

ERC/96/REP

REPORT

Tel Aviv,
Israel,
29 April - 3 May
1996

Twentieth FAO Regional Conference for Europe



Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

REPORT

of the

FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE

Twentieth Session
Tel Aviv, 29 April-3 May 1996

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FAO members in the European Region (as of 20 October 1995)

Albania	Georgia	Norway
Armenia	Germany	Poland
Austria	Greece	Portugal
Belgium	Hungary	Romania
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Iceland	Slovakia
Bulgaria	Ireland	Slovenia
Croatia	Israel	Spain
Cyprus	Italy	Sweden
Czech Republic	Latvia	Switzerland
Denmark	Lithuania	The Former Yugoslav
Estonia	Luxembourg	Republic of Macedonia
European Community (member organization)	Malta	Turkey
Finland	Moldova	United Kingdom
France	Netherlands	Yugoslavia

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for Europe

First	- Rome, Italy, 10-15 October 1949
Second	- Rome, Italy, 10-15 October 1960
Third	- Rome, Italy, 8-13 October 1962
Fourth	- Salzburg, Austria, 26-31 October 1964
Fifth	- Seville, Spain, 5-11 October 1966
Sixth	- St. Julian's, Malta, 28-31 October 1968
Seventh	- Budapest, Hungary, 21-25 September 1970
Eighth	- Munich, Germany, Fed. Rep. of, 18-23 September 1972
Ninth	- Lausanne, Switzerland, 7-12 October 1974
Tenth	- Bucharest, Romania, 20-25 September 1976
Eleventh	- Lisbon, Portugal, 2-7 October 1978
Twelfth	- Athens, Greece, 22-27 September 1980
Thirteenth	- Sofia, Bulgaria, 4-8 October 1982
Fourteenth	- Reykjavik, Iceland, 17-21 September 1984
Fifteenth	- Istanbul, Turkey, 28 April-2 May 1986
Sixteenth	- Cracow, Poland, 23-26 August 1988
Seventeenth	- Venice, Italy, 3-7 April 1990
Eighteenth	- Prague, Czechoslovakia, 24-28 August 1992
Nineteenth	- Killarney, Ireland, 6-10 June 1994
Twentieth	- Tel Aviv, Israel, 29 April-3 May 1996

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SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in the Region

For the attention of Governments

The Conference stressed:

1. the need for and action being taken to increase agricultural competitiveness in the countries in the Region (para. 12);
2. the importance of economically, ecologically and socially sustainable agriculture (para. 12);
3. the need to give careful attention to the sound management of the Region's forest and fishery resources (para. 12);
4. the importance of balanced nutrition (para. 12);
5. the need to take account of the multi-faceted role of agriculture (para. 12);

For the attention of FAO

The Conference underlined:

6. the importance that countries in transition attach to receiving assistance in agriculture and rural development during their process of transformation, particularly from FAO, and the expectations the CEECs have in respect to appropriate and concrete support by the recently opened Sub-Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, Budapest (para. 12).

Report on FAO Activities in the Region, 1994-95

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

7. recommended that future reports provide quantitative data regarding resources allocated to the Region under the Regular Programme and from extra-budgetary sources, as well as a qualitative assessment of resource utilization on which recommendations on future directions could be based (para. 13);
8. recommended that every effort should be made to bring the Sub-Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe in Budapest into full operation as rapidly as possible (para. 13).

World Food Summit

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

9. recognized that certain countries within the Region faced food security problems (para. 18);
10. identified food safety and sound nutrition as priority areas (para. 19);

11. recognized the importance for food security of a well-functioning liberal trade system at local, national, regional and international levels (para. 21);
12. welcomed the outcome of the FAO/Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Consultation which took place immediately prior to the Regional Conference as a viable input to its debate and supported transmission of the Consultation report to the Inter-sessional Working Group of the Committee on World Food Security (para. 25).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

13. drew attention to the need to refer to agreements reached in other international fora (para. 22);
14. recognized that the Inter-sessional Working Group of the Committee on World Food Security had been entrusted with the task of taking forward preparation of the Summit Policy Statement and Plan of Action and directed that its report should be provided to the Inter-sessional Working Group (para. 23);
15. underlined that further steps should be taken to fully involve other relevant organizations of the United Nations system in Summit preparations (para. 24).

