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Report of the

**NINETEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

Bangkok, 11-15 July 1988



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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Rome, 1988

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SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

FAO's Activities in the Region

For the attention of Governments:

The Conference:

1. urged all the Member Nations to make prompt payment of their contributions to FAO. Several delegations appealed particularly to the major contributors to do so. In endorsing this appeal, one delegation observed that all Member Nations should honour their financial obligations without attaching any conditions (para. 91);
2. reaffirmed its support to FAO's initiative in promoting TCDC activities and suggested that member countries should offer their facilities for TCDC purposes (para. 92);
3. suggested that countries undertake agricultural extension studies, paying particular attention to research and extension linkages (para. 96);
4. stressed that work on collection and analysis of farm data for formulating price policies and resource allocation should be strengthened (para. 95);
5. suggested that countries make greater use of crop residues for animal feed to ensure close integration between crop and livestock production (para. 110);
6. fully supported the regional attempt to control and eradicate contagious animal diseases, in particular rinderpest through South Asia Rinderpest Eradication Campaign (SAREC) (para. 111);
7. urged Member Nations to formulate national tropical forestry action plans without delay, in view of the overriding importance of conservation of forest resources for sustainable development (para. 120).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

8. reaffirmed the importance of the five priority areas guiding FAO's Programme of Work during the biennium 1988-89 which were endorsed by the previous Regional Conference: (i) promotion of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) in Asia-Pacific Region; (ii) promotion of equity along with agricultural growth; (iii) development of rainfed and other problem areas; (iv) diversification of agricultural economies of the developing countries; and (v) agricultural development of small island countries (paras 85 and 89);

9. requested the FAO Secretariat to take due account of and reflect the views expressed by the member countries, while formulating the priorities and programmes for 1990-91 (para. 90);
10. suggested that at its future sessions, the priorities for the biennium immediately succeeding should be considered by the Conference (para. 90);
11. suggested that regional cooperation in the management of problem soils be strengthened. It welcomed FAO's proposal to hold an expert consultation on problem soils (para. 93);
12. suggested that increased assistance should be provided to traditionally rice-producing countries to establish and strengthen wheat production programmes, while noting the need for them to take cognizance of comparative advantages (para. 97);
13. suggested that additional research and development support be given to crops such as pulses, oilseed crops, minor export crops and roots and tubers to improve their production and that FAO should collaborate closely with relevant organizations of the UN system in the Region (para. 99);
14. supported FAO's programme of work on analysis of problems and prospects of oilseed production and the establishment of a regional network to promote TCDC in this sector. It was suggested that similar networks for cotton and vegetables also be established (para. 101);
15. suggested that attention be given to promoting all aspects of horticulture development including production, harvesting, processing and marketing (para. 104);
16. suggested greater information dissemination and strengthening of institutional capabilities in biotechnology (para. 113);
17. urged FAO to take special cognizance of problems faced by small farmers in the formulation of programmes and projects such as access to factors of production, market information and training (para. 114);
18. urged FAO to maintain priority support to the integration of women in its future programme of work (para. 115);
19. supported FAO's initiative in establishing the Asian network for food and nutrition as a means for promoting TCDC in this area and suggested that activities such as determining dietary energy requirements, preparation of dietary guidelines, use of nutrition indicators and nutrition education and awareness be undertaken by the network (para. 116);
20. suggested that FAO provide policy guidance and technical assistance in marketing and related post-harvest activities and export promotion to ease the Region's transition into the nineties (para. 117);
21. suggested intensification of efforts in the marine fisheries development particularly in the areas of comprehensive stock assessment and improved fisheries management (para. 118);

22. called on FAO, as the coordinating agency, to accelerate the implementation of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan in the Asia-Pacific Region (para. 120).

Food Production for Nutritional Adequacy in Asia-Pacific Region

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

23. suggested that nutrition considerations become an integral part of national food policies and agriculture plans (para. 125);
24. urged countries to give due consideration to the diversification of agriculture in view of the need for producing more of the nutritionally desirable foods, especially pulses, vegetable oils, fruits, vegetables and fish (para. 126);
25. suggested that quantitative and qualitative dietary guidelines be worked out by countries of the Region, where such guidelines do not already exist. Country level workshops comprising agriculture planners and nutritionists should be held to work out the dietary guidelines (para. 126);
26. suggested that, when agro-climatic conditions are suitable, the cultivation of wheat in the traditionally rice-growing countries of Asia offer a distinct opportunity which needs to be utilized, bearing in mind considerations of comparative advantage (para. 129);
27. suggested that countries make efforts to screen and identify potential legume species for growing under stress conditions. Usefulness of these species should be improved through genetic manipulation (para. 130);
28. suggested that governments undertake measures to improve yields, where necessary seeking the assistance of international agencies (para. 131);
29. urged countries to accelerate crop diversification programmes and promote multiple cropping of short- and medium-term duration oil seed crops (para. 132);
30. suggested that countries strengthen their aquaculture programmes particularly in coastal areas and areas with rivers and lakes (para. 133);
31. emphasized that countries should make continued efforts to increase food production and ensure an overall food availability of at least 10 percent above their average national requirements. This would help ease physical and economic access by weaker segments of the population to available food (para. 134);
32. stressed the need for member countries to strengthen their programmes of nutrition education and nutritional awareness (para. 135).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

33. suggested that FAO provide technical backstopping to country level workshops comprising agricultural planners and nutritionists. The proposed Asian Network for Food and Nutrition should coordinate the work on dietary guidelines (para. 126).

Progress and Problems of Livestock Development in the Region

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

34. urged that countries propagate proven low-cost technologies for feed e.g. supplementation of straw rations with small amounts of green fodder, oil cakes and urea-molasses (para. 138);
35. urged Member Nations to give full support to the South Asia Rinderpest Eradication Campaign (SAREC). Efforts to control foot-and-mouth disease, haemorrhagic septicaemia, and hog cholera should be continued (para. 142);
36. urged Member Nations to develop appropriate institutional mechanisms to formulate and implement national livestock sector pricing policies. Where such institutions already exist in the crop sector, it would be useful to include livestock products within their purview. Some delegates, however, cautioned that administered or regulated pricing could lead to resource misallocation (para. 146).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

37. suggested that the proposal of Pakistan to establish a Regional Centre for Buffalo Research and Training be considered (para. 141);
38. requested FAO to help countries develop programmes for genetic improvement of indigenous resources, based on exotic breeds, adapted to local conditions (para. 144);
39. requested FAO to accord priority to biotechnology, especially animal reproduction, disease diagnosis and control (para. 145);
40. suggested that FAO assist countries, upon request, in preparing comprehensive studies and in organizing national training courses on livestock pricing and marketing policies (para. 147);
41. suggested that FAO assist member countries in improving the data base in the livestock sector (para. 148).

