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Food and Agriculture  
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Продовольственная и  
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Объединенных Наций

Organización de las  
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Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة  
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# COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

## Seventieth Session

Rome, 7-9 October 2014

## INTERNATIONAL RICE COMMISSION

### Executive Summary

A Special Session of the International Rice Commission (IRC) was convened on 13-14 June 2013. The meeting adopted a Resolution in which it agreed to suspend all of the activities and operations of the Commission and recommended *inter-alia* that a standing item on rice be included in the agenda of the regular meetings of the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) and the Committee on Agriculture (COAG). This paper provides a brief background on the work of the Commission and presents the process followed leading to the Resolution adopted by the Special Session in June 2013, including the recommendation to the CCP.

### Suggested action by the Committee:

The Committee is invited to take note of the outcome of the Special Session of the International Rice Commission held in June 2013. In particular, the Committee is invited to:

- take note of the decision by the International Rice Commission to suspend all of its activities and operations in June 2013;
- take note of the recommendation that a standing item on rice be included in the agenda of the regular sessions of CCP; and
- note that rice market and policy issues feature regularly in the CCP agendas, and that the preparation of the agenda of the CCP sessions is subject to Rule IV.1 of the CCP Rules of Procedure on “Agenda and Documents”.

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## I. Brief background on the IRC

1. The International Rice Commission (IRC) was established in 1948 under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, with the objective to promote national and international action with respect to production, conservation, distribution and consumption of rice, except matters relating to trade. The work of the Commission evolved from an early emphasis on breeding and international nurseries to the implementation, during the 1970's and 1980's, of a large number of rice development projects and programmes in support of the green revolution.
2. At the time it was established, the Commission was the only international mechanism for collaboration amongst countries and institutions on matters pertaining to rice. Since the early 1990's the Commission has struggled to retain relevance in the proliferation of other international and regional fora, networks, organizations and programmes addressing technical and policy issues related to rice production. The number of members participating in the sessions of the Commission steadily declined from 38 members at its 18th Session in 1994 (*the last time there was a quorum for decision making*) to 19 members at the 21st Session in 2006. In light of the foregoing, the Independent External Evaluation (IEE) of FAO in 2007 recommended that the Commission be wound-up<sup>1</sup>.
3. The key objective of the 22nd Session, originally scheduled for April 2012, was to discuss the future of the Commission. The meeting was subsequently postponed to November of that year when only 12 countries had confirmed their participation three weeks before the scheduled session.

## II. Consultative process on the future of the IRC

4. In July 2012, a meeting of representatives from member countries of the Commission was convened to consider possible future directions of the IRC. Entitled "Global Rice Roundtable", the meeting was attended by 27 experts from 22 member countries of the IRC, representatives of the CGIAR Consortium and the Global Rice Science Partnership (GRiSP), which is led by the CGIAR. The report of the Roundtable<sup>2</sup> and an options paper on the future of the Commission<sup>3</sup> were prepared for the 22nd Session of IRC (29-30 November 2012), convened immediately prior to the FAO Council to facilitate attendance. A briefing session was convened with the Permanent Representatives to FAO in October 2012 to inform about the upcoming Commission meeting and respond to questions that they might have.
5. However, at its 22nd Session, the Commission struggled to reach a quorum and was unable to take any decision regarding its future. It did, nevertheless, agree to establish a working group composed of representatives from each of the seven regional groups to develop a proposal on the IRC future that would be considered at a special session in June 2013, immediately prior to the 38th Session of the FAO Conference<sup>4</sup>.
6. The Working Group (WG) met under the chairmanship of Mr. Lupino Lazaro of the Philippines (Asia Group). Other WG representatives included Ghana (Africa), France (Europe), Brazil (GRULAC), Egypt (Near East), USA (North America) and Australia (South West Pacific). Observers from Brazil, the Dominican Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand and the Chairperson of COAG participated in one or more of the WG meetings. Representatives of the Secretariats of the CCP and COAG were also invited to address the WG. An initial draft of the resolution and an explanatory Power-Point presentation were made available to the members of the WG to facilitate their consultation with members of their respective regional groups. The feedback from the regional groups was reviewed and based on this discussion the draft resolution revised. The revised draft was further discussed within the regional groups and the feedback reflected in the final

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the IEE of FAO C 2007/A.1-Rev.1 Paragraph 621.

<sup>2</sup> Global Rice Roundtable, 3-4 July 2012, Montpellier France.

<sup>3</sup> IRC 2012/4

<sup>4</sup> IRC 2012/Report

draft of the resolution on the future of the IRC agreed by members of the WG. The resolution was presented to the 22nd Session of the IRC along with brief background information on the working group, including its composition, how it operated, the information it considered and a brief rationale or background to the key political and technical issues that it took into consideration<sup>5</sup>.

7. The Special Session of the IRC agreed to adopt without change the text of the Resolution as prepared by the Working Group<sup>6</sup>.

8. The full text of the Resolution is included in Annex A to this document. It should be highlighted that in paragraph 2 of the Resolution, the Commission decided that it shall “*suspend all its activities and operations*”.

