

doc  
CA1  
EA9  
R121  
ENG  
1974  
March

# Reference Papers

Dept. of External Affairs  
Min. des Affaires extérieures

No. 121  
(Revised March 1974)

APR 10 1996  
AVR

RETURN TO DEPARTMENTAL LIBRARY  
RETOURNER À LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE DU MINISTÈRE

## THE UN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

(By Frank Shefrin, Chairman, Canadian Interdepartmental  
FAO Committee)

The Food and Agriculture Organization serves agriculture in the modern world by encouraging the growth, development and use of essential information, science and research, and by bringing together government officials and policy-makers for consultations leading to international action and arrangements to encourage improved agricultural production practices and to facilitate world business in agriculture. The work the FAO is called on to do includes assisting governments in:

- (a) the establishment of planning machinery;
- (b) the training of personnel;
- (c) the formulation, improvement and implementation of development plans;
- (d) the determination of guide-lines for agricultural policy that take account of resource potentialities and export possibilities;
- (e) the formulation of food standards and plant and animal protection measures.

Essentially, the entire operation is aimed at transferring knowledge and techniques to nearly 100 developing countries in order to enable them to plan rationally, to regulate their economic and social environment, and to build up trained cadres of their own. There are many difficulties to be overcome before these techniques of action can be perfected.

**History** Until 1945, when the Food and Agriculture Organization — one of the 14 Specialized Agencies of the United Nations — was established, no really concerted international effort had ever been launched against world-wide hunger.

An International Conference on Food and Agriculture, convened at Hot Springs, Virginia, in 1943, took the initial action toward the creation of the FAO by setting up an Interim Commission to draft a specific plan for a permanent organization concerned with food and

agriculture. Then, at Quebec City on October 16, 1945, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations was formally created; temporary headquarters were established at Washington, D.C. In 1951, the Organization moved into its present permanent headquarters in Rome.

In 1945, the FAO constitution was signed by 42 governments; in 1960, the FAO had 81 members and, in 1967, its membership rose to 116 member nations and three associate members. By the end of 1973, the membership totalled 131 member nations.

Staff employed by the FAO under both permanent and fixed-term appointments number close to 4,000. Of these, 1,500 were in the professional and higher categories and 2,500 in the general-service category. The FAO annual budget increased from \$5 million in 1946 to \$106.7 million in 1974-5. The FAO's total expenditures increased even more rapidly as it received funds from the UN Development Program, the Freedom-from-Hunger Campaign and the various joint activities with other UN agencies.

The FAO is organized into five major departments; Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Economics and Social Policy, and Development. In addition, there are six regional offices, one each for Africa, Asia and the Far East, Latin America, the Near East, Europe, and North America.

From the beginning, the FAO has served as the organizing and co-ordinating agency that brought together representatives of national governments and scientific bodies to review and exchange information, to study problems of common interest and to plan action programs within the whole range of food and agriculture, including nutrition, forestry and fisheries. The central body of activities conducted in response to this assignment of duties and responsibilities is known as the FAO's Regular Program. The program of activities, services and projects for each year is determined by the FAO Conference.

The Regular Program is financed by annual payments from member nations. The amount of these payments is established in accordance with the scale of contributions determined by the Conference. This scale of contributions, as for other organizations in the United Nations family, is derived from the United Nations scale of assessments. It is based on a formula that takes into consideration a number of factors such as gross national product, population, standard of living, etc., and so recognizes the wide differences in the ability of different nations to pay the costs of conducting the FAO's program. The assessment of each member nation is

---

expressed as a percentage of the whole budget. Field activities are financed by the United Nations Development Program and other trust funds.

**Scope** The task assigned to the FAO by its member nations, as described in the preamble to its constitution, includes raising levels of nutrition and securing improvements in the efficiency of production and distribution of all food and agricultural products, with particular reference to bettering the condition of rural populations. Since most of the population in developing countries is rural, the developing world looks primarily to the FAO as a most important instrument for the fulfilment of its development objectives.

**Functions** Article I of the FAO's constitution defines the functions of the Organization as follows:

- (1) It shall collect, analyze, interpret and disseminate information relating to nutrition, food and agriculture. In the constitution, the term "agriculture" includes fisheries, marine products, forestry and primary forestry products.
- (2) It shall promote and, where appropriate, recommend national and international action with respect to:
  - (a) scientific, technological, social and economic research on nutrition, food and agriculture;
  - (b) the improvement of education and administration relating to nutrition, food and agriculture, and the spread of public knowledge of nutritional and agricultural science and practice;
  - (c) the conservation of natural resources and the adoption of improved methods of agricultural production;
  - (d) the improvement of the processing, marketing and distribution of food and agricultural products;
  - (e) the adoption of policies for the provision of adequate agricultural credit, national and international;
  - (f) the adoption of international policies respecting agricultural commodity arrangements.
- (3) The FAO shall also:
  - (a) furnish technical assistance asked for by governments;

- (b) organize, in co-operation with the governments concerned, such missions as may be needed to assist them in fulfilling the obligations arising from their acceptance of the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture and of the FAO constitution.

