

Chapter III

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

In 1995, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued to assist farmers, fishermen and foresters to improve their standards of living and produce more foods using techniques that did not degrade the environment. Established in 1945 to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity and better the condition of the rural poor, FAO's main objective remained the achievement of global food security, where everyone would have access at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life.

During the year, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan joined the organization, bringing its membership to 174 nations, in addition to the European Community as a member organization and Puerto Rico as an associate member.

The FAO Conference, the organization's governing body, held its twenty-eighth biennial session in Rome from 20 October to 2 November. Highlights of the Conference included adoption of a Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the first international code to address all facets involved in the sustainable development of an entire natural resource sector. The Code covered world fisheries and aquaculture issues, including fisheries resource conservation and development, fish catches, seafood and fish processing, commercialization, trade and research. It was non-binding except for the Agreement on measures to ensure compliance with resources management schemes in the high seas, which was approved by the FAO Conference in 1993.^a

The Conference also gave its approval to the Quebec Declaration, which reaffirmed the international community's dedication to the principles on which FAO was founded and pledged political support for its mission to help build a world where all people could live, confident of food security. The Declaration was initially adopted during fiftieth anniversary commemorations in Quebec City, Canada, in October.

In addition, the Conference unanimously decided to hold a World Food Summit in Rome in November 1996 (see also PART FOUR, Chapter XIII). Summit objectives would include raising global awareness of and commitment to redressing the food security problem and adopting a plan of action to achieve sustained progress towards universal food security. The Conference decided that the plan of action would outline concrete ac-

tivities aimed at constantly improving global food security, in particular at the household level, from both a quantitative and nutritional perspective, within the framework of sustainable development.

World food situation

In 1995, global agriculture production stagnated, reflecting below-average performance in most developed and developing country regions, and virtually unchanged aggregate production levels in the countries in transition. Total crop and livestock production rose at an estimated rate of only 0.2 per cent, compared to a 2.9 per cent increase in 1994.

One of the most significant features in 1995 was the 8 per cent drop in crop and livestock output in the United States, where cereal crops alone, affected by adverse weather, fell by over 20 per cent. In the European Union, overall agriculture output continued its declining trend of the previous few years. On the other hand, Australian production expanded by 12.8 per cent, more than offsetting a sharp shortfall in 1994.

In the countries in transition, 1995 saw the halt of the steady decrease in overall agriculture production since the beginning of their economic reforms, with total production remaining virtually unchanged from 1994. Developing countries, however, reported deteriorating overall agricultural performance in 1995 compared to 1994, with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa, which saw a 2.4 per cent increase. Agricultural growth also slowed in the regions of the Far East and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, both reporting rates of 1.8 per cent in 1995. In the Near East and North Africa, production growth slowed to 1.7 per cent, remaining well short of population growth for the third consecutive year.

FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS), which monitored crop and food outlook at global and national levels to detect emerging food shortages and disasters, issued warnings of developing drought in southern Africa in 1994-1995, as it had in 1991-1992, several months in advance of the harvest. Since its inception in 1975, the System had issued 338 special alerts to the international community on the deteriorating food supply prospects in various parts of the world. GIEWS also analysed emergency food aid requests from Governments, which resulted in the approval

^a YUN 1993, p. 1257.

of 40 emergency operations in 1994-1995, for a total value of \$1.4 billion.

Activities

Emergency assistance

At least 26 countries worldwide faced acute food shortages in 1995, requiring exceptional and/or emergency food assistance. More than half of those were in Africa, which remained the continent most seriously affected by food shortages. Global food shipments in 1995-1996 fell to the lowest levels in 20 years.

In spite of some good harvests in eastern Africa, large-scale emergency assistance was needed in the region throughout 1995. Projects focused on the provision of agricultural inputs, coordination of emergency assistance, and support for urgent rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in Rwanda, paving the way for reconstruction of its economy. Overall, the food supply situation was satisfactory in western and central Africa, reflecting above-average to record harvests in most countries.

Elsewhere, food supply situations remained grave in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Georgia, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal and Tajikistan. The situations in Armenia, Haiti and the Republic of Moldova were improving, though some assistance was still needed.

