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Organización
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Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Eighth Regular Session

Rome, 19 – 23 April 1999

REPORT OF THE FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE (25 – 29 January 1999)

The report includes matters of relevance to the Commission, especially in sections:

- IV. Biotechnology; and
- VII. Report of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

	Paragraphs
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 5
A. ELECTION OF OFFICERS	3 - 4
B. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND TIMETABLE FOR THE SESSION	5
II. REVIEW OF FAO'S PROGRAMME OF WORK IN THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SECTOR	6 - 40
A. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 1996-97	6 - 12
B. FAO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2000-2015 VERSIONS 1.0 AND 2.0	13 - 24
<i>General</i>	13
<i>Preliminary reactions to Version 2.0</i>	14 - 23
<i>Future developments</i>	24

C. MEDIUM-TERM PERSPECTIVES 2000-20054	25 - 40
III. MONITORING LAND AND FRESHWATER RESOURCES: QUALITY AND UTILIZATION	41 - 43
IV. BIOTECHNOLOGY	44 - 53
V. ORGANIC AGRICULTURE	54 - 60
VI. URBAN AND PERI-URBAN AGRICULTURE	61 - 64
VII. REPORT OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP FOR FARM ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE, ROME, 8-10 SEPTEMBER 1998	65 - 70
VIII. SPECIAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURE IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)	71 - 75
IX. OTHER BUSINESS AND DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION	76 - 79
A. OTHER BUSINESS	76 - 78
B. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION	79

INTRODUCTION

1. The Fifteenth Session (Rome, 25-29 January 1999) was attended by 104 representatives of the 120 Members of the Committee, and by observers from 4 other Member Nations of FAO. Also participating were observers from 1 United Nations Member State and the Holy See, representatives of 2 United Nations specialized agencies and observers from 26 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations having status with FAO, and from 2 institutes of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. The countries and organizations represented at the session are shown in Appendix C.
2. Mr. David A. Harcharik, Deputy Director-General, made a statement on behalf of the Director-General, which is attached as Appendix D.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

3. In accordance with Rule I of its Rules of Procedure, the Committee elected Mr. Humberto Molina Reyes (Chile) as Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Ronald Rose (Canada) as First Vice-Chairman and Mr. Khairuddin Md. Tahir (Malaysia) as Second Vice-Chairman.
4. The Committee appointed the following members to the Drafting Committee: Australia, Austria, Costa Rica, Finland, Germany, Iraq, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lesotho, Morocco, Pakistan, Tunisia, United States of America and Venezuela. Ms Hedwig Wögerbauer (Austria) was elected as Chairperson of the Drafting Committee.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND TIMETABLE FOR THE SESSION ¹

5. The Agenda and Timetable were approved without modification. The Agenda as adopted is set out in Appendix A and the List of Documents is given in Appendix B.

REVIEW OF FAO'S PROGRAMME OF WORK IN THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 1996-97 ²

6. The Committee found the Report concise and comprehensive, and welcomed the additional detail on the Internet. Several delegations proposed improvements for future biennia including redesign of the Report to address the strategic objectives in terms of outcomes and the merger of the PIR and Programme Evaluation Report. Members from different regions asked for programme implementation to be reported by region. In the case of reporting by region, the Committee was informed of the difficulties inherent in reporting financial information by this dimension; nevertheless this recommendation would be taken into account in the future.
7. The Committee expressed concern about the decrease in Regular Programme and extra-budgetary resources, which hindered the ability of the Organization to exercise its role in assisting Members to respond to the World Food Summit commitments. Several Members emphasized the importance of the Field Programme in providing an operational experience to enrich normative activities. Several other Members emphasized the importance of striking a balance between Field Programmes and normative activities. The Committee urged that stronger partnerships be forged with donors, UN agencies, international financial institutions and NGOs. Several delegations requested that regional offices devote a greater proportion of their allocations to direct support to

¹ COAG/99/1; COAG/99/2 Rev. 1

² COAG/99/3 (C 99/8)

member countries, including policy advice. Emphasizing the importance of TCP for the developing countries, several delegations requested for an increase in its allocation for the next biennium. Other delegations urged that the Regular Programme support to the Field Programme be significantly reduced.

