

REPORT OF THE

Held in Rome, Italy
24 November 1973

**SPECIAL SESSION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL RICE COMMISSION**



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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1. A Special Session of the IRC was held on 24 November 1973, upon request of the 12th Session of the Commission in Bangkok, 13-15 November 1972, when the number of Member Nations present was insufficient to provide a quorum to adopt suggested amendments to the IRC Constitution. (Report of the 12th Session of the IRC - Document IRC 72/Report.) The amendments concerned are: (a) Amendments to the IRC Constitution and Rules of Procedure (Document IRC 73/3); (b) Introduction of Spanish as a Working Language of the IRC (Document IRC 73/4).
2. Also upon the recommendations made during the 12th Session of the IRC, the IRC Steering Committee at Headquarters prepared a document on the future programme of work which has taken into account the suggestions made during the 12th Session (Document IRC 73/2).
3. The Special Session was attended by the representatives of 33 Member Nations of the IRC and observers from 10 Member Nations of the Organization. A list of participants is given in Appendix A of this report.
4. The meeting was opened by Dr. O.E. Fischnich, Assistant Director-General of FAO, who announced that the Chairman of the IRC holding office during the 1972-76 period, Dr. Bhakdi Lusanandana, unfortunately could not be present and that Mr. M.L. Witcher, First Vice-Chairman, would chair the meeting, assisted by Dr. L.A. Russ, Second Vice-Chairman. In accordance with the IRC Constitution, no elections were therefore to be held.
5. Mr. Witcher welcomed the participants to the Special Session of the meeting and requested Dr. Fischnich to address the meeting.
6. On behalf of the Director-General of FAO, Dr. Fischnich welcomed the Session. His address is reproduced in Appendix B to this report.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA - REPORT OF THE MEETING

7. The Commission adopted the Provisional Agenda (Appendix C) and agreed that the report of the meeting be prepared by the FAO Secretariat in consultation with the First and Second Vice-Chairmen of the Commission and that no session was required for formal adoption of the report.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL RICE COMMISSION (AGENDA ITEM 5)

8. The Commission considered the amendments as outlined in Document IRC 73/3 aimed at: (1) bringing the Constitution in line with the recommendations made at the 11th Session of the Commission held in Tokyo, 1968, to convene a regular session of the Commission "at least once every four years" instead of every two years; (2) facilitating the work of the Commission by providing that the Commission's Rules of Procedure may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast provided that such a majority is "more than one-half of all Members of the Commission" instead of a "two-thirds majority of the Membership".

9. The Commission adopted the amendments in accordance with the IRC Constitution and Rules of Procedure.^{1/}

INTRODUCTION OF SPANISH AS A WORKING LANGUAGE OF THE IRC (AGENDA ITEM 6)

10. The Commission considered the proposal to adopt Spanish as a working language of the International Rice Commission (Document IRC 73/4). The Commission adopted the amendment in accordance with the IRC Constitution and Rules of Procedure.^{2/}

11. In accordance with Article X of the Constitution, the amendments will become fully effective only after the concurrence by the Council. The Secretariat will prepare a document submitting the amendments to the Council at its 62nd Session.

FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORK (AGENDA ITEM 4)

12. Consideration of this item was based on Document IRC 73/2 Future Programme of Work of the IRC and Its Working Parties, prepared by the IRC Steering Committee in Rome.

13. The Commission expressed general agreement to the proposals, in particular to:

- (1) the reorientation of the programme of work in accordance with the changing needs of member governments;
- (2) the medium-term activities to be implemented in the course of the present decade;
- (3) the introduction of a greater flexibility in the structure and working methods of the Commission and its Working Parties.

14. Some members stressed that IRC should concentrate in particular on rainfed rice production, especially at the farm level, since the majority of rice is still produced in vast areas which depend on rainfall.

^{1/} Number of votes cast 28; majority required 28; votes for 28; votes against - nil; abstentions - nil.

^{2/} Number of votes cast 31; majority required 28; votes for 31; votes against - nil; abstentions - nil.

15. The Commission urged that in view of the strategic importance of fertilizer in increasing productivity, increased attention should be given to both technical and economic aspects of fertilizer use. The Commission reaffirmed its support of the statement of Commission II of the FAO Conference which welcomed the establishment of a Commission on Fertilizers which would keep under review the world fertilizer supply and price situation.

16. The Commission also stressed the need for action-oriented programmes at the farm level which lead to higher yields through improved cultivation and planting techniques, improved water management, fertilizer use, plant protection, harvesting, threshing, storage and processing.

