

Report of the

FIFTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Rome, 21 - 25 April 1981



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

FAO Member Nations in the Near East region (as at 16 September 1978)

Afghanistan	Lebanon	Somalia
Bahrain	Libya	Sudan
Cyprus	Mauritania	Syria
Djibouti	Morocco	Tunisia
Egypt	Oman	United Arab Emirates
Iran	Pakistan	Yemen Arab Republic
Iraq	Qatar	Yemen, People's Democratic
Jordan	Saudi Arabia	Republic of
Kuwait		

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for the Near East:

First	—	Cairo, Egypt, 2-14 February 1948
Second	—	Damascus, Syria, 28 August — 6 September 1951
Third	—	Cairo, Egypt, 1-9 September 1953
Fourth	—	Damascus, Syria, 10-20 December 1958
Fifth	—	Teheran, Iran, 21 September — 1 October 1960
Sixth	—	Tel Amara, Lebanon, 30 July — 8 August 1962
Seventh	—	Cairo, Egypt, 19-31 October 1964
Eighth	—	Khartoum, Sudan, 24 January — 2 February 1967
Ninth	—	Baghdad, Iraq, 21 September — 1 October 1968
Tenth	—	Islamabad, Pakistan, 12-22 September 1970
Eleventh	—	Kuwait, Kuwait, 9-19 September 1972
Twelfth	—	Amman, Jordan, 31 August — 9 September 1974
Thirteenth	—	Tunis, Tunisia, 4-11 October 1976
Fourteenth	—	Damascus, Syria, 9-16 September 1978
Fifteenth	—	Rome, Italy, 21-25 April 1981

NERC/81/REP

REPORT
OF THE FIFTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR THE NEAR EAST
Rome, Italy, 21-25 April 1981

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Rome, 1981

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SUMMARY OF RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER COUNTRIES

II.B. The Situation of Food and Agriculture in the Near East

National strategies for agricultural development should be drawn taking note of the broadlines of the agricultural strategy for the Near East as outlined by the Regional Representative in his opening statement (para. 51).

Member countries are requested to urge regional development banks, funds and organizations to make use of the services provided by FAO Investment Centre in the field of project identification and preparation (para. 52).

High priority should be assigned to the agricultural sector in national development plans and the flow of financial resources for this sector should be ensured (para. 55).

Member Governments should support the Palestine Liberation Organization in its endeavour to improve the agricultural situation in occupied territories, and to implement agricultural projects for the benefit of the Palestinian people (para. 57).

II.C.1. Regional Implications of International Actions to Strengthen World Food Security

Member Governments should draw up a new agricultural strategy aimed at increasing production and productivity to levels that would accomplish self-sufficiency and national stock targets and reduce post harvest losses (para. 64).

Member Governments should increase financial cooperation among their countries in the various types of investment in agricultural development, and enter into regional or sub-regional arrangements for coordination of investment activities undertaken by the different institutions, to improve their capabilities in the field of project preparation and evaluation. They should also support joint projects in order to increase production of inputs and improve and develop marketing services (paras. 71, 73 and 75c).

Member Governments should take immediate steps to implement individually and/or collectively, the FAO Plan of Action on World Food Security pending the conclusion of a new international grains arrangement (para. 72).

Countries of the Region are requested to strengthen the resources of the FAO Food Security Assistance Scheme (FSAS) (para. 75d).

Governments in the Region are requested to endorse the Director-General's proposal to develop the International Emergency Food Reserve (IEFR) into a legally binding convention (para. 77).

II.C.2. Prospects for Increasing Animal Production in the Region

Governments are urged to adopt a proper cropping pattern so that fodder production may compliment, rather than compete with production of human feed (para. 79).

Countries should strengthen intra-regional cooperation in the fields of training; animal disease control, including quarantine arrangements and veterinary diagnostic support; supply of vaccines, drugs and semen; exchange of information and research results; and utilization of grazing lands by pastoral livestock (para 80).

Special attention should be given to improving the conditions of the pastoralists so that they become the focal point of integrated rural development programmes in grazing areas and ensure their participation in the development process at all levels (para. 81).

Countries should support the Regional Project for Animal Production and Health (MENEADep) and the global programme on the Ecological Management of Arid and Semi-Arid Range lands (EMASAR) (para. 82).

Countries should assign higher priority to the animal production sector in their national development plans and increase investment in this sector at the national and regional levels (para. 83).

Dairy producers' cooperatives should be strengthened and their efforts should be directed towards selective breeding, artificial insemination, stores for feed and other supplies and marketing of milk and dairy products (para. 84a).

Fattening operations for sheep, cattle, and buffaloes should be promoted through demonstrations and appropriate investment planning. (para. 84b).

Poultry industry should be strengthened (para. 84c).

Expansion of the feed supply and greater utilization of wastes and by-products from crops, cereal and slaughterhouses (para. 84d).

Appropriate institutional arrangements should be made to establish institutions capable of providing technical services in animal production and health, development of rangelands and fodder production; provision of necessary inputs and supplies; and marketing, credit and processing facilities (para. 85).

Appropriate policies for land use and price structure favourable to the producer should be adopted (para. 86).

Rural women should be provided with basic knowledge and technical skills in order to increase animal production efficiency at the farmer and household level (para. 87).

II.C.3. Review and Follow-up in the Region of Actions Arising from the Plan of Action of WCARRD

Countries of the Region should be committed to the follow-up action on WCARRD's Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action (para. 89).

II.D.2. Regional Cooperation in Field Food Crops

Countries of the Region are urged to streamline their national policies for increasing production of field food crops (para. 104).

Countries of the Region should support and provide the necessary resources for pursuing the activities of the Regional Project on Field Food Crops and inform the Director-General of their intended contributions, in cash or kind, for the implementation of the Plan of Action proposed in document NERC/81/7. Contributions of \$600 000 are also required in order to maintain at least essential activities during the first year of operations 1982 (para 107, NERC Res. 3/81).

Countries should cooperate with FAO to develop further the proposed work plan for the project into concrete programmes at national and regional levels (para. 107, NERC Res. 3/81).

II.E.1. FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme

Donor countries in the Region are requested to continue their financial support to the NECP, increase its resources and facilitate the task of the Ministerial Committee which will visit their countries (para. 108 and para. 110).

II.E.2. Representation of the Near East Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

The Conference requested Iraq and Libyan Arab Jamahiriya which were elected to represent the Region on the CGIAR, to ensure that their representatives fully participate in the meetings and report to the next Regional Conference through the Regional Representative for the Near East (para. 111).

B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

II.B. Situation of Food and Agriculture in the Region

FAO should continue to coordinate between Regional Commissions and Regional Projects to avoid duplication and overlapping (para. 42).

FAO should strengthen Regional cooperation in the areas of training, agricultural investment, exchange of experience and research results and technology transfer (para. 45).

The Director-General of FAO is requested to increase funds allocated to the TCP in the PWB of the Organization for 1982-83 (para.46).

FAO should continue to cooperate and coordinate with regional and international institutions and organizations operating in the Region in the fields of agricultural development and investment (para. 53).

FAO should continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people through PLO along the lines of previous arrangements (para. 56).

FAO should, in collaboration and coordination with other regional and international organizations, increase its assistance and support to the agricultural sector in Lebanon (para. 58).

The FAO Director-General is requested to include an item entitled "The Regional Office for the Near East" in the Agenda of the forthcoming Twenty-First Session of the FAO Conference November 1981 (para. 59).

II.C.1. Regional Implications of International Actions to Strengthen World Food Security

FAO should assist countries of the Region in implementing their food security programmes, and formulating national stock reserve policies through the Food Security Assistance Scheme (FSAS) and the programme for the Prevention of Food Losses (PFL) (para.63,65 and 67).

II.C.2. Prospects for Increasing Animal Production in the Region

FAO should assist in strengthening regional cooperation in the fields of training, animal disease control and exchange of information and research results (para. 80).

II.C.3. Review and Follow-up in the Region of Actions Arising from the Plan of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD).

FAO should assist the countries of the Region in developing policies and programmes relating to rural development within their national development plans (para. 89).

FAO is requested to continue its leading role in implementing the Programme of Action of WCARRD at the regional level (para. 90).

FAO should continue to assist member countries in identifying economic and social indicators for measuring progress made in the rural development activities; in analyzing policies; in the establishment of a follow-up and evaluation system; and in the formulation of rural development programmes and projects (para. 91).

FAO is requested to continue its efforts to mobilize more funds to assist countries of the Region in implementing WCARRD's recommendations (para. 93).

FAO should strengthen regional networks of marketing information and the Regional Association of Agricultural Credit for the Near East and North Africa (NENARACA) (para. 94).

FAO should continue its assistance to the countries in the follow-up action on the recommendations of WCARRD, which were aimed at the promotion of investments to support rural development programmes and the elimination of production constraints, especially through assistance in studying the problems of fragmented holdings and rural exodus (para. 90).

FAO is requested to submit a report to the forthcoming Regional Conference on the progress made in the implementation of WCARRD's recommendations in countries of the Region (para. 96).

The Director-General of FAO is requested, in consultation with the Member Governments of the Region, to take appropriate steps towards the possible establishment of a Regional Centre on Integrated Rural Development for the Near East (para. 97, NERC Res. 1/81).

II.D.1. Review of Regional Bodies and Reporting on their Meetings during the Biennium

The Director-General of FAO is requested to take the recommendations of the Regional Commissions into account when formulating the forthcoming Programme of Work and Budget within the financial resources available to FAO (paras. 98 and 99).

The Director-General of FAO is requested to consider conducting a detailed study on the status of Regional Commissions in the Near East to improve their role and functions (para. 100).

The Director-General of FAO is requested to take the steps required to establish the Near East Regional Commission on Fisheries, to reinforce regional cooperation in fisheries, to promote the exchange of information and experience, to strengthen training activities and to support national and regional efforts to develop fisheries in the Region (para. 101, NERC Res. 2/81).

