

***REPORT***

Montevideo,  
Uruguay,  
28 September-  
2 October  
1992

# **Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean**



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

*FAO Member Nations served by the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean  
(as of 2 October 1992)*

Antigua and Barbuda	Dominican Republic	Panama
Argentina	Ecuador	Paraguay
Bahamas	El Salvador	Peru
Barbados	Grenada	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Belize	Guatemala	Saint Lucia
Bolivia	Guyana	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Brazil	Haiti	Suriname
Chile	Honduras	Trinidad and Tobago
Colombia	Jamaica	Uruguay
Costa Rica	Mexico	Venezuela
Cuba	Nicaragua	
Dominica		

*Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for Latin America and the Caribbean*

First	—	Quito, Ecuador, 18-25 September 1949
Second	—	Montevideo, Uruguay, 1-12 December 1950
Third	—	Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1-10 September 1954
Fourth	—	Santiago, Chile, 19-30 November 1956
Fifth	—	San José, Costa Rica, 12-21 November 1958
Sixth	—	Mexico, D.F., Mexico, 9-20 August 1960
Seventh	—	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 17-27 November 1962
Eighth	—	Viña del Mar, Chile, 13-29 March 1965
Ninth	—	Punta del Este, Uruguay, 5-16 December 1966
Tenth	—	Kingston, Jamaica, 2-13 December 1968
Eleventh	—	Caracas, Venezuela, 12-20 October 1970
Twelfth	—	Cali, Colombia, 21 August-2 September 1972
Thirteenth	—	Panama City, Panama, 12-23 August 1974
Fourteenth	—	Lima, Peru, 21-29 April 1976
Fifteenth	—	Montevideo, Uruguay, 8-19 August 1978
Sixteenth	—	Havana, Cuba, 26 August-6 September 1980
Seventeenth	—	Managua, Nicaragua, 30 August-10 September 1982
Eighteenth	—	Buenos Aires, Argentina, 6-15 August 1984
Nineteenth	—	Barbados, 5-13 August 1986
Twentieth	—	Recife, Brazil, 2-7 October 1988
Twenty-first	—	Santiago, Chile, 9-13 July 1990
Twenty-second	—	Montevideo, Uruguay, 28 September-2 October 1992

REPORT OF THE  
TWENTY-SECOND FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE  
FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Montevideo, Uruguay, 28 September - 2 October 1992

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 1992



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SUMMARY OF THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Effects on the Region of the European Single Market, the Political and Trade Opening-up of Eastern Europe and the Outcome of the Uruguay Round

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference:

1. Considered that the Uruguay Round negotiations should produce balanced results in all areas, including agriculture, services, intellectual property rights and trade-related investment matters (Appendix F, para. 14);
2. Stressed the need for an early and successful conclusion of the GATT Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations (Appendix F, para. 16);
3. Considered that net food-importing countries, including ACP countries, should receive special treatment in order to adjust to new market conditions following trade liberalization (Appendix F, para. 19);
4. Urged the European Community to adjust its banana import policy to ensure full consistency with the proposal for comprehensive tariffication in the Uruguay Round negotiations (Appendix F, para. 21);
5. Hoped that the negotiations for a new International Coffee Agreement, including its economic provisions, would be successful and pointed to the need to continue with the Protocol on Rum that was featured in the Appendix to the Lomé Convention (Appendix F, para. 21).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference:

6. Noted with appreciation the technical assistance provided by FAO to developing country participants in the Uruguay Round, particularly its role in the negotiations leading to the draft agreement on sanitary and phytosanitary measures in the draft Final Act (Appendix F, para. 17);
7. Suggested that FAO examine the advisability of addressing the problems of the world sugar market, even though this was being taken care of by another international agency (Appendix F, para. 21);
8. Stressed the need for FAO to provide continuing assistance to enhance the countries' competitiveness as exporters and to bring about appropriate diversification of agricultural sectors (Appendix F, para. 24);

For the Attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

9. Underlined the need for a balanced solution to policy problems in the world banana market within the framework of the Thirteenth Session of FAO's Intergovernmental Group on Bananas, to be held in La Lima, Honduras in November 1992 (Appendix F, para. 21).

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

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference:

10. Elected Chile unanimously as the Region's CGIAR Representative, to replace Brazil when its mandate ended in 1992 (Appendix F, para. 31).

Food Protection and Control in Latin America and the Caribbean with Special Reference to Street Foods and Other Products of Potential Risk for the Consumer and International Food Trade

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference:

11. Stressed the need for strong and concerted action by all countries of the Region to develop adequate and effective food quality and safety programmes (Appendix F, para. 34);

12. Emphasized the urgent need for adequate supplies of potable water for the sale of street foods to reduce one of the most potentially dangerous sources of contamination (Appendix F, para. 36).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference:

13. Expressed its appreciation for FAO's assistance with regard to the control of food quality, safety and contamination and for the training of food inspection, laboratory and management personnel (Appendix F, para. 35);

14. Called for FAO assistance in preparing manuals for food control officers and expressed the hope that FAO assistance could be extended to all the countries of the Region (Appendix F, para. 35).



For the Attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

15. Accorded high priority to working with the Codex Alimentarius Commission to develop adequate standards for food products, hygiene and labelling, to control and limit food contaminants and urged rapid implementation of recommendations at national and regional levels (Appendix F, para. 34);

16. Endorsed the Plan of Action included in the background document and called for vigorous efforts in its implementation and in that of the suggestions put forward, within the framework of a more global strategy (Appendix F, para. 36);

17. Drew attention to the need for programmes that would reduce the risks of organic and inorganic contamination during the production, harvesting and handling of raw materials (Appendix F, para. 36);

18. Considered the programmes for the quality control of water used for agricultural purposes to be of vital importance (Appendix F, para. 36).

Current Status and Future Prospects of Modern Biotechnologies in Latin America and the Caribbean

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference:

19. Recommended that the countries exploit the Region's obvious advantages in biodiversity and other natural resources, reiterating the need to align activities with the conclusions reached at UNCED in the areas of biodiversity and biotechnology (Appendix F, para. 47).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference:

20. Suggested that FAO look into the feasibility of establishing a regional interinstitutional body to manage and follow-up biotechnology activities, mainly in the areas of genetic engineering and molecular biology (Appendix F, para. 45);

21. Suggested that FAO organize a consultation on agricultural biotechnology in which representatives of governments, international technical and financial cooperation organizations, bilateral cooperation agencies and national programmes would participate in coordinating ongoing activities and in defining development strategies (Appendix F, para. 46);

22. Proposed that FAO consider the possibility of implementing sub-regional biotechnology programmes with multi-agency coordination, using already-agreed mechanisms or networks (Appendix F, para. 46);

23. Requested that FAO supplement the current plant biotechnology database with information on animal biotechnology, as part of an interdisciplinary approach (Appendix F, para. 48).

For the Attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

24. Emphasized the need to adapt and transfer advanced biotechnologies produced in developed countries to conditions in the individual countries of the Region, to promote vocational training and horizontal technical cooperation, and to procure funding through a differentiated approach based on each country's requirements (Appendix F, para. 44).

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

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference:

25. Expressed concern over the increase in poverty and malnutrition, especially in the rural areas of most of the Region's Member Nations, which had worsened with the economic adjustment process, and which had underscored the need for effective linkage between agriculture and agro-industry to foster development (para. 24);

26. Stressed the importance of participating in the International Conference on Nutrition, which would produce the World Declaration and Plan of Action as a commitment on the part of Member Nations to combat hunger and malnutrition (para. 24);

27. Suggested that the Member Nations of the Region draw up a common strategy to deal with the problems that were affecting the international agricultural commodity trade (para. 25);

28. Called for a successful early outcome to the negotiations of the GATT Uruguay Round, though some delegations expressed their pessimism in this regard (para. 26);

29. Pointed to the need for greater cooperation among the Member Nations of the Region so that the differences that existed regarding certain aspects of the external agricultural commodity market would be constructively resolved (para. 30);

30. Noted that, in view of the new quality and productivity requirements and the rapid biotechnological headway made in the developed countries, it was essential for all countries to combine efforts in maintaining and accelerating integrated regional development (para. 33).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference:

31. Highlighted the need for the cooperation from the Specialized Agencies, particularly FAO, in the efforts being made by countries to modernize and diversify their production bases and thus adjust to the new trade environment (para. 30);

32. Referred to the benefits that would derive from increasing funds to strengthen the mechanisms and activities of FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme and of its Technical Cooperation Networks (para. 37).

