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IMPLICATIONS OF THE ACTION PLAN OF THE UN CONFERENCE ON THE  
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT ON FAO PROGRAMMES (\*)

Summary

The Action Plan of the UN Conference on the Human Environment (held in Stockholm 5 - 16 June 1972) includes many recommendations for action addressed to FAO and several other recommendations calling for FAO participation in inter-agency activities. The present document gives a summarized list of the areas covered by these recommendations. The document then considers the overall implications of the Action Plan of the Stockholm Conference on the Regular Programme for the 1972-73 biennium, the 1974-75 biennium and the Mid Plan of the Organization. Proposals are submitted for approval by the FAO Council regarding the policy and procedures to be followed for the participation of FAO in the implementation of this Action Plan.

1. Background

1.1 The FAO Secretariat has reported to the FAO Council (55th and 56th sessions) and to the FAO Conference (16th session) on its participation in the preparation of the UN Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 5 - 16 June, 1972). The FAO Conference recommended that a report be made to the FAO Council (59th session) on the implications of the recommendations of the Stockholm Conference on current and future FAO programmes (para. 303 of the Report of the 16th Session). It also recommended (para.307) that FAO should take "a leading role in the protection of the environment in the conservation of natural resources at international level and thereby assist in protecting the vital interests of agriculture, forestry and fisheries and their positive role for economic growth and improvement of the environment in developing countries".

(\*) The document is to be submitted to the forthcoming FAO Regional Conference, the 22nd session of the Programme Committee and 59th session of the FAO Council.

1.2 In line with the above recommendation, the FAO Secretariat actively participated in the preparation of the Conference and, in particular, assisted in drafting those parts of the Action Plan falling within the terms of reference and areas of work of the Organization. The FAO Committees on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries had the opportunity to comment on the relevant parts of this draft Action Plan before the Stockholm Conference and generally concurred with the proposed action. In these areas, the Conference made only a few amendments and additions to the draft Action Plan (mainly to broaden the scope of the recommendations and to stress the operational responsibilities of FAO). On the whole, the 114 member governments represented at the Stockholm Conference endorsed and recognized the need to strengthen the responsibilities of FAO in the fields of monitoring and management of natural resources and their related environmental aspects: out of the 108 substantive recommendations of the Action Plan 36 are addressed to FAO or mention FAO among the addressees.

## 2. Summary of the recommendations of concern to FAO

2.1 Although the present document is mostly concerned with the implications of the Stockholm Conference on specific aspects of the FAO Regular Programme, it should be stressed at the outset that the Conference duly distinguished in its Declaration between the environmental problems of affluent societies and those of the developing countries which are mostly caused by the state of underdevelopment itself. The Declaration stated that the environmental problems of developing countries "can best be remedied by accelerated development through the transfer of substantial quantities of financial and technological assistance...". The Conference accordingly made several general recommendations to international development assistance organizations to increase their assistance to developing countries with a view to solving their specific environmental problems in the context of their development efforts.

2.2 The Stockholm Conference did not attempt to cover all the fields where international action for protection of the environment is needed. It pointed out the areas where new action is required by the UN system or where a definite strengthening of the present level of on-going activities is necessary. In some cases, the recommendations involve both a reinforcement of existing activities and the addition of new activities (strengthening and broadening). The following is a summary of the areas covered by the recommendations concerning FAO with an indication of the type of action recommended:

### 2.3 Major areas covered by recommendations addressed to FAO

- (i) Acquisition of knowledge and transfer of experience on soil capabilities, degradation, conservation and restoration (strengthening and broadening).
- (ii) Information exchange, training and research on physical planning in rural areas in relation to environmental policies (mostly new).
- (iii) Stabilisation of marginal lands (strengthening).
- (iv) Conservation of genetic resources, including exploration and/or collection, surveys, inventories, evaluation, documentation and utilisation. This covers crops, livestock, forests, fish genetic resources (strengthening and broadening) and also insects, wildlife and micro-organisms (new).
- (v) Development and management of livestock (strengthening), including their related environmental aspects (new).
- (vi) Integrated pest control (strengthening) and reduction of harmful effects of agrochemicals (mostly new).
- (vii) Control and recycling of wastes in agriculture (mostly new).
- (viii) Basic and applied research, monitoring and information exchange activities on forest resources and their management, including related technical assistance aspects (strengthening).

(ix) Research and exchange of information on forest fires, pests and diseases (strengthening and broadening).

(x) Assessment of the economic value of wildlife, and monitoring the effects of pollutants on wildlife (new); training activities on wildlife and national park management (strengthening).