Sustainable Agricultural Development in Europe with Particular Focus on the Mediterranean Area

For the attention of Governments

The Conference stressed:

16. the need for strengthening cooperative research programmes (para. 27);
17. the importance of sustainable water management and control in the Mediterranean area and the need for sound choices in the use of water between and within sectors (para. 27).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

18. recognized the valuable role that FAO could play in assisting Member Countries to share information, technology and experiences regarding sustainable agricultural development, water, and related questions (para. 27).

Structural Reform Process in Central and Eastern European Countries(CEEC)

For the attention of Governments

The Conference stressed:

19. the importance to CEEC in their transformation processes of capital inflows (para. 28);
20. the importance of meeting quality and other requirements of export markets (para. 28).

For the attention of FAO

21. the need for FAO to tailor its assistance to the needs of the CEEC (para. 28).

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

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

22. elected Mr. Jure Pohar (Slovenia) as representative of the Region on the CGIAR for the four-year period 1997-2000 (para. 29);
23. recommended that preference be given to a candidate from the Mediterranean area at the 21st Regional Conference subject to suitably qualified candidatures being nominated (para. 29).

Future Ministerial Meetings in Conjunction with Sessions of COFI and COFO

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

24. advised the Director-General to arrange future ministerial sessions in conjunction with COFI and COFO sessions only if appropriate, and in close consultation with Members (para. 30).

A Proposal for Shortening of the Regional Conference Reports

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

25. adopted the proposal for shortening regional conference reports (para. 31).

Date and Place of the Twenty-First FAO Regional Conference for Europe

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

26. welcomed the offers to host the next Conference extended by the delegations of Estonia, Slovakia and Slovenia which would be conveyed to the Director-General for decision in consultation with the Members of the Region (para. 33).

INTRODUCTION

1. The Twentieth FAO Regional Conference for Europe was held in Tel Aviv, Israel from 29 April to 3 May 1996 at the invitation of the Government of the State of Israel.
2. The list of Participants is given in Appendix A to this Report.

INAUGURAL CEREMONY

3. The Director-General of FAO, Mr. Jacques Diouf, welcomed participants and expressed particular thanks to the Government of Israel for its generous hospitality and the excellent facilities provided for the Conference. He highlighted the ethical necessity of eliminating hunger and the threat that hunger presented to the world. A truly global campaign, involving all sectors of society, to achieve a world free of hunger would be required following the World Food Summit to be held in Rome in November 1996.
4. In his welcoming address on behalf of the State of Israel, the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Ya'acov Tsur, underlined the need for concrete action to tackle the problem of world hunger. Agricultural production would have to double over the next 30 or 40 years. This called for both investment and progress with research. Countries in a position to do so should help others. Israel was playing its part in this and would continue to do so. However, there was a fundamental need for peace alongside economic development in order to achieve food security.
5. The Conference also expressed its gratitude to the Government of Israel for its hospitality and the excellent facilities provided.
6. The Conference welcomed the statement and the presence throughout the Conference of the Independent Chairman of the Council. The Conference also welcomed the statements of several UN agencies and NGOs.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN, VICE-CHAIRMEN AND APPOINTMENT OF THE RAPPORTEUR

7. The Conference unanimously elected Mr. Ya'acov Tsur, the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Israel as Chairman.
8. The following vice-chairmen were elected by acclamation:
 - Mr. Joze Osterc, Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia;
 - Mr. Paolo Vincenzo Massa, Conseiller, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy;
 - Mr. Bjorn Sigurbjornsson, Secretary General in the Ministry of Agriculture of Iceland.
9. Mr. David Sands Smith, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to FAO, was elected Rapporteur.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA¹

10. The Conference adopted the Agenda as shown in Appendix B to this Report.
11. In view of the absence of the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe, or his representative, Item 5 was deleted from the Provisional Agenda.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

COUNTRY STATEMENTS AND GENERAL DEBATE ON THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE SITUATION IN THE REGION

12. The Conference reviewed the food and agriculture situation in the Region. Statements were made by the delegations of Israel, the European Union, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, Cyprus, Iceland, Romania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Turkey, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Switzerland, Norway, Malta and Albania. In their statements delegations drew particular attention to the following:

- recent trends in European Union agriculture;
- the steps being taken by a number of countries outside the European Union to align their agricultural policies with those of the Union;
- the need for and action being taken to increase agricultural competitiveness in the countries of the Region;
- the difficulties and the progress being made by countries which formerly had centrally planned economies with agricultural privatisation and the overall transformation of their agricultural sectors to market systems;
- the concern of countries in transition to move ahead rapidly with agricultural restructuring;
- the importance of the countries in transition attach to receiving assistance in agriculture and rural development during their process of transformation, particularly from FAO, and the importance these countries attach to the FAO Sub-Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, Budapest, providing them with appropriate and concrete support;
- the potential of the countries in transition to increase their agricultural production;
- the adverse effect of drought in some southern parts of the Region, in spite of recent rains;
- the importance of economically, ecologically and socially sustainable agriculture;
- the need to give careful attention to the sound management of the Region's forest and fishery resources;
- the importance of balanced nutrition; and
- the need to take account of the multi-faceted role of agriculture.

