

Chapter III

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued to work towards achieving sustainable global food security by raising nutrition levels and living standards, improving agricultural productivity and advancing the condition of rural populations.

At its one hundred and twenty-seventh session (Rome, 22-27 November), the FAO Council adopted a set of voluntary guidelines aimed at providing practical guidance to States in implementing their obligations relating to the right to adequate food in the context of national food security and improving the chances of reaching the hunger reduction goals set by the 1996 World Food Summit [YUN 1996, p. 1129] and the United Nations Millennium Summit [YUN 2000, p. 49].

As part of the follow-up to the World Food Summits held in 1996 [YUN 1996, p. 1397] and 2002 [YUN 2002, p. 1225], FAO helped its members to prepare strategies in meeting the goal of halving the number of hungry by 2015 and in the preparation of medium-term food security and agricultural development programmes. With the collaboration of financial institutions, FAO also helped to formulate projects that would hasten a reversal of the declining resources to agriculture.

As lead agency for the International Year of Rice (2004), declared by the General Assembly in resolution 57/162 [YUN 2002, p. 1226], FAO worked with UN agencies, Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to increase global awareness and promote the importance of rice development and its positive consequences for poverty alleviation and global food security.

In 2004, FAO membership remained at 187 countries and the European Union.

World food situation

FAO estimated world cereal production at a record 2.042 million tonnes in 2004, 8.2 per cent higher than in 2003. Cereal output was forecast to exceed utilization in 2004/05, which could lead to an increase in stock for the first time in five years. World livestock production in 2004 was estimated at 258 million tonnes of meat, an increase of 2 per cent from the previous year. World fish output in 2003, the latest year for which data were available, stood at 132.5 million

tonnes, of which about 32 per cent was from aquaculture, a sub-sector under continuous expansion.

Activities

FAO continued to provide emergency assistance in the agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors to developing countries affected by exceptional natural or man-made calamities. In 2004, FAO received \$232 million to fund 250 emergency relief and rehabilitation projects in over 70 countries and regions. FAO missions toured countries hit by the Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December (see p. 952) to assess damage to the agriculture and fisheries sectors and provide detailed information on the assistance needed.

Through its field programmes, FAO provided technical assistance in food and agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development totalling \$368.3 million, of which \$129.5 million was expended for its emergency agricultural rehabilitation programme and \$238.8 million for development and technical support. FAO's Investment Centre assisted developing and transition countries to identify and assess investment opportunities, and formulated 163 investment projects worth \$5.6 billion, of which \$4.1 billion was provided through external loans from funding partners. The Special Programme for Food Security assisted developing countries, particularly low-income food-deficit countries, to improve national and household food security on an economically and environmentally sustainable basis. By the end of 2004, 101 countries were participating in the programme.

In 2004, FAO continued to participate in activities related to plant biological diversity, crop management and diversification, seed production and improvement, crop protection, agricultural engineering, the prevention of food losses, and food and agricultural industries. It also contributed to the development of animal production and health programmes through better resource utilization, improved processing and commercialization, and better control of animal diseases. The Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme continued to work to eliminate the fatal livestock virus by 2010. Asia was considered

free of the disease and the only remaining suspect area was in the Horn of Africa.

The FAO Forestry Department continued its work in forest resource management, policy and planning, and forest products. FAO hosted the secretariat of the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions and continued to work with NGOs, Governments and the private sector in promoting support for mountain livelihoods, especially for the 270 million mountain people who lived in developing and transition countries and suffered from hunger.

The FAO Fisheries Department promoted sustainable development of responsible fisheries and contributed to food security through activities in fishery resources, policy, industries and information. FAO's main priority was to enlist the international community in promoting more widespread adherence to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. In 2004, FAO established an advisory commission on fisheries management and development, known as the South-West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission.

During the year, FAO provided technical assistance in plant breeding and the safe movement of germoplasm, as well as associated legislation.

The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, approved by the FAO Conference in 2001 [YUN 2001, p.1406], entered into force in 2004. The Treaty aimed at the conservation of plant genetic resources, their sustainable use, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits resulting from commercialization.

In 2004, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, responsible for implementing the joint FAO/World Health Organization Food Standards Programme, adopted over 20 new and amended food standards. Among the new standards and other texts to protect consumers' health and facilitate fair practices in the food trade worldwide were those related to animal feeding, milk products and a newly adopted definition of traceability/product tracing.

Secretariat

As at 31 December 2004, FAO staff numbered 3,821, of whom 1,620 were in the Professional or higher categories, and 2,201 were in the General Service category.

Budget

The regular programme budget for the 2004-2005 biennium totalled \$749.1 million.

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FAO also maintained liaison offices in Brussels, Geneva, Washington, D.C., and Yokohama, Japan; regional offices in Accra, Ghana; Bangkok, Thailand; Cairo, Egypt; and Santiago, Chile; and subregional offices in Apia, Samoa; Bridgetown, Barbados; Budapest, Hungary; Harare, Zimbabwe; and Tunis, Tunisia.