II.D.2. Regional Cooperation in Field Food Crops

FAO is requested to continue to assume its major responsibilities in the activities of the Regional Project on Field Food Crops and not to relinquish them to other international or regional bodies (para. 103).

The Director-General of FAO, within the limits of the means at his disposal is requested to take all necessary steps to implement the Action Plan proposed in document NERC/81/7 including, and if deemed necessary, fielding a FAO mission in 1981 to agree with potential donors of the Region on the amount of their financial assistance to the whole or to part of the proposed plan (para. 107, NERC Res. 3/81).

The Director-General of FAO is requested to approach IFAD to seek its financial assistance in the form of grants to help in implementing this project along the lines of previous grants made by IFAD to regional bodies and organizations working in the production of field crops in the Region (para. 197, NERC Res. 3/81).

II.E.1. FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme (NERC)

FAO is requested to continue its evaluation of ongoing activities of NECP and consult with member countries about drawing up NECP's future policy (para. 109).

The Director-General of FAO is requested to consult with countries of the Region in the manner he chooses in order to form the proposed Ministerial Committee from a number of Ministers of Agriculture of the Region, and to facilitate the mission of the Committee, and help in preparing necessary arrangements and contacts relevant to its task (para. 110, NERC Res. 4/81).

When the new financial pledges are made available, the Director-General of FAO is then requested to implement and operate projects approved by the donor countries (para. 110, NERC Res. 4/81).

II.E.2. Representation of the Near East Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

FAO through the Regional Representative for the Near East is requested to act as focal point for liaison between the elected Representatives of the Region, on the one hand, and the countries of the Region and the CGIAR on the other (para. 111).

II.E.3. Date and Place of the Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference

The Director-General is requested to contact the Government of the United Arab Emirates (host country) to agree on the place and date of the next Regional Conference (para. 112).

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. The Fifteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East was held at the Headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy, from 21 to 25 April 1981.

I - 1. Opening of the Conference

2. The Conference was inaugurated by the Director-General, Mr Edouard Saouma, who welcomed the delegations of the member countries as well as observers participating in the Conference. He also expressed his appreciation that several Ministers of Agriculture were leading their delegations and wished the Conference every success.

I - 2. Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and the Drafting Committee

3. The Conference unanimously elected H.E. Saïd El Raqabani, Minister of Agriculture and Fishery Resources of the United Arab Emirates, Chairman of the Conference, and the heads of delegations of the member countries as Vice-Chairmen.

4. H.E. Saïd El Raqabani expressed his thanks and appreciation for being elected Chairman of the Conference. He also thanked the Director-General of FAO for the efforts exerted by the Organization in the field of agricultural development in the region as well as for its close cooperation with the countries of the region. He wished the Conference every success.

5. Drafting Committee: The Conference agreed to substitute the Drafting Committee by a rapporteur and elected Mr. Amir A. Khalil, member of the Sudanese delegation, as rapporteur.

I - 3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

6. The Conference adopted the provisional agenda (Appendix A) as well as the timetable (Appendix B), after introducing some amendments.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

A. Statements

A - 1. Summary of the Major Issues of the Director-General's Statement

7. The Conference heard a statement by the Director-General of FAO (Appendix 1). He first congratulated H.E. Saïd El Raqabani, Minister of Agriculture and Fishery Resources of the United Arab Emirates, on his election as chairman of the Conference and wished him every success in directing its operations.

8. The Director-General said that the world food situation was still a cause for concern. It had deteriorated in 1980 owing to the drop in world cereal production and in food stocks, the greater cereal import needs of developing countries, and the rise in export prices in comparison to those of 1979.

9. Greater efforts were called for to avoid a world food crisis, which could endanger the lives of millions in the poorer countries, already facing starvation because of natural disasters, a decline in agricultural production, lower annual food aid allocations, and insufficient contributions to the International Emergency Food Reserve (IEFR) of the World Food Programme.

10. A suggestion had been made that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should establish a food-financing facility to assist low-income food-deficit countries to meet the cost of their cereal imports. It had also been proposed, at the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes of the UN/FAO/ WFP and at the Council of Ministers of OPEC, that the IEFR should be transformed into a legally-binding Convention and that the level of its resources should be increased.

11. While the food and agricultural situation in the Near East had improved in 1980 as compared with 1979, there was still a considerable variation in nutritional levels between one country and another, as well as a large trade deficit in food commodities. Moreover, the drought and low rainfall in several countries of the region constituted a cause for concern.

12. The Director-General urged all countries of the region to accord higher priority to agriculture in their development plans. Each of them should lay down its own agricultural development strategy and pursue, on a continuing basis, the implementation of irrigation and land reclamation projects.

13. It was important, also, to accord equitable treatment to farmers, who played a key role in any well-developed system of agriculture, through adopting appropriate price policies to guarantee them a fair income.

14. It had been encouraging to note the resolutions contained in the "Mecca Declaration", which emphasized the Islamic nations' resolve to combat poverty in LDC countries by promoting economic cooperation between them. Also, funds for economic and social development had been made available by the Arab Summit and the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD).

15. The Director-General believed that all funds and institutions concerned with economic and social development in the region should emulate the World Bank and the EEC by investing a greater share of their resources in agricultural development.

16. Agreements had been entered into between FAO and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, IFAD, the Conference of Arab Ministers of Agriculture in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, and the World Bank, according to which the FAO Investment Centre prepared agricultural projects for financing and implementation. Agricultural projects for six countries of the Near East region had been submitted for financing.

17. The Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP) had operated successfully over the past five years, having implemented 29 regional and national projects, which benefited the region as a whole and, in particular, those countries with limited financial resources. As all funds provided by donor countries of the region had been used to meet existing commitments, further pledges were now required to respond to the very numerous project proposals outstanding from recipient countries, which amounted to several hundred million dollars.

18. Recalling the satisfaction expressed by the Fourteenth Regional Conference concerning NECP operations, the Director-General indicated the need to double contributions for the next five-year period, so as to maintain the Programme's current level of achievement, despite the rate of inflation.

19. The strengthening of the NECP was all the more essential, given the fact that less financial resources would be made available to UNDP in the next five years for technical assistance to the Near East region.

20. Important action had been taken concerning the decentralization of the Organization's activities. FAO offices had been established and FAO REpresentatives appointed in some 60 developing countries, 11 of them in the Near East region. The closer contacts afforded by that arrangement enabled FAO to assist Governments to derive maximum benefits from its programmes.

21. The Director-General expressed satisfaction about the increased use of Arabic in FAO and commended the Arab countries which had provided voluntary contributions for that purpose.

A - 2. Summary of the Statement by the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

22. The Conference heard the statement made by Mr. Abdul Muhsein Al Sudeiray, President of IFAD, expressing his appreciation of the active support provided by FAO to IFAD during its preparatory period and since it started activities. He praised the cooperation between his organization and FAO under the able guidance of its Director-General, Mr. Edouard Saouma. He was confident that such cooperation would continue and grow in the future.

23. He noticed that the gap between production and consumption was widening in the region, which was a reason for concern.

24. Mr. Al Sudeiray reviewed IFAD's contribution of some 240 million dollars to finance agricultural projects and provide technical assistance to countries of the region.

25. He also referred to the financial grants made by IFAD to some regional and international bodies and organizations, that are engaged in research on production of Food Crops in the Near East.

26. He expressed satisfaction at the decision taken by the Governing Council last December to replenish the resources of IFAD, with a target of \$ 1 500 million to finance programmes and projects during the three years 1981-1983.

A - 3. Summary of the Statement by the Deputy Executive Director of the UN/FAO World Food Programme (WFP)

27. The Conference heard a statement by Mr B. de Azevedo Brito, Deputy Executive Director of WFP, about WFP's resources and the volume of assistance to the countries of the Near East, exceeding one billion dollars since the inception of WFP. Pledges from this region, including important pledges from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, had totalled \$255.4 million.

28. Mr Brite emphasized the importance of emergency assistance, already mentioned by the Director-General of FAO in his inaugural statement. He particularly stressed the role of the WFP in providing food aid to alleviate human suffering in areas stricken by natural or man-made disasters.

29. He appealed to member countries to increase their pledges to the WFP in order to reach the target of \$1 billion for the biennium 1981/82.

30. Mr Brité referred to the difficulties experienced by the WFP in delivering its assistance to those who deserved it, particularly the poor in the rural areas. He appealed to countries to strengthen their cooperation with the WFP in the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects aimed at developing food production, and to increase the resources of the Programme - both in cash and kind - so that it might further extend its assistance to the poor of the world.

A - 4. Summary of the Major Issues of the Statement by the Assistant Director-General, Regional Representative for the Near East

31. The Conference heard a statement by the FAO Regional Representative for the Near East (Appendix F). He congratulated H.E. Saïd El Raqabani, Minister of Agriculture and Fishery Resources of the United Arab Emirates, on his election as Chairman of the Conference. He also welcomed the participating delegates and wished the Conference every success.

32. The Regional Representative pointed out that the present location of RNEA at FAO, HQ facilitates contact and coordination with departments and technical divisions of FAO to ensure that programmes are implemented in a more efficient and timely manner.

33. Reviewing the food situation in the Region, the Regional Representative said that in spite of the relative improvement last year in cereal production in some countries, the value of food imports to the region increases from year to year.

34. The Regional Representative briefly reviewed the items and documents which would be dealt with by the Conference, including food security, follow-up of WCARRD resolutions and recommendations, animal production and the production of food crops.

35. He reviewed the state of agriculture in the region. This was characterized by a limited cultivated area and fluctuating production due to dependance of cereal cultivation on rainfall which, from year to year, differed in quantity and distribution. Such a situation led to a large gap between production and consumption, which was aggravated further by population increases. He warned of the tendency to cultivate cereal crops, particularly wheat, on marginal lands, at the expense of natural pastures. This led to a continual decline in productivity, a noticeable deterioration in range lands and their gradual desertification.