REPORT ON FAO ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION, 1994-95²

13. In reviewing the report submitted by the Secretariat, the Conference:
- recommended that future reports should provide quantitative data regarding resources allocated to the Region under the Regular Programme and from extra-budgetary sources, as well as a qualitative assessment of resource utilization on which recommendations on future direction could be based;
 - recommended that every effort should be made to bring the Sub-Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe in Budapest into full operation as rapidly as possible; and
 - welcomed the offers of financial support made by some Member Countries to strengthen the Organization's activities in priority areas such as forest conservation, rural energy and agricultural research.

²ERC/96/2

14. Taking account of the financial prospects and noting the priority areas in the Secretariat's report, delegations indicated the importance they attached to:

- i) assistance to Member Countries in the CEE Subregion in policy analysis;
- ii) support for research activities in the CEE Subregion;
- iii) support for the livestock sector in the CEE Subregion;
- iv) assistance in improving agrarian structures in Central and Eastern Europe;
- v) support for strengthening capacity to ensure better nutrition practices;
- vi) advice on diversifying the rural economic base to provide alternative, non-farm sources of income to rural populations; and
- vii) help in safeguarding the quality and standards of food and farm products and promoting measures to prevent the expansion of contagious diseases.

15. The Conference fully supported the measures taken by the Secretariat to ensure coordination with other international organizations such as OECD, the European Community and the World Bank as well as with other bilateral programmes active in the Region.

WORLD FOOD SUMMIT³

16. With a view to contributing a European Regional perspective to the Summit preparation, the Conference considered documents ERC/96/3 "Towards Universal Food Security: Draft of a Policy Statement and Plan of Action", ERC/96/4 "World Food Summit: Food Security Situation and Issues in Europe" and noted ERC/96/4-Sup.1 "Food for All Campaign".

17. The Conference considered it would be premature to make any commitments of a global nature at this regional level, and therefore decided not to consider Part III of ERC/96/4. The European Union stated its wish to have discussions with other European countries on the elaboration of common European views on food security in the Region in order to give an input to the Inter-sessional Working Group of the Committee on World Food Security.

18. The Conference recognized that certain countries within the Region faced food security problems. The Region as a whole made a significant contribution to food security throughout the world, despite the fact that vulnerable groups occurred in the Region.

19. Emphasis was placed on making progress with food and agricultural production in countries in transition to market economies. Steps being taken to expand intra-regional agricultural trade were highlighted. The Conference also identified food safety and sound nutrition as areas of importance.

20. The Conference considered a number of issues should be given greater emphasis in the draft Summit documents and drew particular attention to the following:

- the over-riding need for much greater attention to be given to the fundamental problem of poverty alleviation and access to food;
- governments have responsibility for and must ensure a framework conducive to food security;
- the need for full and active participation of people and their organizations in formulating and implementing food security policies and actions;
- the empowerment of women in view of the central role they play as managers of natural resources and as food producers;
- the critical importance of addressing demographic issues;
- the importance of addressing household-level food security as an essential building block in achieving food for all;

³ERC/96/3, ERC/96/4 and ERC/96/4-Sup.1

- the multiple functions of agriculture with an emphasis on sustainable agriculture - as an engine of growth, in fighting poverty, in providing employment in rural areas and so improving access to food, in resource conservation and in slowing the rural - urban migration;
- the urgency of action to maintain and enhance the natural resource base of agriculture, fisheries and forestry of all regions of the world;
- the sustainable management of water resources, availability of water and dissemination of appropriate technologies for the efficient use of water;
- the substantive role of sustainable fisheries and forestry in food security;
- reinforcing and broadening research on food production systems with an emphasis on sustainable management of natural resources; and
- providing food aid where appropriate without discouraging national production and commercial structures.

