

Report of the

**EIGHTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

Rome, 8-17 July 1986



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

FAO Member Nations in the Asia Region (at 17 July 1986)

Bangladesh	Japan	Philippines
Bhutan	Korea, Republic of	Samoa
Burma	Laos	Sri Lanka
China	Malaysia	Thailand
Democratic Kampuchea	Maldives	Tonga
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Mongolia	United Kingdom
Fiji	Nepal	Vanuatu
India	Pakistan	Viet Nam
Indonesia	Papua New Guinea	

FAO Member Nations in the Southwest Pacific Region

Australia	New Zealand	Tonga
Cook Islands	Papua New Guinea	United Kingdom
Fiji	Samoa	United States of America
France	Solomon Islands	Vanuatu

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for Asia and the Pacific

First	— Bangalore, India, 27 July-5 August 1953
Second	— Kandy, Ceylon, 20-25 June 1955
Third	— Bandung, Indonesia, 8-18 October 1956
Fourth	— Tokyo, Japan, 6-16 October 1958
Fifth	— Saigon, Republic of Viet Nam, 21-30 November 1960
Sixth	— Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 15-29 September 1962
Seventh	— Manila, Philippines, 7-21 November 1964
Eighth	— Seoul, Republic of Korea, 15-24 September 1966
Ninth	— Bangkok, Thailand, 4-15 November 1968
Tenth	— Canberra, Australia, 27 August-8 September 1970
Eleventh	— New Delhi, India, 17-27 October 1972
Twelfth	— Tokyo, Japan, 17-27 September 1974
Thirteenth	— Manila, Philippines, 5-13 August 1976
Fourteenth	— Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 25 July-3 August 1978
Fifteenth	— New Delhi, India, 5-13 March 1980
Sixteenth	— Jakarta, Indonesia, 1-11 June 1982
Seventeenth	— Islamabad, Pakistan, 24 April-3 May 1984
Eighteenth	— Rome, Italy, 8-17 July 1986

APRC/86/REP

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SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

FAO's Programme in the Region

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

1. recommended that Member Governments pursue diversification of agricultural economies, including diversification of cropping patterns, introduction of fish farming and livestock along with crop production, agro-forestry and agro-industry (para. 87).
2. suggested that Member Governments take measures to allocate some minimum funds within their national budgets in order to participate in various TCDC activities, in view of the immense scope and need for promotion of TCDC in the Region (para. 89).
3. stressed that in order to promote equity along with agricultural growth, the concern for the development of small farmers and other target groups such as rural women and artisanal fishermen should be increasingly incorporated into various relevant programmes and activities, such as promotion of institutional credit, input delivery, extension, marketing, social forestry and aquaculture (para. 90).
4. stressed the need to optimize fertilizer use and recommended that countries give high priority to research and development in the economic use of fertilizers (para. 92).
5. urged Member Governments to give priority to the development of agro-industry and to improving agricultural marketing (para. 99).
6. urged Member Governments which have not yet joined CIRDAP, to take steps, where appropriate, towards this end (para. 101).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

7. endorsed FAO's Programme of Work for 1986-87 in the Region, including the following five priority areas which characterize FAO's work (paras. 84 and 86):
 - (i) promotion of TCDC in the Asia-Pacific Region;
 - (ii) promotion of equity along with agricultural growth;

- (iii) development of rainfed and other problem areas;
 - (iv) diversification of agricultural economies of the developing countries of the Region;
 - (v) agricultural development of small island countries of the Region.
8. requested FAO to provide suitable assistance and support towards the diversification of all aspects of agricultural economies (para. 87).
 9. supported the priority given by FAO to the development of agriculture in small island countries of the Region located in the South Pacific and South Asia, particularly to the development of root and tuber crops, coconut, goat husbandry, forestry and fisheries. The Conference also suggested that FAO should follow-up its earlier initiative in helping these countries to explore the possibility of introducing cereal crops such as rice paddy; to give due support to activities concerned with rural women; and to pay increased attention to the development of statistical systems in these small island countries (para. 88).
 10. endorsed the high priority given by FAO to TCDC activities and agreed, for this purpose, to make use of the various FAO-established regional commissions, FAO-sponsored regional bodies and the networks already promoted by the Organization (para. 89).
 11. recommended that FAO provide technical assistance at country level for ecological zone studies to promote optimum resource utilization along with preservation of the environment (para. 91).
 12. endorsed FAO's proposal to utilize the Regional Cooperative Network on Organic Recycling for dissemination of information and experience in improving soil fertility through organic recycling and biological nitrogen fixation (para. 93).
 13. recommended that FAO document the experiences of some countries in participatory management by farmers' associations in irrigation projects (para. 94).
 14. requested FAO to give priority to the development of rainfed farming systems, including research on harvesting and recycling of rainwater, measures for moisture conservation and development of appropriate crops and cropping patterns (para. 95).
 15. recommended that FAO give priority in assisting the countries in the research and development of oil-bearing crops, pulses and other crops suited to various soils and that it promote regional cooperation in the development and transfer of appropriate technologies (para. 96).

16. noted the significant and increasingly important role of sericulture in the Region and endorsed the proposed expanded activities of the Regional Sericulture Training Institute (para. 98).
17. requested FAO to undertake case studies of successful agricultural marketing systems in the Region and to disseminate the information to interested countries (para. 99).
18. recommended that FAO assist selected countries to promote better utilization of straw, crop residues and agro-industrial by-products as livestock feed (para. 100).
19. urged FAO to continue its support to CIRDAF in promoting integrated rural development (para. 101).
20. requested FAO to assist member countries in introducing regulatory measures and improved stock management techniques to reduce fishing intensity (para. 102).
21. requested FAO to assist member countries within the framework of TCDC to properly utilize the rich potential of coastal and inland water resources (para. 103).
22. requested FAO to intensify activities for regional cooperation in fish disease control (para. 104).
23. endorsed the proposed activities of FAO to promote community forestry activities which generate rural income and employment (para. 105).

Food Security with Special Reference to Access on the Part of
Vulnerable Sections

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

24. recommended that Member Governments give high priority to research and development of rainfed farming systems (para. 114).
25. called upon the South Pacific countries to improve roots and tubers production through TCDC and, for this purpose, to participate in the forthcoming Expert Consultation on Tropical Vegetables Production in Asia and the Pacific (including Roots and Tubers), to be held in Bangkok in September 1986 (para. 115).

26. recommended that Member Governments establish or strengthen national early warning systems according to the guidelines already developed by FAO in collaboration with member countries (para. 119).
27. invited countries susceptible to severe weather aberrations and other natural disasters to give high priority to increasing preparedness for acute food shortages. In this regard, special attention needs to be paid to strengthen planning, research and development in contingency crop production (para. 121).
28. recommended that low-income developing countries planning to improve access to food by vulnerable sections through consumer subsidies, should do so through targeted programmes designed specifically to reach the hardcore poor (para. 125).
29. recommended that Member Governments identify vulnerable sections according to composite criteria and develop the necessary surveillance system to register and monitor them on a household basis (para. 126).
30. recommended that Member Governments expand target group feeding programmes and strengthen planning and implementation, particularly to improve cost-effectiveness of the programmes and to ensure that the supplementary feeding is a net addition to the food intake of the recipients (para. 127).
31. recommended that Member Governments expand food for work programmes and strengthen planning and implementation, particularly to introduce longer-term programming, to ensure availability of a shelf of sound projects for implementation as needed, and to improve cost-effectiveness (para. 128).
32. invited Member Governments to continuously monitor, evaluate and improve food intervention programmes and introduce research and training components within them to ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness (para. 129).
33. urged Member Governments which had not joined the Regional Commission on Food Security for Asia and the Pacific and the Association of Food Marketing Agencies in Asia and the Pacific, to do so in order to expand and strengthen TCDC in the Region (para. 130).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

34. recommended that international and regional organizations dealing with research give high priority to research and development of rainfed

farming systems (para. 114).

35. recommended that FAO should continue to give high priority and provide assistance to countries in the Region in the determination of optimum national reserve stock levels (para. 116).
36. requested FAO to assist South Asian countries to bring into operation the proposed South Asian Food Security Reserve (para. 117).
37. recommended that FAO continue in its efforts to assist developing countries to improve foodgrain stock management and logistics, particularly in the crucial aspects of foodgrain management information systems, cost accounting, storage administration, and transportation programming (para. 118).
38. agreed that a FAO regional workshop to develop guidelines for establishing national vulnerable group identification systems would be useful (para. 126).

Institutional Credit for Small Farmers

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

39. recommended that Member Governments ensure that small farmers' share in institutional investment credit be broadly proportionate to their share of crop land, and that the small farmers' share of short-term seasonal credit should be proportionately higher (para. 133).
40. suggested that Member Governments devise suitable measures for establishing operational links between institutional credit and supporting services, including provision of credit facilities for storage and marketing where necessary (para. 134).
41. invited Member Governments to assess the relevance of promoting informal groups as part of an overall programme for expanding institutional credit through positive discrimination in favour of small farmers, including the landless, artisans, fishermen and rural women (para. 135).
42. recommended that Member Governments strengthen/reorient cooperatives to provide increased access on the part of small farmers to the membership and decision-making organs of cooperatives; relax minimum share holding requirements for borrowing, and where necessary, give priority and ration credit in favour of small farmers (para. 136).
43. recommended that commercial banks be required to ensure that a reasonable proportion of their agricultural credit portfolio is earmarked for small farmers. Proper utilization of such funds should be ensured by the banks in consultation with relevant agencies dealing with agriculture and small

farmers (para. 137).

44. suggested that Member Governments adopt strong measures to reduce loan arrears so as to ensure that they do not reduce the flow of agricultural credit (para. 138).
45. recommended that Member Governments provide special financial supports/ incentives to credit institutions for advancing more liberal credit to small farmers. Such support may take the form of guarantee-cum-risk funds or bad-debt grants (para. 139).
46. recommended that Member Governments adopt measures to establish monitoring and evaluation systems that analyse, on a disaggregated basis, data on credit operations, particularly in terms of fresh loans disbursed in the course of the year (para. 141).
47. suggested that Member Governments in the Region furnish relevant information to FAO to enable the Organization to issue a periodical regional publication on the status of agricultural credit in general and small farmer credit in particular (para. 142).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

48. requested FAO to document, for use by Member Governments, selected successful cases concerning operational links between institutional credit and supporting services, including provision of credit facilities for storage and marketing (para. 134).
49. requested FAO to document experiences of organization and working of informal groups of small farmers concerning institutional credit (para. 135).
50. recommended that FAO document the successful experiences of selected cooperatives in the Region for use by Member Governments (para. 136).
51. suggested that FAO might take steps to document the experiences of developing countries in the Region with a view to exploring the possibility of expansion of crop insurance on a wider scale (para. 140).
52. recommended that FAO assist Member Governments with the design and establishment of suitable credit management information systems, where appropriate, utilizing microcomputers at the local level (para. 141).
53. recommended that FAO convene a regional consultation of national experts to define concepts and methodology for generating minimum data concerning agricultural credit (para. 142).

54. recommended that FAO intensify TCDC activities through the Asia and Pacific Regional Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA), with special reference to small farmer credit programmes (para. 143).