36. The Regional Representative also dealt with the cultivation of food crops in irrigated lands. The limited availability of such lands made it difficult to introduce new agricultural technologies. He also referred to the fragmentation of agricultural holdings in some countries of the region and the loss of a substantial proportion of the output during growth, harvest and post-harvest periods. He stressed the necessity of concerted efforts to overcome the causes and effects of such adverse practices on production quantity and quality.

37. The ecological and climatic conditions made it difficult to extend dry-farming areas. It was therefore necessary to seek production increase through vertical expansion by increasing productivity, improving agricultural practices, soil preservation, combating soil erosion, the proper use of appropriate inputs, and by changing the fallow system to the cultivation of suitable varieties of legumes and feed plants.

38. In regard to irrigated areas, the Regional Representative said that efforts to achieve horizontal expansion should be accompanied by improvements in irrigation and drainage and the adoption of the most suitable irrigation methods.

39. In conclusion, the Regional Representative underlined the importance of drawing up a general strategy for agricultural development in the region which would aim at achieving quantitative and qualitative improvement in agricultural production, thus raising the incomes and living standards of rural populations and providing them with essential services. He

then enumerated some elements of such a strategy: priority to the agricultural sectors in overall development planning; agrarian reform legislation designed primarily to ensure a more equitable distribution of income; legislation and infrastructures to guarantee the optimum use of natural resources (land and water); a policy for integrated rural development; incentives to producers; suitable agricultural inputs at reasonable prices; training of technical staff necessary for the agricultural sector and the expansion of white meat (poultry and fish) production, etc.

B. Situation of Food and Agriculture in the Near East

40. The Regional Representative for the Near East introduced document NERC/81/2 and reviewed FAO's regional activities and action taken in implementation of the resolutions of the Fourteenth Regional Conference.

41. The Conference expressed satisfaction that the Organization had been able to pursue implementation of Near East Regional activities according to the revised Programme of Work and Budget, and expressed appreciation of the action taken by FAO to follow-up the resolutions of the Fourteenth regional Conference.

42. The Conference stressed the importance of maintaining the present cooperation and coordination between regional commissions and regional projects in order to avoid duplication and overlapping.

43. The Conference expressed support of the wise policy followed by the Director-General of FAO in introducing decentralization at the country level.

44. The Conference commended FAO's efforts to assist countries of the Region to implement their agricultural programmes and plans. It emphasized the importance of continued co-operation between Near East countries and FAO, at both the national and regional levels.

45. It also stressed the necessity to strengthen regional cooperation towards agricultural integration, especially in the areas of agricultural investment, research, training, exchange of experience, transfer of technology and other areas of regional cooperation.

46. The importance of the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) was also stressed by the Conference, which commended the efforts of the Director-General in the establishment and strengthening of TCP and called for an increase in its funds in the budget of the Organization for 1982-1983 in order to provide more support to developing countries of the Region, especially in training, mobilization of investment resources, and meeting emergency needs resulting from natural or man-made disasters.

47. The achievements of the FAO/Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP) were appreciated by the Conference. It praised FAO's efforts in the implementation of country and regional projects financed by NECP and stressed that the Programme should continue and be expanded with increased financial resources.

48. The Conference was concerned about the food and agricultural situation in the World and more particularly in the Near East Region, as reviewed by the Director-General in his opening statement, especially in view of adverse implications to developing non-oil exporting countries of the region.

49. It was also concerned that the two annual targets of ten million tons of cereals for food aid and 500 000 tons for the International Emergency Food Reserve (IEFR) were not reached.

50. The Conference commended the efforts of the Director-General to provide a legally binding character to the IEFR and was satisfied with his two proposals in this respect to the UN/FAO Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes and to the Ministerial Council of the International Development Fund of OPEC.

51. It welcomed the appeal of the Director-General that each country in the region should have its agricultural development strategy, and supported the broad lines of the strategy presented by the Regional Representative for the Near East.

52. The role of thew FAO Investment Centre in the field of identification and preparation of agricultural development projects was praised by the Conference. It stressed that governments in the region should urge regional development funds, banks and similar institutions to make use of the services rendered by the Centre.

53. The Conference also welcomed the existing cooperation between FAO and various regional and international organizations, bodies and institutions working in the field of investment and rural development in the Region.

54. The remarkable expansion of the use of Arabic language in FAO and its subsidiary bodies was greatly appreciated by the Conference which expressed its gratitude to donor Arab countries who were extending their voluntary contributions to that end.

55. The heads of delegations, in their statements on country plans, supported the importance of according appropriate priority to the agricultural sector and of providing a flow of investment to the sector. They supported the proposal of the Director-General which called the regional development banks and funds to allocate a certain percentage of their resources to agricultural development.

56. The Conference requested FAO to extend assistance to the Palestinian people through the Palestine Liberation Organizations (PLO) along the lines previously followed.

57. It also requested the states of the region to support the PLO to improve the agricultural situation in the occupied territories and to undertake agricultural projects for the benefit of the Palestinian people.

58. The Conference requested FAO, in cooperation with regional and international organizations, to increase assistance for the rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in Lebanon.

59. The Director-General was asked to include an item entitled "The Regional Office for the Near East" in the agenda of the Twenty-first session of the FAO Conference which will be held in November 1981.

C. Subjects of Importance to the Region

C - 1. Regional Implications of International Actions to Strengthen World Food Security

60. Document NERC/81/3 was presented to the Conference. In addition to the data contained therein the presentation provided updated information on international action taken since the 1974 World Food Conference to achieve world food security. In discussing the document, the Conference praised FAO's efforts in underlining the problem of food security in the world and especially in the Near East Region. It stressed the need to continue implementation of national policies to establish local food reserves and to support food production. It expressed satisfaction at FAO's activities with regard to its Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture, which would indicate to governments the dangers surrounding supply of basic foods in vulnerable countries.

61. The Conference commended FAO's efforts to assist governments of this Region to establish national food reserves and to identify and develop their projects. It also commended FAO's Programme on Prevention of Food Losses, especially in grain.

62. The Conference reviewed efforts to reach a new international grain arrangement and emphasized that it should contain all the basic elements that would guarantee food security for the world, and especially for developing countries.

63. A number of delegations described the measures taken by their governments to improve food security and the problem encountered in this area. Other delegations expressed their countries' need for additional assistance, whether bilateral, multi-lateral or regional, to implement their food security programmes.

64. The Conference expressed its concern with regard to the food situation in the Region. Food production did not increase in the same proportion as population in most Near East countries. Thus, countries of the region were increasingly dependent on food imports to meet their basic consumption needs and therefore were more vulnerable to sudden shortages in foodstuffs. The Conference recommended Member Governments to draw up a new agricultural strategy aimed at increasing production and productivity to levels that would accomplish self-sufficiency and national stock targets, and reduce post-harvest losses.

65. The Conference was pleased to note that a great number of Near East countries had established national stock reserve policies and called on other countries to establish such policies as soon as possible. It called on FAO to continue its assistance to these countries in the formulation and implementation of such reserve policies.

66. The Conference supported FAO's Plan on World Food Security, with all its regional implications for the Near East.

67. The Conference emphasized the importance of storage facilities which were necessary to national food security programmes. It welcomed the assistance extended by FAO to this objective through its Food Security Assistance Scheme and its Programme on the Prevention of Food Losses.

68. The Conference expressed its serious concern that the minimum annual target of 500 000 tons of cereals of the International Emergency Food Reserve (IEFR) had not yet been achieved and emphasized the need to strengthen the Reserve. It supported the efforts of the Director-General to enrol new donors to the Reserve and to ensure that contributions were made available to it.

69. The Conference appreciated the collective initiatives taken in the Near East Region towards the achievement of food security. It requested regional and national organizations, agencies, institutions and funds to continue their efforts and cooperation in the field of food security and to establish a regional network of food security reserves.

70. The Conference appealed to the countries of the region to include in their agricultural development plans provision for the achievement of national targets for food reserves, as well as for the increase in agricultural and animal production and productivity, coordination of national policies and objectives relating to agriculture and an increase in investments allocated to the agricultural sector.

71. The Conference also called for increased financial cooperation among the countries of the region in the various types of investment in agricultural development, and for coordination of investment activities undertaken by the different institutions, particularly so that the capabilities of such institutions in the field of project preparation and evaluation may be increased and developed. It also called for more support for joint projects in the Region in order to increase production and improve and develop marketing.

72. The Conference expressed its support for the FAO Plan of Action on World Food Security originally conceived as an interim measure pending the conclusion of a new international grains arrangement. It felt that since the prospects of an early conclusion of such an arrangement had further receded, governments should take immediate steps to implement the Plan of Action individually and collectively.

73. The Conference noted the recent initiatives in the Region for the promotion of investment in agricultural production and for establishing food grain reserves at sub-regional levels. It stressed that, in order to strengthen their collective capacity in the vital sector of food security, countries of the region should intensify their efforts to establish cooperative arrangements in all forms of agricultural investment, including joint production of agricultural inputs essential for achieving a substantial growth in food production.

74. The Conference recognized that there was an urgent need to provide additional assistance to food deficit low-income countries which were faced with exceptionally large food import bills especially at the time of large-scale domestic food shortages. It expressed the hope that the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund would approve as soon as possible the FAO proposal that the IMF provide additional balance of payments support for this purpose.

75. The Conference recommended that, to improve food security in the Region:

- a. governments of the region should give high priority to achieving a substantial increase in food production;
- b. all countries, particularly those which are heavily dependent on imports for their food requirements, should take urgent steps to establish adequate food reserves;
- c. all countries in the region should, in a spirit of collective self-reliance, enter into sub-regional and/or regional arrangements in agricultural investment projects and explore the possibilities of setting up sub-regional food security schemes;
- d. governments and international organizations concerned should provide the necessary technical, financial and food assistance to food security projects in the region. They should also strengthen the resources of the FAO Food Security Assistance Scheme, including through participation of new donors.