For the Attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

33. Noted the offer of a Delegation to provide infrastructural assistance in developing and implementing programmes and projects on food standardization and control, consumer education, staff training and biotechnology (para. 34);

34. Indicated the urgent need to initiate or continue cooperation endeavours that focused on the conservation of the environment and the safe use of agrochemicals within the framework of UNCED's Agenda 21 and Convention on Biodiversity (para. 35).

Report on FAO Activities in the Region in 1990-1991

For the Attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

35. Expressed its satisfaction with FAO's work, and commended the activities of the Regional Office (para. 45);

36. Endorsed the Medium-term Plan 1994-99 and stated that the Plan of Action adopted at the Twentieth Regional Conference remained valid as a policy framework for the agricultural and rural development of the Region (para. 45).

Date and Venue of the Twenty-third FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

For the Attention of Governments and FAO

The Conference:

37. Took note of the offer of the Delegation of El Salvador to host the Twenty-third Regional Conference, to be held in 1994 and requested the Director-General to determine the venue and date, after consultation with the Government of El Salvador and other Member Nations of the Region (para. 48).



## INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

### Organization of the Conference

1. The Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Montevideo, Uruguay, from 30 September to 2 October 1992.
2. The Conference was attended by delegations from 25 FAO Member Nations of the Region, and observers from countries in other regions, various United Nations agencies, regional and sub-regional bodies and institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

### Inaugural Ceremony

3. The Conference was solemnly inaugurated in the City Hall of Montevideo in the presence of His Excellency the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, Don Luis Alberto Lacalle; the Minister of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries, Mr Alvaro Ramos; the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Eduardo Mezzera; the Mayor of Montevideo, Dr Tabaré Vázquez; the Ministers, Vice-Ministers and Heads of Delegations; the Diplomatic Corps accredited in Uruguay, and observers from international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.
4. The Director-General of FAO, Mr Edouard Saouma, thanked the Government and people of Uruguay for their generous hospitality and stressed that the presence of the President of the Republic was a clear testimony of the importance that his Government attached to agricultural development and international cooperation. He then invited the President of the Republic to make his inaugural address.
5. After welcoming the participants on behalf of the Government and people of Uruguay, the President stated that the world was going through a process of change in which political stances and ideological systems should be set aside so that global problems could be addressed pragmatically.
6. He pointed out that the liberalization of trade would generate greater wealth in both developed and developing countries. He stated that Uruguay was concentrating on environmentally-friendly products and foods to safeguard the environment and exploit international trade opportunities. He also called for greater appreciation of the value of water resources.
7. He stated that the items on the Conference's Agenda, such as biotechnology, international trade and the Uruguay Round, were important both to the Region and to the world. He congratulated FAO on its joint organization, with the Government of Mexico, of the International Conference on Responsible Fishing in Cancún, mentioned Uruguay's concern for fishery resources in the Southern Atlantic, and urged FAO to support activities for their conservation and utilization.
8. The Director-General thanked the President of the Republic for his kind words, for the importance he attached to FAO's work and for his comments on the complex issues facing agricultural policy-planners in the

Region and in the world. The full text of the statement by the President of the Republic is included in Appendix D to this report.

#### Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur

9. The Conference unanimously elected as Chairman Mr Alvaro Ramos, Minister of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries of Uruguay. It also unanimously elected as Vice-Chairmen all the Ministers heading delegations: Mr Marcello Regúnaga, Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Argentina; Mr Harcourt Lewis, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries of Barbados; Mr Juan Agustín Figueroa Yávar, Minister of Agriculture of Chile; Mr Joseph Maynard, Minister of Agriculture of Dominica; Mr George Brizan, Minister of Agriculture of Grenada; Mr Seymour Mullings, Minister of Agriculture of Jamaica, and Mr César Antonio Pereira Burgos, Minister of Agriculture of Panama.

10. The Conference appointed as Rapporteur Mr Samuel Fernández, Ministerial Advisor, Deputy Permanent Representative of Chile to FAO, who had performed the same function for the Technical Committee with great competence.

11. The Conference decided to retain the Drafting Committee of the Technical Committee, comprising Argentina, Honduras, Jamaica and Uruguay, with an open invitation to the other delegations to participate.

#### Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

12. The Conference adopted the Agenda and Timetable, and it is attached as Appendix A to this report.

#### Statement by the Director-General

13. The Director-General began his statement by pointing out that this was the fourth time that Uruguay was hosting an FAO Regional Conference.

14. He drew attention to the significant political and economic changes that were taking place in the world, which also affected Latin America and the Caribbean. He stated that though the Region was emerging from the economic and social disasters of the 1980s, the economic structural adjustments in the various countries had led to an increase in absolute poverty, particularly in the rural areas.

15. He expressed his concern about the problems of world agricultural trade which were due to low and unstable commodity prices and to the protectionism applied, in particular, by many industrialized countries, which had placed the countries of the Region at a serious disadvantage. Trade liberalization could provide a much more powerful stimulus to economic growth and prosperity than aid. He stated that the impact of a single European market on the preferential market access currently granted to the CAP countries was a matter of grave concern. In this connection, he stated that the banana trade situation was of crucial importance to many countries of the Region and that a positive innovative approach was required for an effective solution.

16. He also drew attention to the extensive economic integration that was taking place in the Region and that had provided considerable momentum in recent years.

17. He underlined that agriculture featured prominently in the GATT Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations for the first time, and referred to the recognition of FAO's involvement in this connection through the Codex Alimentarius and the International Plant Protection Convention.

18. He stressed that biotechnology was an appropriate instrument to develop sustainable production alternatives and referred to the need to combine efforts along these lines through the creation of such networks as the Technical Cooperation Network on Plant Biotechnology (REDBIO) which constituted a nucleus for the regional exchange of knowledge and expertise.

19. The Director-General concluded by mentioning FAO's role in the Region and existing cooperation mechanisms, and by reiterating his anticipation for high-level participation by the Region at the International Conference on Nutrition.

20. The full text of the Director-General's statement is given in Appendix E to this Report.

Statement by the Independent Chairman of the FAO Council

21. The Independent Chairman of the FAO Council, Mr Antoine Saintraint, thanked the Government of Uruguay for hosting the Conference and for its excellent organization. He stressed the importance of Regional Conferences in defining food and agriculture policies, which should be placed within a regional and global framework to produce more equitable societies.

22. He also stressed that as regards reform, FAO had made a special effort to examine all the aspects of its activities and bring them into line with world, especially Third World, development requirements. The result of this in-depth review had been approved by FAO's Governing Bodies.

## SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

### The State of Food and Agriculture in the Region

23. The delegations of all the Member Nations and various observers intervened in the general debate. They thanked the Government and people of Uruguay for their welcome, and for the facilities made available to the Conference.

24. The Conference expressed its concern over the increase in poverty and malnutrition, especially in the rural areas of most of the Region's Member Nations which had worsened with the economic adjustment process. In this context, agricultural and agro-industrial development was essential in order to alleviate poverty, achieve economic growth and improve food security, especially in households. It also stressed the importance of participating in the International Conference on Nutrition which would produce the World Declaration and Plan of Action as a commitment on the part of Member Nations to combat hunger and malnutrition.

25. The Conference expressed its satisfaction with the fact that trade topics had been included in its Agenda and with the corresponding document submitted by the Secretariat. It stressed that the Conference was taking place at a very critical time for the world economy characterized, inter alia, by an increase in protectionist measures, especially in many developed countries, the emergence of trading blocs that tended to exclude the developing countries, and structures that distorted agricultural trade. These were all factors that led to a very unfair distribution of trade benefits, and it was suggested that the Member Nations of the Region draw up a common strategy to deal with these problems.