Women in Agriculture and Rural Development

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

55. urged Member Governments to make available disaggregated data on the basis of gender as part of a census, as well as other data-collecting exercises to be used by policy makers and planners in promoting women's role in agriculture and rural development (para. 146).
56. stressed the importance of integrating population education with agricultural extension by making special reference to women as the target group, especially where such tasks are not assigned to other functionaries in rural areas (para. 147).
57. suggested that Member Governments take effective measures to improve rural household food storage arrangements since access to food at the household level is an important component of food security (para. 148).
58. emphasized that Member Governments should pay increasing attention to helping rural women engage in income-generating activities in agriculture and marketing (para. 149).
59. noted that certain farming operations, such as weeding and threshing, are more frequently performed by women, and suggested that research workers pay due attention in the generation of agricultural tools and technology suitable for women workers (para. 150).
60. suggested that priority be given to the establishment of village woodlots by using suitable species to provide fuelwood nearer to the households, to the improvement of wood-burning stoves, and to exploring alternative energy sources, including solar energy, in rural households (para. 151).
61. invited Member Governments to undertake a thorough investigation of the extent, trends, causes and problems associated with rural households headed by women (para. 152).
62. noted that in countries where existing laws of inheritance do not adequately safeguard the interests of women, these may be reviewed, where applicable (para. 153).

63. suggested that Member Governments should take action to devise appropriate commodity-specific interventions to help rural households headed by women in such sectors/sub-sectors as dairying, sericulture, etc. (para. 154).
64. recommended that Member Governments adopt clear-cut policy statements, both national and sectoral, to enable fulfillment of the basic objective of bringing women within the mainstream of national development (para. 155).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

65. recommended that FAO assist countries to carry out micro-studies on the status of women to provide more accurate data for analysis regarding employment, wages, access to basic needs, credit and nutritional levels (para. 146).
66. recommended that FAO document and disseminate the experience of the Philippines and other relevant countries in providing for representation of women in the category of extension workers so as to facilitate women farmers' access to agricultural extension (para. 147).
67. suggested that FAO promote TCDC activities to enable countries to benefit from successful experiences within the Region in the generation of tools and technology suitable for women workers to carry out certain farming operations, such as weeding, threshing, etc. (para. 150).

Progress and Problems of Aquaculture Development

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

68. recommended that government support should be channelled to the establishment of such family-operated ventures as small-scale "backyard" hatcheries. The transfer of relevant technology, including the local supply of fish breeding hormones, should be promoted among the countries of the Region in order to ensure adequate seed supply (para. 162).
69. recommended that Member Governments give high priority to nutritional research and practical diet development by concentrating on the utilization of cheap, locally available by-products (para. 163).
70. recommended that a regional fish health management project with diagnostic laboratory facilities be initiated, and that special attention be given to the development of regional research capabilities in virology and immunology (para. 164).

71. recommended that in view of the declining volume of fish harvested in rice fields, Member Governments and the International Rice Research Institute should give high priority to the transfer of improved technologies of ricefield fish culture. The transforming of ricefields to aquaculture facilities should be pursued as far as feasible (para. 165).
72. recommended to Member Governments that they increase support for the expansion of simple, extensive or semi-extensive integrated fish production methods through strengthened extension services, including coverage of inputs and credits (para. 166).
73. suggested that Member Governments take measures to include aquaculture as a component of integrated multipurpose development of reservoirs (para. 167).
74. recommended that Member Governments encourage the construction of pump-fed pond systems outside the mangroves in order to avoid their further destruction, as well as to increase the profitability of coastal aquaculture (para. 168).
75. stressed that careful socio-economic analyses are needed to demonstrate which form of aquaculture is more beneficial for the society as a whole. High priority should therefore be given to carrying out micro- and macro-economic studies related to aquaculture development (para. 169).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

76. recommended that FAO intensify its efforts in exchange of information and regional cooperation within the frame of TCDC in support of aquaculture development (para. 161).
77. requested FAO to document experiences in pump-fed pond systems outside the mangroves and to disseminate information among the interested countries (para. 168).
78. requested FAO to support Member Governments in undertaking micro- and macro-economic studies related to aquaculture development (para. 169).
79. recommended the expansion of the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia by linking it to more national centres. (para. 170).

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

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

80. suggested that whenever possible, the delegation to the FAO Regional Conference should include the representatives of the Asia and the Pacific Region on CGIAR to facilitate reporting to the Conference on the activities of the Group (para. 174).
81. While Thailand will continue to represent the Region on CGIAR until 1988, Dr Mohammad Ekramul Ahsan of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council was elected unanimously as the representative of the Region on CGIAR, in the seat vacated by Pakistan, for the period 1987-1990 (para. 176).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

82. suggested that the studies on training and research priorities prepared by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of CGIAR be more widely circulated (para. 173).

Date and Place of the Nineteenth FAO Regional Conference

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

83. noted the renewed offer of Sri Lanka to host the Nineteenth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific in 1988 in Colombo, and the thanks of the Director-General of FAO in accepting it (para. 108).

INTRODUCTION

1. The Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific was held at FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy from 8 - 17 July 1986.
2. Member Nations that participated in the Conference were: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, China, Cook Islands, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Korea (Republic of), Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United States of America and Vietnam.
3. There were observers from Canada, the Holy See, Netherlands and Turkey. Observers representing the United Nations and specialized agencies were: World Food Programme, International Labour Organisation, and International Fund for Agricultural Development. In addition to the above, observers from the following inter-governmental organizations were present: Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific and the Commonwealth Secretariat.
4. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: International Confederation of Catholic Organizations for Charitable and Social Action, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, International Council of Women, International Federation of Agricultural Producers, Society for International Development, Trade Unions International of Agricultural, Forestry and Plantation Workers and the World Federation of Trade Unions.
5. The list of participants of the Conference and the list of Secretariat documents issued are given respectively in Appendix B and Appendix C to this report.
6. The Technical Committee meeting was opened by Mr D.J. Walton, Deputy Director-General of FAO, who welcomed the delegates and observers to the meeting on behalf of the Director-General of FAO. He explained that the change of venue from Colombo to Rome was essentially for financial reasons and expressed the Director-General's thanks and deep appreciation to the Government of Sri Lanka for their understanding and cooperation in facilitating the shift of the venue.
7. The Technical Committee unanimously elected Mr N.V.K.K. Weragoda, Secretary, Ministry of Agricultural Development and Research, Government of Sri Lanka as Chairman. The Technical Committee also elected the following as Vice-Chairmen: Mr Syarifudin Baharsyah, Secretary-General, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Indonesia and Mr U Khin Win, Managing Director, Agriculture Corporation, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Government of Burma.

8. Mr A.N. Rana, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, His Majesty's Government of Nepal, was elected Chairman of the Drafting Committee. Delegates of the following nations were elected as members: Australia, Bangladesh, Burma, China, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Laos, Korea (Republic of) and United States of America.

9. The Committee adopted the Provisional Agenda and Timetable prepared by the Secretariat with a modification to provide for a statement by the Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific after the election of office bearers of the Committee.

10. The Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific expressed satisfaction at the high level participation in the Technical Committee. He referred to the progress made in the Region in increasing food and agriculture production during the period subsequent to the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference. He observed that in most of the countries in the Region, 1983 was a record year in agricultural production. Even so, the years 1984 and 1985 have generally witnessed a further expansion in agricultural production. In 1985, the overall index of agricultural production in the Region was approximately 140, as against 130 in 1983, with 1974/76 as the base equal to 100. Thus, there was an increase of more than 7% in agricultural production in the last two years.

11. He stressed that in most developing countries of the Asia-Pacific Region, the agricultural economy is generally witnessing a perceptible transition from the first generation problems, which are essentially concerned with increasing agricultural production, to the second generation problems, which relate to post production aspects such as storage, marketing, processing, distribution and consumption. He also emphasized the need for ensuring that agricultural growth is accompanied by concern for equity and participation in the agricultural growth by all segments of the rural population, particularly small farmers, artisanal fishermen and rural women. He underscored the fact that the agenda items for the Technical Committee have been chosen so as to focus attention on these problems.

12. The Technical Committee prepared a report of its deliberations for consideration by the Plenary.

13. The Conference held its Plenary Session from 14 - 17 July 1986.

14. The delegates elected, by acclamation, Mr. Abbas Ali Zali, Minister of Agriculture, Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as Chairman of the Conference.

15. The Conference also elected all the eight cabinet rank Ministers present as Vice-Chairmen as per details given in Appendix B.

16. The Conference adopted the Provisional Agenda and Timetable prepared by the Secretariat. The adopted Agenda appears as Appendix A to this report.

17. The Conference noted, with appreciation, the work of the Technical Committee's Drafting Committee and decided that its report be prepared by the same committee.

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

18. The Director-General of FAO, in his opening statement, expressed regret that the Conference was meeting at FAO Headquarters and not in Colombo. He explained that this change of location was due to a series of financial difficulties facing FAO. He conveyed his gratitude to President Junius Jayewardene and to the Government of Sri Lanka for their understanding, and hoped that the Regional Conference would be able to gather there in two years' time.

19. He welcomed the participants, particularly the Cook Islands and the Solomon Islands who joined FAO recently, and the Islamic Republic of Iran - which previously attended the Near East Regional Conference.

20. The Director-General observed that overall cereal production has grown at a rate of 3.7 percent per annum - exceeding the 1.8 percent achieved by the rest of the world during the period 1975-1985. However, there is no room for complacency. The Region is already pushing against the outer limits of its arable land, and is almost entirely depending on improved yields for the achievement of higher levels of production. But the yield increases of the future may be more difficult - and more expensive - to achieve than those of the past. Above all, malnutrition has by no means been banished, and massive poverty still blights the lives of millions.

21. He stated that despite the immense tasks that still lie ahead the balance sheet for the last decade was highly positive. Policies that discriminated against the farmers were dismantled. The flow of resources to agriculture had increased.

22. He further observed that both at national and regional level, grain reserves were established. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, for example, established an emergency rice reserve. This useful regional initiative can be a model for a similar reserve that is being planned by South Asian countries - an initiative in which FAO has been deeply involved.

23. Perhaps the most remarkable fact of all is that those achievements have been made during a period of great difficulty in the world economy as a whole. The recovery of the industrialized countries has failed to produce the strong and durable rally in commodity prices and the trade outlook, as viewed by FAO, UNCTAD and other organizations, suggests that the next few years will see very limited scope for increased agricultural exports.

24. The Director-General proceeded to outline the themes underlying the four substantive agenda items of the Technical Committee. Regarding food security, despite the progress in production and in stabilizing supplies, improving access to food by the needy remains to be tackled adequately. Current measures include foodgrain price subsidies, food stamps, food-for-work programmes and supplementary feeding of target groups. On the inter-country level, countries have established the FAO Regional Food Security Commission which seems to be a useful forum for developing common approaches in a Region of wide diversity. One area of special current interest is roots and tubers production in the South Pacific.

25. Speaking on the subject of credit, the Director-General stressed that without credit, available packages of technology will remain idle. Increasing and sustaining the flow of credit to the most impoverished of rural communities, through the innovative use of existing institutions and with respect for cultural values, is a task that will demand the most perceptive of policies.

26. Regarding the third substantive item on the agenda, the Director-General emphasized that the role of women in the raising and processing of food was decisive for the nutritional status of families. Unfortunately, rural women's vital contributions were often taken for granted. There is little recognition of the implications posed by high rates of female-headed households, reported as being as high as 40 percent in some parts of the Region. Future policies must create conditions for a more equitable redistribution of income and resources. FAO stands ready to cooperate in the execution of programmes to broaden women's access to training, inputs and technology and thereby ensure their participation in the decisions that affect their lives.

27. Concerning Aquaculture development, the Director-General observed that for the future, Asia and the Pacific will need to strengthen scientific and institutional support. The measures required include strengthened research efforts, reduction of dependence on inefficient and uneconomical tide-fed ponds, updating of laws on access to water, training and investment. In this connection, perhaps the most innovative programme has been the establishment of the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia (NACA). FAO has collaborated in this programme, aimed at enabling four national centres to become focal points for training and research. The network is now well on its way to becoming a self-sustaining, wholly Asian activity - an indication of the useful services these centres can offer.