76. The Conference urged food surplus countries and other countries in a position to do so, to participate in Food Aid Convention and the International Emergency Food Reserve with a view to achieving the accepted annual targets of 10 million tons and 500 000 tons of cereals respectively. Present members should also increase their contributions.

77. Governments in the region are requested to endorse the Director-General's proposal to develop the IEFER into a legally-binding convention as soon as possible with a view to guaranteeing the availability of at least 500 000 tons of food per annum to be placed at the disposal of the World Food Programme to meet the urgent and emergency requirements of developing countries.

C - 2. Prospects for Increasing Animal Production in the Region

78. The Conference discussed document NERC/81/4 which was prepared to highlight the situation of food production from the region's livestock. It was recognized that animal production in the region remained far below the demand level. The analysis of the situation indicated that the increasing demand for milk, meat and eggs can be utilized to stimulate indigenous production of these commodities and thus reduce dependence on imports.

79. The Conference noted that arable land resources for fodder and feed grain production were limited while grazing lands provided most opportunity for development to provide a large proportion of the forage requirements of the livestock population. In this regard, it was recognized that with a proper cropping pattern fodder production can be complementary rather than competitive with the production of human food. Recent technological developments in this field should be propagated in the region, wherever appropriate.

80. The Conference agreed with the elements of the development strategy outlined in the document, and emphasized the need for strengthening intra-regional cooperation in the fields of training; animal disease control, including quarantine arrangements and veterinary diagnostic support; supply of vaccines, drugs and semen; exchange of information and research results; and utilization of grazing lands by pastoral livestock, especially when inter-country migrations are involved.

81. Some delegations requested that special attention be given to improving the conditions of the pastoralists so that they should become the focal point of integrated rural development programmes in grazing areas and participate in the development process at all levels.

82. A number of delegates pointed out the need to strengthen the Regional Project for Animal Production and Animal Health and the International Programme for the Ecological Management of Arid and Semi-Arid Rangelands in Africa and the Near East (EMASAR). Some delegates mentioned the importance of cooperation and exchange of experience by the provision of experts, drugs, vaccines, frozen semen and laboratory training facilities of any one country in the Region through the Regional Project for Animal Production and Animal Health.

83. The Conference urged Near East countries to give greater care to livestock in their development plans and to increase investments in that sector at the national and regional levels.

84. Intensive animal production systems in farming areas and poultry production were discussed by the Conference and it recommended that:

- a. emphasis is needed on strengthening dairy producers' cooperatives, whose efforts should be directed towards selective breeding, artificial insemination, stores for feed and other supplies and milk marketing to ensure favourable price structure;
- b. fattening operations for sheep, cattle and buffaloes should be promoted through demonstrations and appropriate investment planning; and
- c. the poultry industry needs strengthening to improve its efficiency, especially through training in poultry farm management; and
- d. expansion of the feed supply and greater utilization of crop, cereal and slaughterhouse wastes and by-products to intensify animal production in the region.

85. The importance of making appropriate institutional arrangements in the countries to promote animal production was recognized by the Conference. The implementation of integrated animal production development programmes call for agencies that combine the functions of providing to the producer technical services in animal health and production, rangeland development and fodder production; necessary supplies and inputs; and marketing, processing and credit facilities.

86. The Conference noted that adoption of appropriate policies for land use and price structure favourable to the producer were an essential element of an integrated programme for the development of animal production in the Region.

87. The Conference noted the role of rural women in animal husbandry and the need for special training and extensive programmes to provide women with basic knowledge and technical skills in order to increase production at the farm and household levels.

C - 3. Review and Follow-up in the Region of Actions Arising from the Plan of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD)

88. The Conference considered document NERC/81/5 which reviewed the conclusions and recommendations of the Fourteenth FAO Regional Conference (1978) that were subsequently presented at the WCARRD Preparatory Committee (1979).

89. The Conference was satisfied to see that the Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action embodied the wishes of the Near East countries with regard to agrarian reform and rural development, as expressed in the recommendations of the Fourteenth Regional Conference. The Conference underlined the commitment of the countries of the region to the follow-up action on the Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action issued by WCARRD. It appreciated the readiness of FAO to assist the countries of the region in developing policies and programmes relating to rural development within their national development plans.

90. The Conference expressed satisfaction and support for the follow-up action taken by FAO in implementation of the Programme of Action at the international level as well as at the level of the Near East Region. It appreciated the leading role played by FAO in the field of rural development within the UN system. This included convening three joint meetings at the regional level attended by representatives of other UN agencies in the Near East.

91. The Conference expressed its interest in the implementation of the FAO programme designed to assist countries in identifying economic and social parameters for measuring progress made in the continuing reduction of poverty in rural areas, in analyzing policies, in the establishment of a follow-up and evaluation system, and in the formulation of rural development programmes and projects. It called on FAO to supplement efforts in order that countries might prepare reports for submission to the FAO Conference in 1983 on progress being made towards alleviating rural poverty.

92. The Conference underlined the importance of establishing a regional centre for integrated rural development with a network of national institutions or centres to undertake research work, training, dissemination of information, documentation, and formulation of rural development programmes, as had already been done in the establishment of the regional centres in Africa and Asia.

93. The Conference called for continued efforts to provide more funds in support of the programme to help countries in the implementation of WCARRD recommendations according to the resolution of the FAO Conference in 1979.

94. The Conference also called for the strengthening of regional networks of marketing information, and the Regional Association of Agricultural Credit for the Near East and North Africa, and for the development of agriculture under dry climate conditions, particularly range management in areas of traditional agriculture. All this would contribute to production growth and ensure food security for the countries of the Region.

95. The Conference requested the Organization to continue its assistance to the countries in the follow-up action on the decisions and recommendations of WCARRD, which were aimed at the promotion of investments to support rural development programmes and the elimination of production constraints, especially through assistance in studying the problems of fragmented holdings and rural exodus.

96. The Conference requested FAO to submit a report to the next Regional Conference on the progress made in the implementation of WCARRD's decision in countries of the Region.

97. The Conference adopted the following resolution:

NERC RESOLUTION 1/81

Regional Centre for Integrated Rural Development

The Conference,

Noting with satisfaction the actions taken by FAO at the international level in general and in the Near East in particular on the implementation of the recommendations of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, held in Rome in July 1979,

Appreciating the steps taken by the Director-General of FAO for establishing Regional Integrated Rural Development Centres, as requested by Member Governments in other regions,

Considering that such a Centre would facilitate the promotion of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development Programmes by interested Governments in the Near East,

Requests the Director-General of FAO, in consultation with the Member Governments of the Region, to take appropriate steps towards the possible establishment of a Regional Centre on Integrated Rural Development for the Near East.

D. FAO Programme In The Near East

D - 1. Review of Regional Bodies and Reporting on their Meetings during the Biennium

98. The Conference considered document NERC/81/6, and endorsed the following:
- a. Recommendations of the Fourth Session of the Animal Production and Health Commission in the Near East, held in Tunis, Tunisia, 14-16 December 1978.
 - b. Recommendations of the Sixth Session of the Regional Commission on Land and Water Use in the Near East, held in Amman, Jordan, 12-15 May 1979.
 - c. Recommendations of the Eighth Session of the Near East Commission on Agricultural Statistics, held in Nicosia, Cyprus, 3-7 September 1979.
 - d. Recommendations of the Ninth Session of the Near East Commission on Agricultural Planning, held in Damascus, Syria, 7-11 December 1980.
 - e. Recommendations of the Ninth Session of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East, held in Baghdad, Iraq, 16-19 December 1978, the Tenth Session, held in Rome, 5-7 December 1979, and the Eleventh Session, held in Amman, Jordan, 13-16 October 1980.
99. The Conference requested the Director-General of FAO to take these recommendations into account, when elaborating the forthcoming Programme of Work and Budget within the financial resources available to FAO.
100. The Conference recommended the Director-General to undertake a detailed study on the status of the Regional Commissions in the Near East in order to identify the difficulties and obstacles which prevent some of them from achieving their aims, and to enhance their activities to the benefit of the Region.
101. In the field of fisheries the Conference adopted the following resolution:

NERC RESOLUTION 2/81

Fisheries Commission for the Near East

The Conference,

Recalling that the Twelfth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (1974) recommended the establishment of a Commission to promote collaboration in fisheries development in the Region,

Noting that the Committee on Fisheries agreed to this recommendation at the Eleventh Session in April 1977 subject to further consultations with the countries concerned regarding ways of financing the activities of such a Commission and means of coordinating those activities with the work of the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean and of the Indian Ocean Fishery Commission,

Noting further that views on these matters were received from many of the countries of the Region in response to a questionnaire sent by the Director-General of FAO in August 1977,

Conscious of the economic, social and nutritional contributions that the fisheries can make for the benefit of the peoples in the Region,

Invites the Director-General of FAO to consider in the light of the consultations he had already held, the steps required to establish a Fisheries Commission for the Near East, the main functions of which would be to reinforce regional cooperation in fisheries, to promote the exchange of information and experience, to strengthen training activities and to support national and regional efforts to develop fisheries in the Region.

D - 2. Regional Cooperation on Field Food Crops

102. The Conference studied with great attention document NERC/81/7 on the need for regional cooperation in the development of field food crop production. It expressed its complete satisfaction with the progress made through the Regional Project on Field Food Crops in the areas of technical training and improved seed production, in the introduction of new crops and in the supply of experimental and laboratory machinery and equipment to develop agricultural research in field food crops, all of which had led to improvement in national food crop production within the Region.

103. The Conference underlined the content of paragraph 73 of the Report of the Fourteenth Regional Conference which requested FAO to continue its major responsibilities in the activities of the Regional Project on Field Food Crops and not to relinquish them to other international or regional bodies.

104. The Conference stressed that, despite limited arable land resources and difficult environmental conditions, the production of food crops in irrigated and rainfed areas could be considerably increased by better soil and water management, use of improved varieties and adoption of modern crop production technology. It realized that to achieve this objective would require strong national research and development institutes cooperating with extension and other support services, timely provision of inputs, seeds and fertilizers, and policy measures conducive to large-scale adoption of new innovations. All countries of the Region were urged to streamline their national policies for increasing food production.