26. Many delegations agreed with the importance attached to the negotiations for agricultural production and trade liberalization in the context of the GATT Uruguay Round. They, however, expressed disappointment that the negotiations had been deadlocked in recent months and called for a successful outcome as soon as possible, though some delegations expressed pessimism in this regard. They highlighted the contribution included in the draft of the Final Act presented by the Director-General of GATT, Mr Arthur Dunkel, as well as the contributions made by the Cairns Group, particularly its Latin American members.

27. Various delegations pointed out that although agricultural production and trade liberalization was timely in the present international context and could significantly assist in boosting the world economy, its benefits varied from one country to another, and depended on production base, natural resource endowment and market associations. They stressed that while many countries would benefit from liberalization, the advantages would not be equally shared, and some countries could even be disadvantaged.

28. The delegations of the Caribbean Island States stressed that their economies were extremely vulnerable to the changes currently under way in the world market, because of their special characteristics, dependence on agricultural production, and preferential importation rights to developed country markets. They also pointed out that agricultural liberalization and, consequently, the potential loss of their preferential status would exacerbate the current trade problems resulting from increased competition by other producers and the drop in world prices. The delegations drew



particular attention to their concern regarding possible changes in the banana and sugar markets as a result of the changing European Community market.

29. They expressed particular concern regarding the changes likely to occur in the European Community banana market once the Single European Market rules were put into effect, as Caribbean producers were not able to compete with exports from other Latin American producers with more efficient production systems and lower costs. These delegations requested that the special treatment accorded under the terms of the Protocol annexed to the Lomé Convention be maintained. They also expressed similar concerns with respect to sugar and rum.

30. These delegations also thought that their economic vulnerability would make it difficult for them to adapt to the changes in the European market. They mentioned that serious efforts were already being made to modernize and diversify their production bases and thus adjust to the new trade environment. The Conference highlighted the need for cooperation from the Specialized Agencies, particularly FAO, in these efforts. They also pointed to the need for greater cooperation among the Member Nations of the Region so that existing differences in some of these markets would be constructively resolved.

31. Latin American delegations responded positively to this call for cooperation and expressed their readiness to discuss the situation and seek fair and balanced solutions to the problems. They advocated dialogue and cooperation to seek common ground in resolving other existing trade differences and in enabling them to face challenges presented by the standstill in the Uruguay Round talks in a more coordinated manner.

32. Several delegations pointed out that present socio-economic conditions coupled with the need for a more rational use of natural resources necessitated recourse to more highly developed technology, particularly biotechnology, so that these countries could meet the challenges and succeed in competing in world markets.

33. It was noted that, in view of agricultural production restrictions resulting from new quality and productivity requirements and the rapid biotechnological headway made in the developed countries, it was essential for all countries to combine efforts in maintaining and accelerating integrated regional technological development.

34. The Conference noted the offer of one delegation to provide infrastructural assistance in developing and implementing the food and biotechnology programmes and projects mentioned in the Report of the Technical Committee. These included the formulation of internationally-recommended standards and codes of practice in the importing and exporting of food; the development of appropriate and effective food quality and safety programmes; the establishment of adequate food product standards for domestic consumption, hygiene and labelling, and for food contaminant control and limitation; the training of food inspection, laboratory and management personnel; the preparation of material to inform and educate the community regarding food quality and safety procedures; the training of high-level staff in advanced biotechnologies, and the regional interinstitutional management and follow-up of biotechnology activities, particularly in the fields of genetic engineering and molecular biology.

35. Several delegations emphasized the importance of natural resource conservation and sustainable use, and of biodiversity and biotechnology as a comparative advantage for regional development, and indicated the urgent need to initiate or continue cooperation endeavours that focused on the conservation of the environment and the safe use of agrochemicals within the framework of UNCED's Agenda 21 and Convention on Biodiversity. They also highlighted FAO's leading role in promoting horizontal cooperation, in providing technical assistance and in channelling funds for these purposes.

36. On the basis of its experience in and development of agricultural sciences and biotechnology, one delegation offered to host the consultation on agricultural biotechnology recommended by the Technical Committee in its Report during the first half of 1993.

37. A number of delegations underlined the usefulness of horizontal cooperation, particularly that achieved through FAO's Technical Cooperation Networks, and hoped that additional funds could be made available to strengthen their mechanisms and activities. They also recognized the effectiveness of FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) and referred to the benefits that could be expected if the Programme were provided with additional funds.

38. The representative from the World Food Programme (WFP) provided a report on food aid activities in the Region associated to development and relief projects in meeting nutritional needs of resource-poor and vulnerable populations. He emphasized the technical support received from FAO in this respect.

39. The Director-General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) underlined that the Conference Agenda proposed discussion on some of the main areas featuring on the Region's agricultural agenda in the following years, and indicated that FAO and IICA collaboration could focus on them. He also emphasized that much more was required from international organizations within the new context of international globalization in developing cooperation efforts in such areas as technological development, germplasm, and biotechnology, trade liberalization, hunger and poverty elimination, and agricultural production, modernization and reorientation that emphasized the role of small farmers. At the end of his statement, he presented the Director-General of FAO with a silver medal commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of his Organization.

#### Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1990-91

40. The Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, Mr Rafael Moreno, introduced the item on FAO Activities in the Region 1990-91,<sup>1</sup> the document which had been prepared according to the instructions given by the Twenty-sixth Session of the FAO Conference (Rome, November 1991) and the guidelines established by the Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago, July 1991).

41. He stated that, despite budgetary restrictions, FAO had significantly increased its activities in the Region within a framework of

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<sup>1</sup> LARC/92/2; LARC/92/2-Sup.1.

international and regional integration by promoting greater coordination between Headquarters, the Regional Office, the Country Representations and other organizations. This effective coordination had ensured the geographical coverage of all the Member Nations of the Region and had enabled the various regional and subregional topics of interest to be addressed.

42. He made particular mention of the regional preparatory meetings for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and highlighted the importance of the meeting in Barbados which had focused specifically on the sustainable development problems of small island states, as well as the meeting in Santiago, Chile, whose conclusions had been discussed at the Summit in Rio de Janeiro. He also drew attention to the regional preparatory meetings for the International Conference on Nutrition that had been held in Mexico and Kingston, and that had produced Declarations and Plans of Action to address problems associated with food and nutrition.

43. He reported that FAO had organized a number of regional activities in support of women-related issues, fisheries, forestry, livestock development and biotechnology. He referred in particular to the establishment of the Technical Cooperation Network in Support of Rural Women; the subregional meetings for the Central American and CARICOM countries on resource management in their Exclusive Economic Zones; the first Latin American Congress on Watershed Management; the support provided to the Commission on Livestock Development and the promotion of small-scale livestock development; and the preparation of a regional inventory of plant biotechnology laboratories.

44. He concluded by emphasizing FAO's determination to continue to respond to the Region's needs in a committed and forceful manner.

45. The Conference expressed its satisfaction with FAO's work, commended the activities of the Regional Office, and endorsed the Medium-term Plan 1994-99. It also stated that the Plan of Action adopted at the Twentieth Regional Conference remained valid as a policy framework for the agricultural and rural development of the Region.

46. Some delegations asked FAO to investigate the possibility of having countries participate in the design and programming of FAO's regional activities. One delegation requested that documents on FAO's regional activities include additional information in the future.

47. An observer Member Nation delegate stressed the relevance of the FAO document and mentioned that his country had provided technical cooperation for FAO's activities on genetic resources, biotechnology, pesticide registration and control, agricultural policies and the citrus network.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

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

48. This item was presented by the Assistant Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, who described the CGIAR's structure and working mechanisms and stressed the importance that FAO attached to agricultural research.

49. Chile was unanimously elected as the Region's CGIAR representative, to replace Brazil when its mandate ended in 1992.

##### Date and Venue of the Twenty-third FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

50. The Conference took note of the offer of the Delegation of El Salvador to host the Twenty-third Regional Conference to be held in 1994, and requested the Director-General to determine the venue and date, after consultation with the Governments of El Salvador and other Member Nations of the Region.

