

23

REPORT

Rome,
Italy,
12-14 October
1999

**European
Commission
on Agriculture**

Thirty-first session



**Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations**

Reports of the European Commission on Agriculture (known as European Committee on Agricultural Technology from 1949 to 1952 and as European Committee on Agriculture until 1956) are as follows:

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|----------------------------|--|
| 1. Preparatory Meeting | Paris, 27-28 June 1949 |
| 2. First Session | Rome, 26-30 September 1949 |
| 3. Second Session | Geneva, 27-30 March 1950 |
| 4. Third Session | Rome, 25-28 June 1951 |
| 5. Fourth Session | Rome, 3-6 June 1952 |
| 6. Fifth Session | Rome, 26-29 May 1953 |
| 7. Sixth Session | Rome, 14-18 June 1954 |
| 8. Seventh Session | Rome, 20-24 June 1955 |
| 9. Eighth Session | Rome, 7-11 May 1956 |
| 10. Ninth Session | Rome, 17-21 June 1957 |
| 11. Tenth Session | Rome, 19-23 May 1958 |
| 12. Eleventh Session | Rome, 25-29 May 1959 |
| 13. Twelfth Session | Rome, 15-19 May 1961 |
| 14. Thirteen Session | Rome, 13-18 May 1963 |
| 15. Fourteenth Session | Rome, 17-21 May 1965 |
| 16. Fifteenth Session | Rome, 15-20 May 1967 |
| 17. Sixteenth Session | Rome, 23-26 October 1968 |
| 18. Seventeenth Session | Rome, 7-11 September 1970 |
| 19. Eighteenth Session | Rome, 8-12 May 1972 |
| 20. Nineteenth Session | Rome, 17-21 June 1974 |
| 21. Twentieth Session | Rome, 17-23 June 1976 |
| 22. Twenty-first Session | Rome, 19-23 June 1978 |
| 23. Twenty-second Session | Rome, 23-27 June 1980 |
| 24. Twenty-third Session | Rome, 21-25 June 1982 |
| 25. Twenty-fourth Session | Innsbruck, Austria 18-22 June 1984 |
| 26. Twenty-fifth Session | Chania, Greece, 8-12 June 1987 |
| 27. Twenty-sixth Session | Porto, Portugal, 23-26 May 1989 |
| 28. Twenty-seventh Session | Herrsching, Germany 1-5 July 1991 |
| 29. Twenty-eighth Session | Valletta, Malta, 27 September - 1 October 1993 |
| 30. Twenty-ninth Session | Bled, Slovenia, 2-6 October 1995 |
| 31. Thirtieth Session | Nitra, Slovakia, 8-11 October 1997 |

Report of the

Thirty-first Session
of the

European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

Rome, Italy, 12-14 October 1999

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 1999

Report of the
The First Session
of the
Economic Commission for Africa
1964

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I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

II. AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

1. The Thirty-first Session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) was held in FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy from 12 to 14 October 1999 under the Chair of Mr Karoly Kocsis (Hungary). The List of Participants is in Appendix I.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

2. The Chairperson opened the Session and expressed satisfaction that it was taking place in FAO Headquarters.

3. On behalf of FAO, Mr Manfred Lindau, Regional Representative for Europe, welcomed the participants and underlined the extensive agenda of the present Session. He drew attention to the important items included in the agenda, in particular the need to review and adjust the ECA's mandate to the changing environment and to redefine its place and role among European agricultural fora.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND TIMETABLE

4. The Commission adopted the Agenda (ECA:31/99(1)) (Appendix II) and the Timetable for the Session.

5. At the request of the Chairperson, Mr Harald Hildebrand (Germany), Member of the ECA Executive Committee, chaired a number of the sessions, in the absence of the ECA Vice-chairperson.

APPOINTMENT OF RAPPORTEUR

6. Mr Juhani Rouhiainen (Finland) was appointed Rapporteur of the Session.

REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON ON ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE ECA

7. The Chairperson reported on the outcome of the Eighty-second Session of the Executive Committee (Warsaw, Poland, 3-5 December 1998)¹. The Commission approved the Report of the Eighty-second Session of the Executive Committee.

8. The Chairperson also reported on the results and recommendations of the Informal Meeting of the Executive Committee, held on 11 October 1999 in the FAO Regional Office for Europe, in preparation for the Thirty-first Session.

