III of the Rules of Procedure, the Secretariat working with the FAO Legal Office, would examine the credentials of the representatives participating in the current meeting and submit a report to the Chair on the results of its examination during the meeting.
8. Participants were reminded of the need for a quorum in order for it to be able to take any decisions. Quorum was reached on Thursday morning with the participation of 40 Members.
9. The Chair subsequently reported that the Secretariat had reviewed the credentials that had been submitted and confirmed that there were 17 Member countries that had submitted valid credentials and 23 were represented by their Permanent Representatives who are already accredited to participate in meetings of the Commission.

### **c) Participants:**

10. Representatives of the following 40 Members participated in the meeting:

Australia, Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Chad, China, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Vietnam.

11. In addition, representatives of the following 2 countries attended the meeting as observers: Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Democratic People's Republic of Korea
12. The list of registered participants may be found in Annex III to this report.

## **III. Matters related to the work of the Commission**

### **a) Discussion and decision on the future of the Commission**

13. In introducing the topic the Secretariat provided a brief overview of how the context in which the IRC was operating had changed from when it was established in 1948. He noted in particular, the growth of the Consultative Group on Agricultural Research or CGIAR Consortium which includes two research centers dedicated to rice and the launch of the Global Rice Science Partnership in 2010. He briefly described the decline in participation of member

countries in the meetings of the Commission and the outcomes of a number of evaluations/reviews of work related to the IRC that raised questions regarding its continued relevance, noting that it had essentially ceased to operate since 2006. He highlighted the role of FAO's Committee on Commodity Problems and the Committee on Agriculture to work on rice and how FAO was collaborating with a broad range of partners in and with member countries including the Coalition for Africa Rice Development and as co-organizer of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Rice Congress for Africa in October of this year. He concluded his presentation by noting that the Regional Rice Strategy developed following the FAO Regional Conference in Asia and the Pacific in 2012 had been further supported in 2013 with 1 million USD through the Regional Rice Initiative under FAO's new strategic Framework.

14. Subsequently the Chair of the Working Group established at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission presented document IRC2013/3: Discussion and Decision on the Future of the IRC. He provided a brief overview of the terms of reference for the working group, how it operated, the information available to it as well as the key political and technical issues it considered in developing the resolution to suspend the operation of the Commission set out in Annex III to the document. He concluded by introducing the key elements of the text of the Resolution.
15. Following the presentations the text of the resolution was opened for general comments and observations. The resolution was considered to have essentially two phases, one whereby the activities of the Commission were to be suspended with immediate effect and a second where it would eventually be subject to termination upon the submission of instruments of withdrawal by members. It was further explained that formal termination of the Commission would only occur once the number of member countries dropped below ten. As of today this would require the submission of 53 instruments of withdrawal to FAO. In the interim it would be possible for the Commission to be recalled in line with Article V paragraph 6 of the IRC Constitution.
16. In response to the concern on the implications of suspending the activities of the IRC the Secretariat reminded the meeting that following the recommendation of the Independent External Evaluation of FAO (2007) that the IRC be wound up the resources were allocated to other priority activities. The only provision in the current Program of Work and Budget to support the Secretariat of the IRC was half of a P3 staff position which was presently vacant. The IRC had effectively ceased to operate following its 21<sup>st</sup> Session in 2006. The technical and policy assistance that FAO provides to countries in support of rice production is independent of the work of the IRC.
17. There was a suggestion to define the length of the interim period between suspension of the activities of the IRC and its termination. It was explained that as the process for the preparation of an instrument of withdrawal varied widely across member countries this was not considered feasible. It was noted that member countries would be notified of the submission of each instrument of withdrawal.
18. In response to a question as to whether it was more appropriate to refer in paragraph 2 of the Resolution to the suspension of the constitution of the Commission rather than activities it was agreed to retain the reference to activities as the Constitution does not provide for the possibility of suspending its provisions.

19. A concern was also raised regarding the possible implications of the decision of the IRC to suspend its activities on other bodies established under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution. The representative of the Legal Office explained that the decision of the Commission to suspend its activities had no legal implications for other Article XIV bodies as they were separate legal entities. None-the-less some countries felt it was important to state that their support for the resolution was with the understanding that the decision of the IRC to suspend its activities would not prejudice the functioning and operation of other bodies established under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution.
20. Overall all of the countries that spoke expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Working Group established at its last Session in particular the open way in which they operated and the opportunity for the regional groups to be kept informed of their deliberations and to provide input.
21. One country expressed the view that it was not in a position to support or not support the draft Resolution. In their view there was still a need for the Commission and while they preferred to have further discussions on the role of the IRC they supported the possibility to reactivate the commission in the future when needed.
22. The meeting agreed to adopt without changes the text of the resolution to suspend the Commission as prepared by the Working Group. The full text of the resolution is set out in Annex II to this report.
23. The increased importance of rice to food security in Africa was noted by a number of countries from that Region. There was a brief discussion about including a statement to this effect in the meeting report along with a request that FAO strengthen the technical capacity of the Regional Office in Ghana with respect to rice. Following a proposal by a member of the Bureau of the Committee on Agriculture it was agreed that it would be more effective to include this point on the agenda of the Bureau at their next meeting.

#### **IV. Other Matters**

24. There were no other matters identified for the consideration of the meeting.

#### **V. Adoption of the Report**

25. The meeting adopted the present report on the basis of the draft report that had been circulated during the meeting as amended, and on the understanding that the finalisation of the report would be entrusted to the Secretariat working in cooperation with the Chair.

#### **VI. Closure of the meeting**

26. In his closing remarks the Chair warmly thanked the Working Group for their excellent work in preparing the resolution, the Secretariat for the meeting preparation and the participants for the spirit of cooperation that characterized the meeting this week.
27. The Chair declared the meeting closed on Friday 14 June at 16:30

## ANNEX I

### **Agenda      Special Session of the International Rice Commission**

- 1) Opening of the meeting
- 2) Organizational matters:
  - a) Adoption of the Agenda
  - b) Organization of work
  - c) Report on credentials of representatives to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session
- 3) Matters related to work of the Commission:
  - a) Discussion and decision on the future of the Commission
- 4) Other Matters
- 5) Adoption of the report
- 6) Closure of the meeting

**ANNEX II**  
**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.

**ANNEX III  
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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