The FAO Office for Special Relief Operations (OSRO) concentrated operational activities on Bosnia and Herzegovina, where it supplied basic agricultural inputs; Iraq, where it provided plant protection, seeds, veterinary vaccines, goats and feed; and Rwanda, where it supported the urgent rehabilitation of the agricultural sector. Altogether, there were 27 newly approved OSRO projects in 1995, amounting to \$21 million. During the year, OSRO participated in inter-agency missions to Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, the Caribbean islands, Iraq, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Sudan; and issued additional appeals for Afghanistan, Haiti, Malawi/Mozambique/Zambia, the former Yugoslavia and Zaire. It appointed coordinators for agricultural intervention in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Liberia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

In order to continue meeting emergency food needs, the FAO Conference in October 1995 established pledging targets for 1997 and 1998 at \$1.3 billion. A pledging conference for that purpose was to be convened at UN Headquarters in 1996.

Field programmes

In 1995, 1,850 field projects, totalling \$264.1 million, were under way, providing technical advice and support in all areas of food and agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development. They were

funded through trust funds provided by donor countries and other international sources (\$165.1 million), the United Nations Development Programme (\$58.3 million) and the Technical Cooperation Programme from FAO's regular budget (\$40.8 million).

During the year, international financing institutions approved some \$2 billion in funding for 31 agricultural and rural development projects, prepared with the assistance of FAO's Investment Centre. Total investments in those projects, including contributions from recipient Governments, amounted to \$3.3 billion.

Crops

Seeking to ensure that agricultural production met expanding human needs, FAO undertook a range of activities, including conservation and use of plant biological diversity; crop management and diversification; seed production and improvement; crop protection; agricultural engineering and prevention of food losses; and food and agricultural industries.

Discussions were under way in 1995 to make legally binding the Prior Informed Consent Clause of the 1985 International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides. The clause, which was amended to the Code in 1989, maintained that pesticides restricted or banned for health or environmental reasons should not be exported without the consent of the importing country.

FAO continued its Integrated Pest Management programmes, conducted in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations, which emphasized biological control methods and training of farmers to diagnose and treat pest damage. Drawing attention to desert locust invasions in Africa and Asia, including Pakistan and India, in October the FAO Conference urged the establishment of a relief fund to cope with emergency situations arising from such invasions.

The organization continued to provide support for the global coordination of the Special Programme for Food Security, launched in 1994 to assist target countries to increase food production and productivity as rapidly as possible, primarily through the widespread adoption by farmers of available improved production technologies.

Livestock

In 1995, FAO responded to a major outbreak of a cattle disease in southern Tanzania, which threatened Zambia, Malawi and the rest of southern Africa, with a \$334,000 control campaign. The project was initiated by FAO's newly established Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Plant Pests and Animal Diseases.

FAO's ongoing livestock activities included improving feed resources and feeding systems, animal health, genetic resources and production sys-

tems, including both the meat and dairy sectors. Sustainable feeding systems were given high priority. In semi-arid and arid zones, FAO concentrated on improving fodder conservation, fodder trees and grazing systems. In humid and sub-humid regions, it focused on providing high-quality feed from nitrogen-fixing legumes adapted to local means of production.

Fisheries

In March, the FAO Committee on Fisheries agreed on the Rome Consensus on World Fisheries, which called for additional urgent action to eliminate overfishing and rebuild and enhance depleting fish stocks. The Committee urged member countries to minimize wasteful fisheries practices, develop further sustainable aquaculture, rehabilitate fish habitats and develop fisheries for new and alternate species based on scientific principles of sustainability and responsible management. Without such action, further declines would occur in the 70 per cent of the world's fish stocks which were regarded as fully exploited, overexploited, depleted or recovering.

The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture, released in 1995, warned that unless the international community coped with the twin problems of overfishing and overcapacity, world per capita fish consumption would fall over the next 15 years. The report emphasized that in order to keep per capita consumption at current levels, aquaculture would have to double its production.

In October, the FAO Conference adopted a Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. It also urged acceptance of the 1993 Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas, so as to bring it into force as soon as possible. As at 31 October 1995, only 7 countries had accepted the Agreement, which needed 18 acceptances to bring it into force.