PRESENT AND FUTURE ROLE OF THE ECA

9. The Commission reviewed document ECA:31/99(2), based on consultations which had taken place between the Executive Committee and the Secretariat and generally recognised the need to reinvigorate the ECA. While it appreciated the options contained in the document, the Session in particular:

- recalled the distinct functions of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) and of the ECA and emphasised the need to avoid overlap and duplication of items to be discussed by the two bodies;
- several delegates recommended holding future sessions of the ECA back-to-back with the ERC. The Secretariat was requested to study the possibility of linking the ECA with the

¹ Document; ECA:X/82/98 REP

- ERC or holding ECA sessions back-to-back with the ERC, also taking into consideration the cost-effectiveness of such a proposal and the legal and budgetary implications, if any;
- suggested, in view of the overall financial constraints which the Organization was facing, that Members consider ways and means through which future sessions of the ECA could be supported;
 - requested the Executive Committee to screen the themes proposed for discussion at future sessions of the ECA with a view to identifying topics of particular interest which were not already covered by other meetings. In this connection, the Secretariat was requested to liaise with other international regional organizations;
 - recommended that when selecting agenda items for the forthcoming sessions, due attention should be given to the challenges faced by the countries in transition; and
 - referred to the report of the 116th Session of the Council regarding multilingualism in the work of the Organization and stressed the need for the ECA to use the relevant official languages of FAO on an equal footing and to ensure more rigorous quality control of translated documents and their simultaneous distribution.

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF THE ECA WORKING PARTY ON WOMEN AND THE FAMILY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

10. The Commission reviewed the activities of the Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW). Statements by a number of delegations provided an overview of activities in support of rural women. The experience of Spain in enhancing the professional and economic status of rural women and of the Italian Ministry of Agricultural Policies-supported Observatory were noted as innovative approaches to sensitising policy formulation and implementation to gender issues.

11. The Commission recommended the continuation of the WPW, the main FAO body in the Region addressing the specific issues faced by rural women, and took note of the ripple effect of the WPW's activities. The Session recommended the networking approach as a cost-effective work method.

12. The Commission approved the following recommendations of the 82nd Session of the ECA Executive Committee (3-5 December 1998, Warsaw, Poland):

- the preparation of summer schools and WPW sessions remain the responsibility of the WPW Board;
- the existing mode of operation of the WPW remain unchanged, as proposed at the Eighth Session of the WPW (25-28 September 1996, Akureyri, Iceland) in order to secure the continuity of work.

13. The Commission approved the Report of the Ninth Session of the WPW (30 September – 3 October 1998, Yerevan, Armenia) and its Work Plan for the 2000-2001 biennium.

REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE EUROPEAN SYSTEM OF COOPERATIVE RESEARCH NETWORKS IN AGRICULTURE (SCORENA)

14. In reviewing the two documents² submitted on this item, the Commission:
- requested that the SCORENA System be maintained and reinvigorated;
 - suggested that additional human and financial resources be allocated to the System but in view of the continuous budgetary constraints being faced by the Organization, called upon Members to increase their support to the System;
 - welcomed the initiative to set up a new SCORENA Website on Internet and recommended that resources be used in the future to further expand and optimise this

² ECA 31/99(4) and ECA 31/99(5)

- system according to users' needs, particularly the interactive part, in close cooperation with all stakeholders;
- endorsed the general recommendations for ESCORENA activities as presented in documents ECA:31/99(4) and ECA:31/99(5) and expressed particular support for paragraphs 14 and 27 in document ECA:31/99(5);
 - recommended exploring possibilities of linking ESCORENA with the emerging European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development;
 - raised the question of FAO's assistance in the establishment of a Subregional Agricultural Research Forum for Central and Eastern European countries.
15. With regard to document ECA:31/99(4), the Commission:
- expressed support for the Olive, Nuts and SREN Networks; for the latter it particularly underlined the increasing importance of renewable energy in the context of rural development and sustainable resource management;
 - underlined also the need to improve reporting on the Networks' activities which would facilitate coordination, information dissemination, planning and evaluation;
 - called upon participating Members to identify a national focal point to liaise with the ESCORENA Secretariat.

STATUS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE ECA IN LIGHT OF RESOLUTION 13/97 OF THE TWENTY-NINTH FAO CONFERENCE

16. The Commission was informed that the FAO Conference Resolution 13/97 indicated that the ECA should continue its activities, while its Executive Committee should cease being listed as a statutory body.

CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILISATION OF AGRICULTURAL GENETIC RESOURCES: INSTITUTIONAL, POLICY AND TECHNICAL ISSUES³

17. The item was introduced by the Secretary of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA), Mr J. Esquinas-Alcázar, who provided a global overview of technical and scientific issues related to genetic resources for food and agriculture, and highlighted their socio-economic, legal, ethical and policy implications. He underlined that all countries are both donors and recipients of genetic resources and of related information and technology. He emphasised the importance of international cooperation, which had led to the establishment by FAO of an inter-governmental forum to deal with policy issues – the CGRFA, and technical frameworks for different sectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture. He briefed the Commission on the negotiating process for the revision of the International Undertaking (IU) on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

18. During the discussion that ensued, the Commission:
- recognised the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of plant, animal, forestry and fisheries genetic resources relevant to food and agriculture, and also recognised the importance of the genetic diversity of micro-organisms of interest to agriculture;
 - expressed concern about the increasing rate of loss of these resources and the possible consequences for present and future generations. It recognised the geographical interdependence among countries and regions, and stressed the importance attributed by the European Region to international cooperation in this field, in order to assure sustainable agriculture and food security.

³ ECA:31/99(6) and ECA:31/99(7)

19. The Commission furthermore:
- strongly supported FAO's work on genetic resources for food and agriculture, and stressed the role of the inter-governmental CGRFA in the development and monitoring of relevant international agreements, and in priority-setting and policy formulation in this area;
 - emphasised the significance of the CGRFA's current negotiations for the revision of the IU;
 - agreed that the multilateral system for facilitated access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and the sharing of benefits derived from their use, being negotiated in this framework, should cover as many species as possible;
 - noted with satisfaction the report by the Secretary of the CGRFA that substantive progress had been made in 1999 by reaching consensus on some of the most contentious issues under negotiation, especially the agreement on non-bracketed text for the article on Farmers' Rights, although agreement was still needed on a number of key elements, such as the coverage of the multilateral system and the nature of financial resources;
 - expressed the wish that the revised IU be a legally binding instrument. It recommended that FAO continues giving these negotiations top priority and called upon the negotiating parties to demonstrate the flexibility, imagination and far-sightedness necessary to conclude their task in time to submit the revised IU to the 119th Session of the FAO Council in November 2000.

20. The thematic paper "Animal Genetic Resources in Europe" (ECA:31/99(7)) was introduced by Mr Samuel Jutzi, Director, Animal Production and Health Division, Agriculture Department, who referred to the most important points contained in the document. In particular, he referred to the further development of the Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources as well as the preparation of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*.

21. The Commission supported the development of the Global Strategy as a priority activity and, within this framework, the preparation of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*. In this connection, the Commission:

- requested early initiation of the guidelines, based on a country-driven approach, similar to those used for the preparation of the first *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*;
- recognised that a pre-requisite for this approach was the establishment of a strong regional cooperation;
- expressed appreciation for the initiative taken by the Government of France in the early stage of the process to establish a temporary Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources (RFP);
- noted that some countries were seeking further clarifications on the terms of reference for both National Focal Points and RFP (i.e. location and functions of RFP, capacities and financial requirements);
- welcomed the generous offer of the Government of France to accommodate and financially support the permanent RFP, with contributions from other donors;
- expressed the view that France could be a good candidate for locating the RFP, that should be established as soon as possible and the structure of which should be both lean and effective;
- recognised the importance of assistance to CEE countries to advance their activities in the management of Animal Genetic Resources.

22. Some delegates requested that Regular Programme resources be allocated for the further development and implementation of the Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources, including preparation of the first *Report on the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources*, recognised as a priority activity. It was noted that, whilst provision was made in the Programme of Work and Budget for 2000-01 for core support to prepare the first *Report on*

the State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources, additional support was required for the development and the implementation of the Global Strategy which would need to be provided through extra-budgetary funds.

23. The activities of the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) were introduced by its Regional Representative for Europe, Mr J. Turok. The Commission noted with satisfaction the excellent cooperation between IPGRI and FAO.

MULTIFUNCTIONAL CHARACTER OF AGRICULTURE AND LAND – INFORMATION ON THE FAO/NETHERLANDS CONFERENCE (SEPTEMBER 1999)

24. Mr Godfried Thissen of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries of The Netherlands and Ms Louise O. Fresco, Director of the Research, Extension and Training Division of the Sustainable Development Department, reported on the results of the "FAO/Netherlands Conference on the Multifunctional Character of Agriculture and Land (MFCAL)" (Maastricht, The Netherlands, 12-17 September 1999).

25. Participants in the Maastricht Conference recognised the continuing importance of agriculture and related land use for human economy, society and culture worldwide on the basis of technical documentation offering a summary of empirical evidence and a conceptual framework.

