

UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.  
LIMITED

E/CONF.65/PREP/L.9/Add.6  
2 October 1974

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR  
THE WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE  
Third session  
Rome, 23 September - 4 October 1974  
Agenda item 6

Draft report of the Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. L.M. MUMEKA (Zambia)

THE WORLD FOOD PROBLEM: PROPOSALS FOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACTION

1. The Committee reviewed the proposals for national and international action presented in the Secretariat document (E/CONF.65/PREP/13, E/CONF.65/4). The Secretariat of the World Food Conference introduced each of these four sections of the document with a brief explanation of the analysis and suggestions therein.
2. There was general agreement in the Committee that increased efforts were required to expand world food production, particularly in developing countries. To achieve that end, it was agreed that increased resources from both national and international sources would be required. It was also agreed that national governments of developing countries should give priority to agriculture in the context of their overall national plans, and donor countries should give priority to agriculture in their foreign assistance programme.
3. There was general support among delegations for the Secretariat's strategy for increasing food production in developing countries which included the following elements:
  - a) making available large quantities of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, water resources, high-quality seeds and improved management
  - b) the expansion of resources for research and delivery of information so as to elaborate an appropriate technology in given conditions
  - c) comprehensive rural development so designed as to involve people, particularly the small farmer and landless worker
  - d) a major increase in the funds available for investment in agricultural development.

4. Stress was also laid on the need to raise nutritional levels, especially in the vulnerable groups, and to strengthen food security.
5. Many delegates, however, pointed out that they had not received the document under consideration until just prior to the present session of the Preparatory Committee and, this factor together with the limited time available for discussion, had meant that no specific action was taken by the Committee to approve or disapprove the detailed proposals presented in the document. Some delegates emphasized that they had not received the official translation of the document in time to give it proper attention and inform the Committee of their reactions to the proposals contained therein.

#### SECTION I: MEASURES FOR INCREASING FOOD PRODUCTION IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

6. The Committee agreed in the main with the detailed analysis of the problems facing the developing countries in accelerating the growth of their production. It was the view of the Committee that the most important issue remained that of increasing production in the developing countries and it supported the main lines of the proposals set out in chapters 1 to 8 in the document. It noted that the Secretariat's proposals included 44 specific suggestions for consideration by the World Food Conference and felt that an indication of the scale of priority to be attached to these items would help the World Food Conference to concentrate on the more important proposals. Several delegates noted that a number of the proposals related to the strengthening or expansion of the relevant activities of FAO and other agencies, and suggested that the agencies should consider these proposals in formulating their programme of work and budget in the light of the Conference's recommendations.
7. Most delegates agreed with the analysis of the objectives of production policies, national responsibilities and international cooperation and assistance as presented in Chapter I, emphasizing in particular the responsibility of the developing countries to formulate their food production objectives and goals in the context of their economic and social development planning and their population policies. Several delegates emphasized the priority of institutional change and of the reform of the social structure in developing countries as a prerequisite for achieving further sustained increases in food production, eliminating hunger and malnutrition and bringing about integrated rural development covering all sections of the population. Attention was also drawn to the problem posed by the rapid increase in population and to the need for the Conference to give due consideration to the Plan of Action adopted by the World Population Conference.
8. The Committee agreed with the document's statement of objectives of food production within the framework of economic and social goals for the short, medium and long term and with the need for international cooperation and assistance as formulated in paragraph 109, and felt that these objectives could be incorporated in any general declaration which the Conference might wish to adopt, leaving the specific action proposals to be dealt with in recommendations or resolutions. A few delegates questioned the usefulness of setting regional goals for food production.
9. The Committee attached special importance to the proposals in Chapter 2 regarding the short and medium term measures for increasing the supply of fertilizers, pesticides, seeds and credit, and laid particular emphasis on the contribution which these inputs would make to increasing food production in the critical short run. The Committee

noted with appreciation the initiative taken by the FAO Council for setting up an International Fertilizer Supply Scheme (IFS) and the progress of its operations as reported by FAO. The IFS had so far obtained promises or pledges of a limited quantity of fertilizers; unless further supplies could be mobilized, the physical availability of fertilizers would fall far short of the urgent needs of the developing countries, particularly those most seriously affected by the recent economic crisis. The financial resources which could be mobilized for the purchase of fertilizers by the developing countries amounted to at best one half of the physical supply promised to IFS. The Committee expressed concern at the precarious fertilizer situation and at the adverse effect of the shortage and high prices thereof on the short-term prospect for bridging the food gap of the developing countries. It requested FAO to provide an up-to-date report on the IFS to the World Food Conference and urged the Conference to give priority to the consideration of ways and means of giving support to IFS to enable it to tackle the immediate problem.