28. Speaking about the necessary policy reforms for the future, the Director-General stressed that the relentless depletion of tropical forests and the corresponding spread of soil erosion, as well as the unrelenting abuse of ecosystems can set off a spiral of destructive self-reinforcing processes that soon become irreversible. Among the major initiatives which can help us to cope with these compelling issues is the Tropical Forestry Action Plan. The Plan was conceived last year by FAO. It has been approved by the Committee on Forestry, and is being implemented in close association with the World Bank, UNDP and a number of other organizations.

29. The Director-General concluded his address by emphasizing that sustained growth is possible only if built on policies that ensure, for the weakest and poorest, a fairer share of "the good earth". The full text of the Director-General's statement is given in Appendix D.

MAJOR ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED IN THE COUNTRY STATEMENTS

30. Country statements were presented by the delegates of the following countries:

Australia	Indonesia	Pakistan
Bangladesh	Iran, Islamic Republic of	Philippines
Bhutan	Japan	Samoa
Burma	Korea, Republic of	Sri Lanka
China	Laos	Thailand
Cook Islands	Malaysia	United States of America
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Mongolia	Vietnam
France	Nepal	
India	New Zealand	

31. Statements were also made by representatives of the Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and the International Council of Women (ICW).

32. In their statements, various countries expressed their strong appreciation of the lead provided by the Director-General to the Conference through the comprehensive statement on the food and agriculture situation in the Region. Country statements at the Conference also highlighted the very important catalytic role played by FAO in the remarkable progress that had taken place in the food and agriculture sector in the last ten years in the Region. Various highlights of the country statements are briefly summarized below.

Performance of Agriculture Sector

33. The country statements presented by Member Nations of the Region reflected the satisfactory performance of the agriculture sector during the two years that elapsed since the 17th FAO Regional Conference at Islamabad. Bangladesh achieved a level of 16.1 million tons of food grain production in 1984/85 and aims to reach a target of 20.7 million tons by 1989/90. Burma reported that the value of net output of its agriculture sector increased by 3.10 percent during 1984/85, and the growth rate for the year 1985/86 is provisionally set at 4.20 percent. Food production in China dropped to 375 million tons in 1985, from 400 million tons in 1984. However, food reserves generated in the past helped China to stride over the difficult period of 1985. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, irrigation, mechanization and chemicalization have

reached an advanced level; efforts are now directed to developing new arable lands to the extent of some half a million hectares.

34. In Pakistan, agricultural production rose by 4.30 percent annually during the past five years, and there was a 15.80 percent increase in wheat production during 1984-85. The present thrusts of the country are oriented toward promoting edible oil crops, harnessing the potential of rainfed areas, increasing mechanization through small tractors and developing agro-industries. In India, despite yearly fluctuations, the average production of foodgrains during the Sixth Plan was 138.2 million tons per annum, well over 6 million tons higher than the achievement during the Fifth Plan period. Rice and secondary crops production remained vulnerable to adverse climatic conditions in Indonesia. Agriculture in the Republic of Korea is encountering the problems of a decreasing rural labour force and of shrinking farm land. In Laos, the use of seeds of improved varieties, green manure and farm yard manure resulted in a recorded crop harvest of 1.4 million tons of paddy in 1984/85. Although overall crop prospects remained favourable, in Malaysia, the agriculture sector's contribution to GNP decreased from 22.80 percent in 1980 to 20.30 percent in 1985. The National Agricultural Policy is attempting to revitalize this sector by maximizing farmers' income through increased productivity, promotion of exports and development of new crops for food and industrial needs. In the Philippines, after 1979 the agriculture output slowed down resulting in continuous production shortfalls. For the first time since 1977, the Philippines imported 190 000 tons of rice in 1984; this import rose to approximately 500 000 tons in 1985.

35. Sri Lanka is now on the threshold of self-sufficiency and any imports are meant primarily for buffer stocks in the event of adverse weather and other contingencies. In Samoa, the local food supply situation was adequate, although depressed world prices have affected the small growers and have had adverse effects on increasing total production. Agricultural production in Thailand recorded an overall growth rate of 3.80 percent during 1985; the production of rice, corn and sugar cane reached new levels. In Vietnam, food production from 1981-85 increased at an average of 1 million tons of food in paddy equivalent every year. However, food production is still far from meeting the full requirements of the nation, including the need for buffer stocks.

36. Some delegations, notably Cook Islands, New Zealand and Samoa, referred to the problems that the Pacific Islands countries face in achieving better agricultural performance. Small island states, by their nature, are weak and vulnerable. Their economic structure is not only influenced by limited resources, but also by their inability to benefit from economies of scale. Remoteness is another problem facing small island states. The sheer distance from the metropolitan markets entails relatively high marketing costs for their agricultural produce. While new technology is easing the communications problem, efforts to improve transport links have been impeded by the increasing use of container vessels and wide-bodied aircraft, which require larger volumes of traffic. The delegate from Cook Islands suggested that regional economic

cooperation is a way to overcome the problems associated with the "smallness" of these countries and proposed the establishment of a centralized regional marketing organization, a centralized regional processing plant, and a centralized regional agricultural chemicals depot.

37. Whereas many countries have achieved notable production gains in major food crops, agriculture price policies and international market developments are affecting the agriculture exporters such as Australia, Burma, Malaysia and Thailand. According to Australia, subsidized production and exports of farm products by the large developed countries have depressed and destabilized world commodity prices to a disastrous degree. This development has weakened agriculture production and distorted domestic agricultural policies in some countries of the Region. Japan suggested that to achieve orderly development of world trade in agriculture, it is important for the GATT New Round to cover all measures which might influence agricultural trade.

Food Security

38. Governments were unanimous in their concern that food security should receive the highest priority. The importance attached to providing access to food for the vulnerable sections of the population has added a qualitatively new dimension to the objectives of development planning in most developing countries of the Region. Several countries reported that their food policy reforms aim to improve management of food stocks and accounts, quality and inventory control, early warning and information systems, grain handling and movement, market intelligence, grain storage and emergency reserves.

39. In Bangladesh, foodgrain reserve stocks have been mainly directed towards meeting emergency situations rather than acting as a vehicle for price stabilization. Following a Government-sponsored study on Foodgrain Stock Management and Stock Inventory Control, the Government has initiated two projects to raise the level and effectiveness of stock management. Bangladesh has also initiated a project, in collaboration with FAO, to develop and improve its national early warning systems, and is seeking to cooperate with the Centre for World Food Studies of USAID to develop an agronomical model for crop yields in which the foodgrains model constitutes a significant part.

40. India held the view that it is imperative to increase the purchasing power of the target groups and to bring the foodgrains within their reach. Towards this end, India is implementing a package of measures, including the scheme for distribution of foodgrains at a concessional price to the people in the Integrated Tribal Development Project areas. Support was also given to nutrition programmes meant for young children, pregnant women and nursing mothers. During 1985, distribution of foodgrains amounted to 15.45 million tons.

41. Indonesia strongly supported planning and implementation of the food-for-work programmes to transform vulnerable sections into productive and viable ones capable of generating the income necessary to afford adequate food. The Government is providing the transmigrant families with food throughout the first year of their resettlement in the new areas. The transmigration programme, however, is more comprehensive, since its objective is to transform poor families in the densely-populated regions of Java into viable, independent farmers in their new areas. Indonesia has also established rural institutions called "Lumbung Desa," or Village Reserves, through voluntary food contributions by the villagers, and where the food that is stored is never used except in extreme emergencies, although access is provided to everyone and old stocks are renewed by fresh contributions.

42. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, staple foods have been subsidized to improve the overall access of the population to them. Parallel to this measure, the capacity of their store houses has been increased.

43. The delegation from Nepal expressed the view that the mere existence of grain in public stores does not ensure its accessibility for the needy. In the light of this reality, Nepal is launching programmes to increase gainful employment opportunities in the rural and remote areas so that the poor, inter alia, acquire purchasing power. In addition, the production strategy adopted in Nepal centres around increasing food production in the potential deficit districts, and strengthening the public distribution system.

44. In Sri Lanka, a floor price scheme for the supply of essential commodities is being operated. An innovative scheme recently initiated was to provide pensions for farmers. The objective is to ensure security for farmers when they are no longer physically capable of producing food.

45. In Vietnam, in order to obviate the difficulties met during the period of crop failures, the efforts by the State, the cooperatives and their members are coordinated in a spirit of mutual and brotherly assistance among regions, groups and families. In each cooperative, special assistance measures are pursued to assist families in distress.

Institutional Credit for Agriculture

46. All delegations expressed the view that one of the common elements in the strategy for agricultural development is to increase the role of institutional sources of credit, particularly to small farmers.

47. Bangladesh drew attention to the prevalence of a general insensitivity by the rural banking system to rural credit operations and the need to establish alternative arrangements. Among the important initiatives taken by Bangladesh in the recent past is the promotion of the Grameen Banks which target their activities to the rural poor, the small and marginal farmers and the landless.

These Grameen Banks presently operate in 4 272 villages through 234 branches and have a high recovery rate of some 99 percent. The success of these Banks has prompted the Government to broaden their capital base and allow expansion of their operations.

48. The Government of India undertook a major programme to assist small and marginal farmers by providing them with a progressive increase of loans on more liberal terms and representation in the management and organization of cooperatives for such specific activities as poultry, fisheries, animal husbandry, etc. Small and marginal farmers have been made eligible to receive loans from cooperatives even if they are in default of up to 10 percent of their previous loan. As a result, the share of small and marginal farmers in short term credit has increased to 45 percent. A comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme has been taken up during the Seventh Plan Period under which the credit eligibility of farmers for the next crop season is restored whenever there is a widespread crop failure. The premium to be paid is only 2 percent for wheat, rice and millets, and 1 percent for pulses and oilseeds. The premium payable by small and marginal farmers is subsidised by the Government to the extent of 50 percent.

49. The problem of providing increased access by small farmers to institutional credit is an important part of the agricultural development programme in Indonesia. The Indonesian delegation suggested that FAO should convene a regional consultation of national experts and also intensify TCDC activities through APRACA with special reference to small credit programmes.

50. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the bank commission and interest for the agriculture sector was reduced from 10 percent to 4 percent, and more credit was allocated to cooperatives and other common projects with emphasis on loan supervision and the expansion of the distribution network. A usury-free system has been put into practice since 1984, and now covers over 50 percent of the credit in the agricultural sector. In 1985, about 1/3 of the interest free loans, which amounted to US\$1 500 million, were granted to the agricultural sector, mainly to cooperatives and small farmers.

51. In Malaysia, credit agencies have begun to play a more important role in providing financial support to the agricultural sector. Subsidies provided for many types of agricultural output have been withdrawn and farmers have instead been provided with soft credit facilities. This effort has helped to create a new breed of more independent, commercial-minded and viable farming communities. Economic and financial viability has become the critical criterion in the pursuit of any agricultural venture.

52. In Nepal, assistance is provided to small farmers through the Small Farmers Development programme, which has now been expanded to cover 50 000 small farmers and landless families. A separate programme called "Production Credit for Rural Women" has been launched and is in operation. This programme, although of a rather limited scale at the moment, attempts to provide credit and technical support service facilities to the rural women in order to enhance

their socio-economic level. By and large the credit flow has been in the area of livestock, poultry, fruits, vegetable and cottage industries.

53. The delegation from the Republic of Korea expressed the view that increasing the share of agricultural credit to small farmers is important not only to agricultural development but also to the improvement of social equity. They emphasized the importance of linking credit, farm inputs and marketing, since credit would be of no use or would bear no fruit without readily available technology and farm inputs on rural markets.

54. In Sri Lanka, the currently operative rural credit system is managed by the commercial banks. However, this system has several disadvantages. For one thing it is far too complicated. For another, it does not fulfill as wide a range of needs as informal credit sources do. The Government of Sri Lanka has therefore recently established Rural Development Banks, which are designed to focus more intensively on financing the rural sector, to remedy the deficiencies of the present system. Also in operation is an Agricultural Insurance Scheme which indemnifies farmers against loss due to natural hazards for selected crops and dairy cattle. This provides a stabilizing effect on farm incomes. Many farmers have already benefitted from this scheme and every effort is being made to extend its coverage.