8. The Committee acknowledged that the World Food Summit, held at the mid-point of the biennium under review, was an important milestone in raising awareness on the issues of global food security and eradicating hunger and malnutrition, and had established guidelines for FAO activities in this regard. It welcomed the heightened profile of the Organization's work and urged continued efforts to further publicize its achievements. Referring to the World Food Summit Plan of Action, the Committee stressed the importance of activities to alleviate poverty through sustainable rural development. It recalled the fulfilment of the commitment of Members to national actions which would require investment, capacity building, research and access to technology. There was a proposal that work related to further clarifying the concept of the Right to Food be highlighted in the Report.

9. The Committee noted the Organization's role in emergency preparedness and early warning. It also drew particular attention to FAO's work on integrated pest management, disease eradication, and the conservation, development and management of soil and water resources. It appreciated the contribution of EMPRES in mitigating outbreaks of animal and plant transboundary diseases including Rinderpest in Africa and the eradication of tsetse fly in Zanzibar. The Committee recognized the Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources as an important achievement, and requested that information be provided on the progress of the Plan of Action to Members of the Committee on Agriculture. It endorsed the need for a coherent programme on genetic resource utilization including effective use of plant breeding and advice on seed policies and programmes. The Committee also noted increasing work on farm animal genetic resources. It also recalled agreements on phytosanitary measures which facilitate trade and development. It highlighted efforts to promote efficient marketing services and information systems, and to reduce post harvest losses.

10. The Committee recognized the importance of work undertaken on agricultural commodity trade, standard setting, and analysis of the impact of the Uruguay Round on Food Security. These activities were in accord with the priorities established by the World Food Summit. In this connection, it endorsed the priority given to Codex Alimentarius and confirmed the importance of technical assistance to developing countries in trade-related matters including for capacity building in food safety and for preparation for the next round of multilateral trade negotiations.

11. The Committee stressed that gender issues should be mainstreamed in all FAO programmes, and recommended that attention be given to gender analysis and the development of gender disaggregated statistics. Some Members would have appreciated more complete and systematic reporting on gender in the PIR. The Committee emphasized the importance of technology development and transfer for the attainment of food security and endorsed the approach adopted in this regard.

12. The Committee welcomed the more balanced approach adopted for SPFS through activities which benefited marginal areas and resource-poor farmers. Some delegations suggested an increased allocation of resources for SPFS. Others requested a clearer distinction between those resources allocated to TCP and SPFS respectively. Several delegations proposed that the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the SPFS be appraised.

FAO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2000-2015 VERSIONS 1.0 AND 2.0³*General*

13. The Committee noted that Version 2.0 had only recently been distributed and therefore that Members' comments on it must necessarily be of a preliminary nature. The Committee recalled that the Strategic Framework was expected to give the broad picture of FAO's action over the longer-term horizon. The Medium-Term Plan would more particularly focus on the submission of fully substantiated entities (i.e. technical projects, continuing programme activities and technical service agreements). Such entities would, to the extent feasible and appropriate, be defined with precise time-bound objectives with identified outputs and attendant resource implications as well as the intended users. In addition, effectiveness criteria and indicators would be defined and would constitute the prime basis for accountability and post-facto evaluation.

Preliminary reactions to Version 2.0

14. The Committee appreciated the improved presentation and conciseness of Version 2.0, and considered that it represented a substantial improvement on Version 1.0, both in presentation and in content. It welcomed the emphasis on inter-disciplinarity and partnerships, and the additional information provided on both, as well as the treatment of cross-organizational issues. Some Members proposed that an Executive Summary could be a useful addition to the next version.

15. The Committee noted with interest the statements of values, mission and vision for the Organization, as provided in Part I, *Overall Strategic Framework*. It encouraged further refinement of these statements in the light of comments received. Some Members noted that the proposed mission statement was based on the proposed objectives, and requested a more succinct formulation.

16. The Committee appreciated that Part II, *Corporate Strategies*, in addition to the five strategies to address Members' needs, now also incorporated six proposed strategies to address six key cross-organizational issues. The addition of the strategy entitled: *Communicating FAO's messages*, was welcomed. The importance given to *Leveraging Resources for FAO and its Members* was also supported by many Members.

