

Agriculture leading priority in Canadian aid policy

Canada supports the efforts of food-deficit countries to feed their own populations and shares the view expounded at the North-South Summit in Cancun, Mexico that agriculture should be given top foreign aid priority, said Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan in an address to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome on November 11.

Canada has committed itself to reach a of gross national product by 1985 and will attempt to reach .7 per cent by the end of the decade. "This decision was not based on our internal economic fortunes, but on the realization that the poor in the developing countries cannot wait for improvement in their basic human needs for food, housing, education and health care," Mr. Whelan told the organization.

He added that Canada has made agricultural help to food-deficit countries its top foreign aid priority even though it is a net exporter of food and is continually seeking out new customers for its agricultural products.

Stress distribution and storage

The Canadian government believes, said Mr. Whelan, that it is in the national interest of all countries to take responsibility for holding their own stocks of grain. He said that the FAO should put more emphasis on distribution and storage systems to reduce waste and ensure that each country can store the grain it needs.

Mr. Whelan told the organization that Canada is currently discussing a national agri-food strategy and that part of this plan involved ways of helping developing countries increase their agricultural self-sufficiency.

Canada, as proposed by the World Food Council, has provided special funds to developing countries to finance food strategy planning that would help to co-ordinate efforts to increase food production through improved transportation and storage, as well as incentives to farmers, said Mr. Whelan.

He added that Canada remains committed to the multilateral efforts towards food and agricultural development carried out by the World Food Program, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program and the FAO. Canadian total develop-



Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan at FAO conference in Rome.

ment assistance this year is in excess of \$1.3 billion, said the Canadian minister.

The percentage of Canadian bilateral aid that is used for agricultural and rural development work has increased to 30 from 18 per cent five years ago. In addition, the Canadian government has announced that over the next five years this figure will rise to 45 per cent to a total of \$5 billion going into agricultural development.

Development projects

The minister pointed out that Canadian experts have become involved in a number of development activities around the world. Canadian prairie wheat growing expertise, he pointed out, has helped Tanzania to establish dryland grain farming. Canadian farmers and scientists are working in conjunction with Tanzanians to adapt wheat varieties to that country's conditions and are using modern cultivation techniques and equipment on large-scale farms. By 1984, said Mr. Whelan, it is estimated that 50,000 acres of new farmland will have been brought into production in that African country. Tanzania is expected to become self-sufficient in wheat within the next few years.

In addition, Mr. Whelan said the Canadian government supported the research activities of the International Development Research Centre and has allocated some \$25 million to help stop the spread of the desert onto arable land in the Sahel region of Africa. The Canadian government has also allocated 600,000 metric tons of cereal grain annually under the

food aid convention, has increased its commitment to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation in food and agriculture to \$36.3 million and has pledged \$95 million each year to the World Food Program for 1981 and 1982.

"Canada fully endorses the emphasis that the FAO has put on reforestation and energy conservation," said Mr. Whelan. Canada, which has the third largest wood resources in the world, has developed a high level of technology in dealing with forests, he said. Mr. Whelan added that Canada will share its technology with developing countries in areas such as remote sensing, forest inventory and fire control. The current budget of the Canadian International Development Agency for forestry aid to developing countries is about \$80 million a year.

New centre set up

The Canadian government also supports efforts by the FAO to assist developing countries to make their fish resources more productive, Mr. Whelan told the organization. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau recently announced that Canada would establish an International Centre for Ocean Development with a budget of \$9 million for the next five years. The centre will focus on the problems of the developing world to ensure that they benefit from the international negotiations on the Law of the Sea. The institute will also provide for research, training, technical co-operation and exchanges of information.

During his address, the Canadian agriculture minister also announced that Canada would take the initiative to establish a training program for agriculture extension workers that would help improve dissemination of technology among farmers. The Canadian government will consult with the Commonwealth Secretariat to find a suitable country for a pilot project and will make \$2.5 million available over the next five years to begin its operation. Mr. Whelan said that the program would put special emphasis on the role of women in food production.

Programs for women

Canada places high priority on programs that improve the role of women in their communities and will make this an important consideration in allocating its development assistance, the Canadian minister told the FAO.

"We encourage Canadian companies to include women from Third World countries in their training program, and