105. The Conference greatly appreciated FAO's efforts to develop and strengthen inter-country cooperation in field food crops, in training of manpower, strengthening of extension services and research institutions, the provision of large quantities of improved varieties for local multiplication, and the organization of seminars and meetings for the exchange of useful technical information.

106. The Conference greatly appreciated the resources provided by the Director-General in 1980 and 1981, under FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme, to maintain some of the project activities and commended his efforts to prepare action plans for future activities.

107. The Conference supported the objectives and framework for regional cooperation proposed in document NERC/81/7. It requested the countries of the Region to provide the necessary resources for pursuing the activities of the Regional Project on Field Food Crops. It adopted the following resolution:

NERC RESOLUTION 3/81

Regional Cooperation on Field Food Crops

The Conference,

Noting with great concern the widening gap between domestic production and consumption of staple food crops and increasing reliance on imported supplies in the Region,

Recognizing that, despite limited arable land resources and difficult environmental conditions, there is considerable potential for increased production of field food crops by improving and stabilizing yields in both irrigated and rainfed areas through judicious land and water use, better soil management, selection and multiplication of locally adapted varieties and adoption of modern crop production technology,

Aware that many problems limiting food production in countries of the Region are location-specific and their solutions need to be found through locally conducted research and development efforts, closer cooperation between research and extension services to transfer improved technology to farmers, and policy measures conducive to large-scale adoption of improved techniques,

Appreciating the assistance provided by FAO through the Regional Project on Field Food Crops in providing large quantities of improved seeds as well as new germplasm, supplying experimental machinery and equipment, training manpower, organizing seminars, workshops and study tours,

Conscious of the fact that this most valuable work was made possible by the generous voluntary contributions of certain countries and organizations in the Region,

Recalling the recommendation of the Fourteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East according to which FAO should continue to assume leadership for this Regional Project,

Noting with satisfaction the decision of the Director-General to provide the necessary bridging from the Technical Cooperation Programme of FAO, to maintain essential project activities after the termination of UNDP funding, and the various initiatives he had taken for strengthening cooperation between research and extension services in the Region,

Endorsing the action plan for regional cooperation proposed in document NERC/81/7, consisting of personnel at various levels, transfer of improved technology to farmers and provision of inputs,

Recommends that:

1. The Director-General, within the means at his disposal, should take all necessary steps to implement the action plan;
2. Member countries should continue to cooperate with FAO's secretariat to elaborate further these proposals into concrete programmes at national and regional levels for a period of five years from 1982;
3. All countries and organizations of the Region, which are in a position to do so, should support this project and should inform the Director-General, preferably before the end of 1981, of their intended contributions in cash or kind to the proposed cooperative activities;
4. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) should be asked to provide a financial grant to help in implementing the project along the lines of the grants it provided to other international and regional organizations and agencies working in the field of food crop production in the Near East, as indicated by the President of IFAD in his statement to the Conference;
5. If necessary, FAO should field a mission in 1981 to agree with potential donors of the Region on the amount of their financial assistance to the whole or to part of the proposed action plan, either directly, or through the FAO Near East Government Cooperative Programme (NECP);
6. Potential donors of the Region should be immediately requested to commit, as a matter of urgency, the minimum amount of US\$ 600 000 required for the first year of operation, in order to maintain at least essential activities, when the present funding arrangements come to an end, in December 1981.

E. Concluding Items

E - 1. FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme (NECP)

108. The Regional Representative reviewed the activities of the NECP. He stated that contributions from the countries of the Region to the NECP had been exhausted by the regional and national projects reviewed in the information working paper dealing with the progress of these projects.

109. The Conference underlined the importance of the NECP and requested that the Director-General evaluate the previous phase and consult with the countries about drawing up NECP's future policy.

110. The Conference adopted the following resolution:

NERC RESOLUTION 4/81

FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme (NECP)

The Conference,

Reaffirming the recommendations of the Fourteenth FAO Regional Conference regarding the importance of continuing the FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme,

Recognizing the valuable achievements which the NECP was able to reach at the national and regional levels over the last five years,

Decides to:

1. Thank the governments of the donor countries which financed the NECP in its first phase;
2. Form a ministerial committee consisting of a number of Ministers of Agriculture in the Region and the FAO Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for the Near East. This Ministerial Committee shall visit the donor countries in the Region to ascertain their pledges and commitments towards the NECP in its next phase, taking into consideration that such pledges should be increased in order to match the magnitude of the numerous national and regional projects submitted by the countries of the Region;
3. Request the Director-General of FAO (before the Ministerial Committee starts its mission) to undertake intensive contacts with countries of the Region in the manner he chooses in order to facilitate the work of the Committee;
4. Request the Director-General to help in preparing necessary arrangements and contacts relevant to the mission referred to above;
5. Request the Director-General to initiate the implementation and operation of projects approved for financing by the donor countries once the new financial pledges are made available.

E - 2. Representation of the Near East Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

111. The Conference considered document NERC/81/8 and elected the Republic of Iraq and the Libyan Arab Popular Socialist Jamahyria to represent the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), for the period 1981-82 after the expiry of the mandate of Egypt and Syria. The Conference stressed that the representatives of the Region should participate fully in the meetings of the Group, to take full responsibility in this respect and to report to the next Regional Conference. The Conference also recommended that the Regional Office continue its efforts as a focal point for liaison between the Representatives of the Region, on the one hand, and the countries of the Region and the CGIAR on the other.

E - 3. Date and Place of the Sixteenth Regional Conference for the Near East

112. H.E. Saïd El Raqabani, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of the United Arab Emirates, informed the Conference that the invitation from his Government to host this Conference was still standing. The Conference unanimously welcomed this statement. The date for the next Regional Conference would be determined after consultation between the Director-General and the Government of the United Arab Emirates.

E - 4. Adoption of the Report

113. The Conference adopted the Draft Report presented to it and praised the efforts of the Rapporteur and Secretariat in its preparation.

E - 5. Closure of the Conference

114. The Director-General of FAO, Mr. Edouard Saouma, expressed his thanks to the Chairman and the Vice Chairmen for the valuable efforts they deployed in the steering of meetings. He also thanked the country delegations for their constructive proposals and pertinent discussions. A special expression of appreciation went to the efforts of the Rapporteur. Observers from other agencies were thanked for their participation.

115. At the end, H.E. Saïd El Raqabani, Chairman of the Conference, expressed his thanks to the Director-General of FAO and praised the work of FAO's Secretariat in the preparation of the Conference. He also thanked all participating delegations, hoping for a continued effort in all countries for further cooperation within the Region, for the achievement of food security and a better standard of living. He declared the Conference closed at 18.00 hours, Friday 24 April 1981.

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTORY NOTES

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

II. STATEMENTS

1. Statement by the Director-General
2. Statement by the President of IFAD
3. Statement by the Deputy Executive Director of WFP
4. Statement by the FAO Regional Representative for the Near East

III. SITUATION OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN THE NEAR EAST

IV. SUBJECTS OF IMPORTANCE TO THE REGION

1. Regional Implications of International Actions to Strengthen World Food Security
2. Prospects for Increasing Animal Production in the Region
3. Review and Follow-up in the Region of Actions Arising from the Plan of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD)

V. FAO PROGRAMME IN THE NEAR EAST

1. Review of Regional Bodies and Reporting on their Meetings during the Biennium
2. Regional Cooperation in Field Food Crops

VI. CONCLUDING ITEMS

1. FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme (NECP)
2. Representation of the Near East Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)
3. Date and Place of the Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference
4. Adoption of the Report
5. Closure of the Conference

TIMETABLE

	<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Document No.</u>
Tuesday 21 April 1981 Morning 09.30 hrs.	Registration		
	I. <u>INTRODUCTORY ITEMS</u>	I	
10.30 hrs.	- Opening of the Conference	I.1	
	- Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Drafting Committee	I.2	
	- Adoption of the Agenda and Time-table	I.3	NERC/81/1 NERC/81/1(a) NERC/81/INF/2 Rev.2
	II. <u>STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL</u>	II	
	- Statement by the Director-General		NERC/81/CONF/1
	- Statement by the President of IFAD		
	- Statement by the Executive Director of WFP		
	- Statement by the Regional Representative for the Near East		NERC/81/CONF/2
Wednesday 22 April 1981 Morning 09.00 hrs.	III. <u>SITUATION OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN THE NEAR EAST</u>	III	
	- General debate on situation and prospects of food and agriculture in the Near East	III.1	NERC/81/2
Thursday 23 April 1981 Morning 09.00 hrs.	IV. <u>SUBJECTS OF IMPORTANCE TO THE REGION</u>	IV	
	- Regional Implications of International Actions to Strengthen World Food Security	IV.1	NERC/81/3
	- Prospects for Increasing Animal Production in the Region	IV.2	NERC/81/4

	<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Document No.</u>
	- Review and Follow-up in the Region of Actions arising from the Plan of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD)	IV.3	NERC/81/5
V.	<u>FAO PROGRAMME IN THE NEAR EAST</u>	V	
	- Review of Regional Bodies and Reporting on their Meetings during the biennium	V.1	NERC/81/6
Friday 24 April 1981 Morning 09.00 hrs.	- Regional Cooperation in Field Food Crops	V.2	NERC/81/7
VI.	<u>CONCLUDING ITEMS</u>	VI	
	- Any other business		
	- FAO/Near East Governments Cooperative Programme (NECP)	VI.1	
	- Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research	VI.2	NERC/81/8
	- Date and Place of the Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East	VI.3	
16.00 hrs.	- Adoption of the Report	VI.4	
	- Closure of the Conference	VI.5	

List of Delegates, Observers and FAO Staff and
Conference Secretariat

SAID MOHAMMED AL-RAQABANI
(United Arab Emirates)

Chairman

AMIN ABDALLAH KHALIL
(Sudan)