##### Adoption of the Report

51. The Conference adopted its report after introducing the amendments it considered pertinent.

##### Closure of the Conference

52. The Conference thanked His Excellency the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay for having attended the Inaugural Ceremony. It thanked the people and Government of Uruguay for their generous hospitality and for the excellent organization of the meeting. It expressed its appreciation for the extremely capable manner in which the Minister of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries of Uruguay had presided over its proceedings. The Conference also thanked the Director-General of FAO and the Independent Chairman of the Council for their attendance. Finally, it congratulated the Rapporteur, Drafting Committee and Secretariat on their excellent work.

53. The Chairman brought the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean to a close, thanking the delegations for their active participation and for the high-level intellectual content of the technical discussions that took place.

AGENDA OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

(28 - 29 September 1992)

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Opening of the Technical Committee
2. Election of Technical Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman, and Appointment of Drafting Committee
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

II. TECHNICAL ITEMS

4. Effects on the Region of the Single European Market, the Political and Trade Opening-up of Eastern Europe and the Outcome of the Uruguay Round
5. Current Status and Future Prospects of Modern Biotechnologies in Latin America and the Caribbean
6. Food Protection and Control in Latin America and the Caribbean, with Special Reference to Street Foods and other Products of Potential Risk for the Consumer and International Food Trade
7. Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)
8. Any Other Business
9. Approval of the Report

AGENDA OF THE PLENARY SESSION

(30 September - 2 October 1992)

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

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

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement by the Director-General
5. Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in the Region

6. Report of the Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative on FAO Activities in the Region in 1990-91

III. CONCLUDING ITEMS

7. Any Other Business
8. Date and Venue of the Twenty-third Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean
9. Adoption of the Report (including the Technical Committee Report)
10. Closure of the Conference.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS  
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS  
LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES

OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE

BUREAU DE LA CONFERENCE

MESA DE LA CONFERENCIA

Chairman	:	
Président	:	Alvaro RAMOS TRIGO (Uruguay)
Presidente	:	

Vice-Chairmen	:	Marcelo REGUNAGA (Argentina)
Vice-Présidents	:	Harcourt LEWIS (Barbados)
Vicepresidentes	:	Juan Agustín FIGUEROA YAVAR (Chile)
	:	Maynard JOSEPH (Dominica)
	:	George BRIZAN (Grenada)
	:	Seymour MULLINGS (Jamaica)
	:	César Antonio PEREIRA BURGOS (Panamá)

Rapporteur	:	Samuel FERNANDEZ (Chile)
Relator	:	

Drafting Committee	:	Argentina
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LARC/92/2-Sup.1	Medium-Term Plan 1994-99: Regional Dimensions
LARC/92/3	The Effects on the Region of the Single European Market, the Political and Commercial Rapprochement Between Eastern Europe and the Community and the Outcome of the Uruguay Round
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LARC/92/4	Current Status and Future Prospects of Modern Biotechnologies in Latin America and the Caribbean
LARC/92/5	Food Protection and Control in Latin America/Caribbean with Special Reference to Street Foods and Other Products of Potential Risk for the Consumer and for International Food Trade
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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE EASTERN REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY,  
DR LUIS ALBERTO LACALLE

Dr Director-General of FAO,  
Mr Chairman of the Council,  
Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
Honourable Minister of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries,  
Mr Mayor,  
Distinguished Delegates,

The Government of the Republic today opens its doors, the doors of the country, to this meeting which is taking place at a time when the whole world, which is in a state of such upheaval, is questioning fundamental aspects of the way we live. I would say, contrary to what has been stated, that we are not before a new world order, but are undergoing a tremendous process of reorganization. And, believe me, this goes far beyond the notorious eye-catching conflicts that fill our newspapers, that are on television and the radio every day, that are so very painful to us as human beings, and that are so contrary to the spirit of brotherhood that the world needs. There are perhaps in the disorder - or in the process of organization, but certainly not in the order, for there is no order - underlying ontological problems. These are basic questions that human beings are asking themselves, not only at the level of those in government who by the nature of their profession are forewarned and forearmed; not only at the level of the political experts; not only at the level of the intellectuals; but at the level of the ordinary citizens who, thanks to the information made readily available by the mass media, ask themselves: is this really possible? Will matters get worse than they are now in Sarajevo and the Middle East? Worse than the current racial and trade problems that are emerging in many countries? Do we really have to live in a world where three out of four people go to sleep hungry and where, even more dramatically, the fourth wonders whether to go on a diet? What this means, dear friends, is that our world, the world we have been given and in which we all have some form of influence, that this world is tremendously conflictive. Much progress has been made - for we should not be overly negative or apocalyptic about the world's prospects - but there is no denying that progress often has a less appealing underside. Perhaps so that we do not forget that the world will always remain as such, that human nature, since it was first led into temptation, has always struggled and will always struggle between good and evil. Perhaps this is why we are faced with problems that would amaze, shock and distress not only our grandparents, but our very parents.

Therefore a meeting that groups together food, agriculture and human resource policy-planners is undoubtedly important, but only on the condition that we leave behind the ideologies that have caused so much damage, and commit ourselves to the supreme virtue of politicians, which is to act pragmatically and practically. This, of course, does not mean abandoning one's scale of values which serves the same function as the keel of a boat that, though unseen, keeps it on course. But there is no doubt - and this has been made clear by events - that we should discard ideological stances that are going to predetermine the solutions we come up with. If we know that producing food will partly resolve the food problem in the world,

why then do we immediately come up against tariff and non-tariff barriers, followed by logistical problems, and then local political problems? Why do we need to consider the political implications before we decide who to feed and who to leave hungry? If we allow such factors to influence us then unwittingly, and sometimes wittingly, we are at fault and sinning against life.

Such is the international context in which you will be discussing many issues that are of utmost interest to my country, our country. Not only as a country that has traditionally been devoted to food production, but also as a country which, despite its small size, has been an active participant in all of mankind's great endeavours and which has produced citizens who have gone out and initiated the work we want to continue, to make a contribution, with our people, with our talent and with our skills, in attaining peace among nations so that we may all include ourselves among those blessed at the Sermon on the Mount.

You will be discussing biotechnology and various aspects of international trade, which, believe me, is a matter of great concern to us. Under the guidance of our great compatriot, Enrique Iglesias, our nation gave rise to the Uruguay Round, which, though not quite on its deathbed, certainly lacks the vitality it should have. Many of its key players are prevented from making decisions and are therefore failing to work towards a successful outcome because of economic, electoral and circumstantial considerations.

And yet the disastrous recession that is now taking hold in Europe, the United States and the Far East clearly shows that there are no national paths towards recovery. The world today is so interlinked that measures designed to reduce interest rates, loosen or squeeze credits and even provide subsidies fail to have any effect even on the major economies. There is so much interlinkage, and the flow of money and information - which is power - is so great that no country can keep out of economic trouble alone. And yet, paradoxical as it may seem, we have within our reach the only viable means of recovery, which is extensive trade liberalization. Because this is something that is clearly understood by the entrepreneur in any country, by the producer, farmer, livestock breeder, fisherman or industrialist in any part of the world, because they all know that more trade brings greater prosperity. This is the only key to recovery, even for the economies of the developed countries. And yet they adopt positions, which of course we understand (the world is not such an easy place) but which at times prevent them from being a little more farsighted and from realizing that an increase in trade of one trillion dollars is the solution for the world's economies. It is pointless for the central banks to adjust their interest rates or to introduce measures that were valid twenty years ago in reviving today's economies whose strength is derived from their interdependence but also at times from their vulnerability. That is why countries such as ours, that have reduced tariffs, that have opened up their economies, that have listened to the mighty centres of international power, have asked for instructions as to what to do. And once we have followed these instructions, we have asked ourselves where the investment was and whether many of the large countries actually practise what they preach. In other words, we are living in a world that is full of paradoxes, full of contradictions that appear to have no solution.