10. As regards the medium and long term, the Committee noted that there was need for additional investment of about \$6.5 billion on new capacity as estimated in the document. Delegates of some developing countries urged that a higher priority be allotted to the investment in fertilizer plants in those developing countries which did not have oil or gas resources but had the markets to justify efficient-sized plants. Several delegates stressed the need for an increase in production efficiency of existing fertilizer plants, particularly in the developing countries, since most of these plants were working at around 60 percent capacity. There was wide support for proposals in the document for short and long-term action. In particular, the Committee agreed that, in the long run, more fertilizer plants would have to be built in order to meet the increasing demand for fertilizer and that there was need to develop a world fertilizer policy. It took note in this connexion of the Sri Lanka and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific proposals for the creation of a Fertilizer Fund.

11. Emphasis was laid on the transfer of technology, particularly at the intermediate level, for the efficient use of fertilizers. Mass training of farmers through more efficient extension services was considered of vital importance. Emphasis was also placed on the need for developing countries to increase the use of organic manures while the present shortage of inorganic fertilizers lasted.

12. Noting the important role of pesticides for plant protection and production conservation, a number of delegates strongly urged the acceptance of the short-term action proposal (para. 165-A) to establish regional reserve stocks and to make the stocks available on the basis of need-based priority and, where necessary, on concessional terms. The Committee, however, expressed concern at the limited availability of pesticides and at the problems of storage and the safety of stocks. The Committee felt that the short run problem of the supply of these inputs was caused by the economic difficulties of generating investments for plant expansion, and recommended that urgent attention should be given to that matter. The Committee also re-emphasized the need to avoid environmental and health hazards and stressed the need for research on the extension of non-chemical measures, including biological control and crop-breeding to improve resistance.

14. The Committee recognized the crucial importance of adequate stocks of seeds of the right improved variety for timely distribution, noting in this connexion the very considerable impact of the HYVs in bridging the gap in several developing countries in the recent past. Only a few countries had established proper seed multiplication,

storage and distribution systems, and there was urgent need for more assistance to countries to establish efficient seed industries. There was general support for the proposals outlined in paragraph 180, subject to the following considerations:

- a) the Seed Industry Development Programme of FAO should be more broadly based and further strengthened
- b) in order to avoid misuse of seeds as grains, the seed reserve stocks should be kept distinct from food reserve stocks
- c) greater attention should be given to develop storage techniques under difficult and diverse conditions on the lines of the efforts of the FAO Working Group set up to identify such techniques.

14. The absence of specific mention of agricultural machinery as an essential input for increasing food production in developing countries was raised by several delegations, especially those from African countries. It was emphasized that mechanization, even in a plentiful labour situation, was essential to ensure timely primary cultivation and harvesting activities on an expanded acreage or where multiple cropping were practised, or to handle the produce from high yielding varieties. Reference was made to the recommendations formulated on the mechanization question during the Eighth FAO Regional Conference for Africa (August 1974) at which the importance of this matter had been stressed and requests submitted for concrete action with the object of developing a form of mechanization to suit African conditions. Delegations from other developing regions also recognized the need for similar adaptive research and training and, wherever possible, for the local production of improved hand-tools, animal draught, tractors and implements. In this connexion, the Committee also took note of Resolution ..... on mechanization of the Sixteenth FAO Conference.

15. Several delegations also drew the attention of the Committee to the need in the developing world for appropriate or "intermediate" technologies adapted to prevailing conditions. Such technologies would include the improvement of tools and implements and a degree of mechanization in agricultural production as well as an appropriate complex of processing of agricultural products into consumer items for internal as well as export markets.

16. The important role of credit was stressed by most delegations, and particular attention was given to the problems associated with providing credit for the most needy groups, especially the small farmers. Several delegates referred to the experience existing in the developed world under cooperative credit schemes for the channelling of credit and the provision of savings facilities for the small farmers. They suggested that such experience should be used in the form of technical assistance to provide training and extension services and wherever possible "seed" capital for agricultural credit schemes. The Committee supported the view that developing countries should give much greater attention to the building up of their credit institutions than better to absorb sizeable increases in external assistance.