(xi) Protection of living aquatic resources and fisheries\* against environmental damage (mostly new) and related research activities in collaboration with other UN organizations where appropriate (strengthening).

(xii) Regional and global institutional machinery for rational management of fisheries with particular emphasis on fishery data and related scientific information (strengthening).

#### 2.4 Major areas covered by recommendations calling for FAO co-operation with other agencies

(i) Research and monitoring of food contamination (new, jointly with WHO); food control and food standards (strengthening, where appropriate jointly with WHO, including the Codex Alimentarius).

(ii) Research (strengthening) and monitoring (new) of pollution of the aquatic environment (in collaboration with the UN, other specialized agencies and joint bodies of the UN system).

(iii) Basic research on terrestrial ecosystem and ecological effects of natural resources management and pollutants (Man and Biosphere Programme - Unesco) (new).

(iv) Regional centres for training, research and information exchange on water resources management (new) and technical assistance in the field of water management (strengthening). These centres could be jointly established and sponsored by the UN bodies and UN specialized agencies concerned.

(v) Impact of environmental protection measures on international trade (GATT and other UN organizations concerned, new).

(vi) Study of regional environmental problems and related regional activities of planning, technical assistance and information exchange (new, in collaboration with regional organizations of the UN system and others).

(vii) Periodic reporting on the state of the environment at regional and global level (participation of FAO in a coordinated and UN system-wide reporting system, new).

#### 2.5 Institutional and financial arrangements

The Stockholm Conference recommended that, subject to approval by the General Assembly at its next session, the following institutional and financial arrangements be established.

\* A Governing Council for Environmental Programmes composed of 54 members, as an organ of the UN General Assembly and reporting annually to it through ECOSOC. The Governing Council will inter alia "provide general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the UN system".\*\*

- A "small" UN Environment Secretariat headed by an Executive Director, to service the above Governing Council and "coordinate environmental programmes within the UN system"\*\*\* and "to keep under review their implementation and assess their effectiveness".\*\*

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\* This also involves aquaculture.

\*\* Quotations from Final Report of the Stockholm Conference.

- An Environment Fund "to finance wholly or partly the costs of new environmental initiatives undertaken within the UN system"\* including those envisaged in the Action Plan. The Fund will be used essentially for programmes of general global or regional interest. Assistance to specific national programmes will continue to be financed mostly from existing sources of funds (UNDP, IBRD, etc.).

- An Environmental Coordinating Board under the ACC chaired by the Executive Director of the Environment Secretariat.

### 3. Proposed criteria for selection of priorities and implementation of recommendations

#### 3.1 Scope

The protection of the human environment is not a new separate field of activity of FAO but should be considered as forming an integral part of the mandate given to it by its constitution regarding the rational management and conservation of natural resources for agriculture, forestry and fisheries, the welfare of rural populations and the improvement of nutrition standards. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that the recommendations of the Stockholm Conference do not fall only within the scope of the Area of Emphasis "War on Waste" but of the other Areas of Emphasis as well. Priorities should therefore be defined among these recommendations, due account being taken of the field of competence of the Organization and of its other priorities, within the level of available resources.

3.2 Within its broad terms of reference it is proposed that FAO should essentially concern itself with the following "environmental/developmental" problems:

- the maintenance and enhancement of the capacity of the renewable natural resources for agriculture, forestry and fisheries, including the protection of these resources against various forms of environmental degradation, misuse, depletion, pollution, diseases and pests.
- the reduction of the harmful environmental effects arising from the process of food and agriculture production, including those adversely affecting the production process itself, the quality of food and other agricultural commodities and their trade, the consumer protection, rural life and the human environment in general.

#### 3.3 Functions

In the above areas it should be stressed that most of the action required should be taken at the local and national level. It is proposed therefore that FAO essentially perform the functions of a service organization facilitating at the regional and world-wide levels, the gathering and exchange of data and experience, promoting cooperative research, education and training and ensuring, in these areas also, the backstopping of its field programmes and projects of technical assistance to national environment activities. In addition, the Organization should provide the international forum for its member governments to assess common environmental problems related to agriculture, forestry, fisheries and nutrition, to harmonize national policies and plans and decide on international action and services to prevent and remedy these problems.

#### 3.4 Priorities

As to the priorities for the implementation of the recommendations of the Stockholm Conference their choice will be determined by the Director-General in the light of the orientations and guidance received successively from the relevant FAO Committees, the Regional Conferences and the FAO Council. The FAO Secretariat will then present specific proposals in this respect to the 17th session of the FAO Conference.