You will be examining matters that are related to all this, or that will at least serve as a springboard for further developments. Our country

is concentrating on two or three aspects of agricultural production, one being the launching of Uruguayan products under the slogan "Uruguay - At One With Nature". This is a comparative advantage that we intend to pursue and that we are promoting throughout the world. We are already exporting at higher prices because we are selling healthy, wholesome products - not only wholesome for consumers, but also wholesome for the environment in the sense that the biological chain is not being disrupted by products that artificially accelerate the biological process. I would even go so far as to say that our aim is for people to understand that a product's true nobleness lies in its respect for nature's cycles. Uruguay, at one with nature with regard to its meat, with regard to its agricultural produce, will be, and is, an objective that is already bearing its first fruits, though it is of course not a new feature. Simply, as the world concentrates more on wholesome products and focuses more on what is good or better, trade opportunities will be opened up to us.

Our country, which is blessed by Divine Providence with a pleasant geography, which is crisscrossed by thousands of streams and rivers and which lies on one of the largest aquifers of the world, has not yet really understood the true value of water. Together with the Minister of Livestock, we are making efforts to overcome this barrier, which is cultural rather than technical.

We had a conversation this morning with the Director-General which - for me at least - was very educational and instructive. We told him that it was not a question of not knowing how to use water: we have drip irrigation; we know through our rice cultivation how to irrigate large areas; we have irrigation by gravity; we have water close at hand, and we have water in our streams and rivers. Here, as in many other areas, what we are up against is a mental block, the failure of farmers to realize that water is their greatest asset for the future - not only to prevent drought, which is a biblical scourge that affects this part of the world every now and then, but also as a competitive advantage. I refer to water as and when we need it to accompany the life cycles of seeds and crops. This is a vital feature around which we need to educate once more, to train, to break down cultural barriers and which we need to include in our overall conception of agriculture.

We welcome, Mr Director-General, the outcome of the Conference on Fisheries in Mexico which has raised the level of concern over this resource and which is for us indicative of how the international community's conscience has developed. It is no longer a matter of how to fish, where to find fish or how to increase catches, but of realizing that the world's resources are finite, not infinite. This is a qualitative landmark of the twentieth century, with mankind realizing that there are physical and quantitative limits to the way we can employ the world's natural resources.

One of our concerns, Mr Independent Chairman of the Council, Mr Director-General - and you have heard me say this before, for this is not new and I believe it is shared by most of my Uruguayan counterparts - is the conservation of the sea's resources. We are worried about the large fishing grounds in the international waters of the Southern Atlantic, one of the greatest reserves of biomass inherited by mankind which we also take advantage of when in our waters. We are worried about their protection, and if there is one organization that can raise the level of awareness on this matter, then it is the Organization under your leadership which has, as one of its fundamental aims, the conservation of resources. We have in those

enormous stretches of water the means of feeding thousands and millions of individuals. In fact, those of us who love the sea know and believe that this is perhaps where the solution to feeding the world's population lies, more than anywhere else. But these resources, which belong to nobody and yet to everybody, should be especially protected.

I believe therefore, distinguished Delegates, that the items on your agenda, the issues I have raised and anything that might arise during your meeting are relevant and important, at a time when just about everything has resulted in squabbling and arguing. Your discussions will be dealing with life itself, which is the top priority. Without respect for life, we are guilty of irreversibly damaging mankind's most important cultural value. We do not live by bread alone, but we need bread to have faith and to listen to the words of God. Therefore, let every one of us, within our different levels of responsibility, attempt to make sure that each night there is someone who is a little less hungry, and therefore a little more hopeful with regard to the future.

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Mr Chairman, Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates and Observers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the fourth occasion on which the Government of Uruguay has so generously hosted the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a great pleasure to be in the magnificent city of Montevideo and to enjoy the warm, friendly welcome of its people. Indeed, we are delighted to be able to experience once again the natural splendour of this beautiful country as well as the special spirit with which it has inspired culture and nurtured democracy.

On behalf of myself and all assembled here, may I convey our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Government of Uruguay for the wonderful hospitality accorded to us.

The Present Situation

We meet in what is a landmark year, the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America. So much has happened since this meeting between Europe and the Americas which has brought about profound and far-reaching changes in the world and especially in this continent.

As we approach the third millennium, the pace of history seems to have suddenly quickened. Winds of change are blowing around the globe, sweeping away political and economic systems that have long governed the lives of hundreds of millions of people. There seems to be a greater set to embrace new ideas, a willingness to accept new systems.

Latin America and the Caribbean have not been immune to the impact of these historical changes. For the first time since their independence in the early nineteenth century, almost all countries in the Region now have democratic systems of government. The role and functions of governments are being redefined. Increasingly, they reflect new thinking on development and trade policies, and a strengthening of the solidarity within the Region as well as with the rest of the world.

Only now is the Region emerging from the "lost decade" of the 1980s, which took such a heavy economic and social toll, particularly among the underprivileged and poor. The tide seems to be turning, even if a little slowly. Many of your countries have made progress in restoring the overall balance in their economies, reducing inflation, attracting outside investment and improving their ability to compete in world markets. Agricultural production has shown modest growth in 1991, in line with the general trend in recent years.

But, despite these improvements, the average per caput output stands at a level reached a decade and a half ago. Severe social and economic problems persist. The pace of population growth still needs to be moderated. The drift from agriculture and altered patterns of food demand.

In a number of countries, the deterioration in the quality of life among rural people is impeding progress. In addition, structural adjustments of national economies have contributed to an increase in absolute poverty, particularly in rural areas.

#### The External Debt Problem

Despite several initiatives, high levels of external debt continue to be a major problem. While the total external debt in the Region declined slightly, the burden of servicing it increased in 1991, reflecting, among other things, the slowdown in world trade, stagnation in export earnings and an increase in repayments. The ratio of debt service payments to exports rose from 26 percent in 1990 to 30 percent in 1991. Yet without a reduction of the debt burden there can be little hope of stimulating greater investment in economic growth and social development.

#### Improved Regional Trade and Economic Integration

At the same time the pace of regional economic integration has accelerated. The members of the Andean Group and of CARICOM have agreed to establish common markets by 1993. Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and our host, Uruguay, entered into an agreement in March of this year establishing MERCOSUR which will lead to a full common market by 1994. Recently, Mexico and the five Central American republics signed a framework agreement preparing the way for free trade by 1996.

Elsewhere in the hemisphere, trade and investment agreements are being forged. The recent successful negotiations between Mexico and the United States and Canada should lead over the next 15 years to a North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA). The population in this area, at 360 million people, is much larger than any other market in the industrialized world, including that of the EEC. Interestingly, NAFTA provides for other countries to join it. In addition, the United States, under the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative, has announced a proposal to form a free trade zone in the hemisphere.

All these developments raise the vision that eventually a continent-wide free-trade area might be created stretching from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego.

#### Importance of the International Trade Environment

With more than 85 percent of merchandise exports and 90 percent of agricultural exports going to countries outside the Region, the economic prospects for Latin America and the Caribbean are tied inextricably to developments in world markets. It is therefore a matter of some concern that many of the problems confronting world agricultural trade have actually worsened since the 1980s as a result of low and unstable commodity prices and protectionism, especially in many industrialized countries.

#### Depressed Commodity Prices

Demand for the region's exports has remained weak, mainly because of the slow growth in the economies of the developed countries. Commodity

prices have remained depressed generally and terms of trade have deteriorated. In real terms the prices of crucial agricultural exports such as coffee and sugar are now a third of their 1980 levels. Wide fluctuations in export prices have added to the difficulties and uncertainties of producers. The Region's share of world agricultural exports has also fallen since 1980. In fact, the purchasing power for its agricultural exports is now lower than a decade ago, and the link between low commodity prices and the illegal trade in narcotic drugs can no longer be ignored.

For developing countries to increase production would be utterly futile if in the end they cannot get a reasonable return for their exports. Traditional international agreements on commodities, with their provisions on price and stocks, seem to be losing their appeal. Not surprisingly, this leads to a search for new approaches. In this search, due consideration needs to be given to the realities of world trade, including the role and influence of some large transnational corporations on production, processing and prices.

#### Persisting Protectionism

Continuing high levels of protectionism in many industrialized countries are a major barrier to progress. The protection of domestic markets for agricultural commodities, especially the more processed products, remains very high in these countries. According to OECD figures, in the industrialized countries total transfers from consumers and taxpayers associated with agricultural policies totalled record US\$320 billion in 1991.

