



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
and
Agriculture
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the
United
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Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

CONFERENCE

Thirty-fourth Session

Rome, 17-24 November 2007

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF NATURAL FIBRES 2009

1. Resolution 3/2005 of the Thirty-third Session of FAO Conference in 2005 endorsed the proposal for an International Year of Natural Fibres, and requested the Director-General to transmit the Resolution to the Secretary-General of the United Nations with a view to having the United Nations declare the year 2009 as the International Year of Natural Fibres.
2. Subsequently on 20 December 2006 the General Assembly proclaimed 2009 to be the International Year of Natural Fibres. In doing so, it noted that the diverse range of natural fibres produced in many countries provides an important source of income for farmers, and thus can play an important role in contributing to food security and in eradicating poverty and hence in contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It invited FAO to facilitate the observance of the Year, in collaboration with Governments, regional and international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and relevant organizations of the United Nations system.
3. The declaration of the International Year of Natural Fibres reflects the importance of this group of commodities to a great many countries. In many developing and least developed countries proceeds from the sale and export of natural fibres contribute significantly to the income and food security of poor farmers and workers in fibre industries. For some countries natural fibres are of major economic importance at the national level, for example, cotton in some west African countries, jute in Bangladesh and sisal in Tanzania. In other cases these fibres are of less significance at the national level but are of considerable local importance, as in the case of jute in West Bengal (India) and sisal in north-east Brazil.
4. Natural fibres constitute an important renewable resource used as raw material for clothing, upholstery and other textiles for consumers. Many natural fibres also have industrial uses in packaging, papermaking and in composite materials with many uses, including automobile construction.

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5. The International Year of Natural Fibres is intended to raise the profile of natural fibres, thereby strengthening demand and contributing to improved welfare of fibre-producing farmers. The following four objectives have been proposed:

- i) to raise awareness and stimulate demand for natural fibres;
- ii) to promote the efficiency and sustainability of the natural fibres industries;
- iii) to encourage appropriate policy responses from governments to the problems faced by natural fibre industries;
- iv) to foster an effective and enduring international partnership among the various natural fibres industries.

6. Some progress has been made in preparing for the Year. An informal International Steering Committee has met several times to begin discussing arrangements between the various natural fibre industries. It has formulated objectives for the Year, and has overseen the preparation of a communications plan to guide activities through to the end of 2009. Most importantly, perhaps, it has brought together international representatives of the various natural fibre industries, among whom there had been no contact prior to the beginning of this process. The success of the International Year of Natural Fibres will depend on a strong international partnership of all the natural fibres industries.

7. A presentation was held in FAO Headquarters in January 2007 to acquaint delegations with plans for the International Year of Natural Fibres.

8. An Interdepartmental Group within the Secretariat has met several times.

9. An outline communication plan has been developed with support from international fibre industry organizations. This provides a road map of activities which might be undertaken in 2009 and in the lead-up to it. By the time of the Thirty-fourth Session of Conference it is expected that a logo and a slogan will have been developed, a website¹ will have been established and a glossy brochure printed in several languages.

10. A multi-donor project proposal has been developed as a guide to the activities planned and the funding required. It is expected that FAO will provide communication materials and publicity, coordinate events, and operate one or two specific events such as an international conference on natural fibres. Most of the activities in the Year will be operated by various partner organisations, including international bodies which cover specific fibres, as well as national committees. These organisations and committees will work under the general “umbrella” of organization and information provided by FAO. They will define their own objectives, and plan and fund their own events, within the framework of the IYNF objectives and drawing on coordination and communication materials provided by FAO as lead unit.

11. The actual programme of events will take shape as 2009 approaches. Conferences, displays, fashion shows, publication of books, TV documentaries, events for schools, textile art competitions, etc, could be among the activities which might be organized.

12. In order to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the declaration of the International Year of Natural Fibres, considerable financial support will be required well in advance of 2009. Very limited resources have been made available, from various sources, but progress has been limited because of the lack of funding. To undertake the plan of work envisioned in the coming two years, contributions from member countries and non-state actors are required.

13. It is expected that a further report will be made to the Thirty-fifth Session of Conference in 2009, by which time the activities of the International Year will be largely completed.

¹ www.naturalfibres2009.org