Rapporteur

MEMBER NATIONS IN THE REGION

ETATS MEMBRES DE LA REGION

البلدان الاعضاء فى الاقليم

AFGHANISTAN - AFGHANISTAN

افغانستان

Delegate Fazel Rahim Mohmand
Minister of Agriculture and Land Reform

Alternate Abdul Wadood Zafari
President
Cooperative Development

Alternate Mohammed Afzal Aazami
Director of Foreign Cooperation
Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reform

BAHRAIN - BAHREIN

البحرين

Delegate Siddiq Al-Alawi
Director of Agriculture
Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture

Alternate Hassan Mohamed Abdul-Karim
Head of Agricultural Extension Unit
Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture

Alternate Moh'd Ahmed Al-Thawadi
Head of Statistics and Marketing
Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture

صديق العلوى
مدير الزراعة
وزارة التجارة والزراعة

حسن محمد عبد الكريم
مسؤول الارشاد الزراعى
وزارة التجارة والزراعة

محمد احمد الذواوى
مدير الاحصاء والتسويق
وزارة التجارة والزراعة

CYPRUS - CHYPRE

قبرص

Delegate Micos K. Pattichis
Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Alternate Fotis G. Poulides
Ambassador of Cyprus to FAO

Alternate Avraam Louca
Director, Department of Agriculture
Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Associate G. Camelarlis
Assistant Agricultural Officer
Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources

DJIBOUTI - DJIBOUTI

دجيبوتى

Délégué Ahmed Ibrahim Abdi
Ambassadeur de Djibouti en Italie

Suppléant Mohamed Ahmed Aooalek
Chef du Service de l'Agriculture
et des Forêts

EGYPT - EGYPTE

Delegate	Ahmed Sidky Ambassador of Egypt Rome	أحمد صدقي سفير مصر في روما
Alternate	Fouad Reda Director-General Training Department Ministry of Agriculture	فؤاد رضا مدير عام التدريب ، وزارة الزراعة ، مصر
Alternate	Yousef Ali Hamdi Agricultural Counsellor Alternate Permanent Representative of Egypt to FAO	يوسف علي حمدي مستشار زراعي والمندوب المناوب لدى منظمة الاغذية والزراعة ، روما
Alternate	Mohammed Diab Minister Plenipotentiary Egyptian Embassy	محمد دياب وزير مفوض ، سفارة مصر ، روما

IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF)

ايران (الجمهورية الاسلامية)

IRAN (REPUBLIQUE ISLAMIQUE D')

Delegate	Mohamed Salamati Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Alternate	Abbas Ali Zali Acting Minister of Agriculture
Adviser	Eskandar Rastegar Counsellor of the Embassy, Rome

IRAQ

العراق

Delegate	Amir Mehdi Salih Al Khishali Minister of Agricultural and Agrarian Reform	عمر مهدي صالح الخشالي وزير الزراعة والاصلاح الزراعي
Alternate	Mustafa Hamdoun Permanent Representative of Iraq to FAO	مصطفى حمدون ممثل العراق الدائم لدى منظمة الاغذية والزراعة ، روما
Adviser	Hazim Fadhli Najib Alternate Permanent Representative to FAO	حازم فضلي نجيب مساعد الممثل الدائم
Associate	Khalid Mahmoud Al Ishaki Director-General National Committee for FAO in Iraq	خالد محمود الاسحاقي مدير عام الهيئة الوطنية لفعاليات منظمة الاغذية والزراعة

JORDAN - JORDANIE

الاردن

Delegate	Marwan Doudin Minister of Agriculture	مروان دودين وزير الزراعة
Alternate	Hassan El-Naboulsi Director-General Cooperatives Organizations	حسن النابلسي المدير العام للمنظمة التعاونية الاردنية

JORDAN (Cont.d) - JORDANIE (Cont) الأردن (تابع)

Alternate Sami Sunna'a
Director-General
Agriculture Credit Corporation سامي جاد الله الصانع
المدير العام لمؤسسة الاقراض الزراعي

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مدير العلاقات الدولية
وزارة الزراعة

KUWAIT - KOWEIT الكويت

Delegate Salem Al-Mannai
Assistant Under-Secretary
for Agricultural Affairs
Ministry of Public Works سالم ابراهيم المناعي
وكيل وزارة مساعد للشؤون الزراعية
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In collaboration with Conference, Council and Protocol Affairs Division and
Publications Division of the Department of General Affairs and Information.

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

NERC/81/1	Provisional Agenda
NERC/81/1(a)	Provisional Annotated Agenda
NERC/81/2	A report on FAO Activities in the Near East Region and Actions taken on Recommendations made by the Fourteenth Regional Conference
NERC/81/3	Regional Implications of International Actions to Strengthen World Food Security
NERC/81/4	Prospects for Increasing Animal Production in the Region
NERC/81/5	Review and Follow-up in the Region of Actions Arising from the Plan of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD)
NERC/81/6	Review of Regional Bodies and Reporting on their meetings during the Biennium
NERC/81/7	Regional Cooperation in Field Food Crops
NERC/81/8	Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)
NERC/81/INF/1	Information Note
NERC/81/INF/2/REV.2	Provisional Timetable
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NERC/81/INF/5	Provisional List of Documents
NERC/81/INF/6	Provisional List of Delegates and Observers
NERC/81/CONF/1	Statement of Dr. EDOUARD SAOUMA Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
NERC/81/CONF/2	Statement by Mr. SALAH JUM'A Assistant Director-General, Regional Representative for the Near East

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ministers, Heads and Members of Delegations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest congratulations to His Excellency Saïd El Ragabani, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of the United Arab Emirates, on his unanimous election to the Chair of this Fifteenth Regional Conference for the Near East. I wish him all success in guiding this Conference and coordinating its activities.

I would also like, in this connection, to pay tribute to the Government of the United Arab Emirates, which is devoting such intense efforts to the cause of agricultural and world development under the wise leadership of His Highness Sheik Zayed ben Sultan Al Nahyan.

Mr. Chairman,

We are meeting at a moment when the world is facing a difficult situation -- indeed, almost insurmountable crises in the economic, political and agricultural spheres: high rates of inflation, widespread unemployment, economic stagnation, disequilibrium in balances of payments and an acute energy crisis. All these phenomena are salient features of our daily life and are of direct concern to the Near East Region.

Added to this, the world food and agricultural situation is also facing very difficult conditions, attended by numerous hazards. The agricultural situation deteriorated in 1980, and cereal production fell by 48 million tonnes as compared to 1979. For the second consecutive year, the world produced less cereals than it needed to consume. This, in turn, adversely affected world grain stocks, which have fallen in the current 1980/81 season to only 14 percent of annual global consumption, whereas world food security requires a minimum of 17 to 18 percent. FAO estimates that world cereal production for 1981 needs to increase by 8 percent in order to meet the growing demand and restore stocks to the security level.

On the other hand, the developing countries' grain import requirements are steadily increasing. They have been estimated at 95 million tonnes for the current year as against only 50 million tonnes in 1975. Export prices, compared to those of last year, have risen to 7 percent for wheat, 21 percent for maize and 25 percent for rice.

All these conditions are affecting the overall economic situation of the world, and more precisely that of the non-oil exporting developing countries. By the end of last year, their debts had reached the staggering figure of an estimated 280 billion dollars, three fourths of the value of their annual exports and twice their level of seven years ago. At present, developing countries are using up to 20 percent of their export earnings to finance their annual debt service. Furthermore, they are mainly dependent on agricultural exports, and they are still suffering from a serious decline in their terms of trade with developed countries, the instability of commodity markets and protectionist policies that limit their export earnings.

On top of this, the world is undergoing a disastrous population explosion: the number of mouths to be fed increases by 80 million each year. By the end of the century, the world's population will reach 6.3 billion, most of them living in the poorer countries.

Disasters, whether natural or man-made, are numerous and very grave. Today's world has to sustain nine million refugees, five million of them in Africa. Their requirements in food aid for the years 1981/82 are estimated at 2 million tonnes, for a total cost of over 900 million dollars. The situation has worsened in Africa, where 28 countries are affected by acute food shortages as a result of the low level of food production in two successive years. The per caput food production in this region has decreased by 10 percent in the last ten years, and in many countries the level of nutrition is also tending to fall.

Although the world's nutritional level is deteriorating, the minimum annual food aid target established by the World Food Conference as long ago as 1974 at the equivalent of 10 million tonnes of cereals, has not been attained. What is more, this figure now undoubtedly needs to be revised upwards in the light of recent developments and the food aid needs of the developing countries. We estimate that by 1985 the minimum target should be of the order of 17 to 18.5 million tonnes of cereals.

Added to this, the annual target of the IEFER, which is 500 000 tonnes of food to be administered by WFP on a fully multilateral basis, has not been reached, and in fact the amount now available to be administered freely by WFP is only 52 000 tonnes.

In the light of these figures and the forecasts for the near future, the attention of the world had to be drawn to the situation and the alarm sounded, and this has been done repeatedly within FAO and at ECOSOC and the General Assembly of the United Nations.

There was also need for positive action, so I proposed to IMF that it establish a food facility to finance cereal imports by low-income countries suffering from deficits in their balance of payments. The IMF officials have shown considerable interest and are studying this proposal carefully.

Another proposal concerning IEFER, which I submitted to the WFP Committee on Food Aid, asks donors to pledge, in a legally-binding convention, to provide 500 000 tonnes of cereals annually to IEFER, with an initial commitment for the next three years. This will satisfy the demand of the developing nations for an IEFER established on a continuing basis. I submitted these proposals to the Ministerial Council of OPEC's International Development Fund at its recent meeting in Vienna (30-31 January 1981), and I suggested that the OPEC countries could make their first contribution to the IEFER through this Fund.

The Ministerial Council responded positively, deciding to submit the suggestion to the Fund's Board of Directors, which will take a final decision at its meeting of May and June of this year. It should be noted with gratitude that the Algerian Government has already pledged 500 000 dollars to the IEFER.