17. The Commission also emphasized the need for increased attention to the introduction of new production techniques, multiple cropping and crop diversification which should be an integral part of the rural development activities as discussed during the FAO Conference.

18. The Commission re-emphasized the need for action oriented programmes, through which it could exercise a major influence on the Commission's recommendations. It was noted that approximately 200 FAO experts are actively engaged in rice production under FAO/UNDP projects and projects funded by bilateral resources.

19. The Commission considered the proposals to change the working methods and endorsed the proposals to introduce a greater flexibility in the structure and working methods of the Commission and its Working Parties.

20. The Commission recognized that as a result of the increasingly world-wide membership, major emphasis is to be laid on the transfer of know-how and exchange of experience between member countries in the various regions in the world.

21. The Commission noted that present IRC membership of 42 countries comprises 15 member countries in Asia and the Far East, including Oceania, 13 in Latin America, 6 in Africa, 2 in the Near East and 6 in Europe/North America. In the course of the last decade the membership increased mostly through countries from Latin America and Africa.

22. The Commission endorsed the proposal that regular sessions of the IRC should rotate among the various regions and be held every four years, preferably in conjunction with the respective Regional Conferences.

23. The Commission also endorsed the proposal to reduce the frequency of the sessions of the Working Parties to one session every four years which would rotate between the various regions. It recommended that between regular sessions the Secretariat should organize ad hoc meetings, technical conferences or expert consultations on rice problems of particular importance or urgency for a given region or subregion in accordance with regional priorities.

24. Noting the financial stringency which prevailed in the current biennium, which resulted in freezing the post of Rice Agronomist and the abolition of the UNDP-financed post of Executive Secretary at the Regional Office for Asia and the Far East, the Commission expressed satisfaction that the post of Executive Secretary of the IRC would be re-established and noted that the budget for 1974-75 provided for this post to be located at Headquarters.

25. The Commission noted that the proposed stationing of the Executive Secretary at FAO Headquarters was to ensure that he (1) maintains efficient working relations with technical officers of the Divisions of the Agricultural Department; (2) provides backstopping of FAO field programmes in the various regions; (3) effectively participates in project formulation, and (4) provides interaction among the technicians and policy makers on national, regional and international levels.

26. The Commission further noted that sufficient funds have been allocated in the budget for 1974-75 to enable the Executive Secretary to maintain close contact with Member Governments in all regions.

27. Several members, mostly from Asia and the Far East Region, expressed the view that the Executive Secretary should continue to be stationed in Bangkok as Asia and the Far East was the world's major rice producing area. Other members supported the proposal by the Director-General as the location of this officer at Headquarters was necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed reorientation of the Programme of Work of the IRC.

28. The Commission noted that in accordance with the Constitution, the official seat of the Commission is at the Headquarters of the Regional Office of Asia and the Far East. A change in the location or its abolition would require an amendment to the Constitution. Such an amendment would have to be communicated by the Director-General to all members of the Commission 90 days before a regular or special session, in accordance with Rule XII of the Commission's Rules of Procedure.

29. The Commission was informed that the Constitution does not contain any provision for the location of the Executive Secretary so that the proposal in the Programme of Work and Budget to station the Executive Secretary at Headquarters in Rome, was consistent with the Constitution and with the Rules of Procedure.

30. The Commission welcomed the intention that every effort will be made to select for the post the most qualified and experienced candidate who would, through the IRC Steering Committee, be able to give new impetus to the work of the Commission and would assist Member Governments in the various regions.

31. The Commission agreed with the Secretariat's suggestions for improving the IRC Newsletter which should become an increasingly effective instrument in global communication of new technology and experience, serving the interests of all regions.

32. The Commission noted that changes in the IRC Newsletter were planned to commence in the second half of the biennium 1974-75. During 1974 the Newsletter will continue to be issued from RAPE, after which the editorial responsibility will be transferred to Headquarters.

33. The Commission recommended that the Newsletter be issued in three languages to facilitate the exchange of research results between regions and provide research and development workers with topical information from national and international research institutions.

OTHER MATTERS

34. The Commission noted that the draft report after clearance by the Acting Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Special Session and in accordance with Rule X.3 of the Rules of Procedure, will be transmitted to the Director-General of the Organization, who will circulate it to Members of the Commission and to other Member Nations and Associate Members of the Organization for their information.

35. Observers were informed that Article VIII of the Constitution indicates the procedures to be followed by Member Nations of the Organization wishing to become members of the International Rice Commission.