Agroforestry for Improved Land Husbandry

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

42. suggested that Member Nations undertake multidisciplinary research and in-depth studies to promote agroforestry along sound lines (para. 153);
43. urged governments to take steps to devise suitable curricula on agroforestry and introduce them in forestry and agriculture education/training institutions (para. 155);
44. urged that governments should strengthen extension organizations to meet the needs of agroforestry (para. 156);
45. suggested that governments reexamine legislation and procedures, where necessary and appropriate, to remove the constraints relating to security of land tenure and right to the use of trees (para. 158);
46. underscored the need for governments to offer appropriate incentives to farmers willing to practise agroforestry (para. 159);
47. urged governments to adopt strategies which ensure that poverty alleviation and environmental protection complement each other in order to rehabilitate degraded catchment areas (para. 160);
48. suggested that Governments consider increasing support for strategies and programmes designed to better manage shifting cultivation lands in situ, through appropriate agroforestry solutions (para. 161);
49. stressed the need for Governments to undertake wasteland surveys and promote viable agroforestry practices to restore and make these lands productive (para. 162);
50. urged Member Nations to step up efforts to formulate national tropical forestry action plans for concerted intersectoral approaches between agriculture and forestry. Agroforestry as an essential tool for sustainable agriculture and improved land husbandry should be accorded a high priority within the frameworks of national tropical forestry action plans (para. 163).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

51. emphasized that Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) has a key role to play in promoting agroforestry. International organizations like FAO and International Council for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) should facilitate the process of sharing of knowledge and expertise on agroforestry among developing countries (para. 154);

52. suggested that FAO should also consider organizing a regional meeting on agroforestry (para. 154);
53. suggested that FAO continue to give high priority to developing extension organization and methods (para. 156).

Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

54. recommended that Member Governments endorse the Constitution of the Asia-Pacific Association on Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) and encourage the designated national institutions to become members of the Association (para. 167);
55. extended the term of Thailand as the Region's representative for the final two years up to 1990 and noted that the 18th FAO Regional Conference had elected Bangladesh as the new representative for the period 1986 to 1990 (para. 169);
56. decided that the term of the elected countries in the future should be four years (para. 170);
57. urged that future Conferences give due consideration to Island countries while electing regional representatives (para. 171);
58. suggested that the delegation to the FAO Regional Conference may include the representatives of Asia and the Pacific Region on CGIAR, to facilitate reporting to the Conference on the activities of the Group (para. 172).

Date and Place of the Twentieth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

For the attention of FAO

59. noted that a decision on the venue of the Twentieth FAO Regional Conference will be made by the Director-General in the second half of 1989, taking into account any firm offer received by him during the next 12 months or so (para. 173).

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Organization of the Conference

1. The Nineteenth FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific was held at the United Nations Building in Bangkok from 11 to 15 July 1988.
2. Member Nations which participated in the Conference were: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, China, Cook Islands, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Korea (Republic of), Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Solomon Islands, Thailand, United States of America, Vanuatu, and Viet Nam.
3. There were observers from the Holy See, Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and representatives from the following United Nations Bodies and Specialized Agencies: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco). In addition to the above, observers from the following intergovernmental organizations were present: Asian Productivity Organization (APO), the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), and the European Economic Community (EEC).
4. The non-governmental organizations represented were: Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD), Association of Food Marketing Agencies in Asia and the Pacific (AFMA), Asian and Pacific Regional Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA), and International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).
5. The list of participants at the Conference and the list of Secretariat Documents issued are given respectively in Appendix B and Appendix C to the report.

Inaugural Ceremony

6. The Inaugural Ceremony of the Conference was held on 11 July 1988. The Director-General of FAO, Dr Edouard Saouma, welcomed the Prime Minister of Thailand, His Excellency, General Prem Tinsulanonda, Ministers, delegates, members of the diplomatic corps in Thailand. On behalf of FAO and the delegates to the Conference, he expressed appreciation for the hospitality extended by the Government and people of Thailand. He also highlighted the significant social and economic advances achieved by Thailand, under the government of the Prime Minister.
7. The Prime Minister in his inaugural address, praised FAO for giving hope and relief to millions of poor and hungry during the past forty years. He said that through the dedicated efforts of FAO and its staff, there now existed an international sense of common purpose in the struggle to free humanity from hunger and malnutrition.

8. The Prime Minister observed that the challenges which confronted agriculture in the Asia-Pacific Region were daunting. The Region had only one quarter of the world's arable land, but it had to feed more than half the world's population. Fortunately, the past two decades witnessed a remarkable change in the agricultural situation in the Region. Thanks to the remarkable efforts of farmers supported by agricultural scientists, extension workers and other specialists, cereal production in the developing countries of the Region rose from 380 million tonnes in 1967 to 700 million tonnes in 1987. This growth rate was significantly higher than what has been achieved by other developing regions.

9. The Conference would deal with food production for nutritional adequacy. The Prime Minister noted this subject was of much interest to Thailand. Thailand had always produced enough food for its people. In the recent past, per caput food availability exceeded national dietary energy requirements. However, there were still large segments of population whose purchasing power was so low they could hardly buy their full nutritional needs.

10. During the last ten years, the contribution of rice to the national diet had been reduced. The content of animal protein had increased by about 20 percent. This led to improvements in the nutritional status of Thai people, especially children. The Prime Minister stated that severe malnutrition among children was now a story of the past in Thailand. He attributed the successful rural development approach of Thailand to the four Ministries, namely Agriculture, Health, Education and Interior. They worked in coordination at the village level to bring about these changes.

11. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that the Regional Conference would formulate practical recommendations which would be of value to the countries of the Region.

12. The Director-General of FAO thanked the Prime Minister for his thoughtful address and paid tribute to the Government and people of Thailand for their achievements, especially the elimination of severe malnutrition among Thai children. How to eradicate malnutrition in other countries was the challenge before the Conference. He thanked the Prime Minister for his tribute to the efforts of FAO and its staff. This commendation would reinforce the commitment of FAO to its tasks. The valuable insights provided by the Prime Minister would guide the deliberations of the Conference in its search for effective measures to ease transition of countries into the 1990s.

Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur

13. The Conference elected, by acclamation, His Excellency, C.G. Dominguez, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Government of Philippines, as Chairman of the Conference.

14. The Conference also elected all the cabinet Ministers present as Vice-Chairmen. Dato' Abu Bakar Mahmud of Malaysia was elected as Rapporteur.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

15. The Conference adopted the Provisional Agenda and Timetable prepared by the Secretariat. The adopted Agenda is given in Appendix A to this report.

Statement by the Director-General

16. The Director-General of FAO in his opening statement, conveyed his appreciation that the Conference was being held in Thailand, home of the FAO Regional Office for many years. He expressed his appreciation to Mr S.A.M.S. Kibria, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), for making available ESCAP's facilities for the Conference. He paid tribute to His Majesty, the King of Thailand, who, since his accession to the throne, had personally initiated over 1 200 projects in various sectors of agriculture. The pioneering role of royal projects has shaped the country's agricultural development. FAO was proud to have been associated with many of these projects, which had their origin in His Majesty's vision and dynamism.