I am informing you of all these developments in the hope that you will stress to your Governments the importance of this matter in helping the poor and needy and preventing countless deaths from starvation.

The agricultural situation in the Near East showed some improvement in 1980 in comparison with 1979. The nutritional level of the Region has improved more rapidly than in the past, and more significantly than in other regions.

Nevertheless, the Region is still suffering from large variations in nutritional levels from one country to another, and from a large trade deficit in food commodities. Its food imports bill reached almost 12 billion dollars in 1979, and this figure involves all types of food items: cereals (even rice, of which the Region was an exporter in the past), sugar, meat, oil seeds, fats and dairy products.

It is expected that the Region's annual cereal imports will increase from the present level of 18 million tonnes to 47 million tonnes in the year 2000, by which time its self-sufficiency will decrease from 81 percent to 65 percent if present production trends continue.

Drought in the Maghreb and Somalia, and the vast number of refugees in several countries of the Region, are undoubtedly causes for serious concern.

Unfortunately, the rural exodus and emigration between countries of the Region are continuing and on the rise, leading in some cases to the abandonment of agriculture and the neglect of ongoing agricultural projects.

Lastly, it is a cold fact that agriculture has not received its due priority in the development plans of several Near Eastern countries, where investments in this sector are still inadequate.

In several countries of the Region, the long-expected results of irrigation and reclamation projects are unfortunately not yet evident, even though ample potential for agricultural development exists. I hope that each country in the Region will lay down its own agricultural development strategy. In such strategies, project implementation should be pursued on a continuing basis to ensure that the desired results are obtained.

We should bear in mind, in drawing up all our development plans and programmes, that the cornerstone of development is man, the human being who bears the burden of work in agriculture. No advances in agriculture are possible without efficient farmers. The farmer should therefore receive due attention and enjoy equitable treatment. In particular, price policies should encourage him to increase production and guarantee him a fair income.

Mr. Chairman,

Alongside this gloomy picture of the food and agriculture situation on the international and regional levels, there are positive aspects that justify some optimism.

Special mention should be made of resolutions contained in the well-known "Mecca Declaration", the final declaration of the Third Islamic Summit, held from 25-28 January 1981, and attended by about 40 countries. The declaration emphasized that the Islamic nations are resolved to combat the poverty that still afflicts some countries. To that end, measures are to be taken to promote economic cooperation, accelerate the economic development of LDCs and rationalize development policies, respecting the balance between material progress and spiritual advancement. The Summit also emphasized the necessity of subscribing the full capital of the Islamic Development Bank, 2 billion Islamic dinars.

Likewise, the Arab Summit held in Amman during November 1980 agreed to allocate 5 billion dollars for economic and social development in the Arab world. The majority of the nations of the Near East are members of IFAD, whose governing body has decided to replenish its resources, with a target of 1.5 billion dollars, and has assigned priority to loans to projects benefiting small farmers and rural development.

FAO's role in promoting agricultural investment in the Near East Region

All these facts indicate that ample financial resources are now, in principle, available for economic and social development in the Region, which is fortunate to have in its midst so many funds and institutions interested in economic and social development.

However, agriculture has not yet received its due share of investment allocations from these funds. Their policies should be compared with those of the World Bank, which allocated about 35 percent of its financial resources for agricultural development, or of the EEC, whose agricultural development budget reaches 40 percent of its resources. We hope that agriculture will receive a share of the financial resources available in the Region that is compatible with its vital importance.

It is also important to identify and draw up agricultural projects and prepare them in detail to the point that they are ready for financing and implementation. FAO's 30 years of experience in undertaking this work enables it to provide assistance to the countries in the Region in an efficient and effective manner.

In this field, the Organization has already entered into agreements with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development. We are in the process of setting up similar agreements with the Islamic Development Bank and other Arab development funds. Under these agreements, FAO's Investment Centre has made detailed studies of agricultural projects in Egypt, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, the Yemen Arab Republic, the Sudan, Morocco and Somalia, and these studies have all been approved and submitted for financing and implementation. From the time it was established to 1980, the Investment Centre has prepared detailed feasibility studies for 406 agricultural development projects involving investments of about 18 billion dollars.

In addition, we have cooperated with the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Conference of Arab Ministers of Agriculture of the States of the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, and the World Bank, in generating agricultural investments in the countries of the Near East Region. The Organization could further extend its activities in this area, and is also prepared to adapt its programmes to those of the regional institutions, as it has in the past. This has already led to the noticeable benefits reaped from FAO's Near East Cooperative Programme, on which I would like to say a few words.

Near East Cooperative Programme

Mr. Chairman,

The Near East Cooperative Programme was set up in 1975 to be a living example of earnest cooperation and fruitful work among the countries of a single region, as well as to set up an example of the material assistance which the more prosperous countries of a region can provide to their less-privileged neighbours. I wish at this point to express to all donor countries my personal appreciation of the positive contribution they have made during the last five years.

I cannot here elaborate on the programme and its achievements. Some indications appear in a recent booklet which has been distributed to the distinguished delegates. Yet I must mention in a few words that through NECP pledges which yielded 29 million dollars, it was possible to finance 29 projects, 7 regional and 22 at the country level. Present commitments already exhaust this entire amount, and it has become impossible to meet new requests, although the Organization has received more than 200 project proposals and ideas, the cost of which is estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Fourteenth Regional Conference expressed its satisfaction with the progress made in the operation of projects under the NECP, and expressed the hope that the pledges of the donor countries would continue and increase in order to meet the agricultural and rural development needs of countries in the Region, particularly since such continuing activities, whose fruits can be observed only in the long term, must by their very nature be supported over longer periods of time.

I have no doubt that both donor and recipient countries sincerely wish the programme to continue and expand, not only as the cornerstone of agricultural development in the Region, but -- and equally important -- as an example of joint action and regional cooperation. I should emphasize that, to this end, and in order to keep this noble programme active and effective, and to maintain its level of service and achievement, it will be necessary to double previous contributions, considering the current rates of inflation.

Finally, we should bear in mind that, during the next five years, the financial resources available to UNDP, and earmarked for technical assistance to countries in the Region, will decrease. This loss will have to be covered by contributions from the more prosperous countries in the Region to development and technical assistance programmes in the less-privileged countries. And herein lies the great importance of the NECP.

Decentralization of action at the national level

Among the most important recent steps taken by FAO has been the decentralization of its management and programme activities to the national level.

Decentralization is no longer a mere slogan repeated, from time to time, at FAO conferences and meetings, but it is now a concrete reality. This has become possible through the establishment of FAO country offices and the appointment of some 60 FAO Representatives in developing countries. Eleven of these are in the Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Mauritania, Egypt, Somalia, the Yemen Arab Republic, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and FAO has always responded positively to requests from the countries of the Region to establish FAO representation.

FAO Representatives have now been assigned new responsibilities, and have been granted the authority to decide upon matters which formerly had to be referred to FAO Headquarters in Rome. Among their duties are to identify and draw up agricultural projects and monitor their implementation, as well as to provide support for experts and consultants. In this way, decentralization has made great strides in FAO, and has enabled it to assist governments in deriving maximum benefits from the programmes it delivers.

Mr. Chairman,

In this connexion, I have to say a word about a subject dear to us all: the use of Arabic. Since the Thirteenth Regional Conference in 1976, the General Rules of the Organization have been amended to provide for extending the use of Arabic in FAO, and, as a result, that use has tripled at least. Arabic has finally acquired its due place, and now is on the same footing as the other languages used in this great international Organization.

The use of Arabic has gradually increased to cover all activities, within the limits of budgetary allocations and thanks to the voluntary contributions and support of a number of Arab countries which merit our sincere thanks.

Mr. Chairman,

I have limited myself to this short summary of FAO's activities and programmes so that Mr. Salah Jum'a, Assistant Director-General for the Near East, can discuss in detail the programmes and projects of interest to you.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ideal on which all the efforts of FAO and its Member Nations are concentrated is to liberate man from hunger and malnutrition. We are striving to eliminate hunger from our planet. What an enormous challenge! It is a challenge that corresponds to the aspirations of the people of this Region to which we all belong, and which is so close to our hearts. These aspirations make it necessary for us to forge ahead, with strong will and firm determination, on a policy of regional development and cooperation. The most evident proof of our determination is this Regional Conference, in which is gathered together a distinguished body of experts familiar with the issues of agricultural planning and policies in the Region. What adds to my optimism for the future is your commitment to the principle of regional cooperation in agriculture and rural development and your firm determination to bring it about through national and regional projects.

FAO, which I have the honour to direct, is prepared to place all its resources at your service and to cooperate with your Governments in the implementation of agricultural development projects and programmes. Thus we will be able to pursue our great struggle against hunger, malnutrition, poverty and need, as well as to look forward, optimistically and confidently, to the future.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, may I, a true son of the Region to which I have the honour to belong, convey my appreciation for your precious confidence and thank you for your continuing support. I wish all success to your Conference. Peace be with you.

STATEMENT BY THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL, REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Mr. Chairman,
Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegations,
Distinguished delegates,
and Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, first of all, to congratulate His Excellency Said El-Raqabani, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of the United Arab Emirates, for his unanimous election as chairman of this Conference. I wish him all success in his task.

Contrary to previous practice as well as to the rules governing FAO Regional Conferences, this Conference is being held at a time and place different from those originally planned, for reasons beyond our control. However, a remarkable élite of agricultural leaders of the countries of the Region is attending this Conference, demonstrating the importance attached by the governments of the Near East to regional cooperation in agricultural development and emphasizing their confidence in FAO as the appropriate framework within which fruitful cooperation among the countries of the Region can be established. I therefore associate myself with the Director-General in greeting and welcoming you and wishing you every success.

Mr. Chairman,

The Regional Office for the Near East is passing through a transitory period, which may be long or short as dictated by future developments. However, in either case, we will spare no effort in order to ensure that activities continue as in the past. We even hope to enlarge the scope of our work and to improve its performance.