It is a cause of great disappointment and frustration that trade liberalization, which has led to a massive dismantling of trade barriers in the Region and in many other developing countries, has not been accompanied by similar measures in many industrialized countries. This has placed producers in the Region at a great disadvantage. Not only do they have to compete with industrialized countries in world markets, but also, very often, in their own domestic markets.

#### Gains from the Liberalization of Trade

On the whole, removal of protectionist barriers would be in the interest of all countries, including the developing countries. Trade liberalization can provide a much more powerful stimulus to economic growth and prosperity than aid. Clearly, a successful and early conclusion of the Uruguay Round negotiations would provide a tremendous boost to recovery and progress.

As is well known, agriculture has figured prominently for the first time in the GATT rounds. FAO has been associated with these negotiations, especially in respect of the sanitary and phytosanitary barriers to trade, with specific recognition being given to the important roles of Codex Alimentarius and the International Plant Protection Convention. Unfortunately, differences between the two major trading partners over whether and how to reduce farm subsidies continue to stand in the way of progress towards a successful conclusion of the overall negotiations.

Breaking the deadlock in the GATT negotiations is especially important for this Region which is expected to benefit substantially from the removal of protectionist barriers, particularly in the food and agriculture sector. According to one study, a reduction of 20 percent in producer prices in the agriculture sector of the main developed countries, as envisaged in the so-called Dunkel Package, would result in an overall net trade gain for the Region of some US\$450 million. Of course, the extent of the benefits would vary from country to country, with some countries possibly losing out in net terms. Much would depend on the commodities that they export and import, the main markets to which they export, and the impact on preferential conditions of market access.

#### Implications of a Unified European Market

Equally important for trade prospects in the Region is progress towards a single European market. The EEC has a long-standing relationship with the CARICOM countries through the Lomé Convention and with the Central American countries through the San José accords. Over the past 18 months, the EEC has also signed bilateral trade agreements with the Andean Group, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay. Clearly, the impact of a unified European market on market access and the preferential access at present accorded to the ACP countries are matters of major concern.

In this context, the position with respect to the banana trade is of crucial importance to many countries in the Region. A lot of good will and innovation will be needed to arrive at a practical solution. Account should be taken of both GATT principles and the interests of smaller countries that depend heavily on banana exports for foreign exchange earnings.

#### Latin America's Role in Meeting Rising Demand

Over the next three decades, the world population will grow by 3 billion people, adding dramatically to the demand for food, clothing and other basic needs. Food and agricultural output alone will have to be doubled. It is therefore essential that trade and economic cooperation within the Region should foster an expanding and dynamic relationship with the rest of the world. Its future prosperity will be that much more secure if it is firmly anchored to the expanding global trade.

Considerable potential certainly exists: the rich natural endowment of this Region - its land, forests and fisheries - should allow it to meet its own needs and to provide for a substantial surplus to meet requirements outside the Region. Latin America is widely regarded as one of the few agricultural "frontiers" left in the world. Recent growth in both traditional and new agricultural exports provides evidence of this, the doubling in the past five years of its exports of horticultural products being just one example. Another is the relatively untapped potential of its marine and inland fisheries resources. However, the problem of how to increase production without bypassing the small-scale producers or depleting the resource base presents a formidable challenge. But here, as elsewhere in the world, a word of warning is called for: the natural resources of the Region will need to be harnessed prudently to meet the anticipated rise in demand for agricultural products.



### Urgent Need for Research in Sustainable Agricultural Development

The Region must thus produce more, generate more income and employment, and yet conserve its natural heritage. Do we have the knowledge and technology to achieve these objectives? Intensive agricultural production, which typically relies on a massive application of pesticides and fertilizers, has been criticized for harming the environment. But, in the absence of any viable and proven alternative, we may have no other option than to depend upon these same technologies. Obviously, every effort must be made to use them in a safer, more careful way so as to avoid, or at least minimize, damage to the environment.

This does not mean that we should accept the status quo. Research needs urgently to be directed at finding and developing alternatives that are both environmentally friendly and that have the capacity to produce what is required. Biotechnology holds some promise in this respect. But research in biotechnology is often costly. To date, it has been mainly the province of large corporations and has focused mostly on crops and livestock varieties that are suited to temperate zones and for which markets exist primarily in the developed world.

However, the Region has the tremendous advantage of a vast reservoir of biodiversity. The need, therefore, is to join together through networks and other means of information exchange to develop new technologies and varieties. Already, the FAO-sponsored Technical Cooperation Network on Plant Biotechnology (REDIBIO) has brought together 18 countries in the Region. A nucleus for regional cooperation is accordingly in place. Biotechnology can be expected to assume increasing importance in raising production, incomes and export earnings in the future.

### FAO in the Region

The region has shown great vitality on environmental issues. I need only mention the initiative in hosting earlier this year the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), perhaps better known as the Earth Summit. The Agenda 21 adopted by this historic meeting covers a very wide range of FAO programmes. We stand ready to cooperate fully with the countries of the Region and other organization in the follow-up process to UNCED. FAO is already supporting the Amazon Cooperation Treaty. We are providing support to its Secretariat and helping to prepare a package of environmentally-sound projects for this vast expanse of humid tropical forest.

FAO through its Regional Office in Santiago, Chile, and its network of country representatives is well placed to assist governments in the Region. Our mandate is to support efforts to improve living conditions, particularly in rural areas, to develop agriculture, forestry and fisheries on a sustainable basis, and to increase the capacity of the Region to compete in the world market. Our role is catalytic, setting norms and standards, providing access to and disseminating the latest knowledge and techniques, and encouraging investment in technical assistance and development.

At present, FAO's Field Programme has 277 projects active in the Region amounting to some US\$127 million, the majority being funded by FAO's own Technical Cooperation Programme. Trust fund projects have now reached a

level of some US\$70 million, more than double the level financed by UNDP. The increasing share of Trust Fund projects is a healthy sign for the future because of the decline in projects executed by Specialized Agencies following the new support costs arrangements being introduced by UNDP.

FAO cooperates with many regional and international organizations, such as ALADI, IICA, SELA, UPEB and IDB, to name but a few. We are particularly keen to finalize a formal agreement with IDB that would enhance our collaboration in the future.

#### The International Conference on Nutrition

Before closing, I would like to refer to the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) which is to be held in Rome in December this year under the joint sponsorship of FAO and the World Health Organization. Your Region's preparations for the ICN culminated in the convening of two meetings, one in Mexico and the other in Jamaica, in March this year. Subsequently, a very fruitful meeting of the Preparatory Committee was held in August paving the way for a successful conference in December. I look forward to the high-level participation of countries from the Region at the ICN as we endeavour to set the agenda and plan of action for achieving the common goal of better nutrition and food security for all.

#### Concluding Remarks

The Latin America and Caribbean Region has always participated vigorously and constructively in international forums. Your Region, as a firm and consistent supporter of FAO, has contributed immensely to ensuring that it remains a strong and credible multilateral organization working for the benefit of all of its Member Governments. I have no doubt that, with its abundant resources and capacity, it has a vital part to play in meeting the growing needs of the world, and a heavy responsibility as a champion of multilateralism in international institutions.

We in FAO always derive the greatest satisfaction from being of service to the Region, and we look forward to continued and increased collaboration in the future. The strong support that the Region has always given to FAO is of particular importance for preserving and strengthening it as a truly international organization. Let me take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation and thanks also for the support that I have personally received from all of you.

In conclusion, I wish you complete success in your deliberations during the Conference. I am confident that the results will provide yet further impetus for our work and for regional cooperation in the vital sector of agriculture and rural development.

REPORT OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

(Montevideo, Uruguay, 28-30 September 1992)

1. The Assistant Director-General, FAO Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, inaugurated the Technical Committee on behalf of the Director-General, welcomed the Delegates and Observers and thanked the Government and people of Uruguay for their hospitality.

Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur

2. The Committee unanimously elected as Chairman Mr Pedro Saravia, Under-Secretary for Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries of Uruguay. It also unanimously elected Mr Ruall C. Harris, the Permanent Secretary for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries of Barbados, as its Vice-Chairman. Mr Samuel Fernández, Ministerial Advisor and Deputy Permanent Representative of Chile to FAO was elected Rapporteur.