17. Reviewing the food and agricultural situation in the Region, the Director-General observed that progress in cereal production had been spectacular over recent decades. Between 1961 and 1986, cereal production in the developing countries of the Asia and Pacific Region had grown at an average annual rate of 3.8 percent, a level substantially higher than in the rest of the world. This remarkable achievement reflected mainly enlightened and vigorous government policies, coupled with the hard work and skill of the Region's farmers. However, there had been substantial variations between countries: growth rates were equal to or above the regional average in eleven countries and below average in nine others. There were consumption declines in individual countries. Serious localized food shortages were encountered among vulnerable and drought-affected populations.

18. The Director-General observed that following the sharp decline in cereal stocks, the outcome of this year's harvests would be even more crucial than was usually the case to the Region's food supplies. The southwest monsoon had started on time this year bringing widespread and abundant rains. The weather in the next two months would be critical. Should crop conditions be unfavourable in the next few months, increased cereal imports could be needed when foodgrain supplies, particularly rice, were tight on world markets. The situation would need to be monitored closely, especially in view of the current drought in North America. Cereal supplies on international markets were expected to be tighter in the years ahead. Already, world market prices of cereals had risen sharply and could rise further.

19. The Director-General outlined the themes underlying the three substantive agenda items of the Conference. Regarding nutritional adequacy, he stated that developments had been positive owing to improvements in cereal production. Per caput dietary energy supplies were increasing. The proportion of undernourished people had dropped from 21 percent in 1971 to 17 percent in 1981, and there was every indication that this downward trend would continue. However, such progress also highlighted those pockets of undernourishment and dietary imbalances which still remained. He suggested that incentive policies be aimed at encouraging production of pulses, dairy products, small animal husbandry and artisanal fisheries. This should be complemented by consumer education policies.

20. Referring to livestock production, the Director-General observed that one offshoot of the upsurge in cereal production had been the availability of enormous amounts of straw. The nutritional value of straw to ruminants could be greatly enriched by urea treatment, a simple and inexpensive technique. Yet, the practice was not spreading. Furthermore, the animal breeding and

genetic situation left much to be desired. Farmers were not using selected bulls; artificial insemination was still too rare; and bovine genetic resources were insufficient. He stressed the need for extension. Where peasants had been motivated and their energy mobilized, excellent results had been obtained. He also observed that developing countries were still incurring heavy losses from infectious diseases and emphasized the need for regional rather than national control campaigns. In this regard, FAO had drawn up a regional project for the eradication of rinderpest.

21. Speaking on agroforestry, the Director-General referred to the conflict between agriculture and forestry. He observed that in a region which held 69 percent of the world's farm population and only 28 percent of its farmland, the threat to forests was obviously exacerbated. An estimated 10 million hectares of forest cover were lost in the Region between 1975 and 1985. Shifting cultivation, which covered 75 million hectares and provided a livelihood for roughly 30 million people in the region, had aggravated the threat to tropical and subtropical forests. The results of deforestation were erosion, soil impoverishment and watershed degradation. Ways were to be found to utilize the land's resources without exhausting them. One viable solution was agro-forestry. Good sylvo-pastoral practices could be used to restore degraded watersheds and stabilize eroded slopes. Ecological needs could be reconciled with socio-economic requirements.

22. The Director-General emphasized that increased international help and assistance were needed to solve the Region's agricultural problems. It was the role of FAO to provide such assistance. But the organization was facing a grave financial crisis. Should this persist, FAO's activities, and indeed its very existence, would be threatened. Owing to shortfalls in payment of contributions, particularly by the major contributor, FAO had to cut its services to Member Nations by 25 million dollars. In 1988, a further cut of 20 million dollars was made. The reduction would have been much higher without the extraordinary contribution of 15 million dollars by Italy.

23. On its part, FAO had completely reworked its Programme of Work and Budget to sharpen its priorities. As instructed by the FAO Conference, the Organization was now in the process of a review of certain aspects of FAO's goals and operations with a view to make its contribution more effective. But what would this review achieve if performed on a moribund FAO, and when the needs of developing countries were so immense? He appealed to the reason and good sense of affluent member countries to emulate Italy's example and pay their contributions early.

24. The Director-General emphasized that decisive, concerted action was needed now to conserve and develop the Region's resources so the neediest share the fruits of development, and a civilized human community survives, able to look confidently towards the 21st century. The complete text of the Director-General's statement is given in Appendix D to this Report.

25. The Chairman thanked the Director-General for delivering a constructive and thought-provoking statement. The realistic assessment provided by the Director-General would help the Conference to appreciate better the magnitude of problems and achievements of the Region. He referred to the critical issues

that faced agriculture and the reduced capability of FAO to respond to the Region's needs. He expressed the hope that materially better-off nations would provide resources for the challenge of the 1990s which were historically unprecedented. Never before in history were the farms of this Region ever called upon to feed such large concentrations of urban populations or take on the burden of large external debts. At the same time, bills for ecological deficit incurred in the past were now falling due. The Chairman assured the Director-General that the Conference would address its mandated tasks with dedication.

II. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in the Region

26. Country statements were presented by the delegates of the following countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, China, Cook Islands, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Korea (Republic of), Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United States of America, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

27. Statements were also made by representatives of: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); International Labour Organisation (ILO); Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP); and International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

- Role of FAO

28. Various countries repeatedly drew attention to the significant and constructive rôle played by FAO, under the leadership of the Director-General. This had contributed to the remarkable progress that had taken place in the food and agriculture sector in the Region. Through its regular programme activities and its field projects FAO undertook a wide range of activities which effectively promoted development of agriculture, animal husbandry fisheries and forestry in the region. Member countries particularly appreciated the work and dedication of the Organization as it continued programmes despite unprecedented financial difficulties. They stated that FAO had an important continuing rôle to play as the "global agent" of technology transfer. FAO's activities needed to be intensified to enable farmers and fishermen to benefit from technical advances through this useful multilateral channel.

29. Activities of the Regional Office, which fostered close cooperation among member countries of this region, were appreciated. Several delegations commended the rôle of FAO Regional Office in promoting Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC).

30. Many delegations shared and underlined the concerns expressed by the Director-General regarding the financial situation faced by the Organization. They urged the international community especially the major contributors, to pay promptly their assessed contributions and in some cases arrears, and thereby steer the Organization out of the current financial difficulties. India appealed to all the Member Nations to honour their commitments to FAO without linking the release of their contributions to any conditions, so that the approved programmes would be fully implemented.

- Performance of Agriculture Sector

31. The country statements revealed substantial increase in agricultural production in the Asia-Pacific Region. Some of the traditional food-deficit countries, which primarily depended on food imports, had gradually achieved basic food self-sufficiency.