Implementation  
of the Programs

The methods employed by the FAO must be those that are most effective in assisting governments in performing their own functions, and the Organization cannot assume the responsibilities of governments for carrying out those functions. Thus, the FAO's methods are designed to meet these conditions and include the following:

- (1) Provision of international forums;
- (2) preparation and publication of technical bulletins, books and policy papers;
- (3) holding of technical and economic meetings;
- (4) sending of survey missions to study the needs of countries;
- (5) sending of individual experts or groups of experts to countries.

Field Programs

When the FAO was set up at the end of the Second World War, many people thought that international exchange of knowledge alone was the answer to world food and agricultural problems — with a little technical information, provided from a world centre, any country could solve its own problems.

During the past two decades, there has been a significant reorientation in the FAO's role in assisting developing countries. From being solely an advisory body, the FAO has also become an operational organization assisting countries in preparing development plans, helping to execute major projects, providing some of the backing for these projects and aiding countries in obtaining finance for the largest projects of national development.

This change in approach became possible at the end of 1950 with the establishment of the United Nations Expanded Program of Technical Assistance. Since the development of agriculture is the main concern of most developing countries, it was inevitable that a major part should be carried out by the FAO.

The *United Nations Development Program* (UNDP) is the chief partner in the FAO's field activities. It has grown from the earlier Expanded Program of Technical Assistance (EPTA), under which the FAO spent \$1.4 million in 1951 to provide 53 experts to 38 countries with various development problems. In 1972, the FAO spent \$84 million in UNDP funds on a corps of technicians who helped countries with pre-investment planning leading to heavy development expenditures for the purpose of setting up and operating major research institutes and establishing and staffing centres of higher education to provide the planners and technicians needed for further progress.

The FAO has consistently been assigned almost one-third of all UNDP projects — the agency was assigned a 29 percent share of 58 country programs approved up to January 1973 or \$199 million out of a total programmed amount of \$686 million.

*Trust funds from individual governments* pay for a growing part of the FAO's field programs. These arrangements fall into two main classes. Some developing countries will pay over to the FAO the money needed to finance some part of their own national development programs.

Under the other, and larger, class, developed countries channel a proportion of their bilateral aid funds through the FAO. The number of such projects executed by the FAO and financed by bilateral agencies rose in 1972 to 59 national projects in 26 countries, 30 regional and 45 inter-regional projects at a total cost of \$23 million.

The *Associate Expert Scheme*, which is another form of bilateral aid channeled through the FAO, was started in 1954 with an agreement that well-qualified young people could assist FAO experts in the field. By the end of 1972 there were 319 associate experts working with the FAO. In 1972 a total sum of \$5,408,369 was spent by ten donor governments on the associate expert scheme.

*Volunteers in field programs.* The FAO was the first UN Specialized Agency to introduce volunteers into its field projects on an official and systematic basis. By June 1967, agreement had been reached with 12 sponsoring organizations. Between 1965 and 1972, over 700 volunteers carried out two-year assignments to FAO projects, working under the technical supervision of FAO field experts. Previous bilateral arrangements are now being replaced by assignments under the United Nations Volunteer Program, which, by April 1973, has supplied 62 volunteers to the FAO.

The *FAO Investment Centre* helps governments to identify, prepare and evaluate projects for financing by the various investment agencies with which the FAO is linked through co-operative programs.

The largest of these programs is with the World Bank Group – the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA). During 1972 the FAO/IBRD Co-operative Program helped to identify or prepare 27 projects in 22 countries; loans and credits approved by the Bank for these projects totalled \$351 million. Since the 1964 Program, 138 projects have been approved for loans totalling more than \$1,900 million.

Similar co-operative arrangements with regional banks have helped in increasing lending for agricultural development.

The *World Food Program* is a co-operative undertaking by the United Nations and the FAO that uses food supplies – contributed by more than 100 developed and 62 developing countries – as a backing for long-term social development and also for emergency relief. Food aid may be given as an incentive in self-help and settlement programs, as part wages in labour-intensive development projects or as support for school and other institutional feeding programs. The Program started operations in January 1963, and by 1972 more than 11 million people were benefiting from WFP aid. Most were workers, and the families of workers, building roads, digging irrigation channels, planting new forests and doing other public works. Others were infants, mothers and students benefiting from various health and education projects. Up to the end of 1972, 538 projects had been approved in 87 countries for a total commitment of \$1,135 million, and 154 emergency operations in 72 countries had cost \$114 million.

