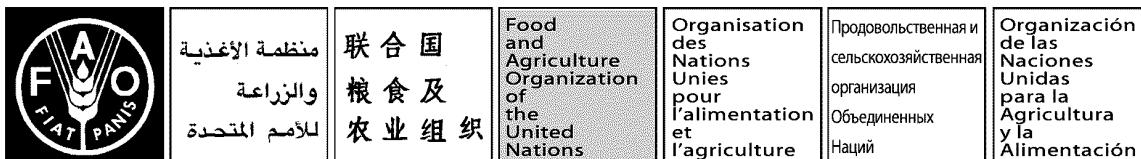


August 2009

E



## COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

### JOINT MEETING OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON HARD FIBRES AND THE THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON JUTE, KENAF AND ALLIED FIBRES

**Pasay City, Philippines, 20 October – 22 October 2009**

**INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF NATURAL FIBRES 2009**

## I. BACKGROUND AND EXPECTATIONS

1. The idea of a United Nations International Year dedicated to natural fibres arose from this very Group. At the December 2004 Joint Meeting in Rome, a proposal was drawn-up which sought to focus world attention on the role that natural fibres play in contributing to food security and poverty alleviation. The proposal was subsequently endorsed in the following year by the FAO governing bodies. After a request from the Director-General of FAO to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and interventions by a number of Member States, the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Assembly of the UN in 2006 declared that 2009 be the International Year of Natural Fibres (IYNF). FAO was invited to facilitate its observance, in collaboration with governments, regional and international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and relevant organizations of the United Nations system.

2. Several administrative arrangements were proposed at the last Joint Meeting to facilitate implementation of the IYNF.

- The IYNF would be under the general direction of an International Steering Committee (ISC) with representatives of main partners – fibre organizations, other international organizations, producing countries, consumer organizations, donors, etc. The ISC had proposed four objectives:
  - a) To raise awareness and stimulate demand for natural fibres;
  - b) To promote the efficiency and sustainability of natural fibre industries;
  - c) To encourage appropriate policy responses to the problems faced by natural fibre industries; and
  - d) To foster an effective and enduring international partnership among the various natural fibres industries.

This document is printed in limited numbers to minimize the environmental impact of FAO's processes and contribute to climate neutrality. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and to avoid asking for additional copies. Most FAO meeting documents are available on the Internet at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

W0000

- An administrative secretariat would be established in FAO, with staff supported by a project-funded project coordinator and consultants as required to coordinate and publicize.
- Partner organizations would work under the general umbrella provided by the ISC. Within the framework of the IYNF objectives, they would define their own objectives, and plan and fund their own events, drawing on coordination of FAO as the lead unit and under general guidance of the ISC.

3. As the lead agency, with responsibility for all planning and coordinating, it was foreseen that FAO would require around US\$2 000 000 to effectively implement the IYNF. Namely, to coordinate the necessary international action to achieve IYNF objectives; to build an international alliance of international and national organizations; to prepare communications material, provide international communication/media coverage; and to plan/host events.

## **II. EXPERIENCE IN IMPLEMENTATION AND OBSERVANCE OF THE IYNF**

4. The large sums of money that were accorded to FAO for coordinating previous “International Years” have not been forthcoming for the IYNF. As of 31 July 2009, FAO had divested approximately US\$110 000 from its own budget on IYNF implementation (not notwithstanding staff time and resources), while external donations amounted to around US\$57 000 (US\$44 000 from the CFC; US\$8 000 from the Government of New Zealand; and US\$5 000 from the International Jute Study Group). With such small outlays, FAO’s achievements have nonetheless been considerable. These include<sup>1</sup>:

- A Symposium on Natural Fibres, held at FAO HQ on 20 October 2008.
- A set of published proceedings from the Symposium.
- Design of the IYNF logo.
- The Official Launch of the IYNF at FAO HQ on 22 January 2009.
- A 7-minute + IYNF video produced in 7 languages.
- A website, with a presence in 8 languages, containing:
  - Profiles of 15 of the world’s major plant and animal fibres;
  - Fibre factsheets on health, responsible choices, sustainability, technology and fashion;
  - Micrographs of 18 plant and animal natural fibres; and
  - A selection of fibre “stories”.
- A poster and a brochure, in various languages.
- Downloadable T-shirt and bag designs for printing.
- A display of natural fibres and a fashion show were arranged to coincide with the 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP), 20 to 22 April 2009.

5. FAO recognizes that many decentralized initiatives have been undertaken around the world, and that many of these potentially have greater impact, superior sustainability and implemented with more efficiency than any centralized effort might have hoped for. As an indicator of this activity, the calendar of events on the IYNF website has almost 80 entries.

6. As a further indicator of IYNF interest, formal requests for permission to use the IYNF logo amounted to several hundred by the end of July 2009. This figure is expected to increase by the end of the year.

7. Despite FAO attempts to lobby potential donors, without further funding, there appears little prospect of any new activities and initiatives beyond what FAO has already implemented. It is therefore unlikely that the widely anticipated closing event for the IYNF will take place. In

---

<sup>1</sup> Further details are contained in the document CCP: HF-JU 09/2.

hindsight, a more concerted and a more aggressive fund raising drive conducted prior to the Year could have resulted in larger resource in-flows. For instance, the International Year of Potato had secured almost US\$1 million dollars before its launch. With a larger centralized campaign, the Secretariat is of the opinion that the IYNF objectives could have been realized, especially at the global level, with much more impact.

### **III. HARD FIBRES AND JUTE IN THE IYNF**

8. It is understood that a formidable challenge facing the hard fibre and jute sectors has been to create their own place within the IYNF, to ensure that the visibility of these industries is maintained alongside the much bigger cotton and wool industries. However, the central themes of the IYNF, namely the environmental benefits of natural fibres twinned with poverty alleviation, food security and rural development, lend themselves arguably more towards jute and hard fibres than for other natural fibres. In this context, delegates at the Joint Meeting are invited to share their experiences in implementing and observing the IYNF for hard fibres and jute.

### **IV. BEYOND 2009**

9. At the meeting of the ISC in Frankfurt on 19 June 2009, it was decided to apply the name “International Natural Fibres Committee” (INFC) to the steering committee. It was also agreed that the INFC should remain active in the coming years and to meet at least once per annum in conjunction with other fibre events. One suggestion was that FAO should reinstate the Intersessional Consultations on Natural Fibres, and hold an INFC meeting in conjunction with these. The Committee would use the standard version of the existing IYNF logo. Delegates are invited to comment on these proposed arrangements.