32. In most countries, agricultural growth was attributed to the pursuit, in varying degrees, of a four-pronged strategy. This consisted of: (a) expanding area under high-yielding varieties; (b) increasing use of fertilizers; (c) providing supplemental irrigation facilities for rainfed crops; and (d) extending existing irrigational coverage for dry season crops.
33. Countries of the Pacific sub-region stated that root crops and their improvement continued to be the central concern of their agriculture growth strategies.
34. Despite this impressive growth, the Asia-Pacific Region still suffered from many problems such as: poverty, unemployment, wide spread disparities in income and low agricultural productivity in some countries.
35. One of the new developments, during the biennium, was the significant progress in cooperation within the forum of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This had resulted in finalization of the proposal for a food security reserve of 200 000 metric tons. Moves were being finalized to establish a SAARC regional agricultural information centre in Dhaka.
36. Bangladesh reported important policy changes which included elimination of subsidies and privatization of distribution of agricultural inputs. These measures may have impaired the productivity of small farmers, who were preponderant in Bangladesh.
37. Both agriculture and forestry were vital to the economy of Bhutan. In 1986, these sectors contributed 51 percent of the gross domestic product. Bhutan was adopting a three-fold development strategy for growth of agriculture comprised of: area-based programmes; incentives and services; and improving planning, manpower development, and implementation capabilities.
38. In Burma, the cultivated area sown to paddy had remained almost unchanged at about 5 million ha over the past decade. Burmese agriculture was predominantly rainfed: irrigated areas accounted for only 13 percent of total net sown area. Inadequacy of agricultural inputs such as fuel, fertilizers and agro-chemicals, had constrained further development.
39. In 1987, the value of China's agricultural value increased by 4.7 percent over 1986. Total grain production in 1987 amounted to 402 million tons, an increase of 2.8 percent over the previous year. China believed that important contributions to agricultural growth could be made, in future, only through improvement of farmers' educational and technical standards, extension of farming techniques and providing to farmers relevant research findings.
40. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea reported advances which contributed to its agricultural growth. Among these were: the gigantic West Sea Barrage; a waterway tunnel cutting through a 40 km-long mountain range; establishment of a water sprinkling irrigation system in the non-paddy areas; new fertilizer industries to produce annually 900 000 tons of nitrogen fertilizer and 510 000 tons of potassic fertilizer as well as reclamation of tidal land.

41. Most parts of India suffered, in 1987, the worst drought of this century. India evolved an integrated drought management strategy and drew heavily on buffer stocks of foodgrains. It also started new employment generation programmes and accelerated implementation of schemes for drinking water supply and production of fodder. A Special Foodgrain Production Programme, under the Seventh Five-Year Plan, was launched. In the 1988 Central Budget, the provision for agriculture purposes had been enhanced by 40 percent, the Government launched a low-cost crop insurance scheme which paid claims amounting to Rs. 2.6 billion over the last two years. Minimum support prices had been continuously increased. By the end of the century, India's foodgrain requirements would rise to 240 million tonnes. Annual per capita consumption of foodgrains was expected to increase from 170 kg in 1987 to 215 kg by 2000 AD.
42. In Indonesia, there was a strong commitment to diversification of the agricultural sector so that it was placed on a broader and sounder base.
43. In Laos, agriculture was still very much dependent on weather and was already affected by recent droughts and floods.
44. In Malaysia production of paddy dropped 4.6 percent between 1986-87, mainly due to poor harvest in the dry season. In 1986, the government of Malaysia launched the 'corporate farming system'. Under this scheme, the government established farming lots where paddy fields were arranged systematically with adequate drainage and roads to gain access to farm machinery and mills. This system, launched so far in some 5000 villagers, was showing great promise.
45. Decentralized decision-making and a coordinated and effective monitoring and supervision mechanism, at all levels, was initiated by Nepal.
46. In Pakistan agricultural production grew by 4.4 percent annually. The National Commission on Agriculture reviewed this sector and recommended strategies and policies for the 12-year period 1988-2000. The Commission's Report underlined the vital link between agricultural and rural development. In the past, Pakistan achieved significant progress in production of wheat, rice and cotton but not as well in edible oil, sugarcane and maize. The Commission recommended a major shift to high value crops and products like fruits and vegetables and livestock.
47. In the Philippines, the economy reversed its decline and GNP (Gross National Product) grew by 1.5 percent in 1986 and 5.7 percent in 1987. The principal concerns now were in alleviating poverty, redistributing the opportunity of wealth creation and sustaining the momentum of growth, even as it met the obligations of onerous foreign debt. The comprehensive agrarian reform program, recently passed into law by Congress, had begun to be implemented. Specialized programs for disadvantaged groups like upland dwellers, cultural communities, and subsistence fishermen would be intensified.
48. Currently the Republic of Korea was concerned about the large proportion of households farming land less than a hectare. This seriously affected agricultural productivity. Another serious concern was the income disparity between the rural and urban areas. Korea launched a new integrated program for

rural development in 1986, investing 2.1 billion U.S. dollars. It was to promote agricultural productivity, expand farm income sources, and improve rural living conditions through better health care, education and transportation. The Government revised agricultural policy in the Sixth Five-Year Economic and Social Development Plan to effectively reflect this changed agricultural environment.

49. The stated government policy of Samoa sought to encourage the private sector participation in the country's industrialization programme. A copra and cocoa legislation had been introduced in Parliament to transfer the purchasing and marketing of these two commodities from government to the private sector. The government's role would be to control quality and regulate prices to be paid to the producers. As part of the cocoa rehabilitation programme, Samoa had put in place a cocoa suspensory loan scheme. This provided funding to smallholder farmers to develop their cocoa plantations. If the farmers succeeded in establishing the cocoa plantations, the loans would be converted into grants.

50. In the Solomon Islands, rice was an increasingly important part of the diet in town and rural areas. Rice imports reached over 10 000 tons in 1987. Research would continue into the possibility of growing rainfed rice by small farmers.

51. Crop diversification was an important component of the National Agricultural Plan of Sri Lanka. The Council for Agricultural Research Policy (CARP), recently established, would coordinate all research relating to agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry products. The Council was to create linkages among policy makers, implementers, producers and researchers. It would also formulate national agricultural research policy and identify priorities for each sub-sector.

52. Thailand's agriculture sector contributed 17 percent of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), 58 percent of export earnings and 68 percent of employment. The agricultural sector's growth rate was expected to reach 7 percent in 1988. Despite these optimistic growth prospects, tightening world markets and growing protectionism were cause for concern - Thailand shared these concerns with other developing export countries.

53. Food production in Viet Nam grew steadily in 1981-1985 but stagnated in 1986-1987, due to continuous natural calamities and other limiting factors. Efforts were now under way to improve transportation and storage conditions.

- Nutrition

54. The Conference noted that about 400 million of undernourished people, equivalent to 60 percent of such people in the world, lived in the Asia-Pacific region. Food production for nutritional adequacy was, therefore, an issue that was receiving increasing attention in different countries of the Region.

55. Bhutan's Sixth Plan provided for teaching agriculture, nutrition and environmental subjects in schools. In addition, all schools operated a kitchen garden scheme. The Cook Islands constituted a "Food and Nutrition Committee" to increase production and use of local foods; increase people's awareness of health problems; promote health surveys; and monitor the quality of imported foods.

