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NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Communication received from the INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE ALLIANCE relating to item 6 of the agenda of the ~~seventh~~ session of the Economic and Social Council:

"Report of the Food and Agriculture Organisation on progress in the co-ordination of studies of suitable measures to bring about an increase in food production".

MEMORANDUM ON THE PART PLAYED BY CO-OPERATIVE ORGANISATIONS
IN THIS FIELD

Most types of co-operatives, with the largest membership, have always devoted the closest attention to the problems to whose solution FAO is to devote all its efforts.

The primary function of consumers co-operatives is to distribute food; agricultural co-operatives of various types, dealing with supplies, the joint utilisation of machinery and tools, the preparation processing and offering for sale of products etc., are mainly concerned with the production and supply of foodstuffs; while rural credit co-operatives have as their chief aim to improve and increase such production and supply.

For the carrying out of what has been their common purpose for several decades, consumers' and agricultural co-operatives have tended to draw closer and closer together, creating between themselves working relationships through which the common interests of the working-class rural and urban populations have been safe-guarded by the rationalisation of production and co-operative supervision of quality and prices.

To this end, immediately after the World Economic Conference of 1927, an International Committee on Inter-co-operative Relations was set up. The establishment of this Committee soon led to the creation of similar committees on a national scale in a considerable number of countries. Unfortunately, first the economic depression and then the war checked the movement in this direction which, thanks to the international co-operative agency, was tending to develop on a world-wide scale.

Taking note of all these productive and promising measures, the United Nations Conference at Hot Springs in 1943 stresses in its resolutions the important part the co-operative movement was called upon to play both in the reconstruction effort and in the setting up of the new

economy. "Co-operative Societies can be of great help in stimulating adjustments in production and distribution and in improving productivity and efficiency."

It was this same concept of the importance of co-operation in the creation of a world economy of order, security and peace that decided the United Nations to include the International Co-operative Alliance in the number of non-governmental organisations in category A.

Co-operation was also dealt with in the first FAO document, the Report of Commission A to the Conference (cf. pp. 19 and 20). Although too briefly, since consumer co-operation was completely left in the background, whereas in a large number of cases the consumers' co-operatives, acting of their own accord as "fair price shops", have been the most effective agents against the black market.

Since that time, however, the co-operative movement does not appear to have been taken into consideration by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, or, by the Economic and Social Council either.

This is the reason for the action taken by the International Co-operative Alliance at the present session of the Council. Its object is to obtain from the latter a statement recalling and bringing to the attention of the FAO in particular the important part which co-operatives can and should play in national and international efforts to restore and steadily improve the world food situation.