17. Apart from the various inputs into agricultural production, the further link between producer and consumer, i.e. that of marketing, was also emphasized by the Committee. It felt that marketing was an essential part of the agricultural infrastructure and that measures for the improvement of marketing should be given due

consideration with a view to ensuring a reasonable return to the farmers and reducing the costs of delivery of agricultural products to the consumers. In this respect some delegates referred to the important role which farmers' cooperatives could play. The contribution of effective marketing to the reduction of post-harvest losses was also stressed.

18. The Committee's attention was drawn to the proposed programmes for the development (including the extension of cultivation to new areas) of land and water resources which would entail (a) the improvement of 46 million hectares of existing irrigated area, (b) the expansion by 1985 of 23 million hectares under irrigated agriculture, and (c) land development in 153 million hectares in rainfed areas. The costs of the programme amounted to \$59 billion for irrigation schemes and to \$30 billion for rainfed areas, i.e. a total of \$89 billion, with a foreign exchange component of about \$30 billion. Representatives of many developing countries strongly emphasized the importance of these programmes which in some countries should also include flood control. Several representatives also stressed the need for complementary investments on transport and communications, without the parallel development of which the benefits from land and water development could not be fully reaped. Noting that the proposals envisaged a stepping-up of the annual rate of investment from all sources to about \$8 billion per annum, with a corresponding increase in external financing from about \$700 million to a range of about \$2.5 billion by 1980, several delegates doubted whether resource transfers on this scale could be realistically envisaged or fully absorbed. It was explained that the three components of the programme were not necessarily concentrated in the same countries, and hence the magnitude of the total programme costs should not be a decisive factor as regards the absorptive capacity of individual countries. The Committee further emphasized the need for large scale training programmes, particularly at the medium level, as well as the need to adopt intermediate technology in the fields of land and water, as well as other training programmes in many other agricultural sectors. The Committee emphasized international river basin planning and development, the development of minor irrigation schemes, and similar aspects.

19. Further, the Committee underlined the need for carrying out a World Survey of Water Resources and Irrigation Potential, as proposed in paragraph 200 of the document, in order to improve and update the hydrological data, both on global and national levels. It noted that such a survey would be closely correlated with the assessment of soil resources by the proposed International Land Resources Centre, and emphasized the importance of gearing the survey to concrete proposals. Referring to the proposed International Irrigation Development and Water Use Institute (paragraph 201), several delegates felt that FAO could carry out many of the Institute's functions within its present mandate.

20. The Committee recognized the important contribution that national and international research programmes could make to the increase of food production in developing countries and agreed that this was one of the priority areas for national and international action. Noting the high pay-off of outlay on research, the Committee agreed with the need for increased outlays on the international research programme, as well as for the strengthening of national research. However, the Committee felt that, to achieve the estimated annual outlay of the order of \$1.2 billion on research, considerable trained manpower and other resources would be necessary. In this connexion, it emphasized the need for adequate education and training programmes. The Committee noted that the cost-benefit analysis of research was difficult but would be discussed at a Conference to be held in January, 1975. It was hoped that the discussions on that occasion would assist greatly in the planning, programming and budgeting of future major research

efforts, both at the national and at the international levels. The Committee noted that the machinery of the Consultative Group and its Technical Advisory Committee, as developed under the programme sponsored jointly by FAO, IBRD and UNDP, had proved flexible, effective and successful in other ways, and thus deserved consideration in other areas of the action programme.

21. Some delegates emphasized the need for including in the research programme activities looking into the long term, while others emphasized the inadequate research results available on crops such as pulses, root crops, non-staples and other crops. Several delegates emphasized the need for greatly enhanced efforts in basic and adaptive research on problems of tropical agriculture, and particularly food crops. The Committee attached special importance to the information and delivery system needed for transmitting the results of research through extension and other organizations. It felt that the information and extension services needed for this purpose had not been as fully emphasized and formulated in the relevant chapters of the document as their importance would warrant.

22. Several delegates stressed the contribution that prevention of post-harvest losses and waste, particularly in the handling and storage of the produce, could make towards meeting the food gap of developing countries. Many processing activities produced waste products which could be potential sources of environmental pollution if a waste management scheme was not adopted. The employment generating opportunities presented by the agro-industries were emphasized. In this connexion, the Committee underlined the need for developing appropriate technologies to suit the resource positions of the different countries. The considerable scope and need for investments in food processing activities such as sugar-refining were noted, as were the opportunities for the agro-industries companies to invest in joint ventures. The role of cooperatives in organizing these industries was also stressed.