56. Nepal's Basic Needs Programme had incorporated, in its production targets, a margin of about 10 percent over and above the average requirements for foodgrains and potatoes. Production of supplementary food items such as milk, meat, eggs, vegetables, fruits and fish was being encouraged. In Thailand farmers in more developed agricultural areas were undergoing changes in dietary patterns towards more vegetables and meat consumption. More farmers were integrating their existing crop production with livestock, poultry and fish-farming.

- Livestock Development

57. Several delegations welcomed the importance given by the Regional Conference to the development of livestock. Most countries envisaged programmes for improvement of animal health through improved veterinary services, upgrading of genetic stock and promotion of fodder cultivation. Better breeds, health and feed were instruments through which countries attempted to improve productivity. Countries of South Asia emphasized that land was becoming increasingly scarce; hence, livestock feed and fodder resource development had emerged as a major problem. Given the multitude of small farmers who raised animals, livestock activities should remain fully integrated with other agricultural activities.

58. India welcomed measures to increase production of goats and sheep. But it must be ensured that the numbers of these small ruminants should not go beyond recommended levels, particularly in ecologically fragile zones. Nepal called upon the international community for help in carrying out an extensive study on long-term livestock development strategies.

59. Malaysia reported on recent developments in poultry through contract schemes. These involved the private sector, smallholders and government agencies. Under these schemes, large poultry meat enterprises supply day-old chicks to smallholders to be reared until marketable age. These were then sold back to the suppliers at a profit. The Department of Veterinary Services provided training to smallholders, as well as advisory services and disease control programmes.

60. In the Pacific island-countries, pigs had traditionally been the only livestock raised by villagers. Cattle were used in coconut plantations for many years to control undergrowth. Due to poor pasture production, low prices and problems of collecting cattle from remote islands, small farmer cattle production proved uneconomic. However, Vanuatu enjoyed favourable conditions for the production of beef. The absence of serious cattle diseases had made it possible to develop an export trade.

- Forestry Development

61. In their statements countries strongly underscored the overriding need for conservation of tropical forest resources and their sustainable use on a planned basis. There was unanimous support for the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP). The need to formulate national tropical forestry action plans in order to intensify action, with increased support from the international community, was underscored by delegation.

62. The Bangladesh government was currently examining the need for formulating a national TFAP. Due to population pressure and acceleration in wood demand serious depletion of forest resources had taken place. Concerted action to conserve the remaining forest resources was urgent.
63. Because of the fragility of the mountain ecosystem, the Bhutanese government was according the highest priority to conservation of forest resources. To enhance public awareness on the importance of forests, Bhutan's coronation day on 2 June, was dedicated to tree planting. Agro-forestry was viewed as an important means for modifying shifting cultivation practices, thereby mitigating some of the environmental damage that resulted from shifting cultivation.
64. For export and domestic consumption, Burma had been exploiting 400 000 tons of teak and 1 000 000 tons of hardwood each year. Government had decreed that a hectare of teak plantation should be established to match every 100 tons of teak extracted. From 1980 onwards, 25 000 to 30 000 ha of forest plantations were established yearly. Self-help fuelwood plantations established at 20 ha per 100 households, were being encouraged. Biogas technology was also promoted in rural areas. Government established the Biogas Production and Utilization Centre in 1983. To date, about 1 200 family size biogas digesters had been installed. Some 2 000 were to be completed by 1989-90.
65. Agroforestry had pride of place in the forestry programmes of China. It was being promoted to help make optimum use of land resources, increase farmers' income, provide renewable energy and protect land from the hazards of erosion.
66. With FAO's support, Malaysia was currently formulating its national TFAP. It also launched a programme for reforestation to compensate for depleting natural forest resources. A total of some 850 000 hectares of forest land would be cultivated, with fast growing timber species in Peninsular Malaysia by 1987. Similar projects were being undertaken in Sabah and Sarawak.
67. Japan expressed concern that conservation of tropical forest resources was threatened by acute problems. TFAP could play a significant role in intensifying appropriate approaches. Japan would extend positive cooperation to FAO in its efforts to promote TFAP.
68. Indonesia underscored the need for agroforestry development on a TCDC basis. Cooperation, however, should no longer be confined to interaction between governments, ministries or agencies; it was now imperative to encourage closer cooperation between the farmers themselves.
69. Nepal appraised the Conference regarding its forestry sector Master Plan. This plan met the need for long-term policies and strategies in forestry. Nepal believed that efforts to promote agroforestry for improved land husbandry would go a long way in striking a desirable balance between man and his environment on a sustained basis.
70. Pakistan recognized the significance of a long-term policy for resource conservation, particularly for forest, watersheds, range lands and arid lands. At present, Pakistan sought to create federal and provincial institutions that would give systematic attention to these vital objectives.

71. The Republic of Korea stressed that agroforestry was an appropriate solution for maintenance and improvement of the land resource base, combined with growth of small farmers' incomes. Every country should develop its own model of agroforestry which recognized and enhanced traditional and proven ways of land use.

72. Thailand expressed concern over the rapid deforestation, due to encroachment of forests for agriculture by shifting cultivators, upland farmers and hilltribes. Illegal logging, and use of forest land for infrastructure expansion exacerbated the problem. Several measures were being contemplated to reverse this trend. This included review of related laws and regulations, so that local people and private organization would be encouraged to participate in reafforestation.

73. Viet Nam had carried out a policy whereby forest land was allocated to cooperatives or individuals on long-term contracts. Agroforestry systems, suitable to the local conditions were being encouraged, together with the traditional systems where crop-livestock-fish production were integrated.

74. In several Pacific island-countries, the major forestry issues concerned the assessment and sustainable management of the existing forest resources; intensification of traditional agroforestry system and reforestation of denuded areas.

- Trade

75. Many delegations expressed concern that, "Agriculture" remained the most serious and urgent example of a world trading regime in critical need of reform. There had been a proliferation of protectionist and trade distorting policies, including inappropriate domestic support policies and deficient trading rules and disciplines. Australia called for a long-term framework for agricultural reform in which trade-distorting influences would be progressively reduced and eliminated.

76. Countries emphasized that the Asia-Pacific Region stood to benefit substantially from liberalization of agricultural trade. Burma stressed that agricultural trade in the Region had continued to decline due to trade barriers. Indonesia emphasized that subsidies to farmers in the developed economies, contributed to the impoverishment of millions in developing countries.

77. Japan recognized that expansion of exports of agricultural products was of vital importance to the economies of developing countries. Japan therefore reduced or abolished tariffs for a substantial number of agricultural products imported from developing countries under the global system of trade preferences. Malaysia stated that various new barriers were being put up by developed countries in disguised form, with the intention of limiting accessibility to their markets. These barriers included attempts to frighten consumers by classifying products from developing countries as health hazards without scientific basis.