17. The Committee recalled that during previous discussions of the Strategic Framework various options had been examined with a view to rearranging and/or merging of the different strategies to address Members' needs. The Committee considered that the current presentation would provide a good basis for further refinement. In this connection, the Committee stressed that, while the perception of relative importance of the proposed objectives necessarily varied among individual countries or regions, it was important to bear in mind that the sequence of presentation of corporate strategies and component strategic objectives did not imply any order of priority.

18. During the discussion, Members provided specific suggestions for changes, improvements and ways of sharpening focus, as well as stressing areas they felt deserved more coverage, including in particular the need for a regional perspective. Some Members stressed their expectation of seeing greater clarity in the description of the role FAO was expected to play in specific areas, whether as a leader or as a facilitator of actions by others. Other Members expressed their desire to see a more explicit connection with the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the World Food Summit.

19. The Committee noted that the Secretariat, in further elaborating the strategies, would be taking account of the suggestions from Members and of those partners to which the Strategic Framework had been sent for comments. In this regard, it drew attention to the need to remove

³ COAG/99/4 (CL 115/12); COAG/99/5

ambiguities in the use of terminology, as well as to ensure consistency with closely related formulations in other internationally agreed texts.

20. The Committee noted that the document could reflect only in abbreviated manner the analytical work carried out within the Secretariat to prepare the draft, and that in line with the guidance provided by the Council for Version 2.0 much of the supporting material had been moved from the body of the text into an annex. The Committee recognized that the trends indicated in Annex II were fully pertinent, but that the brief formulations could not do justice to all underlying issues and the differing perceptions of various regions and countries.

21. The Committee welcomed the additional explanations provided in Annex II concerning comparative advantages and criteria for priority-setting. Some Members felt that the definition of specific comparative advantages needed to spell out the relative roles of potential and actual partners. The Committee noted the importance of comparative advantage as a key criterion for priority-setting. Some Members felt that the Organization's ability to act on gaps in provision of relevant services should be considered. The Committee stressed that addressing the effective requirements of the membership, taking into account an appropriate balance between normative and field activities, should continue to be a paramount consideration.

22. In appreciating the more detailed information on external partnerships provided in Annex III, the Committee noted the accent placed, both in the text and the annex, on dovetailing of action at country level with that of other organizations. In this connection, it stressed the importance of the UN reform process for work being carried out at national level, *inter alia* through the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs).

23. More generally, the Committee recalled the importance given by FAO Governing Bodies to ensuring and maintaining close relationships and alliances with all external partners, including UN system entities and NGOs. It welcomed the emphasis placed in the document on the strengthening of links, and potential for synergy, among the four Rome-based organizations –FAO, WFP, IFAD and IPGRI – for food and agricultural development.

Future developments

24. The Committee recalled that, at the conclusion of consideration of Version 2.0 by the Technical Committees of the Council, the Secretariat would prepare a third version, which would be examined by the Programme and Finance Committees and the Council in May and June 1999 respectively. It was noted that, as mentioned in Resolution 6/97, the Strategic Framework was to have an Implementation Programme, which would be outlined in the future version. The Committee noted that criteria for priority-setting would be included in the Framework, to provide a useful tool for decision making in the medium-term planning process, which would follow the adoption of the Framework by the Conference in November 1999.

MEDIUM-TERM PERSPECTIVES 2000-2005⁴

25. The Committee complimented the Secretariat on a concise and informative document. It appreciated the interdisciplinary approach adopted for analyzing priority and cross-cutting issues.

26. The Committee endorsed generally the six priority areas expected to guide the work of the Departments over the medium-term. Delegations highlighted common normative areas considered fundamental to the three Departments – emergency preparedness; international fora for discussion and agreements; standard setting; regulatory frameworks; and, data and information systems.

⁴ COAG/99/6

Some delegations considered that employment creation and poverty alleviation should not be viewed as priority areas, *per se*, but as results to which priority areas should contribute.