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\*Quotations from the Final Report of the Stockholm Conference.

In considering the summarized list of the areas covered by the Action Plan in Section 2 above, the following priority areas could be selected:

(i) Those areas of the Action Plan where FAO is already active and where the 16th FAO Conference recommended increased activities; for example 2.3 (i), (iii), (v), (viii) above

(ii) Those areas where action can serve both the requirements for development and those for environmental protection; in particular, those where action could assist in ensuring a sustained and enhanced productivity of the agriculture, forestry and fisheries of developing countries, minimize the adverse effects of environmental control on the economy and trading opportunities of these countries; and improving nutrition standards; for example 2.3 (iv), (vi), (xi) and 2.4 (i), (ii), (iv), (v) above.

(iii) Those areas where action could enable FAO to better assist its member governments in their new national effort for environment protection and in their participation in new international cooperation in this respect, especially in the field of research, monitoring, management of common resources, harmonization of standards and protection of the consumer; for example 2.3 (ii), (vii), (x), (xii) and 2.4 (i), (iii), (vi), (vii) above

### 3.5 Implementation

In the priority areas, the strengthening of the present level of activities would be mainly achieved by adding to the core of the general Regular Programme activities specific programme elements to be financed on a fixed-term basis by extra-budgetary sources of funds (mainly the Environment Fund). The impact of these additions to the Regular Programme itself would be mainly limited to the formulation, the overall supervision and coordination of these new programme elements. In some cases, however, where the recommendations of the Stockholm Conference call for a very substantial increase in the scale of FAO's present activities, the Regular Programme support would have to be increased accordingly insofar as resources permit.

### 4. Impact on current Regular Programme and Budget

At the time of preparation of this document, the institutional and financial arrangements recommended by the Stockholm Conference still have to be endorsed by the UN General Assembly (autumn 1972 session). It is unlikely, therefore, that the actual implementation of the Action Plan as a whole could start during the current biennium. However, the formulation of detailed programmes to be financed by the Environment Fund would presumably begin in 1973. This should be ensured by the Regular Programme staff as part of the Regular Programme formulation for 1974-75. In a few cases where the size of the new activities warrants it, short-term consultants may be required to advise on formulation and feasibility of the programmes (in particular, in the areas of monitoring of food contamination and possibly in the field of genetic resource conservation).

### 5. Impact on 1974-75 Regular Programme and Budget (\*)

As indicated in para. 3.5 above, the recommendations of the Stockholm Conference would mainly be implemented through the addition of programme elements to be financed by extra-budgetary sources of funds. Most of the recommendations would call for one of the following types of action:

- A technical consultation (consultant or expert panel) on a specific problem area, followed by a publication of findings and/or the formulation of a detailed programme.
- The gathering of additional environmental information, its inclusion in the FAO data systems (soil, fisheries, etc.) and the relevant improvement of data collection and processing procedures.

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(\*) The impact on the overall FAO policy and priorities for 1974-75 is discussed in the context of the Medium-Term Plan under section 6.

- The preparation of publications making a comparative study of methods, techniques and measures (including legal and institutional) to solve a particular environmental problem.
- Guidance on the establishment or strengthening of appropriate national and regional institutions and assistance in the formulation of their programmes.
- Preparation of guides, manuals and handbooks, training courses and other training courses and other training activities.

## 6. Impact on the Medium-Term Plan

6.1 Strategy. Besides introducing (adding) specific elements to the Regular Programme for 1974/75 and the next biennia, the recommendations of the Stockholm Conference may also progressively lead to some new orientations in the Medium-Term strategy for the development of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The formulation of specific programme elements will therefore need to be made in the context of these new orientations, and this also in line with the recommendations of the 16th FAO Conference (para. 305-306-307 of the Report). Some preliminary proposals regarding these new orientations are given below:

(i) More emphasis will need to be given to integrated natural resources assessment, management and use and to environmental considerations in development programmes, in perspective studies at country level and at regional and global levels, and international adjustments of food and agricultural production and of trade of agricultural commodities. This should aim particularly at the forecasting and prevention of major investments and changes in natural resources use.

(ii) In efforts to conserve natural resources and to protect the human environment more emphasis should be placed on sustained productivity (besides gross production increase) and on technical efficiency in the production process, i.e. controlled grazing, multiple cropping, etc.). This could be achieved by reducing wastage of resources and external inputs and utilizing by-products and recycling wastes. Fuller use should also be made of all the biological and ecological capabilities of natural resources under local conditions and of the local materials and local experience available, (i.e. diversification integrated land use).