78. Pakistan stressed that an era marked by recession, protectionism, and stagnating production, required proper responses at national and international levels. Liberalization of agricultural trade, stabilization of international

markets in grains and orderly adjustment in agricultural production were some of the vital areas to which the international community should make a commitment without any reservations.

79. The United States of America (USA) emphasized that it was committed to elimination, over a ten-year period, of all agricultural import restrictions and agricultural subsidies, which directly or indirectly affected trade. There was need for an internationally agreed approach towards development and application of health and sanitary regulations to assure they were harmonized, and not used as trade restrictions. The USA proposal would allow maintenance of non-commodity-specific subsidies and tariffs where the need to do so was demonstrated. The proposal further envisioned a gradual reduction in tariff ceilings as the economic performance of a country improved. In addition, the USA proposed that food export embargoes be eliminated under revised rules of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Statements by the Observer Delegations

80. The Director of the Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) reported that ministers for rural development met at Dhaka in Bangladesh in April 1987 and adopted the "Dhaka Declaration on Rural Development", which called for increased regional cooperation in promoting rural development.

81. The Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) said that it was gratifying to note that the ESCAP premises had been chosen as the venue of this high-level meeting. He informed the meeting that ESCAP would undertake a detailed study on the impact of depressed agricultural export prices on the socio-economic condition of small farmers and the landless agricultural workers. He referred to the programmes of ESCAP and the ways to harmonize its work with that of FAO.

82. The General Secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) emphasized, in his statement, that for participation to be meaningful and effective, it had to be through the instrumentality of democratic, self-reliant organizations of their own. International organizations could help them by creating conditions for their formation and free functioning.

83. The statement of the representative of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) emphasized the usefulness of collaboration between ILO and FAO, through such joint ventures as the FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Working Techniques and Training of Forest Workers.

Report on FAO Activities in the Region including Action Taken on the Main Recommendations made by the Eighteenth Regional Conference and Programme of Work 1988-89 in the Region

84. The Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific introduced the Secretariat documents.^{1/} He observed that the Twenty-fourth Conference of FAO, held in Rome (7-26 November 1987) reviewed and approved the Organization's overall programme. The Programme of Work for

^{1/} APRC/88/2; APRC/88/3

the Region formed an integral part of this approved document. In addition to activities carried out under the Regular Programme, FAO executed 80 regional projects and 556 country level projects during the biennium 1986-87.

85. The last FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, held in July 1986, had recommended five priority areas to guide FAO's Programme of Work:

- (i) promotion of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) in Asia-Pacific Region;
- (ii) promotion of equity along with agricultural growth;
- (iii) development of rainfed and other problem areas;
- (iv) diversification of agricultural economies of the developing countries;
- (v) agricultural development of small-island countries.

86. These priority areas had been duly taken into account in formulating the Programme of Work for 1988-89.

87. He reiterated that the Region had shared problems and also common features. These made TCDC an ideal vehicle for the transfer of technology. For instance, most countries produced paddy and accounted for more than 90 percent of the world's paddy production. Since there were striking differences, there was considerable need and scope for TCDC. Aquaculture was widely practised in some countries but not in others. Significant technological breakthroughs had been made in selected areas of agriculture production, such as hybrid rice. The technologies developed were eminently transferable to other countries. Thus, there was a strong basis for learning from each other. In promoting TCDC, FAO relied primarily on its regional commissions and FAO-executed regional projects. During the biennium 1986-87, all seven FAO regional technical commissions dealing with animal production and health, agricultural statistics, farm management, fisheries, forestry, food security and plant protection continued to be active. Eight meetings of these technical commissions were held during the period under review. In addition, FAO promoted and strengthened regional associations composed primarily of parastatal bodies drawn from member countries. Apart from Asia and Pacific Regional Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) and Association of Food Marketing Agencies in Asia and the Pacific (AFMA), FAO helped establish the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) to further programmes of TCDC.

88. The Conference commended the Secretariat for comprehensive coverage and presentation in its document. ^{1/} Some delegates suggested the inclusion of more detailed data such as expenditures on field programmes countrywise in future reports.

89. The Conference endorsed the objectives and the thrust of FAO's programme of work. For the Programme of Work of 1988-89, the five priority areas adopted by the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference held in July 1986, were reaffirmed.

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90. The Conference requested the Secretariat to take due account of and reflect the views expressed by the member countries, while formulating the priorities and programmes for 1990-91. Further, the Conference suggested that at its future sessions, the priorities for the biennium immediately succeeding should be considered by the Conference.

91. The Conference noted with serious concern the observations contained in the Director-General's statement about FAO's disquieting financial position, resulting from non-payment of contributions to FAO by the major contributors. The Conference was, in particular, concerned over the fact that while the need for providing technical assistance to developing countries was increasing, the ability of FAO to respond to these needs was alarmingly diminishing. There had been substantial reductions in its technical manpower following the severe cuts in its budgetary resources for undertaking field missions to the countries. The Conference also observed that this was an unprecedented situation which should be quickly rectified if FAO's capability, as the principal agency of the United Nations in the food and agriculture sector, was to be maintained. In this context, the Conference urged all the Member Nations to make prompt payment of their contributions to FAO. Several delegations appealed particularly to the major contributors to make their payments promptly. In endorsing this appeal, one delegation observed that all Member Nations should honor their financial obligations without attaching any conditions.

92. The Conference reaffirmed its support to FAO's initiative in promoting TCDC activities and suggested that member countries should offer their facilities for TCDC purposes.

93. The Conference recognized that in many countries of the Region, large areas of land were affected by special problems such as salinity. In this context, the Conference suggested that regional cooperation in the management of problem soils needed to be strengthened. It welcomed FAO's proposal to hold an expert consultation on problem soils.

94. The Conference recognized the importance of rain harvesting and small-scale water conservation technologies. It supported FAO's proposal to convene an Expert Consultation on Water Lifting Devices and Small-Scale Irrigation during the biennium.

95. Recognizing the importance of increasing productivity and income of the small farmers, the Conference endorsed the proposal to conduct a workshop in farm programming to determine the most efficient use of farm resources to maximize income for small farmers. Furthermore, the Conference stressed that work on collection and analysis of farm data for formulating price policies and resource allocations should be strengthened. Studies should be carried out to identify weaknesses in data collection systems.

96. The Conference reiterated the importance of agriculture education, extension and training in the dissemination of information and transfer of technology to small farmers. The Conference suggested that agricultural extension studies should be undertaken, paying particular attention to research and extension linkages.

97. There was little scope for increasing the cultivated area in the Region. The Conference therefore emphasized that future demand for food would have to

be met primarily through increased yields. This called for varied measures, including development and transfer of appropriate production technologies. In this context, the Conference welcomed the proposed regional training course on hybrid rice production to be organized in China and hybrid cotton production in India. The Conference also suggested that increased assistance should be provided to traditionally rice producing countries to establish and strengthen wheat production programmes, while noting the need for them to take cognizance of comparative advantages.