23. Recognizing the importance of the livestock sector, the Committee emphasized that plans and programmes for the development thereof should encompass all aspects of breeding, nutrition and animal health. There was need for further strengthening the research programmes in these areas, both at international and at national levels, with a view to evolving methods and techniques suitable for tropical conditions.

24. The Committee recognized the importance of the action proposal for the control of African Animal Trypanosomiasis which was of interest to a large number of African countries and was expected to result in increasing the region's annual meat production by about 1.5 million tons. The Committee noted that progress in trypanosomiasis and tsetse fly control techniques now made possible the implementation of large-scale operations in regions where the livestock production potential was warranted. The Committee emphasized that trypanosomiasis and tsetse fly control should be considered as the first phase of an integrated plan of economic development, to be followed by programmes and projects covering pasture improvement, livestock management, animal health, livestock marketing, and processing and education.

25. Several delegates felt that the development of fisheries deserved special attention, especially in view of the fast-growing protein needs of the population. The marine resources of the world still provided a considerable potential for increased catches without impairing conservation. Further, research and development aimed at aquaculture, the breeding of fish in freshwater, brackish water and seawater deserved special support. The Committee also felt that greater attention should be given to the development of artisanal and small scale fisheries, the benefits of which would largely accrue to the poorer sections of the population.

26. The Committee fully supported the view that the goals and objectives of food production increases in developing countries could not be achieved only through technical solutions, but required the involvement of the people, particularly of small farmers and landless workers. To this end, the developing countries should give the utmost priority to policies and programmes designed to enable the poorer segments of the rural population to participate in the development of production and employment, to obtain adequate access to technology, inputs, credit and marketing facilities and to improve their income and nutritional status. The Committee agreed with the approach to rural development indicated in Chapter 6 of the document, in particular the emphasis placed on mobilizing rural people, securing their participation and encouraging self-reliance. It also agreed that no clear pattern of rural development could be suggested for universal adoption.

27. Some delegates pointed out, that, in many developing countries, women constituted with over one half of the total labour force in arable farming. However, the participation of women in agricultural production was usually given inadequate attention. It was proposed that the Conference should stress the role of women in rural development and discuss implications for education and extension.

28. The Committee stressed that agrarian reform in its widest sense should be a key element of rural development, the main objective of which should be to improve the condition of the small farmers, landless labourers and other sections of the rural poor. It also recognized that, while agricultural extension and education should be a necessary element of rural development programmes, these should not be confined to securing an increase in agricultural productivity but should encompass structural improvements, increases in employment and a better distribution of the product. The attainment of these objectives would require the strengthening of institutional and other support, especially to the weaker sections of the farming and rural community, and also, in many countries, institutional innovations. The Committee noted that many developing countries would need to strengthen their planning efforts and machinery and adopt an integrated approach to the analysis of the rural sector. The need for technical assistance in such planning, as well as in developing suitable services and facilities, was also underlined.

29. The Committee gave special attention to the proposals made in Chapter 8 on the requirements of financial resources necessary for the implementation of the different programmes for increasing food production in developing countries. Many delegates agreed that the present level of development assistance flow to agriculture (\$1.5 billion) was inadequate, and needed to be increased very substantially by 1980 to meet the proposed goals and objectives. Delegates from some of the developed countries stated that they were still examining these estimates, and would explain their position at the Conference. However, their preliminary reaction was that the proposed increase in the flow of development assistance to agriculture had to be integrated with the assistance flow to other sectors thus permitting a clear picture of total aid levels for each country. The sectoral allocation of bilateral aid depended not only on the donors but much more on the wishes and priorities of the recipient governments. A few delegates observed that, in order to step up the transfer of external resources to the levels indicated, there would have to be a substantial increase in the absorptive capacity of the developing countries and a considerable easing of such constraints as institutional capacity and trained manpower. The delegates of many developing countries supported the proposals in paragraph 455, and indicated that their prospects of achieving production goals in the medium term depended very largely on receiving external assistance on a much higher scale than at present. They also emphasized their intention of mobilizing domestic resources to the utmost, in spite of the critical situation caused by inflation, shortages of inputs and balance of payments difficulties.

30. The Committee noted that the estimates of the requirements of financial resources were linked to the proposals for follow-up action, in particular the setting up of an agricultural development fund, and felt that these two issues should be considered together by the World Food Conference.