Women in Agriculture and Rural Development

55. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness that women play a significant role in rural development in general and agriculture in particular. This awareness was reflected in the country statements presented by several delegations.

56. The delegation from Burma stated that the traditional and cultural system of the country provides ample opportunities for women's role in rural development. Burmese women enjoy equal status with men in social, legal and economic matters. In rural areas women undertake a large share of agricultural, fisheries and livestock activities such as planting, weeding, harvesting, threshing, fresh water fish culture, processing and marketing of fish products and small scale livestock farming. Women also handle rural marketing and they also help take part in making important domestic decisions.

57. India welcomed the recognition given to the role of women in agriculture and rural development by FAO and stated that the country's Seventh Plan seeks to improve women's employment opportunities by identifying areas and sectors where female employment is low or on the decline, and by promoting additional employment avenues. Efforts will also be made to increase employment opportunities for women in the schemes for the public distribution system, dairy development and social forestry. To improve access of rural women to agricultural extension, a project on training of women in agriculture has been

initiated as a part of the National Agricultural Extension Project. Under the various rural development programmes of the Government of India, like the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas, conscious efforts are being made to ensure active involvement of women. To supplement these developmental efforts, a scheme of "Assistance to Voluntary Agencies" has also been formulated. It would cater to the needs of women from the rural poor families covered by IRDP, who would be organized to assume income-generating and other activities on a self-sustaining basis. The Government of India has also constituted a separate Department for looking after the welfare of women.

58. Indonesia stated that in their country women play an active role in the agricultural production process, as well as in endeavours to improve the family's well-being in general. In order to further enhance the role of women in development, the Government of Indonesia has launched an integrated programme to establish family welfare education programmes in every village.

59. In Mongolia, women are provided with equal conditions of work as men; comprehensive measures are undertaken with regard to maternal and child welfare in rural areas, maternity houses for pregnant women in remote areas, boarding schools for herdsmen's children and the expansion of primary health care. Mongolian women-cattle breeders and farmers are making a valuable contribution to agricultural production, especially in herding stock, milking, processing of milk, and farming work.

60. A number of policy measures have been adopted in Nepal to ensure the active participation of women. Among the several measures taken are: establishment of a full-fledged Women Development Division under the Ministry of Panchayat and Local Development, initiation of a Production Credit Programme for Rural Women; employment of women extension agents at the grass root level, and initiation of several other development programmes for rural women under governmental and non-governmental social organizations. The Ministry of Agriculture is going to establish a Women Cell at the Ministry level to consolidate and coordinate the activities and involvement of women in the agricultural sector from fiscal year 1986/87.

61. The delegation from Samoa stressed that women in agriculture play a significant role in their society and have demonstrated many times to be more effective organizers than men. The delegation emphasized the need for more flexible policies with regard to "lending" to women farmers.

Aquaculture

62. Recognizing the fact that the Asia-Pacific Region accounts for more than three quarters of global aquaculture production, several delegations commended the stress laid by FAO on its development. Among the countries in the Region,

there was considerable variation in trends of production, product mix, culture practices and measures adopted to promote aquaculture development.

63. In Burma, the thrust is on fish and shrimp culture and stocking of fingerlings in lakes and reservoirs. Efforts are in progress for the establishment of 500 hectares of marine shrimp farms and freshwater prawn farms as part of the inland fishery development project. Similarly, a hatchery capable of producing 10 million fish seeds has also been undertaken.

64. The Cook Islands are developing pearl shell farming in the lagoons of the Northern Islands. Shellfish like trochus and giant clams have improved very successfully on those islands where they have been introduced. Fresh fish for consumption in the Cook Islands are obtained entirely from local sources, except for specialities like prawns and oysters.

65. The level of fish production in India is expected to reach 6 million tons by 2000 AD, and benefit 25 million active fishermen in the country. During the Seventh Five Year Plan, the emphasis would be on augmentation of the level of inland fish production from open waters, and acceleration of development of fish farming in tanks and ponds and culture-cum-capture fisheries in minor and medium reservoirs in the country. The development of improved methods for the capture and culture of fish and modernization of post harvest technologies will be given high priority. The Indian delegation felt that collaboration amongst member countries through exchange of information and expertise in commercial breeding and culture of fish can contribute significantly to the development of aquaculture in the Region.

66. Aquaculture has traditionally been a method of fish production in Indonesia. During the last ten years, fish production from aquaculture has increased by 6.1 percent per year, from 164 650 metric tons in 1975 to 298 800 tons in 1985. Aquaculture production contributed about 12.6 percent to the total fish production of the country in 1985. Taking into account that there are still vast aquaculture potentialities throughout the country as well as their considerable importance in the forthcoming decades, aquaculture activities will continue to be developed simultaneously with marine fishing. Among the constraints to increasing aquaculture production in Indonesia are: (i) scarcity of fries, especially for marine-culture; (ii) fish disease control and eradication; (iii) stepping up technical and managerial know-how of fish farmers; and (iv) improvement of the financial status of small scale fish farmers. The Indonesian delegation, therefore, suggested that regional cooperation in aquaculture development should be geared toward solving these problems.

67. The Iranian delegation regretted that despite the rich natural potential in the country, in the past adequate attention was not paid to training or research and productive activities concerning aquaculture development in the country. In their future programmes, "fisheries" is to be given high priority and the country hopes to realize the total productive potential of inland

waters in fish farming and oyster and shrimp culture, which is estimated at 100 000 tons annually.

68. In Japan, fishery products provide more than 40 percent of the nation's total animal protein intake. Because of their importance as food, Japan has always taken a keen interest in the preservation and effective use of the world's fishery resources. Japan has been cooperating in the promotion of aquaculture development in the region in various ways. Since 1985, Japan has been contributing to the FAO Trust Fund for the "South Pacific Aquaculture Development Programme".

69. The Government of Nepal is attempting to gradually move towards mass application of the appropriate technology which has been generated in the research farms and stations. A relatively large scale project in aquacultural development is being implemented that will cover 16 Terai districts. The Government is planning to expand this programme to all districts in the Terai, as well as to potential pockets in the hills. While the achievements in pond fisheries are encouraging, the country is still to find appropriate technology for application in riverine fisheries whose potential, in view of the abundance of perennially-flowing rivers in the country, is enormous.

70. In the Philippines, the production of shrimp rose from 26 000 tons in 1980 to about 50 000 tons at present. Tilapia production increased by 200 percent from 48 000 tons to over a hundred thousand tons. Oysters and mussels also increased rapidly over the same period, from an insignificant level of 3 000 tons to over 20 000 tons. But milkfish production drastically declined from 200 000 tons to less than half that figure. On the whole, aquaculture presents a positive balance. The problems mainly relate to seed supply and fish health management.

71. The delegation from Sri Lanka stated that although fish in its various forms is the most acceptable animal protein, present production meets only 50 percent of the national demand. The bulk of the catch comes from coastal fisheries, since the inland fisheries supply is limited to about 15 percent. Off-shore and deep sea fisheries are not yet fully exploited. In view of the growing pressure on coastal fisheries and the increasing cost of fishing in these waters, more attention is currently being paid to developing inland fisheries. It is hoped that the catch from fresh water reservoirs and brackish-water lagoons will be doubled in the near future.

72. The delegation from Vietnam stated that aquaculture has made an important contribution to the food supply of both the urban and rural populations and is beginning to have a share in the export of brackish-water products in the country. Some 500 000 hectares of inland water area, including ponds, pools, lakes and reservoirs of small, medium or large

hydroelectric structure were developed and, at present, millions of these "Ponds" are adopting advanced techniques (use of improved varieties, new feeding and breeding methods).

STATEMENTS BY THE OBSERVER DELEGATIONS

73. The Director of the Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) stated that right from its inception, CIRDAP has been paying attention to the multi-sectoral needs in the development of the rural areas and, in particular, to the problems of the poor and the disadvantaged groups. CIRDAP has organized a number of training programmes for policy makers, supervisors and implementors for better management of IRD programmes/projects in the participating countries. Some of the research studies carried out by CIRDAP in recent years relate to non-farm employment, cooperatives, decentralization programmes, agrarian reform measures, impact of technology on the rural poor, youth in development, and the role of non-governmental organizations. Ongoing research studies cover such areas as landlessness, people's participation in rural development programmes, small and large scale irrigation projects, and women in development. The Director stated that eleven countries in the Region are now members of the CIRDAP family, and invited other countries in the Region to join the Organization.

74. The representative of the International Council of Women, in her brief statement, supported all elements of FAO's programme of work that related to the role of women in agricultural development.

FAO ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION DURING 1984/85 AND

FAO'S PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 1986-87

75. The Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific introduced this item. He stated that during the biennium, two more developing countries, namely, Cook Islands and Solomon Islands, became members of FAO. In addition, the Islamic Republic of Iran joined as member of the FAO Region for Asia and the Pacific.

76. During the biennium 1984-85, the seven regional technical Commissions dealing with various aspects such as animal production and health, agricultural statistics, farm management, fisheries, forestry, food security and plant protection continued to be active. Seven meetings of these technical commissions were held during the period under review. A significant number of country level activities were organized by these Commissions.

77. In addition to the Regional Commissions established by FAO under its own Constitution, FAO has also sponsored three regional bodies, namely, the Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), the

Asia-Pacific Regional Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA), and the Regional Association of Food Marketing Agencies (AFMA).

78. The CIRDAP was active in promoting various aspects of integrated rural development. The APRACA has increasingly become self-reliant and is a significant instrument for development of agricultural credit training arrangements and agricultural credit policies and programmes. The AFMA continued to be active in strengthening the capability of food agencies.

79. During the biennium 1984-85 FAO convened an expert consultation in October 1985 at RAPA premises towards the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions. The Association, when established, would strengthen linkages between the research organizations in different countries and facilitate the exchange of experiences and ideas.

80. During 1984-85, there has been a substantial expansion in FAO's field activities in the Region. During the biennium 1984-85, FAO was involved in the execution of 733 projects. Out of this overall number, 71 projects were regional or inter-country projects. The bulk of them were in the areas of crops, fisheries and forestry. As regards country level projects, FAO was involved in the execution of as many as 662 projects during 1984-85. These projects were spread over all developing countries of the Region and covered numerous aspects of food and agricultural development. The largest number of projects were in the crop sector, followed by forestry and natural resources sectors. Nearly 800 professional experts were deployed by FAO in the execution of these projects in different countries of the Region.

81. In addition to executing field projects, FAO continued to play a major role as an agency for investment support. During 1984-85, 18 projects prepared with assistance from FAO's Investment Centre were approved by multilateral financing institutions. Total investments in these projects, including contributions from recipient governments, amounted to US\$ 915 million, of which \$ 581 million were from external sources.

82. During 1984-85, 184 important technical meetings/training courses were organized. These meetings served as effective fora where practical knowledge and tested experience were exchanged among participants. In addition, regional cooperation and collective self-reliance were promoted through these meetings.

83. Reviewing the Programme of Work for 1986-87 for the Region, the Assistant Director-General stated that the Organization's overall programme budget for the biennium 1986-87 had been approved by the 23rd Conference in November 1985. The activities to be taken up were funded through Regular Programme resources, as well as through extra-budgetary resources provided through UNDP and Trust funds.

84. The priority areas of FAO's work during 1986-87' would be:

- (i) Promotion of TCDC by FAO in the Asia-Pacific Region during 1986-87;
- (ii) Promotion of equity along with agricultural growth;
- (iii) Development of rainfed and other problem areas;
- (iv) Diversification of agricultural economies of the developing countries;
- (v) Agricultural development of Small Island Countries of the Region.