The present location of RNEA at the Headquarters of the Organization, side by side with other departments and divisions, facilitates contacts and coordination between RNEA on the one hand and those units on the other. It also ensures that programmes established for the Near East Region within the overall FAO Programme of Work and Budget, are implemented in a more efficient and timely manner.

Mr. Chairman,

The clear and frank statement delivered today by the Director-General is still echoing in this hall. You will agree with me that the content of his statement constitutes the cornerstone for your deliberations during the Conference.

In his statement, the Director-General referred to several points leaving others to be developed by me. I will try not to overburden you with details. Occasionally, however, I will have to take some time in order to give some details of the various interrelated matters of concern to you.

The Director-General spoke of the world food and agricultural situation, and emphasized its seriousness; the situation has been deteriorating over the years, in spite of temporary recoveries. Clearly, grave consequences cannot be avoided without joint international action, in which all activities and efforts are coordinated and concerted.

At the regional level, the situation is less acute, due to the relative improvement in cereal production in some countries of the Region last year. However, this somewhat reassuring situation should not make us forget the unhappy fact that cereal production in the Region under rainfed agriculture will remain subject to fluctuation according to the amount of annual rainfall which varies in quantity and distribution from one year to the next.

And in spite of this temporary improvement in the regional food situation, the value of food imports to the Region is increasing year after year with rises in exporters' prices, ocean freight rates and inland transportation costs, in addition to inflation and rapid currency fluctuations.

If such imports are no burden on the balance of payments of oil-exporting countries in the Region, the situation is quite different in other countries, where the value of food imports represents a heavy burden indeed. And unfortunately this deteriorating situation may continue for many years to come if their rate of agricultural development remains below the required level.

Talking about the food situation in the Region leads us to another subject closely-related to it: food security. Before doing this I would like to explain what Food Security means:

On the level of the countries of the Region - especially the Arab countries - it means that both plant and animal production reaches or approaches the level of self-sufficiency. Consequently, food security projects in those countries are agricultural projects leading to increased production and consequently to an advanced level of self-sufficiency.

To FAO in general, on the other hand, the expression food security means the assurance that every country will have an adequate supply of food at all times, whether through local production or foreign imports. In general, therefore, food security projects in FAO are projects concerned with the establishment of national food reserves in accordance with the International Undertaking on World Food Security.

The difference between these two concepts of food security should be borne in mind in your discussions of the subject, in order to avoid any ambiguity.

This important matter is dealt with in the document "Regional implications of international actions to strengthen World Food Security", which will be presented to you in due time.

It goes without saying that the essential condition for ensuring food security is to consolidate and accelerate the rate of growth of national capacities to produce main food items in the developing countries of the Region. FAO has always dedicated itself, even before the appearance of the concept of food security, to sponsoring and strengthening regional food production programmes and projects at country and regional levels.

A clear example of this is the Regional Project for Field Food Crops which was a basic element of the effective cooperation between FAO and assistance agencies and member countries of the Near East Region.

The achievements of that project, as set out in document NERC/81/7, and the vital importance of continued cooperation among countries of the Region in this field were the basis for the proposal to establish a permanent regional system, funded by contributions of donors in the Region and covering various activities, including research and training networks, the transfer of improved technology, the supply of seeds and equipment, the exchange of technical information, etc. We hope that this proposal will meet your approval and support.

Follow-up of WCARRD resolutions and recommendations

One of the main results of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, held in the summer of 1979 at FAO Headquarters, was the recognition of FAO's leading role among the specialized agencies of the UN system in the field of agrarian reform and rural development.

This leading role has naturally led to profound adjustments in FAO programmes and priorities, in themselves a breakthrough toward broader horizons.

While the World Conference charged FAO with that important task and leading role, the Conference's Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action, which was adopted unanimously, urged individual countries to take the necessary steps to include in their development plans measures for monitoring and evaluation of land reform and rural development programmes. FAO is ready to extend its help and assistance in this field.

The support of the Director-General for the establishment of regional rural development centres should encourage the Region to take the necessary steps to establish such a centre for the Near East. We hope that this question will receive due attention when you consider the document which will be presented to you under the title of "Review and follow-up action in the Region arising from the WCARRD Programme of Action".

State of Agriculture in the Region

Agriculture in the Region is characterized by a limited cultivated area as compared to other regions. The land under agriculture is only 6 percent of the total land, most of which is arid or semi-arid.

Insufficient arable land may explain the reason for the wide gap between production and consumption in the Region, a gap that is widening because of exceptionally high rates of population growth, which exceed the rates in other regions.

The continuous population growth and subsequent rise in the food consumption may account for the growing tendency to cultivate cereal crops, particularly wheat, on marginal lands most suitable for natural pasture.

Unfortunately, such exploitation of that land, year after year, has led to a continuous fall in productivity which in turn has largely contributed to instability of output and a great decline in the efficiency of pastoral land. The extensive use of farm machinery undoubtedly encouraged the encroachment on pasture and its gradual transformation into desert. In short, such undesirable human activities waste effort and capital, destroy natural pasture, accelerate the desertification process and create a man-made desert.

Speaking of natural pastures and their deterioration in the Region through their use for crop production or because of uncontrolled grazing (sometimes called overgrazing) leads us to the question of animal production. It is not my intention to deal with this now, as there is a special document (NERC/81/4) before you for discussion and recommendations. The document includes an assessment of the present situation and proposals for a development strategy and regional cooperation for the improvement of livestock and feed resources, and the institutions required to implement the strategy. We trust that this document will receive due attention.

Another characteristic of agriculture in the Region is its large dependence on rainfall. Rainfed and dry-land agriculture represent 60 percent of the total agricultural land in the Region. It goes without saying that the droughts that affect areas of the Region from time to time, and erratic rainfall characterized in many cases by adverse distribution or timing, are negative factors leading to instability of production.

Since the production of food crops - particularly wheat - under irrigation is almost confined to small areas, it is therefore difficult to introduce new agricultural technologies such as the use of improved seeds and chemical fertilizers. For these reasons, wheat-growing on irrigated lands has failed to show substantial gains in productivity.

It is worth mentioning here that fragmented holdings in some countries of the Region also limit the introduction of modern techniques into wheat cultivation.

One of the general aspects of production of field food crops in the Region, as well as other regions, is the loss of a substantial proportion of output during the growth, harvest and post-harvest periods. This is due to:

1. Failure to select the appropriate pesticides and disease-control chemicals and/or incorrect timing of their use during growing periods;
2. Lack of due care during crop-harvesting operations;
3. Inefficiency of transport and storage facilities during the post-harvest period.

Identifying these causes is naturally the first step toward determining the most effective means of overcoming them and offsetting their adverse effects on production quantity and quality.

The ecological and climatic conditions of the Region make it difficult to expand its dry-farming area substantially, so it would be unrealistic to expect a substantial increase of production through such an expansion.

It is therefore necessary to seek alternative solutions, mainly through a vertical expansion of production. On rainfed land, traditional cultivation practices must be changed and soil conservation methods and operations must be improved in order to prevent erosion, maintain moisture content, and make proper use of appropriate inputs.

It is also necessary to abandon the fallow system used in some rainfed areas, and to cultivate varieties of legumes and fodder crops that are suitable to the nature of the soil, climate and rates of precipitation.

If horizontal expansion of rainfed land is difficult, it is feasible and profitable at the same time in irrigated areas, if accompanied by efficient management of irrigation and drainage and the adoption of irrigation methods best suited to the nature of the soil, the climate, cropping patterns and water availability.

In this connexion, a regional survey of land and water resources has been carried out in order to assist the countries of the Region in planning to improve their resources. Another regional study has assessed areas of high potential for the expansion of rainfed agricultural production. This study, which seeks to identify methods of improving productivity, is supplemented by agro-ecological maps to be used in planning proper land utilization. Also among the objectives of the regional project for land and water utilization, implemented by the Organization, are the improved use of land and water through applied research and practical measures and the improved cultivation of arid land by the application of proper methods of land and water management practices. It is interesting to note that this regional project is carrying out its activities through subcontracts with a number of national institutions for the implementation of the approved work plans and field programmes. It has also undertaken several additional studies, including the important study of water resources shared by the States of the Gulf and Arab Peninsula.

Agricultural development strategy in the Region

The drawing up of a general strategy for agricultural development applicable to all the countries in the Region is not an easy matter in view of their wide diversity of environments, climates, and socio-economic conditions. Nevertheless, it should not be considered impossible to draw up such a strategy, bearing in mind the obvious similarity between the agricultural sectors in various countries of the Region and between those involved in such sectors. Furthermore, the obstacles to agricultural development in these countries are almost identical, even though the means of overcoming them may differ.

An agricultural strategy for the Region should have two main complementary goals: the quantitative and qualitative improvement of agricultural production and the improvement of the incomes of rural populations (the majority of which work directly or indirectly in the agricultural sector), in order to raise their standards of living and provide them with the essential services.

To realize these two goals, the elements of such an agricultural development strategy should include the following:

1. Priority to the agricultural sector in overall development plans, adequate provisions from local or external sources being allocated for this sector;
2. Agrarian reform legislation designed primarily to ensure a more equitable distribution of income;
3. Legislation and infrastructures to guarantee the optimum use of natural land and water resources;
4. Integrated rural development policies;
5. Direct or indirect incentives to producers;
6. Suitable agricultural inputs at reasonable prices;
7. Training of technical staff in such areas as applied research, agricultural services, training and agricultural extension;
8. Expansion of white meat (poultry and fish) production.

Mr. Chairman,

My only occasion to address such an outstanding group of agricultural leaders of the Near East Region arises through the Regional Conferences, which are held once every two years. However, it is now well over two years since the Fourteenth Regional Conference was held in September 1978. For this reason I have taken the liberty to exceed my time limit somewhat. I would have refrained from doing so had I not been sure of the generosity and patience of my brothers and colleagues.

I thank you all and wish you success in your endeavours.

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