



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

### JOINT MEETING OF THE THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON HARD FIBRES AND THE THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON JUTE, KENAF AND ALLIED FIBRES

Rome, 31 January–2 February 2007

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF NATURAL FIBRES 2009

## I. BACKGROUND

1. The proposal for an International Year of Natural Fibres (IYNF) arose in the previous Joint Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group on Hard Fibres and the Intergovernmental Group on Jute, Kenaf and Allied Fibres in December 2004, where it was seen as a means of raising the profile of the natural fibres. This proposal was subsequently endorsed by the Sixty-fifth Session of the Committee on Commodity Problems in April 2005, and by the Hundred and Twenty-eighth Session of the FAO Council in June 2005. A resolution was carried by the Thirty-third Session of FAO Conference in November 2005. Following a request from the Director-General of FAO to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and on the basis of intervention by a number of Member States, it is expected that the Sixty-first Session of the General Assembly of the UN will, late in 2006, declare that 2009 be the International Year of Natural Fibres.

2. The IYNF will encompass all natural fibres (vegetable and animal, including cotton, wool, silk, jute flax, hemp, sisal, abaca, coir, etc.) for all applications including apparel, industrial, carpeting, upholstery etc. There is considerable diversity among these fibres, with uses ranging from high-priced apparel to traditional industrial and new diversified and high-tech applications.

## II. PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF NATURAL FIBRES 2009

3. The primary logic behind the proposal is to raise the profile of natural fibres, thereby strengthening demand and contributing to improved welfare of fibre-producing farmers.

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4. The following administrative arrangements are proposed for the international action required to define objectives, to build an international alliance of international and national organizations, to prepare communications material, provide international communication/media coverage, and to coordinate events:
  - The IYNF will be under the general direction of an International Steering Committee (ISC) with representatives of main partners – fibre organizations, other international organizations, producing countries, consumer organizations, donors, etc. Informal meetings of an initial group have already been held, in December 2005 and in April 2006;
  - FAO will be the Lead Agency, with its activities under the direction of an Inter-departmental task force within FAO;
  - An administrative secretariat will be established in FAO, with staff supported by a project-funded project coordinator and consultants as required to coordinate and publicize.
5. Partner organizations will work under the general umbrella provided by the ISC. Within the framework of the IYNF objectives they will define their own objectives, and plan and fund their own events, drawing on coordination of FAO as lead unit and under general guidance of the ISC.
6. FAO will provide publicity, coordinate events, and operate one or two specific events such as an international conference on natural fibres. It is expected that most of the activities in that Year will be run by various partner organizations, including international bodies which cover specific fibres (the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC), the International Jute Study Group (IJSJ), the International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO), etc.), national producer and consumer organizations, etc. It is expected that national committees will be formed in countries, to plan and operate activities. Conferences, displays, fashion shows, publication of books, TV documentaries, events for schools, etc, would be among the activities which might be organized.
7. The International Steering Committee has proposed four objectives for the International Year, as follows:
  1. To raise awareness and stimulate demand for natural fibres;
  2. To promote the efficiency and sustainability of the natural fibres industries;
  3. To encourage appropriate policy responses from governments to the problems faced by natural fibre industries; and
  4. To foster an effective and enduring international partnership among the various natural fibres industries.
8. The IYNF process may be considered in four phases:
  1. Up to the United Nations resolution in late 2006: Activities have included initial conceptualizing, gathering political support; some coordinating activities; establishment of the core membership of the ISC; initial planning; and defining the overall concept and objectives.
  2. Planning after the UN declaration, 2007 and 2008: ISC would meet a number of times, and expand its own membership in this time. This period, especially in 2008, requires considerable activity, including liaison and preliminary planning at the international and national levels between fibre industry organizations. All partners would be planning their programme of events for the Year, developing publicity materials. A logo, website, posters, school material, media releases, etc, will be developed. A background global study on natural fibres could be published, and an international conference on natural fibres could be held in this period.
  3. Implementation in the year itself, 2009: This will provide an opportunity to generate information, to communicate messages about natural fibres. FAO as lead unit, will provide communication and information materials, maintain a website, coordinate activities, and, where possible, provide limited funding to activities run by partner organizations. FAO would possibly organize a major international conference on Natural Fibres, but most activities in the International Year will be organized and

funded by international or national organizations. The theme of IYNF will be incorporated in promotion messages; a wide range of events will be held to generate interest in natural fibres:

- Generating press stories, TV footage, making a film, writing a book – anything which allows “reaching out” with a message, either directly to the public, or through the press, TV, etc.;
- Conferences, displays, fashion shows, competitions (textile craft, art, events for school children);
- Promote new technology; and
- Regular annual events might be “dressed up” as IYNF activities.

4. Post IYNF from January 2010: A period of wrapping-up and reporting, as well as a programme of continuing activities of the international partnership on natural fibres.

9. As the lead agency, with responsibility for all planning, coordinating and media information, FAO will require around US\$2 000 000 over the next three years. This would need to be secured from donor countries and donor organizations. Initial approaches have been made to potential donor countries but, at the time of preparation of this document, no funding has been secured.

### **III. JUTE AND HARD FIBRES IN THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF NATURAL FIBRES 2009**

10. Delegates at this Joint Meeting might wish to consider the arrangements that would be made for observation of the IYNF specifically by the hard fibres and jute industries, of how the themes or messages for these fibres would be defined, and how events might be funded.

11. A challenge facing the jute and hard fibres sectors will be to create their own place within the IYNF, to ensure that the visibility of these industries is maintained alongside the much bigger cotton and wool industries, while benefiting from the strength of the other natural fibre industries.

12. One of the roles of the ISC, working with the Coordination Unit in FAO, will be to develop messages and publicity materials for the IYNF as a whole. Individual fibre interests will need to determine their own messages, their own “slant” within the umbrella of the wider IYNF messages. Central themes of the IYNF will be the environmental and health benefits of natural fibres – poverty alleviation / food security is also an important issue, perhaps more for jute and hard fibres than for other natural fibres. Two informal meetings of the ISC have been held, and hard fibre and jute interests have been represented in these meetings. It is important that these fibres should continue to be represented on this Committee.

13. The IGGs on Jute and Hard Fibres would be active in planning at the international level, and would seek funding for specific events; In addition to activities which might be conducted under the auspices of these IGGs, it is expected that other fibre organizations will plan their own activities at the international level. Fibre producing and consuming countries would also organize their own activities. National committees might be formed where appropriate to bring together two or more natural fibre industries within a country.

14. The Joint Meeting may wish to give consideration to appropriate international activities on jute and hard fibres which might be planned for the “lead up” period in 2007 and 2008 as well as for the International Year itself, 2009.