He outlined the activities that FAO would undertake in the biennium 1986-87 under each of the above priority areas.

85. The Conference commended the FAO Secretariat for the comprehensive and informative review on FAO activities in the Region and the Programme of Work for 1986-87 contained in the documents APRC/86/2 and APRC/86/3, respectively. The Conference placed on record its appreciation of the excellent publications prepared by the Regional Office as background material for the Conference. It considered the services of RAPA to be an indispensable complement to those of Headquarters and FAORs.

86. The Conference endorsed FAO's Programme of Work, particularly its emphasis on technical and economic programmes and expressed its general agreement with the thrust of the activities detailed in the Secretariat documents. The Conference endorsed the five priority areas as specified in para. 84.

87. The Conference underlined the priority given by FAO to diversification of agricultural economies of developing countries in the Region. The Conference noted that this area of work broadly covers four groups of activities, namely:

- i) Diversification of cropping patterns;
- ii) Introduction of fish farming and livestock along with crop production;
- iii) Agro-forestry; and
- iv) Agro-industry.

The Conference decided that all these aspects of diversification should be pursued by countries and that suitable assistance and support should be provided by FAO.

88. The Conference supported the priority given by FAO to the development of agriculture in small island countries of the Region located in the South Pacific and South Asia. The Conference stressed that various activities relevant to the economy of these countries such as the development of root and tuber crops, coconut, goat husbandry, forestry and fisheries should receive priority attention. The Conference also suggested that FAO should follow up its earlier initiative in helping these countries to explore the possibility of introducing cereal crops, such as rice paddy. The Conference recognized the importance of women in agriculture and rural development in these small island countries and stressed that FAO should give due support to activities concerned with rural women. Finally, the Conference suggested increased attention to the development of statistical systems in these small island countries.

89. The Conference recognized that there is immense scope and need for promotion of TCDC in food and agriculture sector in Asia-Pacific Region. This arises from several common features of the Region. Another reason underlining the importance of TCDC is the wide variation in the levels of agricultural development, as well as a wide spectrum of agricultural experiences. The Conference noted that during 1986-87, FAO will continue to give high priority to TCDC activities and for this purpose will utilize various FAO-established regional commissions, FAO-sponsored regional bodies and also a number of networks promoted by FAO in sectors such as organic recycling, aquaculture, food legumes, coconuts, forestry education and forestry research. The Conference desired intensification of TCDC activities and for this purpose suggested that various countries take measures to allocate some minimum funds within their national budgets to participate in various TCDC activities.

90. The Conference underlined the priority given by FAO to promotion of equity along with agricultural growth. It was recognized that stress on equity was both relevant and desirable in the present stage of agricultural development in the Region. The Conference recognized that the concern for the development of small farmers and other target groups, such as rural women and artisanal fishermen, should be increasingly incorporated into various relevant programmes and activities such as promotion of institutional credit, input delivery, extension, marketing, social forestry and aquaculture.

91. The Conference emphasized the importance of optimum resource utilization along with preservation of the environment. It recommended that FAO provide technical assistance at country level for ecological zone studies.

92. The Conference stressed the need to optimize fertilizer use. It recommended that countries give high priority to research and development in the economic use of fertilizers.

93. The Conference stressed the need for dissemination of information and experience in improving soil fertility through organic recycling and biological nitrogen fixation, and endorsed FAO's proposal to facilitate this through the Regional Cooperative Network on Organic Recycling.

94. The Conference emphasized the need to improve the management and utilization of irrigation facilities already created. It recognized that in some countries participatory management by farmers' associations in irrigation management have been developed. The Conference recommended that FAO document such experiences and disseminate such information to member countries.

95. The Conference recognized the need for further development of suitable technology to improve rainfed farming. The Conference requested FAO to give priority to the development of rainfed farming systems, including research on harvesting and recycling of rainwater, measures for moisture conservation and development of appropriate crops and cropping patterns.

96. The Conference noted the potential for crop diversification in the Region and urged FAO to assist the countries to promote oil-bearing crops, pulses, and other crops suited to various soils. The Conference recommended that FAO give priority in assisting the countries in the research and development of these crops, and that it promote regional cooperation in the development and transfer of appropriate technologies.

97. The Conference underscored the need to transform subsistence agriculture into commercial agriculture. In this regard, it suggested that high priority should be given to development of appropriate technology for the commercialization of agriculture.

98. The Conference noted the significant and increasingly important role of sericulture in the Region and endorsed the proposed expanded activities of the Regional Sericulture Training Institute.

99. The Conference noted the significant production increases achieved by many countries and emphasized that countries should give priority to the development of agro-industries and to improving agricultural marketing. FAO was requested to undertake case studies of successful agricultural marketing systems and selected cases of agro-industrial enterprises in the region, and disseminate the information to interested countries.

100. The Conference noted that problems of livestock feed constitute a major constraint to livestock development in the Region and should be given priority. It recommended that FAO assist selected countries to promote better utilization of straw, crop residues and agro-industrial by-products as livestock feed.

101. The Conference noted the activities of CIRDAP in promoting and training for Integrated Rural Development, and urged FAO to continue its financial and technical support to further strengthen CIRDAP. The Conference urged those countries which have not yet joined CIRDAP to take steps, where appropriate, towards this end.

102. The Conference noted that a major problem of marine fishing in several countries of the Region is overfishing. Many inshore and nearshore stocks

are severely over-exploited. The importance of introducing regulatory measures and improved stock management techniques to reduce fishing intensity was stressed. The Conference requested FAO to assist member countries in this regard.

103. Several delegates noted that rich potentials of coastal and inland water resources are not yet properly utilized in some countries in the Region, and urged FAO to assist member countries in this respect. The importance of utilizing experiences accumulated in the Region within the frame of TCDC was duly stressed.

104. The Conference stressed the importance of regional cooperation in fish disease control, and requested FAO to intensify activities in this regard.

105. The Conference endorsed the proposed activities of FAO in the forestry sector, with particular reference to promotion of community forestry activities which generate rural income and employment. The Conference noted FAO's proposal for locating a Forestry Advisor in Samoa with UNDP support and endorsed the proposal as timely and important for the conservation and development of forest resources in the sub-region.

106. One delegate referred to the need for close coordination between FAO's activities in the Region with those of ESCAP and other regional bodies. In this connection, on behalf of the Secretariat, it was clarified that in May 1983, an agreement was reached between FAO and ESCAP demarcating their respective areas of work. In terms of that agreement, ESCAP would increasingly concentrate on social and economic issues in the food and agriculture sector so as to complement FAO's work. For other technical matters, ESCAP would take note of the mandate of FAO while formulating its own programme of work. It was also clarified that FAO had collaborative arrangements with various other regional bodies which are partly or wholly concerned with food and agriculture.

107. While generally appreciating the contents of the FAO Secretariat Document No. APRC/86/2 regarding Review of FAO's Activities in the Region during the biennium 1984-85, some delegates suggested that it would be helpful for evaluation of the effectiveness of FAO activities if additional detailed information is provided in the future with regard to expenditure in the Region on various programmes, including the Technical Cooperation programme. In this connection, on behalf of the Secretariat, it was pointed out that financial information is presented in the statement of account of the Regular Programme which is submitted to FAO Conference, and that this information regarding the TCP can be incorporated in future documentation.

CONCLUDING ITEMS

Date and Place of the 19th FAO Regional Conference

108. The delegation from Sri Lanka stated that their Government would be pleased to host the 19th FAO Regional Conference in 1988. The Deputy Director-General thanked the Government of Sri Lanka on behalf of the Director-General for renewing the invitation, and observed that FAO would look forward to convening the Conference in 1988 in Colombo.

REPORT OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

109. The Conference considered the Report of the Technical Committee which had earlier discussed the following substantive agenda items:

- Food Security with Special Reference to Access on the Part of Vulnerable Sections
- Institutional Credit for Small Farmers
- Women in Agriculture and Rural Development
- Progress and Problems of Aquaculture Development
- Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

110. The Report of the Technical Committee, as amended and adopted by the Conference, is presented below.

Food Security with Special Reference to Access on the Part of Vulnerable Sections

111. The Regional Economist (Food Security) introduced Conference document number APRC/86/4 entitled "Food Security with Special Reference to Access on the part of Vulnerable Sections". He recalled that concern over inadequate access to food on the part of vulnerable sections had been expressed in several fora such as the FAO Regional Commission on Food Security for Asia and the Pacific and the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference. The Secretariat document had been prepared in response to this concern.

112. The Conference commended the Secretariat for undertaking topical and comprehensive country studies for the regional review. It noted that while the Region as a whole had made noticeable progress in raising production and increasing the stability of food supplies, it had made slow headway towards improving access to food on the part of vulnerable sections of the populations. For this reason, studies concerning access to food by vulnerable sections were particularly welcome.

113. While considering issues relating to adequacy of food production, the Conference noted with satisfaction that aggregate regional cereal production grew at the rate of 3.9 percent per annum in the decade 1974-1984. However, individual country performance varied markedly. At the bottom end of the scale, there were five low-income countries registering cereal production growth rates near or below population growth rates in the past decade. This is a matter of concern. Another cause for concern was insufficient domestic food production in the South Pacific Island countries. Aggregate production of root and tuber crops and coconuts, the traditional staples of these countries, nearly stagnated. In recent years food imports had increased, and cereal imports especially had more than doubled in the decade.

114. The Conference agreed that high priority should be given to strengthening the production component of food security. In this connection the Conference emphasized that rainfed farming predominated in most developing countries. There was much scope for raising the productivity of the rainfed areas through yield and cropping intensity improvement. The Conference recommended that countries and international and regional organizations dealing with research give high priority to research and development of rainfed farming systems.

115. The Conference noted that there is much potential for raising the yields of root and tuber crops in the Pacific Island countries. To realize this potential there is a need for the transfer of technology from more advanced root and tuber crop producing countries of the Region to the South Pacific and other countries of the Region. In this regard, the Conference noted the proposed Expert Consultation on Tropical Vegetable Production in Asia and the Pacific (including Roots and Tubers) to be held in Bangkok in September 1986 and urged the South Pacific countries to participate in this consultation.

116. In considering the stability of food supplies, the Conference examined several instruments for effecting this stability, namely, foodgrain reserve stocks, foodgrain imports, early warning systems and preparedness, and contingency crop production planning. On reserve stocks, it was noted that there had been some, though variable, improvement among developing countries of the Region. The majority of the countries in the Region had explicit stock policies and targets. Aggregate regional foodgrain stocks had increased rapidly at 6.4 percent per annum to reach 104 million tons in the decade ending 1984. However, the bulk of the stocks was concentrated in a few countries. In many food-deficit countries carryover stocks stagnated or failed to meet national targets. There was obviously a need for each of these countries to arrive at a reserve stock level which was adequate at minimum cost. In this context the Conference appreciated FAO's efforts in assisting South Asian countries to determine optimum national reserve stock levels and recommended that FAO continue to give high priority and provide assistance to countries in the Region in the determination of optimum national reserve stock levels.

sections at the household level. Most countries had clear definitions of vulnerable households based on single criterion such as income, location, employment, etc., but only a few had developed adequate arrangements to identify, register and monitor them. Consequently, leakages of food assistance resources to non-vulnerable sections occurred. To ameliorate the situation, the Conference felt that supportive actions focussing the distribution programme in areas where the poor were a majority and distributing food commodities consumed mainly by the poor could be introduced. The Conference recommended that countries identify vulnerable sections according to composite criteria and develop the necessary surveillance system to register and monitor them on a household basis. In this regard, a FAO regional workshop to develop guidelines for establishing national vulnerable group identification systems would be useful.