27. The Committee acknowledged the continuing pressure on financial resources and welcomed the focussing of priorities on core competency and comparative advantage. It agreed that the Departments should build networks with partners in FAO, the UN system, governments, NGOs and the private sector for complementary actions. In this connection, the Committee requested information in future meetings on complementary activities of WAICENT and the Investment Centre.

28. The Committee was informed of FAO's cooperation with the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Right to Food, and asked FAO to provide its support for the efforts of the High Commissioner on this issue.

29. The Committee emphasized the need for a complementary and synergistic nature of operational and normative work, and stressed the importance of a balance. It was emphasized that operational activities, such as technology transfer, training and policy advice, have an important role at the regional and country levels.

30. The Committee generally endorsed the seven medium-term objectives proposed for the Agriculture Department, in line with the comments noted in paragraph 26. The Committee called on the Organization to give prominence to research and technology generation and transfer on improved agriculture production methods, seed production, and soil and water management. Noting that sustainable intensification of natural resource use was a precondition for increased production, the Committee requested that more attention be given to sustainable crop and livestock production systems on rain-fed and marginal lands.

31. The Committee highlighted the challenge to assist small farmers in the context of globalization, market-oriented agriculture, trade liberalization, and new communications methods. Some Members recommended attention to: prevention of post harvest losses; sustainable market-oriented production systems with due consideration for subsistence needs of farm families; and value-added processing in small and medium enterprise development with links to national and international markets. Others requested more information on the work of the Joint FAO/IAEA Division, including work on biotechnology.

32. The Committee confirmed the importance of FAO's work on conservation and utilization of genetic resources for food and agriculture as a key component of sustainable production increases.

33. The Committee highlighted the key role of plant, animal and commodity protection in production efficiency and product quality. It endorsed the priority given to pest and disease prevention including IPM, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), and the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent (PIC), noting the need for adequate Regular Programme resource allocation to the interim PIC secretariat.

34. The Committee generally endorsed the six domains proposed for the Economic and Social Department drawing attention to four priority areas.

35. The development and maintenance of comprehensive statistical systems at the international and national levels, including gender disaggregated statistics, were considered fundamental. Monitoring, assessment and outlook studies, building on this information, as well as commodity intelligence work, was important. The Committee highlighted the importance of FIVIMS for addressing food insecurity and vulnerability issues at the national and international levels and encouraged that its work be accelerated.

36. The Committee endorsed the priority given to work on food standards, quality control and consumer protection at global and national levels. Work on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

and Technical Barriers to Trade was recognized as important for enhancing agricultural commodity trade. Particular attention was drawn to the development of science-based food standards and to microbiological risks.

37. The Committee attributed high priority to the collection, collation and interchange of agricultural commodity information, the analysis of trade issues, and the provision of policy advice as follow-up to the Uruguay Round. The Committee supported greater attention being given to technical assistance and training to strengthen the capacities of developing countries to become well informed and equal partners in the forthcoming agricultural trade negotiations.

38. The Committee accorded priority to work on emergencies encompassing preparedness, early warning, effective response within its mandate, and agricultural sector rehabilitation. It considered that FAO's comparative advantage lay in its ability to draw on a wide range of disciplines, including those in the AG and SD Departments. The need for close coordination with WFP, IFAD and other UN and bilateral/NGO agencies was emphasized.

39. The Committee generally supported the four medium-term objectives of the SD Department, but cautioned against overlap between the activities of the AG and SD Departments. The Committee noted the Organization-wide responsibilities of the SD Department resulting from international conventions and recommended that sufficient emphasis be given to UNCED follow-up and the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

40. The Committee endorsed SD's role and priorities in strengthening agricultural research, including support to CGIAR and TAC secretariat and NARS, development of sustainability indicators, the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and food security in rural areas, and on mainstreaming of gender issues and WID. Some delegations recommended that consideration be given to housing the Secretariat of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in the SD Department since it was noted that eventually forestry and fishery genetics would be incorporated. The Committee supported the FAO/Netherlands Technical Conference on the Multifunctional Character of Agriculture and Land to be held in September 1999.