26. The Commission underlined the importance of understanding the multiple functions of agriculture and land as a way to assess the relationships between the various functions of rural landscapes, and stressed the need to develop better tools for analysis and decision-making. It supported further work on the development of the empirical description and analysis of MFCAL presented in Maastricht, in particular the need to further explain and specify the relevance of these concepts to developing countries. Further examination of these ideas based on continuous dialogue and broad-based participation will both contribute to the report to the Commission on Sustainable Development - 8 in 2000 and to reflections on how to achieve sustainability in rural development.

27. The participants regretted that the final version of the Chairperson's Report had not heeded their request at the Conference in Maastricht to continue, through FAO, to develop an analytical framework to study and evaluate the multiple functions of agriculture.

28. Therefore, the Commission encouraged FAO Members, given the tenor of global debates on agriculture – including the topics of trade and valuation of non-food services of agriculture – to carefully prepare their individual and joint positions for future discussions in other fora, including the forthcoming 117th FAO Council. The Commission encouraged continuing the technical contribution of FAO to empirical description and analysis of MFCAL trends in agriculture to enhance global understanding of this vital topic.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE ECA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

29. The Commission unanimously elected Mr Harald Hildebrand (Germany) and Ms Maria Kadlecikova (Slovakia) respectively as Chairperson and Vice-chairperson of the Commission for the four-year period 2000-2003. On the basis of the nominations received, the Commission unanimously elected Ms Hedwig Wögerbauer (Austria), Mr Cosimo Lacirignola (Italy) and Mr Ahmet Saylam (Turkey) to the ECA Executive Committee for a two-year period. The Commission reelected Mr Franc But (Slovenia) and Mr Ruve Sank (Estonia) for another two-year term.

OTHER BUSINESS

30. The Commission was informed of the holding of the Third International Crop Science Congress 2000, planned for August 2000 in Hamburg, Germany, which will focus on sustainable and multifunctional land use and on future food security as well as the International Conference Rural 21 to be hosted by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry planned for 5-8 June 2000 in Postdam, Germany.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE THIRTY-SECOND SESSION

31. The Chairperson informed that the Secretariat had not received any proposal from Members to host the next session. Several delegates reiterated the recommendation that the next ECA Session be held back-to-back with the ERC.

32. The Executive Committee was invited to examine the possibility of organizing ECA sessions back-to-back with the ERC. The ECA Chairperson was requested to report the results of the enquiry to the forthcoming ERC.

33. Should a decision be taken to organize the next ECA Session in conjunction with the ERC in 2002, the Cyprus Delegation offered to host it jointly with the ERC which it had already invited.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

34. The Report was adopted by consensus.

CLOSING OF THE SESSION

35. In closing the Session, the Chairperson of the ECA thanked all the participants for their contributions and expressed appreciation, on behalf of the participating delegations, to all FAO staff who had contributed to the Session's success. He welcomed the new ECA Chairperson and wished him, as well as the Members of the Executive Committee, success in their work and leading the ECA. The Chairperson expressed appreciation for and satisfaction with the support received from the Regional Office for Europe.

36. The Regional Representative for Europe joined the Chairperson in thanking the delegations for their collaboration and expressed his hope that the Commission debates had served well to initiate a process of reinvigoration of the ECA and to implement the agreed necessary adjustments as regards ESCORENA. He thanked Mr K. Kocsis for his skilful and dedicated leadership of the ECA during his term of office and the outgoing Members of the Executive Committee for the valuable inputs to ECA activities. He congratulated the new Executive Committee Members and wished them success in their work to enhance the role and activities of the ECA.

APPENDIX I
ANNEXE I
APENDICE I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS
LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES

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Ms Isabel ALVAREZ-FERNANDEZ
Senior Officer - Regional Office for Europe

Ms Alenka VERBOLE
Women in Development Officer – Regional Office for Europe

APPENDIX II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the Session
2. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable
3. Appointment of Rapporteur
4. Report by the Executive Committee Chairperson on Activities Related to the Programme of Work of the ECA
5. Present and Future Role of the ECA
6. Report on Activities of the ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development
7. Review of the Activities of the European System of Cooperative Research Networks in Agriculture (ESCORENA): Reports by the European Research Networks Advisory Committee and by the Secretariat
8. Status of the Executive Committee of the ECA in light of Resolution 13/97 of the Twenty-ninth FAO Conference
9. Conservation and Sustainable Utilisation of Agricultural Genetic Resources: Institutional, Policy and Technical Issues
10. Multifunctional Character of Agriculture and Land – Information on the FAO/Netherlands Conference (September 1999)
11. Election of Members of the ECA Executive Committee
12. Other Business
13. Date and Place of the Thirty-second Session
14. Adoption of the Report
15. Closing of the Session