Forestry

The twelfth session of the FAO Committee on Forestry met in March 1995 and agreed on the Rome Statement on Forestry, which asked for full and urgent implementation of decisions taken at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. The Summit had called for the protection, sustainable management and conservation of the world's forests. The first State of the World's Forests report was released by FAO during the session, which was attended by 121 countries. It was the first major study on the role of forests in sustainable development and the state of forest resources. It brought together information from the Forest Resources Assessment and other important FAO studies, including two regional reviews in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Food standards and nutrition

In 1995, the Codex Alimentarius Commission—the joint FAO/WHO body responsible for international food standards—adopted recommendations on the Maximum Residue Limits for growth-promoting hormones used in food production, despite a European Union ban on the use of these substances in its member countries. Veterinary drugs promoting animal growth were used in major meat-producing countries such as the United States and Australia. The Codex Commission approved the maximum residue levels after extensive review of scientific information indicated their safety to the consumer.

FAO continued to promote better nutrition by providing member countries with advice, information and technical assistance in three broad areas: formulation and implementation of national food policies and nutrition programmes; provision of technical and legislative advice on measures to ensure the quality and safety of food supplied; and assessment and monitoring of nutrition situations, including monitoring the effects of food and agricultural policies and development activities on nutrition.

Plant and animal genetic resources

In 1995, FAO established the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources, in order to obtain information on such resources and halt the loss and further erosion of valuable plant germplasm of food crops. The System, featuring a database with information on about 4.8 million germplasm accessions held in some 1,220 genebanks or botanical gardens, also aimed to assess plant genetic resources erosion in seed collections as well as in natural stands.

In October, the FAO Conference decided to broaden the mandate of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources to cover all components of biodiversity of relevance to food and agriculture and to rename it Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The broadened mandate of the Commission was to be carried out through a step-by-step approach, beginning with animal genetic resources.

According to the 1995 edition of the World Watch List for Domestic Animal Diversity, published jointly by FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme, many of the world's 4,000 to 5,000 farm animal breeds were disappearing at an alarming rate, possibly as high as three breeds every two weeks. A global database, maintained by FAO as part of a comprehensive five-year programme begun in 1992 to conserve and promote the sustainable use of animal genetic resources, listed 3,882 breeds of 38 species, of which 873, or 30 per cent, were at risk.

Information

FAO continued to function as an information centre, collecting, analysing, interpreting and disseminating information through various media, including print, radio, television, video, film and photo displays and exhibitions. Materials produced included information booklets, technical documents, reference papers and reports of meetings, training manuals and audiovisuals.

Major FAO periodicals published on a regular basis included the annual Food and Agricultural Legislation, the FAO Quarterly Bulletin of Statistics, a forestry quarterly called *Unasylva*, the World Animal Review and Plant Protection Bulletin, both quarterlies, and the annual Rural Development. FAO yearbooks were issued on rural development, trade, fertilizers, forest products, field projects, fishery statistics and animal health.

AGROSTAT PC, an electronic version of FAO's Statistical Yearbooks, designed to be used on a simple personal computer, provided updated figures on all agriculture-related topics in six files: population, land use, production, trade, food balance sheets and forest products. FAO compiled and coordinated an extensive range of international databases on agriculture, fisheries, forestry, food and statistics. The two most important were AGRIS (the International Information System for the Agricultural Sciences and Technology) and CARIS (the Current Agricultural Research Information System). Other important statistical information

produced by FAO included the Fisheries Statistical Database, Globefish Databank and Electronic Library, Forest Resources Information System, and the Geographic Information System. FAO operated the World Agricultural Information Centre (WAICENT) designed to meet the increasing supply and demand for and improve access to agricultural data, particularly to external users, via the Internet, floppy disks and CD-Roms. WAICENT can be reached on the World Wide Web at <http://www.fao.org> and on Gopher at gopher.fao.org.

Secretariat

As at 31 December 1995, the number of staff employed at FAO headquarters was 2,682, of whom 960 were in the Professional or higher categories and 1,656 in the General Service category. Field project personnel and those in regional and country offices numbered 1,991. There were also 232 Associate Professional Officers working at headquarters, regional offices and in the field.

Budget

The FAO Conference in 1995 approved a working budget for the 1996-1997 biennium of \$650 million. The largest appropriation in that budget was \$299 million for technical and economic programmes, followed by \$113 million for development

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