3. The Drafting Committee was made up of the delegates of Argentina, Honduras, Jamaica and Uruguay, with an open invitation to the other delegates to participate.

Adoption of Agenda and Timetable

4. The Conference adopted the Agenda and Timetable, found in Appendix A.

The Effects on the Region of the Single European Market, the Political and Trade Opening-up of Eastern Europe and the Outcome of the Uruguay Round

5. The Director of the ECLAC/FAO Joint Agricultural Division presented a synopsis of this item.<sup>1</sup> He began by emphasizing the importance of the issue for Latin America and the Caribbean, and drew attention to the impact of the support policies implemented by the industrialized countries on the Region's agricultural sectors. He mentioned in particular the adverse effects of the European Community's (EC) Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on exports from Latin America and the Caribbean.

6. He also indicated that the speed and nature of the changes taking place in Europe and the standstill in the Uruguay Round Multilateral Trade Negotiations made it difficult to determine their impact on agriculture and agricultural trade in Latin America and the Caribbean. These changes would, however, have a profound effect on the Region, as they would alter the relative position of the countries in the so-called EC "Privilege Pyramid".

7. The Director observed that the changes would have an important impact on agro-food trade. He mentioned in particular: (i) the changes introduced in the CAP; (ii) the integration and consolidation of the European economy (SEM 1992) and the financial and political integration envisaged under the Maastricht Treaty; (iii) the emergence of a new "European Economic Area" with closer ties and integration between the

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<sup>1</sup> LARC/92/3

Community and the EFTA and Eastern European countries; and (iv) the GATT Uruguay Round trade negotiations.

8. He pointed out that the Region's exporters would have to face increasingly competitive and sophisticated markets in the developed countries, with higher technical and quality standards that presented new and greater challenges. He stated, however, that the entry into effect of the SEM and the larger economic area would also offer export opportunities for the Region.

9. He stressed that the specific impact of these changes on the Region's exports would depend on the following factors: (i) the introduction and effective implementation of the SEM 1992 rules and mechanisms; (ii) progress in amending the CAP; (iii) the EC's capacity to absorb a new economic area of continental proportions; (iv) changes in the EC's trade relations and system of preferences; (v) the characteristics and structure of the production base and of the Region's export profile; and (vi) the ability of Latin American and Caribbean governments, producers and entrepreneurs to react to developments.

10. He stated that the changes examined in the document would be numerous and would have a deep impact on the Latin American and Caribbean countries. He believed that there could be new opportunities with positive effects in some cases, but adverse impacts on agricultural and export growth in others.

11. He stressed that actions to exploit the new opportunities should not focus exclusively on increasing exports, but should also concentrate on the equitable development of sustainable agriculture and production changes.

12. The document suggested that consideration be given to the following specific actions: (i) more active and coordinated participation of all the Region's countries in the GATT Uruguay Round; (ii) greater consolidation of broader trade and such cooperation agreements as the Initiative for the Americas, and the development of new links with the Asia/South Pacific bloc; (iii) promotion of joint efforts to increase domestic trade flows; (iv) creation of measures to improve the competitiveness of Latin American and Caribbean exports by emphasizing economic complementarity, the use and dissemination of appropriate, advanced technology and the strengthening of regional cooperation actions in commodity trade; (v) the preparation and submission of programmes and projects for possible EC funding, mainly in the areas of rural development and food security; diversification of the production base and of regional trade; promotion of regional integration and non-traditional export crops, alleviation of problems associated with peasant agriculture and rural poverty, and promotion of environmental protection measures.

13. The Committee highlighted the importance of the Uruguay Round negotiations, the establishment of the Single European Market and the impact of agricultural developments in Eastern Europe for the Region, and commended FAO for the background document as an excellent point of departure for the Committee's deliberations on the main international trade issues.

14. The Uruguay Round was by far the most comprehensive package of trade negotiations undertaken in the history of GATT. In addition to the traditional areas, this Round of negotiations had also included such new trade aspects as services, intellectual property rights and trade-related

investment matters. The Conference considered that the negotiations should produce balanced results in all areas.

15. The Committee stressed that for the first time in GATT negotiations the Uruguay Round had included wide-ranging discussions on agriculture dealing with access to markets, internal support and export subsidies. The Committee noted that the draft agreement on agriculture included specific rules and disciplines on each of these elements, in order to achieve substantive reductions in trade distorting measures.

16. Underlining the stimulus that trade liberalization could provide to world economic growth, the Committee stressed the need for an early and successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round. A number of delegations noted the contributions made in achieving agreement through the draft Final Act of the Round ("Dunkel Package") issued in December 1991, and the willingness of their Governments to endorse it.

17. The technical assistance provided by FAO to developing country participants in the Uruguay Round was noted with appreciation, particularly its role in the negotiations leading to the draft agreement on sanitary and phytosanitary measures contained in the draft Final Act.

18. The Committee noted that the liberalization of markets aimed for in the Uruguay Round would have different impacts on countries according to their patterns of agricultural trade and production, and the extent to which preferential conditions of market access could change.

19. The Committee considered that net food-importing countries, including ACP countries, should receive special treatment in order to adjust to new market conditions following trade liberalization and the possible erosion of their preferential treatment in certain developed country markets. The Committee noted that a declaration on measures concerning the possible negative effects of the reform programme on the net food-importing developing countries had been included in the draft Final Act of the Uruguay Round.

20. The Committee noted with appreciation the efforts made by Cairns Group, especially by its Latin American members, to take into consideration the interests of all Latin American and Caribbean countries in the broadest possible manner.

21. Special attention was given to the proposal by the European Community Commission regarding the adjustment of the Community's banana regime in the context of the Single European Market and the Uruguay Round. The Committee urged the European Community to adjust its banana import policy to ensure full consistency with the proposal for comprehensive tariffication included in the Uruguay Round negotiations. Other delegations urged that the Community keep to its existing commitments on preferential banana imports. The need was underlined to pursue the achievement of a balanced approach to policy problems in the world banana market within the framework of the Thirteenth Session of FAO's Intergovernmental Group on Bananas, to be held in La Lima, Honduras, in November 1992. Similarly, the Committee noted that the Sugar Protocol of the Lomé Convention was for an indefinite period, and that another international agency was paying special attention to the world sugar market. However, it suggested that FAO examine the advisability of addressing similar problems regarding the world sugar market. The Committee hoped that the negotiations for a new International Coffee Agreement, including its economic provisions, would be successful. The Committee

pointed to the need to continue with the Protocol on Rum featured in the Appendix to the Lomé Convention.

22. The Committee took note of the measures announced by the European Community to reform its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). A number of delegations expressed disappointment that these reforms did not appear to include explicit provisions to either enhance access for imports from third countries, or to reduce subsidization of the Community's agricultural exports in line with the proposals embodied in the draft Final Act of the Uruguay Round ("Dunkel Package").

23. The Committee expressed the hope that the Single European Market, due to come into effect on 1 January 1993, would provide new opportunities for exports from developing countries. To be able to benefit from such opportunities, some countries would have to improve production techniques and, in many instances, would require financial and technical assistance to make this possible.

24. The Committee considered ways in which FAO should assist the countries of the Region in their efforts to meet the challenges posed by the sweeping changes taking place in the global agricultural trading environment. In particular, it stressed the need for FAO to provide continuing assistance to enhance their competitiveness as exporters and to bring about appropriate diversification of their agricultural sectors. The Committee also stressed FAO's role as a forum to promote further cooperation endeavours between countries of the Region regarding the process of international trade negotiations and the Organization's role as an information centre for keeping member countries up to date on market developments.

UPDATE ON THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION (ICN)

25. The Director of FAO's Food Policy and Nutrition Division introduced this agenda item.<sup>2</sup> He reported that the International Conference on Nutrition, convened jointly by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO), would be held in Rome from 5 to 11 December 1992. The purpose of the Conference was to give the international community the opportunity to make a critical assessment of the continuing malnutrition problems in the world and to determine how best to tackle them.