(iii) Besides increasing yields and earning foreign exchange, the objectives of agricultural development should aim more and more at raising the standard of living of the producer himself and improving his working conditions as well as the overall quality of life in rural areas. This should assist, where necessary, in reducing the rate of rural exodus with all its subsequent social and environmental problems.

(iv) Apart from the development of favourable areas for intensive, specialized forms of agricultural production, which are increasingly dependent on the safe use of new technologies and on market conditions for their inputs and outputs, greater attention should be given to the less favourable environments particularly arid lands. This could lead to the development of improved systems of subsistence agriculture with a wider range of production and sources of income and with a higher rate of auto-consumption and self-supporting, labour-intensive production.

(v) The increasing rate of agricultural development, including the development of new resources, and use of new technologies, will call for an effort of unprecedented scale in research, education and training in order to ensure the safe use of these resources and new technologies under varying local ecological and socio-economic conditions. Improvement of the technical know-how of the millions of people engaged in food and agriculture production should be considered as a key element to avoid accelerated deterioration of productive resources, food contamination and other degradations of the environment.

6.2. Implications. The implementation of the above additional element of a Medium-Term strategy would mainly affect the field programmes for which the Organization is the executing agency. The Regular Programme support to these new orientations would consist mainly of an increase in the capabilities of the Organization in serving its member countries by providing basic data and other information for policy formulation and planning and by ensuring information exchange and transfer of experience in management of natural resources for agriculture, forestry and fisheries:

(i) In the field of policy formulation and planning, economic information on production, demands, markets, and their trends will need to be increasingly supplemented by and processed together with information on natural resources capabilities, natural resources use environmental damage, and other environmental problems. In so doing, the Organization should also become increasingly involved through interagency cooperation in an overall assessment and monitoring of the state of world resources and environment. Its role would be mainly confined to the rural and aquatic sectors of the environment and, in these sectors, to the planning and management of natural resources for agriculture, forestry and fisheries. To this end, the several data centres operated or coordinated by FAO should insofar as resources permit broaden their scope and become fully operational and be inter-connected and linked with national and regional systems of data collection and monitoring and also with other sectoral monitoring systems coordinated and/or operated by other UN agencies (WMO, WHO, etc.). This would involve a major effort in the development and standardization of methods of data collection and data analysis and an increasing use of computer facilities and remote sensing techniques. It would also require a corresponding effort in technical assistance and training to ensure the full participation of developing countries in such international activities.

(ii) In the field of management of natural resources for agriculture, forestry and fisheries, the following areas may receive increased attention during the Medium-Term Regular Programme activities:

(a) Research, information exchange, and assessment of risks regarding the processes of degradation of renewable resources affecting and/or caused by agriculture, forestry and fisheries, including the process of food contamination;

(b) Research and information exchange on management techniques to prevent or overcome environmental degradation caused by and related to agriculture, forestry and fisheries; including food.

(c) Assistance in developing and establishing guidelines, standards, appropriate legislation and institutions for environmental control and conservation of natural resources;

(d) Related education and training activities in the three above mentioned areas.

(iii) In addition, special international (regional or world-wide) emergency programmes would also be required to save some endangered resources (soils, some genetic resources, some fish stocks, afforestation, forest fire prevention and, locally, wildlife resource protection and natural ecosystems management).

## 7. Requirements for coordination

The above proposals will call for a closer cooperation of the different sectors of FAO involved and therefore for coordination. FAO may also become increasingly involved in the joint interagency activities recommended by the Action Plan of the Stockholm Conference, at both the regional and global levels. The required coordination will continue to be ensured through the IDWG on Natural Resources and the Human Environment which was established for this purpose by the Director-General in 1969. Additional organizational arrangements will need to be considered, if necessary, in the light of the recommendations the FAO Council will make as to the importance to be given to these activities in future FAO programmes.

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Item 14 (c) of the  
Provisional Agenda

IMPLICATIONS OF THE ACTION PLAN OF THE UN CONFERENCE ON THE  
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Corrigenda

On page 4, paragraph 3.2, the second sub-paragraph should read: "the maintenance and enhancement of the productive capacity of the renewable natural resources...."

On page 6, paragraph 6.1(i), the last sentence should read: "This should aim particularly at the forecasting and prevention of major environmental problems at the planning stage before decisions are taken on investments and changes in natural resources use."

Underlining denotes those words left out of the original English text.