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Organización
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Naciones Unidas
para la
Agricultura y la
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CONFERENCE

Thirty-seventh Session

Rome, 25 June - 2 July 2011

Presentation of the B.R. Sen Award 2010

Executive Summary

The B.R. Sen Award pays tribute to Binay Ranjan Sen, FAO Director-General from 1956 to 1967. The Award is presented annually to the field officer who has made the most outstanding contribution to the advancement of the country or countries to which he or she has been assigned. For 2010, a shared Award is attributed to Mr Ad Spijkers (Netherlands) and to Mr Jean François Gascon (France).

1. At its 14th Session in November 1967 the FAO Conference, by Resolution 33/67, established the B.R. Sen Award to be presented at the beginning of each regular session of the Conference. Any FAO field officer who has served under any of the programmes operated by FAO during the year for which the Award is made, is eligible for nomination.

2. The Award recipient is entitled to: (i) a medal engraved with the name of the recipient; (ii) a scroll describing his or her achievements; (iii) a cash prize of USD 5 000; (iv) round trip fare to Rome and associated travel expenses.

Selection of Award winners

3. Prior to the Conference, the B.R. Sen Award Selection Committee, chaired by the Director-General and comprising the Independent Chairperson of the Council and the Chairpersons of the Programme and Finance Committees, makes a final decision on the basis on the shortlists submitted by the interdepartmental Screening Committee¹, supplemented by the endorsements received from the governments where the nominees are serving or have served.

¹ The B.R. Sen Award Screening Committee is chaired by the Deputy Director-General, and comprises the Assistant Directors-General of the headquarters' departments as well as the Legal Counsel, the Directors of OEK and OSD, and the Chief, TCDM, as Secretary.

4. For 2010, a shared award is attributed to Mr Ad Spijkers from the Netherlands and to Mr Jean François Gascon from France:

Mr Ad SPIJKERS

5. Mr Adrianus (Ad) Spijkers (Netherlands). He holds a Master of Arts (MA) degree in Development Studies, Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Rural Policy and Project Planning from the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague.

6. He was a Staff Member of the Office of International Affairs in 1973 at the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands, and then worked for eight years supporting institutions of higher education in developing countries at the Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation. He has also worked as a consultant for the nutrition programme in UNICEF, Viet Nam.

7. Mr Spijkers joined FAO in 1985 as a Programme Officer in the FAO Representation in Viet Nam, where he worked for five years before moving to the FAO Representation in China where he was subsequently appointed Deputy FAO Representative in 1992. In 1996, Mr Spijkers became FAO Representative in Cambodia, followed by a post as FAO Representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for seven years. In 2006 he was appointed FAO Representative in Bangladesh where he served until his retirement in March 2011.

8. Mr Spijkers took up his assignment in Bangladesh soon after the country had been devastated by two consecutive floods during the monsoon and a category IV cyclone. He rose to that challenge so that FAO could meet the urgent needs of the country; and FAO efforts became an international example of delivering assistance to victims. In 2009-10 he launched the process by which Bangladesh became Asia's show-case for sustainable food security in the global arena.

9. In Bangladesh, Mr Spijkers' steadfast role as coordinator triggered large humanitarian interventions from a number of donors (more than USD 12 million), and FAO became the implementing agency under a World Bank loan to the Government of USD 30 million. The Ministry of Agriculture subsequently developed the coastal south under a Master Plan, which is now being considered for much larger interventions for comprehensive agricultural development linked with the USD 3 billion Padma Bridge Project.

10. His success in enhancing support to the Government of Bangladesh for sustainable food security and initiating food safety programmes has been remarkable. He played a leading role in promoting the collaboration led by the Government with key Development Partners and FAO in formulating the Bangladesh Country Investment Plan (CIP), which proved instrumental, as the country became the first in Asia, to win a grant (USD 52 million) from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program following the L'Aquila commitments.

11. Mr Spijkers changed the composition and increased the size of the FAO annual portfolio in Bangladesh from USD 2 million up to a delivery of about USD 19 million in 2010, and inspired actions towards extending the new agronomic revolution in Bangladesh to the poorest farmers. These achievements were made possible by Mr Spijkers' creative thinking and result oriented approach which inspired, catalysed and mentored teamwork, effectiveness and partnerships.

Mr Jean François GASCON

12. Mr Jean François Gascon (France) has a Doctorate degree in Rural Sociology. His thesis was on "Rural poverty and Food Insecurity in Rwanda".

13. Mr Gascon started his career in 1971 in Burkina Faso as Director of an Agricultural Training Centre in Bomborokuy. In 1975, he moved to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, with the PanAfrican NGO "INADES-Formation" as a trainer and in 1978, he moved to Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) as a Country Director. From 1979 to 1982, he worked for the World Bank in Ouagadougou as an agricultural expert.

14. Jean François Gascon joined FAO in 1982 working as a Young Professional and expert for Agricultural Extension in Burkina Faso. In 1987, he was transferred to Rwanda (Gikongoro) working until April 1994 when the Rwandan civil war broke out. Between April and September 1994, he

participated in two emergency assessment missions in Rwanda and in September 1994, he was the first FAO international staff member to return to Rwanda to establish an FAO Emergency Coordination Unit. In February 2001, Mr Gascon joined the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division (TCE) as Liaison and Operations Officer. He retired in December 2010, as Senior Operations Officer for Western and Central Africa.

15. Despite the evacuation from Rwanda, in 1994, and the trauma of the genocide, Mr Gascon did not hesitate to go back to Rwanda just a few months after the dramatic events and was eager to return to work with those whose lives had been affected by this tragic experience. In June 1994, during the war and genocide period, he undertook FAO's first Assessment Mission in the Northeastern part of Rwanda to identify the emergency requirements of the population. In July 1994, he represented FAO and participated in the post crisis joint UN humanitarian mission in Rwanda chaired by the United Nations Under-Secretary General.

16. In September 1994, Mr Gascon established the first Emergency Coordination Unit for FAO, managing a large emergency programme and coaching a team of 50 national and international staff, during the difficult post-genocide period. The model of coordination unit that Mr Gascon had set up is today the basis for TCE Emergency and Rehabilitation Units all over the world and particularly in Africa.

17. The emergency agricultural rehabilitation programme that Mr Gascon developed with the Government of Rwanda constituted the basis for the development of long-term national food security projects. In addition to his role as Emergency Coordinator, he represented FAO at the "Round Table" on Rwanda, held in Geneva in June 1996. Cognisant of his experience in the region, he took part during the same period, in important missions in the Great Lakes Region, namely in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, after which he formulated key strategic documents.

18. Mr Gascon's achievement in Rwanda is a milestone for TCE and FAO's work in the field of humanitarian assistance. Through his work, he demonstrated how countries can benefit from FAO's assistance in times of crisis. In addition to his outstanding professional work in the field and in headquarters, Mr Gascon was highly esteemed for his great respect for colleagues and partners, regardless of grade and hierarchy.