127. The Conference acknowledged the contribution of target group supplementary feeding programmes. It was agreed that the programmes, designed mainly to increase the food intake of children and pregnant and lactating mothers, were targetted to the really needy. The Conference recommended that countries expand target group feeding programmes and strengthen planning and implementation, particularly to improve cost-effectiveness of the programmes and to ensure that the supplementary feeding is a net addition to the food intake of the recipients.

128. The Conference recognized the contribution of food-for-work programmes in increasing access to food by vulnerable sections. The Conference recommended that countries expand FFW programmes and strengthen planning and implementation, particularly to introduce longer-term programming, to ensure availability of a shelf of sound projects for implementation as needed, and to improve cost-effectiveness.

129. The Conference stressed the need for improving cost-effectiveness of public food intervention programmes. The Conference recommended that countries continuously monitor, evaluate and improve food intervention programmes and introduce research and training components within them to ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

130. It was observed that the task of improving food security policies and programmes and upgrading food distribution managerial and technical skills could be facilitated through TCDC. In this context, the Conference noted the Regional Commission on Food Security for Asia and the Pacific (APCFS) provides an effective forum for discussion of policies and programmes. The Conference also recognized the significant contributions of the FAO-sponsored Association of Food Marketing Agencies in Asia and the Pacific (AFMA) in promoting food marketing research, training and information exchange. The Conference urged member countries which had not joined APCFS and AFMA to do so in order to expand and strengthen TCDC in the Region.

disasters give high priority to increasing their preparedness for acute food shortages. In this regard, special mention was made of the need to strengthen planning, research and development in contingency crop production.

122. In considering access to food, the Conference noted that food availability in terms of calories per caput per day increased for developing countries of the Region as a group - from about 2 100 to 2 300 calories in the decade ending 1982. As a consequence, the overall percentage of undernourished in the Region had declined. But absolute numbers of undernourished remained large, at approximately 300 million. The Conference recognized that lack of economic access to food was the most crucial reason for the existence of such a large number of undernourished. Further reduction of the numbers of undernourished would require higher income levels and purchasing power among the vulnerable groups. This was being effected through long-term integrated rural development and other employment expansion programmes such as transmigration, area development and carefully targetted small-scale income-generating activities. The Conference felt that, meanwhile, measures - i.e. food intervention programmes - to provide immediate relief to the weakest sections of the populations were necessary.

123. The Conference noted that to increase access in the short run, most developing countries relied on subsidized foodgrain supply programmes and supplemented them with subsidiary programmes such as food-for-work or target group feeding. The main programme was either an untargetted consumer price subsidy available to the whole population, or a targetted one meant to reach specific vulnerable sections.

124. The Conference felt that generally untargetted price subsidy programmes had not lowered foodgrain prices sufficiently to benefit the hardcore poor because the subsidy element was usually small and governments could not afford to subsidize the whole population adequately. However, a few countries had used untargetted programmes as they required relatively little administrative and physical infrastructure to implement.

125. The Conference observed that the statutory and modified ration schemes of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan and the food stamps scheme of Sri Lanka were generally designed to aid the vulnerable sections and provided more relief per household than untargetted programmes. Some of those programmes were quite successful. Available evidence supported their further adoption and expansion. The Conference recommended that low-income developing countries planning to improve access to food by vulnerable sections through consumer subsidies should do so through targetted programmes designed specifically to reach the hardcore poor. The Conference noted that in China, food supply schemes covered all the rural and urban dwellers.

126. The Conference recognized, however, that one of the main difficulties in effectively implementing targetted schemes was identifying the vulnerable

sections at the household level. Most countries had clear definitions of vulnerable households based on single criterion such as income, location, employment, etc., but only a few had developed adequate arrangements to identify, register and monitor them. Consequently, leakages of food assistance resources to non-vulnerable sections occurred. To ameliorate the situation, the Conference felt that supportive actions focussing the distribution programme in areas where the poor were a majority and distributing food commodities consumed mainly by the poor could be introduced. The Conference recommended that countries identify vulnerable sections according to composite criteria and develop the necessary surveillance system to register and monitor them on a household basis. In this regard, a FAO regional workshop to develop guidelines for establishing national vulnerable group identification systems would be useful.

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Institutional Credit for Small Farmers

131. The Regional Marketing, Credit and Cooperatives Officer introduced Conference document No. APRC/86/5 entitled "Institutional Credit for Small Farmers". He summarized existing regional information on institutional credit for agriculture in general and for small farmers in particular. He noted that data base on agricultural credit was weak and that disaggregated information on small farmer credit was often not available. A number of key issues regarding small farmer credit were highlighted. The Conference considered each of those issues in detail.

132. The Conference recognized that a uniform and precise definition of a small farmer for all countries is neither desirable nor practical because of the diversity of conditions among the countries and, in some cases, among various areas of the countries of the Region. However, the Conference felt that a broad degree of uniformity of approach towards the categorization of small farmers was necessary. The Conference endorsed the following broad approach formulated by an earlier intergovernmental consultation:

- (i) The categorization of small farmers in each country must be related to the agro-economic conditions of that country either at the national or at the sub-national level.
- (ii) The definition of small farmers once adopted should be maintained for some years for purposes of monitoring yearly progress. It was felt that the categorization should be such that it could be adhered to for some specific period, e.g. Five-Year Plan period.
- (iii) Ideally, a small farmer definition, in terms of income criteria, would be desirable but in practice, from the operational point of view, a definition in terms of the size of the landholding may perhaps have to be adopted as a general norm.
- (iv) In order to ensure that the categorization of the small farmers does not become so flexible as to practically embrace the entire farming community within the definition, as well as to ensure that the benefit of small farmer credit programmes does, in fact, reach the relatively weaker sections of the farming community. It was felt that the definition of the small farmers should take note of the average landholding and should be so formulated to cover a level lower than the average landholding at the provincial or national level or a ceiling not exceeding the average.

133. In line with the WCARRD Declaration and Follow-up Consultations, the Conference reaffirmed the necessity of strengthening|reorienting institutional credit schemes to meet the needs of small farmers. The Conference recommended that countries ensure that small farmers' share in institutional investment credit be broadly proportionate to their share of crop land, and that the

small farmers' share of short-term seasonal credit should be proportionately higher.

134. The Conference noted the importance of strong links between institutional credit and supporting services such as extension, inputs supply, storage and marketing. Such links encourage the productive use of credit and facilitate collection of dues. In view of the limited progress made in most countries, the Conference suggested that each country consider this matter and devise suitable measures for operational links, including provision of credit facilities for storage and marketing where necessary. The Conference requested FAO to document selected successful cases for use by Member Governments.

135. The Conference noted that in some countries informal groups of small farmers were effective in improving access to institutional credit. These groups served as a receiving mechanism for institutional credit and as savings mobilization units for self-help programmes. At the same time, the Conference noted that the progress in organizing these informal groups was very slow. The Conference suggested that each country assess the relevance of promoting such groups as part of an overall programme for expanding institutional credit through positive discrimination in favour of small farmers, including landless, artisans, fishermen and rural women. The Conference requested FAO to document experiences of their organization and working.

136. The Conference noted that cooperatives are a very important source of agricultural credit in the rural areas in most countries of the Region. In this context, the Conference suggested that strengthening/reorientation of cooperatives would be desirable in the following directions:

- (i) Increased access on the part of small farmers to the membership of cooperatives;
- (ii) Increased access on the part of small farmers to the decision-making organs, such as Managing Committees and Boards of Directors;
- (iii) Relaxation in regard to the minimum share-holding requirements vis-à-vis borrowing from the cooperatives;
- (iv) Whenever necessary, priority and rationing of credit in favour of small farmers.

The Conference recommended that FAO document successful experiences of selected cooperatives in the Region for use by member countries.

137. The Conference recognized the growing role of commercial banks in expanding agricultural credit as a result of policy designed to allocate a portion of their loanable funds for agricultural and rural sectors. The Conference

recommended that countries where such policy arrangements do not exist may consider adoption of similar measures. The Conference also recommended that commercial banks be required to ensure that a reasonable proportion of their agricultural credit portfolio is earmarked for small farmers. Proper utilization of such funds should be ensured by the banks in consultation with relevant agencies dealing with agriculture and small farmers.

138. The Conference recognized that loan arrears reduce the flow of agricultural credit. The Conference therefore suggested countries to adopt strong measures to reduce loan arrears.

139. The Conference suggested that governments should also provide special financial support/incentives to credit institutions for advancing more liberal credit to small farmers. Such support may take the form of guarantee-cum-risk funds or bad-debt grants.

140. The Conference noted that in some developing countries of the Region, in recent years, measures had been taken to introduce crop insurance. In some of these countries this was essentially in the form of crop loan insurance and therefore had a bearing on ensuring farmer eligibility for fresh loans in the event of crop failures due to natural disasters. The Conference noted that FAO had been assisting these countries through the services of an expert provided by Japan. The Conference suggested that FAO may take steps to document the experiences of developing countries in the Region with a view to exploring the possibility of expansion of crop insurance on a wider scale.

141. The Conference noted that the status of monitoring and evaluation of institutional credit for agriculture in general and for small farmers in particular was quite uneven and unsystematic in many countries of the Region. The Conference felt that data on credit operations, particularly in terms of fresh loans disbursed in the course of the year, needed to be disaggregated. The Conference therefore recommended that countries adopt measures to establish monitoring and evaluation systems that analyse data on a disaggregated basis. The Conference requested FAO to assist countries with the design and establishment of suitable credit management information systems, where appropriate, by utilizing microcomputers at the local level.

142. The Conference emphasized the need for generating requisite data and suggested that all the countries in the Region furnish the relevant information to FAO to enable the Organization to issue a periodical regional publication on the status of agricultural credit in general and small farmer credit in particular. In this connection the Conference recommended that FAO convene a regional consultation of national experts to define concepts and methodology for generating minimum data.

143. The Conference noted that several countries offered to share their experience and know-how on small farmer credit for mutual benefit and recommended that FAO intensify TCDC activities through the Asia and Pacific Regional

Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA), with special reference to small farmer credit programmes.

144. A reference was made to measures initiated in some Islamic countries towards establishment of "usury-free" banking systems. A suggestion was made that FAO may document experiences in this regard.

Women in Agriculture and Rural Development

145. The Regional Home Economics and Social Development Officer introduced the Conference document number APRC/86/6 entitled "Women in Agriculture and Rural Development". She outlined the contribution made by rural women to food production and food security in the Asia-Pacific Region and recalled the several recommendations from regional and world conferences held during the United Nations Decade for Women to enhance the contributions of and ensure benefits for rural women in the development process. Referring to the WCARRD Declaration of 1979, she mentioned that while significant legislative changes in Asian and Pacific countries had taken place, loopholes tended to frustrate the effectiveness of these laws. Recalling the recommendations of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the United Nations Decade for Women, the FAO Regional Officer recapitulated items which required follow-up: the enhancement of women's role in food security, women and household energy, and women and technology.

146. The Conference noted that, while women's role in agriculture and rural development is increasingly recognized, the data base relating to this role generally continues to be inadequate. The Conference therefore stressed the need for strengthening the data base and applying new indicators to facilitate monitoring of progress and identification of specific interventions needed to enhance women's participation in programmes of agricultural and rural development. The Conference urged countries to make available disaggregated data on the basis of gender as part of a census, as well as other data-collecting exercises to be used by policy makers and planners. The Conference recommended that FAO assist countries to carry out micro-studies on the status of women to provide more accurate data for analysis regarding employment, wages, access to basic needs, credit and nutritional levels.

147. Considering the role of women in the context of food security, the Conference, while noting the substantial role presently played by women in food production, recognized that this role can be further strengthened through suitable measures. One of these measures would relate to women being brought effectively within the agricultural extension system. The Conference noted that in the Asia and Pacific Region very few countries have given adequate representation to women in the category of extension workers. The Conference noted that one of the significant exceptions is the Philippines where women play a **significant** role in agricultural extension work. The Conference recommended that the experience of the Philippines and other relevant countries should be documented by FAO and disseminated among the other countries in the Region so as to facilitate women farmers' access to agricultural extension.