9. In paragraph 3 it recommended “*that a standing item on rice be included in the agenda of the regular session of COAG and CCP, as appropriate, to consider issues of global significance on rice production, conservation, distribution, consumption or trade.*”

### **III. CCP and Rice**

10. The terms of reference of the CCP as laid down in Rule XXIX of the General Rules of the Organization include the following: i) to keep commodity problems of an international character affecting production, trade, distribution and consumption, and related economic matters under review; and ii) to prepare a factual and interpretative survey of the world commodity situation, which would be made available directly to Member Nations.

11. In the CCP, rice is regularly covered under the short- and medium-term market outlook items, with other major agricultural commodities. This includes coverage of major market trends over the past two years and the outlook for the coming year. Through the medium-term agricultural outlook work carried out jointly by FAO and the OECD, the Committee is also informed about market prospects over the next ten years for production, utilization, trade and prices and debates any new drivers or major issues facing markets.

12. In addition, there is the Intergovernmental Group (IGG) on Rice, which was established by the CCP at its 26th Session in 1955, as a subsidiary body. The Group provides a forum for consultations on the economic aspects of rice, paying particular attention to any special difficulties which exist or are likely to arise in the international trade in rice. It also covers issues related to the production, consumption and prices of rice. The IGG on Rice is open to all Members and Associate Members that are substantially interested in rice production, consumption and trade.

13. Furthermore, FAO Trade and Markets Division (EST) produces and publishes regular market reports on food commodities, with rice as a major commodity. These reports include Food Outlook (biannual), the OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook (annual), Crop Prospects and Food Situation (quarterly), the Rice Market Monitor (quarterly) and the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) Market Monitor (monthly). All these publications and reports are made available to the public free of charge.

### **IV. Suggested action by the Committee**

14. The Committee is invited to consider the outcome of the Special Session of the International Rice Commission held in June 2013.

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<sup>5</sup> IRC 2013/3

<sup>6</sup> IRC 2013/Report

15. In particular, the Committee is invited to:
- take note of the decision by the International Rice Commission to suspend all of its activities and operations in June of 2013;
  - take note of the recommendation that a standing item on rice be included in the agenda of the regular sessions of the CCP; and
  - note that rice market and policy issues feature regularly in the CCP agendas, and that the preparation of the agenda of the CCP sessions is subject to Rule IV.1<sup>7</sup> of the CCP Rules of Procedure on “Agenda and Documents”.

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<sup>7</sup> Rule IV.1: “*The Director-General, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Committee, shall prepare a provisional agenda and shall normally circulate it at least two months in advance of the session to all Member Nations and Associate Members of the Organization and to all international organizations invited to attend the session.*”

## **Annex A – RESOLUTION**

### **Future of the International Rice Commission**

THE INTERNATIONAL RICE COMMISSION,

**CONSIDERING** that the International Rice Commission (IRC) was established under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution, through a Resolution approved by the FAO Conference, at its Fourth Session in 1948, with the purpose of promoting national and international action with respect to production, conservation, distribution and consumption of rice, except matters relating to international trade;

**NOTING** that the Constitution of the IRC came into force on 4 January 1949 upon acceptance by ten Member Nations of the Organization, and that at present 62 Member Nations have deposited instruments of acceptance of the Constitution, thus becoming Members of the Commission;

**RECOGNIZING** that the Commission has assiduously pursued and fulfilled the objectives for which it was established in 1948;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that there are currently two centres of the CGIAR Consortium, as well as a wide range of fora, programmes, specialized meetings, networks and regional strategies dealing exclusively with rice;

**BEING AWARE OF** the declining trend in the number of Members that participate in Regular Sessions of the Commission, and, in particular, the fact that since 1994 no Regular Session has obtained the necessary quorum;

**RECALLING** recommendations that the IRC should be wound up and that, subsequently, a process of reassessment of the need for the Commission was launched within FAO and by its Members;

**HIGHLIGHTING** that winding up the IRC should not be construed as a reduction in FAO's commitment to its Members with respect to increasing sustainable rice production and consumption;

**RECOGNIZING** that rice is the staple food of more than half of the world's population and its importance to global food security is acknowledged by FAO and its Members;

- 1) **EXPRESSES ITS APPRECIATION** for the work accomplished over the years by the Commission, its Members and FAO;
- 2) **DECIDES** that the International Rice Commission shall suspend all its activities and operations;
- 3) **RECOMMENDS** that a standing item on rice be included in the agenda of the regular sessions of COAG and CCP, as appropriate, to consider issues of global significance on rice production, conservation, distribution, consumption or trade;
- 4) **FURTHER RECOMMENDS** that in the event an issue, of global significance on rice production, conservation, distribution, consumption or trade, arises that cannot be addressed by a body within FAO, the Director-General, within his authority, convene a meeting with all stakeholders;
- 5) **CALLS UPON** Members who so wish to submit notices of withdrawal from the Commission under Article XII paragraph 1 of the Constitution of the IRC so that under Article XIII of the Constitution it shall be terminated if and when the number of Members of the Commission drops below ten. Until such time the Commission shall remain in a state of suspension.