
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON PROPOSED ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR LATIN AMERICA

Statement by Mr. Roberto Arellano-Bonilla,
Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization

I. FAO is intensely interested in the possibility of establishing an Economic Commission for Latin America.

1. Our own fields are those of Agriculture, Fisheries, Nutrition, Forestry, Statistics, and Welfare - all falling within the broad field of Economics.

2. Our purposes are, as expressed in the Constitution of FAO, "to promote the common welfare by furthering separate and collective action ... for the purposes of

"raising levels of nutrition and standards of living of the peoples under their respective jurisdictions,

"securing improvements in the efficiency of the production and distribution of all food and agricultural products,

"bettering the condition of rural populations, and thus contributing toward an expanding world economy."

3. We have noted with great interest the repeated references to agriculture and agricultural economics in Working Paper No.2 of this Committee, prepared by the Delegates of four Latin American countries, since in these references we see the ground of common interest between our Organization and its member countries in Latin America. Furthermore, we can not conceive that progress can be made in the fields of food and agriculture unless it is paralleled by similar progress in the broad field of economics.

4. Any action taken to better the economic situation in Latin America is welcomed by FAO.

(a) FAO has already initiated arrangements for effective consultation on matters of common interest with the Pan American Union, and is about to conclude similar arrangements with the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences, whose headquarters are at Turrialba, Costa Rica.

(b) The co-operation established between FAO and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe has been particularly close and effective for both agencies, resulting in a valuable Conference on Timber and Forest Products Requirements of Europe held at Mariánské Lázně, Czechoslovakia, and similar studies on fertilizer. Co-operation in the broad field of agricultural production is also underway.

II. FAO's work in Latin America is being intensified. Early this year FAO's Director General, Sir John Boyd Orr, visited 12 of the Latin American countries. His reception in all of these countries was so sincerely enthusiastic that he was sorry that because of lack of time he could not visit them all.

1. One field of intense activity has been the preparation of the Agricultural Census of 1950, which will coincide with a Population Census to be undertaken by many of the Latin American countries that same year.

2. Three Conferences are planned for Latin America during 1948.

(a) Plans for a Forestry Conference, to be held between February and May, have reached a detailed and specific stage.

(b) Conferences are also planned on Nutrition and on the Preservation of Stored Grain against Insect Infestation and Fungous Damage.

(c) With regard to Conferences, it is important to note that it is the strong desire of FAO's Director General that the results of all FAO Conferences be of a highly practical nature, i.e. that the resolutions adopted be specific, corresponding to actual problems, and be so designed that they may be immediately implemented by the interested Governments, with such help as FAO may appropriately furnish, if necessary. From the tenor of previous discussions in this Committee by the proponents of an Economic Commission for Latin America, it would appear that this desire of our Director General will find a sympathetic response among the Latin American countries.

3. At FAO's recent Third Conference in Geneva it was resolved that Regional Offices of FAO would be established in Latin America.

(a) To this end, and to explore more intimately the interest and desires of the Latin American governments with regard to FAO, three FAO Liaison Officers are presently traveling among all of the countries of Latin America. They will bring back a much more detailed account than has hitherto been available of the specific food and agricultural problems which these countries wish to attack with FAO's help, and of the resources which the countries themselves can spare to help FAO in its work.

III. A word as to FAO's modus operandi:

1. FAO has no funds of its own which it may spend on agricultural development projects. Such projects are financed by the interested member governments themselves, although FAO may lend its limited technical resources to member governments for preliminary studies which may facilitate financing. FAO can also act to obtain technical information and technical services at the request of member governments.

2. FAO has strictly limited funds with which it may assume a part of the cost of advisory missions requested by Governments. Two FAO Missions have completed comprehensive agricultural surveys and made specific recommendations in European countries, and several requests for such missions have been tentatively made by Latin American countries. One such Mission will leave in January under FAO auspices for Venezuela, at that country's request and at its entire expense.

/3. FAO further

3. FAO further collects from its member governments and correlates information in its appropriate fields, to provide a basis for advising these governments on food and agricultural matters, at their request. This information is gathered from its 54 member countries all over the world, and enables FAO to survey, in the broadest possible manner, the world supply and demand, potential and effective, for food, fodder, fiber, fertilizers, and ancillary agricultural products and materials.

IV. In closing, I wish to thank the ad hoc Committee on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization for the invitation to be present at these meetings and to wish you success in your efforts to find an Organization capable of making an effective attack on the problems of Latin American economics. FAO will be glad to co-operate with such an organization. Finally, I might add that the location of the permanent site of such an organization would be borne in mind by FAO in its choice of sites for its Regional Offices in Latin America.