The Conference stressed the importance of integrating population education with agricultural extension by making special reference to women as the target group, especially where such tasks are not assigned to other functionaries in rural areas.

148. The Conference recognized that one of the important components of food security concerns access to food at the household level. In this context, the Conference suggested that member countries take effective measures to improve rural household food storage arrangements.

149. The Conference recognized that, in most countries of the Asia-Pacific Region, the problem of food security essentially lies in ensuring economic access to food which is otherwise physically available within the country. In this context, the Conference underlined the importance of increasing income in the hands of rural women as an effective means for increasing the access of rural families to food and nutrition. In this background, the Conference emphasized that countries should pay increasing attention to helping rural women engage in income-generating activities in agriculture and marketing.

150. While considering the role of women in relation to technology, the Conference took note of the relevant recommendations of the Nairobi Conference on the subject. The Conference noted that certain farming operations, such as weeding and threshing, are more frequently performed by women. The Conference suggested that in the generation of agricultural tools and technology, research workers should pay due attention to these aspects of agricultural activities and that FAO should promote TCDC activities to enable countries to benefit from successful experiences within the Region.

151. The Conference discussed the issue relating to household energy as affecting women. The Conference recognized that in most countries of the Region, rural energy problems, particularly the fuelwood problem, are reaching crisis proportions and need urgent attention. In the interest of saving time spent by women in fetching fuelwood, the Conference recommended that priority be given to the establishment of village woodlots by using suitable species to provide fuelwood nearer to the households. The Conference also underlined the importance of improvement in wood-burning stoves and alternative energy sources, including solar energy, in rural households. It was also desired that since women are the major users, they should be enabled to participate effectively in the evolution of national rural energy programmes and projects.

152. The Conference noted that even though precise and up-to-date information is not generally available, there is a growing proportion of rural households headed by women. The Conference suggested that countries undertake a thorough investigation of the extent, trends, causes and problems associated with this phenomenon in the Region.

153. The Conference also recognized that, in several countries, prevailing legislation handicaps members of rural households headed by women. These handicaps affect their access to both movable and immovable assets, as well as

access to current inputs including credit. The Conference also noted that, in some countries, the existing laws of inheritance do not adequately safeguard the interests of women, and where this applies, laws may be reviewed.

154. The Conference noted that, while women's role is generally all pervasive, they have a primary responsibility in certain areas such as dairying, sericulture and pandanus production in some countries. The Conference suggested that, on a priority basis, countries should take action, especially to devise appropriate commodity-specific interventions to help rural households headed by women in these particular sectors/sub-sectors.

155. The Conference noted that in recent years in several countries of the Region one of the significant developments has been the establishment of Ministries of Women's Affairs or Departments within their Ministries. There should be close liaison between such bodies and the line Ministries. The Conference stressed that the existence of such Ministries provides an important coordinating and lobbying centre, which should lead to women's concerns being made explicit in each sectoral programme. The Conference recognized that clear-cut policy statements, both national and sectoral, are needed to enable fulfillment of the basic objective of bringing women within the mainstream of national development.

Progress and Problems of Aquaculture Development

156. The Regional Aquaculture Officer introduced the Conference document number APRC/86/7 entitled "Progress and Problems of Aquaculture Development." He recalled that more than three quarters of the global aquaculture production comes from the Asia-Pacific Region. The Conference noted with satisfaction that, owing to the rapid development of aquaculture, the per caput fish and seafood production increased from 6.6 kg/year in 1975 to 7.1 kg/year in 1983 despite the population growth and stagnating marine catches.

157. The Conference agreed that, aquaculture is a valuable source of supplementary income for the rural population using primarily family labour. This is particularly important for poor fishing communities. The Conference accordingly underlined the need for further measures to promote and develop aquaculture.

158. The Conference observed that traditionally most of the aquaculture products are marketed domestically. However, a new shrimp culture industry, which is primarily export-oriented, is expanding rapidly. Foreign trade in other aquaculture products is also increasing. The Conference stressed that, in this context, the problems of export trade of aquaculture products will require increasing attention.

159. The Conference noted that the average annual growth rate of aquaculture production in the decade ending 1984 was an impressive 8.2 percent in the developing countries of the Region. However, the outstanding performance

was the result of the achievements of some ten countries only. In some countries, the production stagnated or decreased in the same period. The Conference suggested that these countries take measures to accelerate aquaculture development.

160. The Conference observed that there is a changing pattern of aquaculture production. While the share of molluscs decreased slightly during the 1975-1984 period, that of seaweed stagnated and the share of finfishes of the total production increased steadily. The Conference also noted that crustaceans were the most rapidly developing commodity.

161. The Conference appreciated FAO's continuing efforts in supporting aquaculture development in the Asia-Pacific Region and recommended that FAO intensify its efforts in exchange of information and regional cooperation within the frame of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

162. The Conference noted that there was a breakthrough in fish and shrimp/prawn seed supply achieved by simple, small-scale "backyard" hatcheries. It urged that more attention and government support be channeled to the establishment of these family-operated ventures. The Conference recommended the transfer of such technology, including the local supply of fish breeding hormones, among the countries of the Region in order to ensure adequate seed supply.

163. In view of the increasing demand for cheaper and more efficient fish and shrimp feeds in several countries of the Region, the Conference called attention to the importance of strengthening nutritional research. The Conference recommended that the governments give high priority to nutritional research and practical diet development by concentrating on the utilization of cheap, locally available by-products.

164. Considering the severe losses caused by recent ulcerative disease outbreaks in several countries, the Conference called for urgent actions to strengthen regional capabilities and cooperation in fish health management. The Conference recommended that a regional fish health management project with diagnostic laboratory facilities be initiated, and that special attention be given to the development of regional research capabilities in virology and immunology.

165. The Conference noted that ricefields were traditionally important suppliers of fish throughout the Region. However, with the emergence of high yielding rice varieties and the spread of pesticide use, the volume of fish harvested in ricefields declined. The Conference recommended that countries and the International Rice Research Institute should give high priority to the transfer of improved technologies of ricefield fish culture. It further agreed that transforming ricefields to aquaculture facilities should be pursued as far as feasible.

166. Aquatic cash-cropping contributed significantly to the rapid development of aquaculture in several countries of the Region. The Conference acknowledged the importance of this type of development, but felt that after initial technology transfer government support for such ventures might be reduced. On the other hand, the Conference recommended that government support should be strengthened to promote the expansion of simple, extensive or semi-extensive integrated food fish production methods, considering their important role in the improvement of the nutritional standards of the rural poor. In this context the Conference stressed the need for strengthened extension services, including coverage of inputs and credits.

167. The Conference noted that reservoirs constructed throughout the Region represent large potential for the expansion of aquaculture. Appropriate stocking of these with hatchery-raised fish seed and the introduction of cage and pen culture methods offer a rapid increase in fish supply and alternative employment to displaced farmers. In this context, the Conference suggested that measures should be taken by countries to include aquaculture as a component of integrated multipurpose development of reservoirs.

168. With the rapid development of coastal aquaculture, vast areas of formerly productive mangrove areas were transformed into fish and shrimp ponds. These ponds often proved to be very low in productivity because of their acid-sulphate soil and inappropriate design. The Conference recommended that countries encourage the construction of pump-fed pond systems outside the mangroves in order to avoid their further destruction as well as to increase the profitability of coastal aquaculture. The Conference requested FAO to document experiences in this respect and to disseminate information among the interested countries.

169. While the advantages of large-scale, intensive aquaculture over artisanal fisheries and extensive subsistence farming are obvious in terms of volume of production and its profitability, careful socio-economic analyses are needed to demonstrate which of these is more beneficial for the society as a whole. The Conference recommended that high priority be given to micro- and macro-economic studies in the Region related to aquaculture development. The Conference requested FAO to support such studies.

170. The Conference commended the achievements of the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia in research, training and information and noted the progress in increasing the level of self-financing. The Conference recommended the expansion of the Network by linking it to more national centres.

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

171. The Director of Research and Technology Development Division introduced Conference document number APRC/86/8 entitled "Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)".

172. The Conference noted with appreciation FAO's assistance in ensuring contacts by regional representatives with member countries to facilitate the feed-in of national views prior to the meeting, as well as the feedback to member countries subsequent to the meetings.

173. The Conference noted with appreciation the studies on training and research priorities prepared by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the CGIAR and suggested that these studies be more widely circulated.

174. The Conference suggested that whenever possible the delegation to the FAO Regional Conference should include the representatives of Asia and the Pacific Region on CGIAR to facilitate reporting to the Conference on the activities of the Group.

175. The Conference noted with appreciation the action taken by FAO to hold an Expert Consultation on the Establishment of the Asia-Pacific Association on Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) in pursuance of the recommendation of the 17th FAO Regional Conference held in Islamabad (Pakistan) in 1984. The Conference desired that APAARI, when established, would constitute a forum where representatives to CGIAR from the Region could hold consultations with leaders of national research systems in order to improve contacts and facilitate sharing of information.

176. The Conference noted that the 17th FAO Regional Conference elected Thailand as new representative for the period 1984-88, and extended the term of Pakistan up to 1986. The Conference expressed its appreciation of the work of the representative of Pakistan during his term on the CGIAR. In the seat vacated by Pakistan, Dr. Mohammad Ekramul Ahsan of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council was elected unanimously as the representative of the Region on CGIAR for the period 1987-1990.

AGENDA

Technical Committee (8-12 July 1986)

I. INTRODUCTION ITEMS

1. Opening of the Technical Committee
2. Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen and Election of the Drafting Committee
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable
4. Statement by the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative

II. TECHNICAL ITEMS

- x 5. Food Security with Special Reference to Access on the Part of Vulnerable Sections
- x 6. Institutional Credit for Small Farmers
- x 7. Women in Agriculture and Rural Development
- x 8. Progress and Problems of Aquaculture Development
9. Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)
10. Adoption of the Technical Committee Report

Plenary Session (14-17 July)

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Opening Ceremony
2. Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable
4. Statement by the Director-General

II. STATEMENTS

5. Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in the Region
6. FAO Activities in the Region including Action Taken on the Main Recommendations made by the 17th Regional Conference
7. Programme of Work 1986-87 in the Region

III. CONCLUDING ITEMS

8. Consideration of the Technical Committee Report
9. Any Other Business
10. Date and place of the 19th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
11. Adoption of the Conference Report
12. Closure of the Conference

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
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Chairman: Abbas Ali ZALI (Iran, Islamic Republic of)
Président:

Vice-Chairmen: Terepai MAOATE (Cook Islands)
Vice-Présidents: Gurdial Singh DHILLON (India)
WARDYOY (Indonesia)
Surenkhörin SODNOMDORJ (Mongolia)
Hari Narayan RAJAURIA (Nepal)
Kazi Abdul Majid ABID (Pakistan)
Fuimaono MIMIO (Samoa)
Gamani JAYASURIYA (Sri Lanka)

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BUREAU DU COMITE TECHNIQUE

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Président:
Vice-Chairmen: Syarifudin BAHARSYAH (Indonesia)
Vice-Président: U Khin WIN (Burma)

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OPENING STATEMENT BY THE
DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE PLENARY

Introduction

May I first, on behalf of all of us, express a profound regret that we are meeting at FAO Headquarters and not in Colombo, the beautiful capital of Sri Lanka. This change of location was due to events beyond our control. I was able to consult the participating countries with representation in Rome, but in the last resort the decision was mine alone. It reflects a series of financial difficulties facing our Organization.

I would like to convey my gratitude to President Junius Jayewardene, and to the Government of Sri Lanka, for their understanding in this most difficult situation. Our only consolation can be a hope that Sri Lanka will renew its invitation, and that the Regional Conference will be able to gather there in two years' time.