98. The Conference also welcomed the emphasis on stabilizing of production in rainfed areas through improvements in water use and crop management practices. It supported the proposal to hold a Regional Expert Consultation on Rainfed Agriculture and to document and disseminate successful experiences in contingency crop planning. This would enable countries to share available technology and help intensify rainfed crop production.

99. Since a majority of countries in the Region had made significant progress in production of cereals, the Conference affirmed the need for diversifying crop production. In this context, it suggested that additional research and development support be given to crops such as pulses, oilseed crops, minor export crops and roots and tubers to improve their production and as necessary, to collaborate closely with relevant organizations on the UN system in the Region.

100. The Conference stressed the need for upgrading irrigation efficiency and supported FAO's proposals to hold a Regional Expert Consultation of Water Users' Associations, and to publish a technical report methodology for evaluation of irrigation performance.

101. The Conference supported FAO's programme of work on analysis of problems and prospects of oilseed production and the establishment of a Regional Network to Promote TCDC in this sector. It was suggested that similar networks for cotton and vegetables also be established.

102. The Conference observed that in promoting crop diversification programmes, due consideration be given, not only to improved productivity and production, but also post-harvest handling, storage, transportation, and marketing.

103. To improve food security and to increase export revenues, the Conference fully supported the proposal to continue root and tuber, coconut, cocoa, and banana production development in the South Pacific. The Conference supported FAO's proposal to organize an Expert Consultation on Improved Production of Roots and Tuber Crops in Small Island Countries.

104. In crop diversification, the Conference suggested that attention be given to promoting all aspects of horticulture development including production, harvesting, processing and marketing.

105. The Conference observed that monitoring of exotic pests and diseases continued to be of major concern. It was vital to prevent new attacks by pests and diseases, by introduction of post-quarantine measures. The Conference therefore endorsed FAO's activities in support of member countries to enhance effectiveness of their quarantine activities.

106. The Conference recognized that Integrated Pest Management (IPM) was one of the most appropriate strategies for plant protection and expressed full support for FAO's activities concerning IPM.

107. The Conference noted that a free and expanding international trade underpinned efforts to diversify agriculture. However, the trade had been distorted, not only by tariff and non-tariff barriers, but also by the export subsidies given to producers of several agricultural products. The Conference noted that FAO had done various studies on agricultural trade and food security.

108. The Conference noted the importance of liberalization of international agricultural trade for member countries. In this context, the Conference observed that the Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN) currently underway under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade offered a major opportunity to improve access in major markets for agricultural exports from the Region. Participants in the MTN negotiations were urged to commit themselves to achieving a successful outcome in the Mid Term Review of the negotiations to take place in Montreal in December 1988. Some delegates, however, stressed that international cooperation on trade in agriculture products should take into consideration the position of the countries heavily dependent upon imports of agricultural products.

109. The Conference reiterated the need to reduce food losses and promote agro-processing and marketing. It supported FAO's proposal to document the development of agro-industries in selected countries of the Region, as well as the holding of a Regional Consultation on Agricultural Mechanization to facilitate exchange of information and experiences.

110. To ensure close integration between crop and livestock production, the Conference suggested greater use of crop residues for animal feed.

111. The Conference endorsed the emphasis given to Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries in livestock production and the programme for transfer of technology on the management of buffaloes and embryo transfer. It fully supported the regional attempt to control and eradicate contagious animal diseases, in particular rinderpest through South-Asia Rinderpest Eradication Campaign (SAREC).

112. The Conference recognized the importance of strengthening national research systems, and observed that the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions would be a welcome development.

113. The Conference recognized that tissue culture and biotechnology were already making significant contributions to agriculture. The Conference suggested greater information dissemination and strengthening of institutional capabilities in biotechnology.

114. In the promotion of equity, the numerous problems faced by small farmers were noted by the Conference. FAO was urged to take special cognizance of these problems in the formulation of programmes and projects such as access to factors of production, markets' information and training.

115. The Conference emphasized the vital role of women in agriculture and rural development and urged FAO to maintain priority support to the integration of women in its future programme of work.

116. The Conference underscored the importance of integration of nutritional considerations into programmes for agricultural diversification. It supported FAO's initiative in establishing the Asian Network for Food and Nutrition as a means for promoting TCDC in this area or work. Activities such as determining dietary energy requirements, preparation of dietary guidelines, use of nutrition indicators and nutrition education and awareness should be undertaken through this Network.

117. The Conference stressed the need to strengthen food and agricultural marketing systems. This is particularly urgent in developing countries with poor marketing and transport infrastructure. Several South Pacific Island delegations highlighted post-harvest crop and income losses experienced by small farmers because of marketing constraints. Several other delegations noted that the rapid advances in food and agricultural production required complementary developments in marketing and related post-harvest activities and export promotion to ease the Region's transition into the nineties. The Conference suggested that FAO provide policy guidance and technical assistance in this field.

118. The Conference supported the priority given to dissemination of productive and proven aquaculture technologies, within the framework of TCDC, through the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia (NACA). It also endorsed the ongoing activities of FAO in small-scale fisheries development and fish marketing and information services through its regional projects, INFOFISH and regional meetings. In regard to marine fisheries, the Conference suggested intensification of efforts, particularly in the areas of comprehensive stock assessment and improved fisheries management.

119. The Conference expressed its serious concern at the accelerated rate of deforestation, especially in tropical areas. This was leading to soil erosion and consequent loss of productivity. It noted that deforestation threatened the resource base for continued food production. It therefore supported the importance given to conservation of uplands; promotion of agroforestry in areas where shifting cultivation was practised and programmes of community forestry, reforestation and in situ conservation of genetic resources.

120. The Conference fully supported on-going reforestation efforts. It called on FAO, as the coordinating agency, to accelerate the implementation of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan in the Asia-Pacific Region. Given the overriding importance of conservation of forest resources for sustainable development, the Conference urged Member Nations to formulate national tropical forestry action plans without delay.

121. The Conference recognized the special needs of South Pacific Island countries. It fully supported the new Regional Project on the South Pacific Forestry Development located at Port Vila in Vanuatu. This project aimed at assisting these small island countries through assessment of their forest resources and providing expert advice in such critical areas as: reforestation of degraded lands, coconut wood utilization and agroforestry development.

III. SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Food Production for Nutritional Adequacy in the Asia-Pacific Region

122. The Regional Food Policy and Nutrition Officer introduced the Secretariat document 1/ entitled "Food Production for Nutritional Adequacy in Asia-Pacific Region". He stressed that in almost all countries, increase in domestic food production had been the most important factor in nutritional improvements. He clarified that other factors such as food distribution, were also relevant but they had not been proposed for discussion as they were discussed at the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference.