21. The Conference recognized the importance for food security of a well-functioning liberal trade system at local, national, regional and international levels. However, a number of delegations cautioned that trade liberalization by itself would not be sufficient to achieve food security and ecological and social objectives, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

22. Delegations drew attention to the need to refer to agreements reached in other international fora and highlighted the importance of substantive contributions which are expected from the Leipzig FAO Conference on Plant Genetic Resources for food and agriculture. Steps needed to be taken by Member States and the UN system to ensure the World Food Summit preparation and its subsequent follow-up formed an integral part of the Conference Action Plan (i.e. the UN system assistance for the integrated follow-up to the major UN conferences since 1990).

23. The Conference recognized that the Inter-sessional Working Group of the Committee on World Food Security had been entrusted with the task of taking forward preparation of the Summit Policy Statement and Plan of Action. It accordingly directed that its report should be provided to the Inter-sessional Working Group.

24. The Conference underlined that further steps be taken to fully involve other relevant organizations of the United Nations system in Summit preparations. It particularly emphasized the importance of their active participation in the meetings of the Inter-sessional Working Group and stressed the need for further UN system consultations within appropriate existing inter-agency mechanisms.

25. The Conference welcomed the outcome of the FAO/Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) Consultation which took place immediately prior to the Regional Conference as a valuable input to its debate. It noted and supported transmission of the Consultation Report to the Inter-sessional Working Group of the Committee on World Food Security.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA⁴

26. As an introduction, Professor Pasternak of the Ben-Gurion University of Negev gave a presentation of Israel's experience in the management and use of scarce water resources, including the use of saline and recycled water for irrigation and development of drought-resistant crops.

⁴ERC/96/5

27. In discussion, attention was drawn to the following:
- the value of countries in the Mediterranean area sharing information, technology and experiences regarding sustainable agricultural development, water, and related questions, recognizing the valuable role that FAO could play in this context;
 - the need for strengthening cooperative research programmes;
 - the importance of sustainable water management and control in the Mediterranean area and the need for sound choices in the use of water between and within sectors; the importance of forestry and forest management in the Mediterranean area and the problem of damage caused by forest fires;
 - the problems caused by protracted drought and dry summer seasons;
 - the variations in ecological conditions within Mediterranean countries;
 - the importance of identifying and addressing nutritional problems in Mediterranean countries.

STRUCTURAL REFORM PROCESS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES⁵

28. The Conference reviewed the Progress Report prepared by the Secretariat and highlighted the following:
- the value of the technical and financial assistance from the European Community in support of CEE reforms as well as of bilateral support and of support from FAO;
 - the importance to CEE countries in their transformation processes of capital inflows;
 - the action being taken by CEE countries to comply with GATT Uruguay Round requirements as well as the action being taken by these countries to benefit from export opportunities;
 - the importance of developing off-farm employment opportunities in rural areas;
 - the importance of meeting quality and other requirements of export markets; and
 - the need for FAO to tailor its assistance to the needs of the CEE countries.

⁵ERC/96/7

OTHER MATTERS

REPRESENTATION OF THE REGION ON THE CGIAR⁶

29. On the basis of a recommendation of a Sub-committee of the Regional Conference, Mr. Jure Pohar of Slovenia was elected to represent the Region within the CGIAR for the four-year period 1997-2000. The Sub-committee also recommended that preference be given to a candidate from the Mediterranean area at the 21st Regional Conference subject to suitably qualified candidatures being nominated.

FUTURE MINISTERIAL MEETINGS IN CONJUNCTION WITH SESSIONS OF COFI AND COFO⁷

30. The Regional Conference advised the Director-General to arrange future ministerial sessions in conjunction with COFI and COFO sessions only if appropriate, and in close consultation with Members.

A PROPOSAL FOR SHORTENING OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE REPORTS

31. Following the recommendations in 1995 of the FAO Council and the Conference requesting the Director-General to make savings in the cost of governance, the Conference adopted the proposal for shortening regional conference reports⁸.

32. However, the Conference decided that its debate on the World Food Summit, should be recorded in greater detail in view of the contribution it would make in the process of preparing for the Summit.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE

33. The Conference welcomed the offers to host the next Conference extended by the delegations of Estonia, Slovakia and Slovenia which would be conveyed to the Director-General for decision in consultation with the Members of the Region.

CLOSURE OF THE CONFERENCE

34. The Conference repeated its gratitude to the Government of the State of Israel for hosting the Conference and for the warmth of its hospitality.

35. The Conference also thanked all those who had contributed to the smooth and efficient conduct of business and in particular, to Mr. Pérez de Vega, not only for his work at the Conference but also for all that he had done during his period as the FAO Regional Representative for Europe.