It is, meanwhile, a pleasure to welcome all of you to FAO Headquarters. I assure you of our fullest cooperation to ensure the success of this important meeting.

At the FAO Conference last November, two countries from your Region joined the Organization: Cook Islands and the Solomon Islands. In addition, Iran - which previously attended the Near East Conference - will now join the Asia and Pacific meeting.

Unfortunately, the disastrous cyclone which devastated the Solomon Islands a few weeks ago has made it impossible for this new Member Nation to attend the Conference. I am sure we shall all wish to convey our sympathy to the Solomon Islanders in their time of misfortune. On the other hand, I am happy to welcome the delegations from the Cook Islands and Iran to this session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific.

Manila Declaration

As we prepare to tackle our agenda, it may be instructive to cast our minds back ten years, and to recognize the vast progress that has been made during this period.

I well remember flying to the Philippines in 1976, as the newly-elected Director-General, to attend the 13th FAO Regional Conference. Huge food deficits threatened this densely-populated Region then. Malnutrition was rife. Cereal shortfalls were forecast to reach 35 million tons by 1985. Food imports had quadrupled. The Region appeared to be drifting into disaster.

The Conference's response was to issue the "Manila Declaration on Food and Agriculture of 1976". In this eloquent document, Member Countries declared that: "Our agricultural development must be achieved largely by our efforts in a spirit of self-reliance. In our respective countries, it is essential that we accord the food and agricultural sector a key position commensurate with its primary role in our economies. We also recognize that the small farmer is the backbone of agriculture... (he) must be given a vital role in the development process".

The document called for reinforcing national and regional research efforts, increased investment in agriculture and fair prices for exports. It invited all nations to join Asia and the Pacific "in a true partnership to eradicate hunger".

Regional Response

The response has shown that these injunctions did not fall on barren ground.

Overall cereal production has grown at an annual compound rate of 3.7 percent - outstripping the 1.8 percent achieved by the rest of the world during this period. The Region today is a net exporter of rice. Increases in wheat harvests have stabilized imports, and dependence on food aid has been reduced.

This success was dramatically symbolized at the FAO Conference last November. On that occasion, we were honoured by the visit of the President of Indonesia, who came as guest speaker for the celebration of the Organization's Fortieth Anniversary. President Soeharto announced a gift of 100 000 tons of rice, presented by the farmers of Indonesia to help the unfortunate victims of hunger in other parts of the earth, notably in Africa.

There are, of course, still serious problems. Agricultural growth has been uneven, both between different countries and within different parts of the same country. The Region is already pushing against the outer limits of its arable land, and is almost entirely dependent on improved yields for the achievement of higher levels of production. But the yield increases of the future may be more difficult - and more expensive - to achieve than those of the past. Above all, malnutrition has by no means been banished - even though its impact is being gradually rolled back.

The unmet needs of the Region remain daunting. Massive poverty still blights the lives of millions. As a consequence, over 300 million men, women and children are malnourished, thousands of children are threatened by blindness due to Vitamin A deficiency, and life expectancy is almost 15 years less than that in the world's industrialized countries. We have therefore no reason for complacency, no justification for any slackening of our efforts.

Factors of Success

Nevertheless, despite the immense tasks that still await us, the balance sheet of the last decade is highly positive. It may be of general interest to identify some of the factors that led to this success.

Policies that discriminated against the farmers were dismantled. In their place, governments guaranteed remunerative prices for producers.

In addition, the flow of resources to agriculture was increased. This ensured the timely provision of credit. Inputs and marketing facilitation were provided. External assistance, by and large, was used effectively.

Furthermore, governments continuously expanded irrigation facilities, and taught better management of water. They reformed ineffective bureaucracies, and strengthened their national research and extension capacity. Farmers were provided with viable packages of agricultural technology.

At both national and regional level, grain reserves were established. The Association of Southeast-Asian Nations (ASEAN), for example, set up an emergency rice reserve. This useful regional initiative can be a model for a similar reserve being planned by the newly-established South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC) - an initiative in which FAO has been deeply involved.

In this vast process, governments gave people the power to plan and to make decisions. They were open also to ideas that came from organizations outside government.

Perhaps the most remarkable fact of all is that these achievements have been made during a period of great difficulty in the world economy as a whole. Asia has, on the whole, survived the savage downturn of the early eighties much better than other developing regions. Nevertheless, a number of important countries of the region are now under considerable economic stress.

There is little comfort in sight. The recovery of the industrialized countries has failed to produce the strong and durable rally in commodity prices that is so badly needed by debt-laden developing exporters. Work on the trade outlook by FAO, UNCTAD and other organizations suggests that the next few years will see very limited scope for increased agricultural exports to richer nations. Indeed, the dominating problem for many of the industrialized countries is to find a way of controlling their own surplus production without either impoverishing their farmers or making undue calls upon their taxpayers.

The note which the Region could well strike in mid-1986, it seems to me, is one of reasonable satisfaction at what has been accomplished in the last decade, combined with a consciousness of how much still remains undone, and mixed also with concern about prospects for the next few years.

Of all the problems which cry out for the policy-maker's attention, it is surely mass poverty which must be the most urgent and compelling. It is, therefore, appropriate that the focal concern in the discussions by the Technical Committee has been the fate of the poor and the marginalized. This theme has underlined the four substantive agenda items on: food security, institutional credit for small farmers, women in agriculture, and aquaculture.

Food Security

The first item on our agenda is food security. Despite the progress in production and in stabilizing supplies, we all recognize that much remains to be done by way of improving access to food by the neediest.

Countries have shown considerable sophistication in designing schemes to improve access to food. Current measures include foodgrain price subsidies, food stamps, food-for-work programmes and supplementary feeding of target groups.

Today, most countries have clear-cut definitions of vulnerable groups, but few have adequate arrangements to pinpoint vulnerable households or monitor the effectiveness of intervention schemes to improve access. Hence there is an urgent need to identify more precisely the malnourished segments of populations and to develop appropriate strategies for reaching them.

On the inter-country level, countries have set up the FAO Regional Food Security Commission. The Commission now serves as a valuable forum to work out common approaches in a region of wide diversity. Also of special interest to the Commission is the role played by staples other than cereals. Roots and tubers are especially important in countries of the South Pacific, and improved production systems could make a useful contribution toward strengthening food security in the area.

Credit for Small Farmers

The subject of credit is the second item on our agenda. Without credit, available packages of technology will remain idle. Nor will the festering problems of surplus rural labour and income disparities be defused. "If you have money", Asian farmers like to say, "even the spirits will turn the wheels for you."

Our discussions can usefully focus on how to increase and to sustain the flow of credit to the most impoverished of rural communities, through the innovative use of existing institutions and with respect for cultural values - a task that will demand the most perceptive of policies.

It is painfully obvious that despite increased funding, credit for small rural producers still falls short of needs. Far too many financial institutions prefer the soft option of funnelling credit to urban industry and trade. Hence,

the question has been asked: what constitutes a fair and appropriate share of small farmers in the total flow of institutional credit?

There is no easy answer. Diverse national settings render the fixing of percentages risky - and largely irrelevant. A Conference like this can, however, indicate the general thrust which countries - on the basis of their accumulated experience - consider possible and desirable.

Role of Women

In the final analysis, global food security is the sum total of the food security of millions of households. Women account for over half of the work involved in food production. Their role in the raising and processing of food is decisive for the nutritional status of families, so that the third substantive item on the agenda has a direct impact on food security.

Unfortunately, rural women's vital contributions are often taken for granted. There is little recognition of the implications posed by high rates of female-headed households, reported as being up to 40 percent in some parts of the Region. Development assistance programmes therefore tend to bypass women or, worse, address peripheral problems.

The more basic task in this field is to challenge the values, structures and institutions that confine women to the domestic sphere of production or to inferior roles. Future policies must create conditions for a more equitable redistribution of incomes and resources.

FAO stands ready to cooperate in the execution of programmes to broaden women's access to training, inputs and technology and thereby ensure their participation in decisions that affect their lives. This November, FAO is convening an expert consultation on the unique problems and challenges that confront South Pacific women in agriculture.

Aquaculture

Finally, I would like to say something about the fourth technical subject on our agenda: aquaculture. The depletion of major marine fishing grounds has acted as a brake on the growth of the world fish catch in recent years. Our agenda gives us a chance to consider how far aquaculture could help in filling the gap.

History would seem to have vested this Region with a trail-blazing role in fish farming; after all, aquaculture started in China and Japan some 4,000 years ago. Today millions of fish-farmers in all parts of Asia and the Pacific harvest more than 6.8 million tons annually - approximately three-quarters of global aquaculture production. Aquaculture in the Region is growing at an annual compound rate of nearly 7 percent.

This yield has been achieved by men and women working, for the most part, in simple ponds of less than one hectare each and relying on traditional technology - in the absence of adequate scientific and institutional support. There remains a very considerable potential, both for upgrading the technology of aquaculture where it is already practised, and for extending the area utilized for fish farming. The International Rice Commission, for example, has pointed to the immense possibilities of integrating irrigated rice cultivation with aquaculture.

For the future, Asia and the Pacific will need to strengthen scientific and institutional support for aquaculture. The measures required include strengthened research efforts, reduction of dependence on inefficient and uneconomic tide-fed ponds, updating of laws on access to water, training, and investment.

Perhaps the most innovative programme has been your establishment of the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia (NACA). FAO has collaborated in this programme, aimed at enabling four national centres to become focal points for training and research. The network is now well on its way to becoming a self-sustaining, wholly Asian activity - an indicator of the useful services these centres can offer.

Tasks Ahead

Mr. Chairman, I have been speaking about problems examined by the Technical Committee, and which will now come before the Plenary Session for review. As background to all of them, I would like to emphasize one common aspiration, which I am sure we all can share: to leave to our children, and to those who will come after them, productive land, unpolluted water, and a rich store of flora and fauna. If we are not to bequeath the legacy of a ravaged world, we must adopt today the necessary policy reforms.

The relentless depletion of tropical forests and the corresponding spread of soil erosion have not been checked, and the consequences are there for all to see: increasingly severe flash floods, fuelwood shortages, and the fall of water tables. Mangrove forests in the Pacific and South Asia have been ruined. Vast logged-over areas in Southeast Asia are blanketed by sterile fields on imperata cylindrica. These show how the ancient concept of man's role as steward of God-given natural resources has been devalued.

Unrelenting abuse of ecosystems can set off a spiral of destructive self-reinforcing processes that soon become irreversible. Each step of ecological decay accelerates the onset of the next. Asian scientists have warned of this destructive spiral in the Himalayan ecosystems which threatens the lives and future of millions who live in these ranges and farm the Indo-gangetic plains.

Among the major initiatives which can help us to cope with these compelling issues, I would like to make particular mention of the Tropical Forestry Action plan. The Plan was conceived last year by FAO, has been approved by our Committee on Forestry, and is being carried out in close association with the World Bank, UNDP and a number of other organizations. It provides a framework within which developing countries and the international community as a whole can tackle some of the problems I have outlined.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, thirty years ago, twenty years ago, even ten years ago, the world food problem was dominated by Asia. It is an immense tribute to Asian policy-makers and farmers that this is no longer the case.

Your remarkable achievements have, at the same time, unleashed a powerful surge in the legitimate aspirations of the destitute for a more decent life. To underestimate the strength of this turbulent social force would be to court disaster.

For the remainder of this decade, and well into the 1990s, the agricultural policy-makers of Asia and the Pacific face the challenge of responding to these deeply human hopes with vision, decisiveness and compassion. I am confident your response will stem from the conviction - shaped by the development experience of this Region - that sustained growth is possible only if built on policies that ensure, for the weakest and poorest, a fairer share of "the good earth".

Thank you.

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