MONITORING LAND AND FRESHWATER RESOURCES: QUALITY AND UTILIZATION ⁵

41. The Committee recognized the priority of land and water resources assessment and monitoring, as well as FAO's significant role, in close cooperation with other agencies. Accordingly priority should be given to allocating Regular Programme resources to the programme of monitoring land and freshwater resources. The Committee emphasized the establishment of guidelines, data standards and methods, and the need to enhance capacity building by FAO to ensure harmonized global data collection and monitoring. Some countries pointed to the need for intensified coordination and cooperation with other agencies to avoid overlaps and develop cost effective approaches and systems where FAO has comparative advantages. Some countries emphasized the continued need for direct assistance from FAO in setting up national systems and in establishing relevant and globally networked data and information systems.

42. The Committee agreed on the preparation of periodic reports on the State of The World's Land and Water Resources and FAO's participation in the preparation of a periodic World Water Development Report.

43. The Committee noted that FAO provides technical assistance in order to improve management and conservation of land and water resources.

⁵ COAG/99/7

BIOTECHNOLOGY ⁶

44. The Committee noted that biotechnology offers considerable potential and opportunity, and also presents risks. It is an area where there is a growing gap between developing and developed countries.

45. The Committee recommended that FAO develop a strategic approach to biotechnology and give high priority to a coordinated cross-sectoral programme.

46. The Committee recommended that FAO undertake activities in the various areas of its mandate including information-exchange, capacity-building and policy-advice to Members; all three are important in helping developing countries realize the potential benefits of biotechnology, while managing risks. FAO should address biotechnology further, in accordance with its mandate. The trade and plant and animal health, implications of biotechnology developments should also be analyzed. The Committee recommended that FAO develop partnerships with the international agricultural research centres, the National Agricultural Research Systems and other international organizations.

47. The Committee recognized that the issues of genetic resources and biotechnology are complementary. It expressed support for the ongoing negotiations in the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) on the revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

48. The Committee emphasized FAO's role in developing international agreements to minimize the risks while maximizing the benefits of biotechnology. It was acknowledged that risk assessment ought to be carried out on a case-by-case basis. In this context, the Draft Code of Conduct on Biotechnology, still under development in the CGRFA, was mentioned. Some countries favoured a strictly science-based approach, while other countries wanted to take other factors into consideration.

49. The Committee recommended that FAO monitor developments in the CBD negotiations, to help ensure that agricultural expertise is available to implement the Biosafety Protocol, once finalized. In this context, several countries requested FAO's help in drafting national biosafety legislation and setting up their regulatory bodies. The Committee recommended that FAO help harmonize regulations at the regional and sub-regional levels. Therefore, FAO should continue and reinforce its normative and advisory work, in coordination with other agencies.

50. The Committee noted the difficulties that developing countries and 'countries in transition' face in conducting risk-analysis in relation to genetically modified organisms. This risk analysis may call for international standard-setting and harmonization. Such harmonization is an integral part of existing pest and phytosanitary risk-analysis programmes, and of risk analysis in relation to human health sanitary measures, as called for in the World Trade Organization Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. Expanded risk-analysis harmonization may build on the existing programmes in Codex Alimentarius and the International Plant Protection Convention, within recognized frameworks. The Committee noted that the effort for harmonization should not duplicate the content of the Biosafety Protocol.

51. The Committee noted the importance of actively considering the labelling of foods containing the products of biotechnology, in the context of consumers' health-protection and trade. It welcomed the Codex Alimentarius Commission's work on this.

52. The Committee noted the importance of agricultural research and adequate extension systems, as well as of regional and sub-regional biotechnology networks, in facilitating cooperation

⁶ COAG/99/8

at all levels. FAO was requested to assist Members in building the technical capacity to deal with biotechnology. Some countries, noting the importance of biotechnology, especially tissue culture, in seed and plant materials, stressed the need for making them affordable for farmers.

53. The "terminator technology" was mentioned as an example of a biotechnology that may have wide implications for agriculture, and that needed careful attention. The Committee stressed FAO's role in providing a forum for countries to monitor food and agriculture biotechnologies.

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE ⁷

54. The Committee on Agriculture confirmed that organic agriculture's increased momentum is due to consumer demand and to positive environmental impact. It noted that the practices associated with organic agriculture as an example of traditional agricultural knowledge merit further research and development. The Committee concurred that many aspects of organic farming were important elements of a systems approach to sustainable food production, including in developing countries, both for domestic consumption and export.