The *Freedom from Hunger/Action for Development Campaign* was launched in 1960 to create a world awareness of the severity of the food problem and to stimulate understanding of the fundamental causes of under-development. Substantial funds have been contributed by private individuals and citizen groups that have increasingly been spent on self-help projects aimed at showing the people of the developing countries how much they can do to improve their own circumstances. By the end of 1972, there were 132 projects in operation, for which \$2,250,000 have been contributed during this year by voluntary agencies.

The *FAO Industry Co-operative Program* helps countries to draw up projects that are likely to gain support from private industry and helps to bring investors into projects at the drafting stage. The Program was established in 1966, and is supported by fees paid by about 90 member companies.



To sum up, the primary aim of the FAO's field program is to help governments to prepare their national development programs to make the most effective use of limited resources and to help build up national forces to deal with all the problems of development.

Commodity policies The Quebec Conference of 1945 gave the FAO broad responsibilities in the economic policy field. Over the years, the FAO has provided the forum for governments to consider a world food board and an international commodity clearing-house. Member countries of the FAO organized a Committee on Commodity Problems and a host of commodity study groups covering grains, fats and oils, rice, tea, oilseeds, meat, jute and hard fibres, citruses, cocoa and bananas. The FAO and its member governments worked out the principles of surplus disposal that provided guidelines for surplus disposal of agricultural products in a manner that minimized damage to commercial trade. It spelled out the guiding principles for stabilization of farm products. These principles were also an attempt to provide guidelines to member countries, to make sure the price support legislation in one country was not at the expense of farmers in another country.

Canada and the FAO Canada is one of the founding members of the FAO and the World Food Program. It has contributed financial resources, food and technical experts to both of these organizations. Canada is the eighth-largest contributor to the FAO — after the United States, Japan, Germany, France, China, Britain, and Italy. Its share for the years 1974 and 1975 will be \$2,160,675 (U.S.) *per annum*, or 4.05 per cent of the total budget. Its original contribution in 1946 was \$216,500 (U.S.). Canada is also the second-largest contributor to the World Food Program. Its contribution has risen from \$2.3 million (U.S.) a year during the period 1963-65 to \$40 million for the years 1975-76.

Canadians serving as FAO experts have come from the federal and provincial civil services and from the universities and industry. The scope of their activities is shown in the few examples given below:

- Veterinarians* — Turkey, serving on a team fighting foot-and-mouth disease
- Home economists* — in Ghana and Sierra Leone, developing improved home and family living programs
- Grain storage expert* — Turkey
- Consultant on forestry and forestry industries* — Ecuador
- Expert on wildlife management* — Cameroon
- Forestry economics expert* — Turkey
- Instructor at the National Seminar on Farm Broadcasting* — Turkey

*Technical officer* (range economy) — Kenya  
*Forestry officer* (sawmilling) — Malaysia  
*Animal production officer* (livestock improvement) — Kenya  
*Nutritionist* — Swaziland  
*Agricultural officer* (applied physiology) — Arab Republic  
of Egypt  
*Fisheries officer* (vessel and gear) — Barbados  
*Animal production officer* (animal nutrition) — Iran  
*Technical officer* (soil and water management) — Iran  
*Technical officer* (plant nutrition — fertilizer use) — Malaysia  
*Nutrition officer* (education and training) — Sri Lanka  
*Home economics officer* — Nigeria  
*Animal production officer* (dairy cattle husbandry) — Iraq  
*Nutrition officer* (fruit and vegetable technology)  
*Technical officer* (dry farming) — Tunisia  
*Land water management specialist* — India

Canadians also served on a number of FAO expert panels such as:  
Panel of Experts on Integrated Pest Control; Working Party of Experts  
on Pesticide Residues; Seminar on Experts to Advise on Soil Map of  
the World Project; Expert Panel of Nutrition; Advisory Committee on  
Marine Resources Research; Advisory Committee on Forestry Education;  
FAO-WHO Expert Group on Vitamin Requirements.

Canada continues to be active both in its support of the FAO and its  
participation in the Organization. It has been a member of the  
Council, the Committee on Commodity Problems, the Fisheries Committee,  
the Sub-Committee on Surplus Disposal and the Group on Grains since  
their inception, and has participated in the Study Groups on Fats  
and Oils, Bananas and Hard Fibres, as well as in groups involved in  
food-standard work. Canadians served as chairmen of the FAO  
Conference and the UN-FAO World Food Program Pledging Conference,  
the Intergovernmental Committee of the World Food Program, the  
Fisheries Committee, and the Committee on Commodity Problems, and as  
First Vice-Chairman of the Council, Chairman of the Finance  
Committee, Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the North American Forestry  
Commission, and chairmen of various working parties.

Canada recognizes the role of the Food and Agriculture Organization.  
It also recognizes the need of the FAO to be flexible, to adapt  
itself to changing conditions and to meet new challenges. Canada's  
contribution has matched the growing responsibilities of the FAO  
in the war against hunger and in the struggle to attain freedom from  
want.

RP/C