⁶ERC/96/6

⁷ERC/96/8

⁸ERC/96/9

APPENDIX A
ANNEXE A
APENDICE A

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS
LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES

Chairman	:	
Président	:	Ya'acov TSUR (Israel)
Presidente	:	
Vice-Chairmen	:	Björn SIGURBJÖRNSSON (Iceland)
Vice-Présidents	:	Paolo Vincenzo MASSA (Italy)
Vicepresidentes	:	Joze OSTERC (Slovenia)
Rapporteur	:	David SANDS SMITH (United Kingdom)
Independent Chairman of the Council	:	
Président du Conseil	:	José Ramón LOPEZ PORTILLO
Presidente independiente del Consejo	:	

**MEMBER NATIONS IN THE REGION
ETATS MEMBRES DE LA REGION
ESTADOS MIEMBROS DE LA REGION**

ALBANIA - ALBANIE

Delegate
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General Director of Agriculture Livestock
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ARMENIA - ARMENIE

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Ashot VOSKANIAN
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BOSNIA Y HERZEGOVINA**

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APPENDIX B

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Inaugural Ceremony
2. Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Appointment of the Rapporteur
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement by the Director-General
5. Statement by the Executive Secretary of the ECE
6. Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agricultural Situation in the Region
7. Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1994-95

III. SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

8. World Food Summit

The Conference at its 28th Session decided to convene the World Food Summit from 13 to 17 November 1996, at FAO Headquarters. It is expected that the Summit will adopt a Policy Statement and a Plan of Action for Universal Food Security.

A draft of these documents is presented to the Regional Conference for review so as to ensure that issues of particular relevance to the region are adequately addressed.

To facilitate this review a separate document provides an assessment of the food security situation in Europe and discusses in some detail those issues which are specific to the region. It also contains a proposal for regional food security targets which, once approved by the Regional Conference, will form, together with those for other regions, the basis for the World Food Summit targets.

In reviewing the draft Policy Statement and Plan of Action, and the regional food security targets a number of provisional technical background papers will be available to the Conference. These papers provide the substantive basis for the main policy topics and approaches outlined in the draft Plan of Action.

9. Sustainable Agricultural Development in Europe with Particular Focus on the Mediterranean Area

Soil degradation, scarcity of water and desertification affect to a varying degree several countries of the region, in particular in the Mediterranean area. There is a need for sound policies and strategies to address these problems at national and regional levels. The document under this item discusses policy options for agricultural development in drought-prone ecosystems, strategies for water utilization and resource conservation and their sustainable use and makes proposals for regional and interregional cooperation including possible areas for FAO support.

10. Structural Reform Process in Central and Eastern European Countries

The Regional Conference at its Seventeenth and Eighteenth Sessions had discussed policy changes affecting European agriculture with particular emphasis to the restructuring efforts of Central and Eastern European countries. The present update has the purpose to review progress made and to highlight positive experiences and difficulties encountered in the transformation of farm structures, in land privatization and in the introduction of market systems for agriculture commodities.

IV. OTHER MATTERS

11. Representation of the Region on the CGIAR
12. Future Ministerial Meetings in Conjunction with Sessions of COFI and COFO
13. A Proposal for the Shortening of Regional Conference Reports

V. CONCLUDING ITEMS

14. Date and Place of the Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for Europe
15. Adoption of the Report
16. Closure of the Conference

APPENDIX C

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

ERC/96/1	Provisional Annotated Agenda
ERC/96/2	Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1994-95
ERC/96/3	World Food Summit: Draft of a Policy Statement and Plan of Action
ERC/96/4	World Food Summit: Food Security Situation and Issues in Europe
ERC/96/4-Sup.1	Food for All Campaign
ERC/96/5	Sustainable Agricultural Development in Europe with Particular Focus on the Mediterranean Area
ERC/96/6	Representation of the Region on the CGIAR
ERC/96/7	Structural Reform Process in Central and Eastern European Countries
ERC/96/8	Future Ministerial Meetings in Conjunction with Sessions of COFI and COFO
ERC/96/9 + ERC/96/9-Corr.1	A Proposal for the Shortening of Regional Conference Reports (French only)
<u>ERC/96/INF/....</u>	
ERC/96/INF/1	Information Note
ERC/96/INF/2	Provisional Timetable
ERC/96/INF/3	Provisional List of Documents
ERC/96/INF/4	Action Taken on the Main Recommendations of the 19th Regional Conference for Europe
ERC/96/INF/5	Director-General's Statement
ERC/96/INF/6	Provisional List of Participants
ERC/96/INF/7	Statement of Competence by the European Community (EC) and its Member States