55. The on-going work of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling to develop a single definition and harmonized procedures for organic agriculture, to be adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission in June 1999, was discussed. It was recommended that the discussion of standards for food production, processing, labelling and marketing takes place in the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

56. The environmental and potential health benefits of organic agriculture and its contribution of innovative production technologies to other agriculture systems and to the overall goals of sustainability were recognized. In particular, the importance of broadening the genetic base and applying ecological principles to agriculture were emphasized.

57. A few concerns were expressed as regards the ability of organic agriculture to respond to increased food needs, and some countries suggested that the contribution of organic agriculture to food security be evaluated. Further specific studies were suggested including on gender, labour aspects, potential for tropical environments, alternative utilization of organic matter, scenarios for future supply-demand relationships and the comparative long-term performance of conventional and organic agricultural systems. Projects should draw on existing financial resources (including TCP) and, if necessary, support should be sought from other sources.

58. It was agreed that FAO's work on organic agriculture be undertaken in collaboration with existing public and private institutions such as national and international agricultural research centres, national programmes, consumers' associations and competent NGOs such as IFOAM. The catalytic role of the Sustainable Development Department, to promote and coordinate technical divisions' work, was recognized.

59. The Committee requested that FAO assist developing countries to access international markets through technical information on production requirements, trade information on market opportunities and capacity building. Specific assistance was requested to develop appropriate national legislation, certification capabilities, research and extension (following, for example, the Farmer Field School model) and to promote exchange of experiences between countries. It was agreed that FAO had a beneficial role to play in policy analysis and advice, facilitation of research and extension, information exchange, and technical assistance for organic agriculture.

60. The Committee supported the proposal to give the practices associated with organic agriculture a place within sustainable agriculture programmes. It endorsed the development of an

⁷ COAG/99/9

Organization-wide, and cross-sectoral programme in organic agriculture, while maximizing the use of existing mechanisms.

URBAN AND PERI-URBAN AGRICULTURE⁸

61. The Committee welcomed the timely selection of urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) for its consideration. The Committee noted that UPA is a complex array of diverse food production activities, including fisheries and forestry, in many cities in both developing and developed countries, including countries in transition. The Committee pointed out that UPA contributes to food security, employment and income, and nutrition of urban dwellers. It noted that UPA may complement, but does not replace rural agriculture .

62. The Committee acknowledged FAO's established expertise and capacity in providing technical support and policy advice to countries with needs in this area. It recommended that FAO develop an interdisciplinary and inter-departmental programme on UPA. FAO's UPA activities within and outside the Organization should focus on areas of its comparative advantage, and FAO should interact in a complementary manner with other UN organizations, local grassroots organizations, NGOs, and other organizations. These activities should lead to an improved understanding of the benefits and risks inherent in UPA and provide a knowledge base on the issues, enabling FAO to provide guidance and assistance to member countries, in active cooperation with existing international networks.

63. The Committee recognized several areas of focus for FAO in its work on UPA, such as: the health and sanitary implications of UPA; the land use dynamics caused by the encroachment of urban areas into agricultural areas; the interdependencies between rural and UPA; the credit and other input constraints of poor urban and peri-urban farmers; integrated crop and animal production systems; the involvement of women in UPA; and the associated requirements for marketing and distribution.

64. Interventions from observer organizations emphasized the broad spectrum of UPA activities underway in the international arena and the role that FAO can play in this context.

⁸ COAG/99/10

OTHER MATTERS**REPORT OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL
WORKING GROUP ON ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE,
ROME, 8-10 SEPTEMBER 1998⁹**

65. The report of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was introduced by its Chair, Dr Elzbieta Martyniuk. The Committee recognized that this first session of the Group contributed to the further development of the Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources, as requested by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and was in line with Resolution 3/95 of the FAO Conference.

66. The Committee endorsed the report of the Working Group and fully supported the recommendations therein.

67. The Committee encouraged Member States to meet their responsibilities to sustainably utilize and conserve farm animal genetic resources. It agreed that the Global Strategy would provide the framework for international cooperation and should underpin and guide national efforts. Accordingly, the Committee agreed on the urgent need for the development of guidelines, in consultation with countries, to be used in the preparation of the Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources.