26. He also referred to national and regional preparations for the Conference and to the meeting of the ICN Preparatory Committee held in Geneva in August, and highlighted the active participation of those present.

27. Regional declarations and plans of action served as a basis for the preparation of the World Declaration on Nutrition and the Plan of Action to be adopted by the countries at the ICN.

28. He stressed that the NGOs should be involved in the ICN follow-up activities as they played an essential role in ensuring people's nutritional well-being.

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<sup>2</sup> LARC/92/INF/4

29. He emphasized that the ICN should not be considered as an end in itself, but as a step in the continuing process of strengthening the efforts and taking the necessary measures to prevent and alleviate hunger and malnutrition.

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

30. This item was presented by the Assistant Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, who described the CGIAR's structure and working mechanisms and stressed the importance that FAO attached to agricultural research.

31. Chile was unanimously elected as the Region's CGIAR representative, to replace Brazil when its mandate ended in 1992.

Food Protection and Control in Latin America and the Caribbean with Special Reference to Street Foods and Other Products of Potential Risk for the Consumer and for International Food Trade

32. The Director of FAO's Food Policy and Nutrition Division also introduced this document,<sup>3</sup> which stressed the importance of improved food quality and safety systems for all the countries of the Region. He reported on the current levels of international food trade and on the present and future benefits that could be derived from strengthened food-industry and government food quality and safety control systems. He emphasized consumer protection and the need to control and monitor domestic foods during production, harvesting, storing, processing and marketing. He also highlighted the importance of street foods to growing urban populations and the need for enhanced food safety. The document proposed a Plan of Action for the harmonization of regional food control policies, legislation and standardization, improved management and implementation of food control programmes, technical cooperation among countries of the Region, with a greater exchange of information, and increased consumer participation in food quality and safety matters.

33. The document also stressed the importance of participating in the work of the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission which developed internationally recommended standards and codes of practice for the importing and exporting of food. It highlighted the work of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean in this regard.

34. The Committee stressed the need for strong and concerted action by all countries of the Region to develop adequate and effective food quality and safety programmes. It accorded high priority to working with the Codex Alimentarius Commission to develop adequate standards for food products, hygiene and labelling, and to control and limit food contaminants, and urged rapid implementation of recommendations at national and regional levels.

35. The Committee expressed its appreciation for FAO's assistance to countries of the Region in strengthening their systems for the control of food quality, safety and contamination, and for the adequate training of food inspection, laboratory and management personnel. It also underlined the importance of training and educating the community as a whole in food

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<sup>3</sup> LARC/92/5

quality and safety procedures. It stressed the need for better food monitoring and analysis facilities, and for enhanced laboratory capacity. It also called for FAO assistance in preparing manuals for food control officers. It expressed the hope that FAO assistance could be extended to all the countries of the Region, and pointed out that food quality and safety problems needed to be overcome to gain access to export markets in North America, Europe and elsewhere.

36. The Committee endorsed the Plan of Action included in the background document and called for vigorous efforts in its implementation and in that of the suggestions put forward, within the framework of a more global strategy. It drew attention to the need for programmes that would reduce the risks of organic and inorganic contamination during the production, harvesting and handling of raw materials, and thus achieve greater environmental protection. It therefore acknowledged the need for more farmer and worker training in the utilization of agrochemicals and in the application of appropriate sanitary measures during commodity harvesting, handling and transport. It considered the programmes for the quality control of water used for agricultural purposes to be of vital importance. It underlined the need for meaningful coordination between all the sectors so as to give effect to the extension and training programmes for those involved in food production. Finally, it emphasized the urgent need for adequate supplies of potable water for the sale of street foods to reduce one of the most potentially dangerous sources of contamination.

#### Current Status and Future Prospects of Modern Biotechnologies in Latin America and the Caribbean

37. This item <sup>4</sup> was presented by the Regional Plant Production Officer, who stressed that modern agricultural biotechnologies were a set of tools that could have a significant medium-term impact and benefit on agricultural and livestock production in the Region.

38. The FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean conducted a survey in 1989-90 covering 16 countries, which revealed an extensive involvement of the private sector, a heterogeneous and inconsistent level of biotechnology activity - from the most orthodox technologies to genetic engineering through recombinant DNA - applied to a wide range of crops.

39. He stated that the main obstacles to biotechnological development were: a lack of highly-trained staff in advanced areas; limited laboratory funding and operating resources; a lack of venture capital; poor interlinkage between academia and the productive sector; the lack of flexible information mechanisms or networks; and the absence of a multidisciplinary attitude, especially among agronomists and biotechnologists.

40. Reference was made to the Technical Cooperation Network on Plant Biotechnology (REDBIO) which included laboratories from 20 countries in the Region and which aimed to use the new technologies, with appropriate training, for the benefit of the main crops of social and economic importance to the Region.

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<sup>4</sup> LARC/92/4



41. He stated that the Convention on Biodiversity and Agenda 21, negotiated by over 150 countries at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), provided an appropriate framework for the implementation and utilization of biotechnology in sustainable agricultural and forest development.

42. While respecting national socio-economic realities, the combination of abundant genetic resources and appropriate and diversified biotechnology should nevertheless promote regional, national and local policy decisions oriented towards new environmentally-friendly markets commensurate with the scale of the challenge.

43. The Committee stressed the timeliness, quality and pertinence of the document submitted by the FAO Secretariat, which provided an accurate review of the situation and would be a valuable analytical tool in the Region.

44. It emphasized the need to adapt and transfer advanced biotechnologies produced in developed countries to conditions in the individual countries, including the tropical ones, of the Region, as well as to promote vocational training and horizontal technical cooperation and procure funding through a differentiated approach based on each country's requirements..

45. It highlighted the need for greater coordination between biotechnology projects and activities developed by the various international agencies cooperating in the agricultural sphere, and suggested that FAO look into the feasibility of establishing an interinstitutional body in the Region to manage and follow up biotechnology activities, mainly in the areas of genetic engineering and molecular biology.

46. The Committee also suggested that FAO organize a consultation on agricultural biotechnology in which representatives of governments, international technical and financial cooperation organizations, bilateral cooperation agencies and national programmes would participate in coordinating ongoing activities and in defining development strategies. It proposed that FAO consider the possibility of implementing sub-regional biotechnology programmes with multi-agency coordination, using already-agreed mechanisms or networks.

47. It recommended that the countries exploit the Region's obvious advantages in biodiversity and other natural resources and that activities involving the use of germplasm, including the conservation, identification and isolation of genes for use in genetic improvement, be given priority. It reiterated the need to bring these activities into line with the conclusions reached at UNCED concerning biodiversity and biotechnology.

48. It requested that FAO supplement the current plant biotechnology database with information on animal biotechnology as part of an inter-disciplinary approach.

49. The Unesco delegate reported on the Regional Biotechnology Project being implemented jointly with UNIDO and UNDP, which focused on training and research on biotechnology applied to human and animal health and plant production. He offered Unesco's cooperation in coordinating activities within the body proposed by the Committee, and promised to make the results of Phase 1 of the Project available to FAO for dissemination.

50. A delegate from an observer country presented a summary of its technical cooperation activities, and stressed that biotechnology was currently at the centre of its international cooperation policy. He drew attention to the mandate conferred on the Director-General of FAO by the UN Secretary General to coordinate the activities of the major UN agencies in environmental matters.

#### Other Matters

51. The Brazilian delegation reported that the Eighth Meeting of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean would be held in Brasilia from 16 to 20 March 1993, and not as shown in paragraph 85 of the document LARC/92/5. Prior to this, the Seminar on Microbiological Contamination of Food and its Implications for International Trade would be held from 15 to 16 March 1993.

52. The delegation of Argentina reported that it had convened, in conjunction with UNDP and FAO's Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) Unit, a Programming Exercise to be held in Buenos Aires from 1 to 5 December 1992. There would be participants from 20 Latin American and Caribbean countries and five from other regions, to exchange offers of and requests for technical cooperation in the agri-food sector. FAO Representations were requested to assist in preparing replies to be sent by countries concerning the survey on institutions and agencies with technical cooperation capacities and needs.



ISBN 92-5-103246-7



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M-90 T0676E/1/11.92/1100