

The FAO Conference: Ninth Session

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During the Second World War, concern about the probability of a world-wide food shortage led to the formulation of measures to meet the problem in the hope that such a vital question could provide the basis for effective international co-operation and endeavour.

With this in view forty-two allied and associated nations met at Hot Springs, Virginia, in May 1943 to discuss the possibilities of increasing food supplies and improving the level of living for the people of the world. One outcome of this conference was that in 1945, at Quebec City, the Food and Agricultural Organization was established, the first of the United Nations Specialized Agencies to come into being. In 1951 the Headquarters of the Organization was permanently established at Rome.

The chief legislative and policy-making organ of the FAO is the Conference, which meets every two years in regular session and when required in special session.

As on previous occasions the Ninth Session of the FAO Conference, which met at Rome from November 2 to 22, 1957, proceeded to business by electing a chairman, and appointing several committees. The chairman was Dr. A. Mercier, the Argentine Minister of Agriculture. The Conference then reviewed the world food and agriculture situation, giving special attention to the problems of establishing national food reserves and of strengthening marketing and nutritional programmes throughout the world. Plans were made for census of agriculture in 1960. Various administrative and financial matters were considered and technical committees examined the work of the following Divisions of the Secretariat: Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Nutrition, Economics, and Information.

Director-General's Report

The Director-General of FAO, Mr. B. R. Sen of India, presented the annual report on the present and future outlook of the world production of food. He informed the Conference that since 1955 world food production had continued to expand at a rate of about three per cent annually, which is more than one per cent faster than the growth of world population. Moreover, in contrast to the immediate post-war period, food production had in the last few years continued to increase faster in the less developed regions than in those regions where supplies were already more ample, although this increased production was to some extent offset by the more rapid growth of population in the less developed regions.

The Director-General's report emphasized that despite the continuing surpluses of some commodities in certain exporting countries, there should be no slackening in the efforts in under-developed countries to increase food production. In the Far East and Latin America in particular, the setback during the war years to food production had still not been made good on a per capita basis, despite increases in recent years. This fact and the rapid growth of demand which accompanied the increasing tempo of economic development, have contributed to the inflationary pressures and the difficulties of foreign payments which some countries of those regions are experiencing.