68. The Committee recognized the importance of developing regional potential and capacity for the management of animal genetic resources, in order to increase cost-efficiency and cooperation. The importance of further involving the scientific community and NGOs in the development and implementation of the Global Strategy was underlined. The significance of conserving endangered farm animal species was also stressed. The Committee emphasized the importance of understanding and utilizing indigenous breeds, and the role of local knowledge in this regard.

69. Some Members asked FAO to seek extra-budgetary resources required to conduct the core country, regional and global activities associated with the further development of the Global Strategy; including for preparation of a country-driven Report on the State of the World's Farm Animal Genetic Resources.

70. The Committee considered Members, through the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, should guide and monitor the development of the Global Strategy. The Committee also noted the need to ensure that animal genetic resources management is well integrated with other FAO activities concerning the sustainable intensification of livestock systems, and consequently asks to be kept informed of progress made.

⁹ COAG/99/11

SPECIAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURE IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)¹⁰

71. The strategies for addressing issues and constraints facing the agriculture sector of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) were discussed. The Committee considered that the paper COAG/99/12 should have addressed more specifically the following issues: food security, poverty, sustainable livelihood, trade and marketing, sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, farmer participation, gender, agricultural linkages with tourism, environmental degradation, climate change, and natural hazards. The use of a vulnerability index was proposed to better evaluate SIDS' problems. The need for clearly identifying the distinguishing aspects of SIDS was stressed. The Secretariat informed the Committee that most of these issues were in fact addressed in the background documentation prepared for the Ministerial Conference.

72. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the generous offer by the Government of Australia to fund participation of representatives of SIDS from the Pacific Island region. An appeal was made to other countries to add their support, to make the Conference a success.

73. The Committee endorsed the initiative to hold a Special Ministerial Conference on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States in FAO in March 1999. The Conference would be an important contribution to the problems and specific challenges facing SIDS. It also represents a significant contribution to the April 1999 meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development which will prepare for the Special Session of the September 1999 UN General Assembly on the Sustainable Development of SIDS.

74. Many Members regretted that the Conference will be only one day and that the background documents will be in one language only. The Secretariat informed the Committee that limited resources were the main constraint. However, the draft Plan of Action, to be discussed at the Conference, will be available in the five FAO official languages. This Plan of Action will also be presented at the UN-sponsored meeting of SIDS with prospective donors, 24-26 February 1999.

75. The Committee requested that FAO coordinate its activities with those of other UN bodies which will be convening meetings on SIDS during 1999. The Committee noted that consultation also includes the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). It recommended that FAO coordinate also with the major financial institutions for the implementation of the Plan of Action. Some delegates stressed the importance of FAO strengthening its activities in training, human resources, and advice, for SIDS.

OTHER BUSINESS AND DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION

OTHER BUSINESS

76. The Representative of Colombia made a statement regarding the tragedy that had struck his country, with the earthquake of 25 January 1999, and made a request, on behalf of his Government, for the solidarity of the international community. The Committee expressed its support for, solidarity with, and commitment to, the people and the Government of Colombia. The Government of Colombia was invited to approach FAO for assistance. FAO was requested to respond in accordance with its mandate and in consultation with the UN Community.

77. It was pointed out that the information which had been presented under Agenda Item 7 on Biotechnology had been most valuable, and suggested that future Sessions of the Committee might incorporate briefings on matters not requiring decisions, such as biotechnology and organic agriculture. It was further suggested that the agenda of future sessions of the Committee might include items on information technology and extension systems and on post harvest processing.

¹⁰ COAG/99/12; COAG/99/12 Corr. 1

78. The importance of the Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme (GREP) as outlined in document COAG/99/Inf.2 was noted, as this disease was a significant threat to food security.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION

79. The Committee noted that its Sixteenth Session would be held at FAO Headquarters in Rome in approximately two years' time. The Director-General, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, would determine the exact date, taking into account the overall meeting schedule both of the Organization and of other Rome-based agencies.