123. The Conference noted that in the Asia-Pacific Region, over the last 25 years, there had been increases in food production. Cereal production in the Region increased from about 320 million tons in 1961 to 765 million tons in 1986 at an annual average compound growth rate of about 3.6 percent. The production of roots and tubers, the staple food in the Pacific countries, increased from about 135 million tons in 1961 to about 214 million tons in 1986, registering an average annual growth rate of 1.9 percent. Against the average requirement of 2 285 kilocalories, the availability of dietary energy in the developing countries of the Region rose from 1 983 kilocalories in 1961/63 to 2 437 kilocalories in 1982/84. This was about 7 percent above the average requirements and represented an increase of about 23 percent in per caput food availability in the Region over the period. Calories from total cereals increased by about 29 percent. Calories from wheat more than doubled from 216 to 449 kilocalories. Rice increased from 1 304 to 1 677 kilocalories and the share of other cereals stagnated around 285 kilocalories. Calories from roots and tubers, pulses and beans, and animal products generally declined. Calories from sugars and oils and fats, however, generally increased.

124. The Conference recognized that the percentage of the undernourished declined and there had been an increase in average dietary energy availability in the Region. However, because of significant increase in total population, recent estimates placed the number of undernourished persons in the Asia-Pacific Region at around 400 million.

125. The Conference observed that while some efforts had been made to introduce nutritional considerations in individual agriculture projects, by and large, agricultural planning in most countries of the Region had, so far, tended to focus on achieving food self-sufficiency targets rather than on nutritional considerations. A stage had now been reached when it would be desirable to shift the focus of agricultural planning from food self-sufficiency to nutritional adequacy. The Conference therefore suggested that nutrition considerations should comprise an integral part of national food policies and agriculture plans.

126. Realizing the need for producing more of the nutritionally desirable foods, especially pulses, vegetable oils, fruits, vegetables and fish, the Conference urged countries to give due consideration to the diversification of agriculture. The Conference noted that the potential for increasing the production of nutritionally desirable foods did exist in various countries of the Region. In order to properly guide agricultural diversification, the

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Conference suggested that quantitative and qualitative dietary guidelines be worked out by countries of the Region where such guidelines do not already exist. Country level workshops comprising agriculture planners and nutritionists should be held to work out the dietary guidelines. FAO should provide technical backstopping to these workshops. The proposed Asian Network for Food and Nutrition should coordinate the work on dietary guidelines.

127. In several developing countries of the Region, strategies for increasing food production in the short run focus on better endowed areas. Such strategies, though beneficial, tended to neglect parts of individual countries where food deficits had increased and where large concentrations of people could be at nutritional risk. In this context, the Conference suggested the identification of such areas and segments of population. They should be accorded greater attention by agricultural planners. Identification of beneficiaries should be based on objective norms, such as: (i) birth weight; (ii) height and weight of primary school children at entry, i.e. 6-7 years of age; (iii) food consumption patterns of primary school children during their final year, i.e. 11-12 years old; and (iv) the cost of 1 600 kilocalories of the staple food, expressed as a percentage of the average income from area to area within a country.

128. Reviewing the contribution of rice to the overall regional availability of food, the Conference emphasized that in such countries where overall availability of dietary energy was satisfactory and rice contributed more than 70 percent to the total calorie intake, a strategy to convert marginal paddy lands to other crops, would facilitate diversification of the national food basket.

129. The Conference noted that wheat proved to be a successful crop from the viewpoint of diversifying cereal contents of diets in the Region. In recent years, several non-wheat growing countries had succeeded in producing wheat. The Conference suggested that, when agro-climatic conditions were suitable, the cultivation of wheat in the traditional rice growing countries of Asia, offered a distinct opportunity which needed to be utilized, bearing in mind considerations of comparative advantage.

130. The Conference noted with concern that in most countries of South Asia, the available dietary energy per caput from pulses and beans had substantially declined. Nutritionally, pulses were a rich source of dietary protein and therefore were an important addition to a cereal-based diet for improving its essential amino acid profile. The Conference, therefore, suggested that countries should make efforts to screen and identify potential legume species for growing under stress conditions. Usefulness of these species should be improved through genetic manipulation.

131. The Conference noted that in the Pacific Island countries roots and tubers were important food crops. Improvements in production of these crops had not been significant and there was considerable potential for raising their yields. In this context the Conference suggested that governments undertake measures to improve yields, where necessary seeking the assistance of international agencies.

132. Recognizing the nutritional importance of fats and oils in diet, the Conference emphasized the need for exploiting the potential for the development of oil-seeds in the Region. In this context the Conference urged countries to accelerate crop diversification programmes and to promote multiple cropping of short- and medium-term duration oil seed crops.

133. The Conference emphasized the importance of dietary energy from fish and seafood in different countries of the Region and observed that there were considerable variations in the contribution of fish and seafood to the diets. In this context the Conference suggested that countries strengthen their aquaculture programmes particularly in coastal areas and areas with rivers and lakes.

134. The Conference emphasized that countries should make continued efforts to increase food production and ensure an overall food availability of at least 10 percent above their average national requirements. This would help ease physical and economic access by weaker segments of the population to available food.

135. In order to promote nutritional adequacy, the Conference stressed the need for increased nutrition education and awareness. To this end countries should strengthen their programmes of nutrition education and nutritional awareness.

Progress and Problems of Livestock Development in the Region

136. The Regional Animal Production and Health Officer introduced the Secretariat document 1/ entitled "Progress and Problems of Livestock Development in the Region". He observed that in recent years, there had been considerable progress in livestock development in the Region. Progress, however, had been very uneven; there were many constraints still to be removed. In 1976-86, the Region recorded annual growth in production rate of 6.6 percent for meat, 3.9 percent in milk and 4.9 percent in eggs. World growth rate for these items were: 2.8, 1.9 and 3.0 percent, respectively.

137. The Conference noted that in spite of substantial growth in the output of livestock products in the Region, livestock's contribution to national economies was uneven; its contribution to nutrition, with few exceptions, remained poor. Intake of animal protein in the Region's developing countries was only 7 gram per caput per day as against the world average of 24 grams. Due to increase in per capita income in several countries of the Region, demand for livestock products had been increasing. This demand was being met by ever-larger imports. Improvement in production would reduce the foreign exchange burden and increase employment and incomes of the small-scale farmers who had limited access to land.

138. The Conference considered various components in livestock development such as nutrition, genetic improvement, animal health, marketing and credit. It noted that straw was the major ingredient in feed of cattle and buffaloes in many countries of the Region. The largest impact on ruminant feeding could be achieved by improving the feeding value of straw. The Conference therefore urged that countries propagate proven low-cost technologies for feed e.g. supplementation of straw rations with small amounts of green fodder, oil cakes and urea-molasses.

139. The Conference recognized the special problems of South Pacific countries as far as animal feeds were concerned and supported FAO's initiative in identifying the locally available ingredients in the formulation of improved animal feeds.

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140. The Conference recognized cereal production had increased significantly. But use of cereals as an ingredient of livestock feed barely reached ten percent. Tropical developing countries might consider use of cereal for livestock feeds if an unmarketable surplus became available. Keeping in view the effective economic demand for human consumption, the use of cereals as an ingredient of livestock feeds might be considered.

141. The Conference recognized the importance of buffaloes in the Region and observed that sufficient international support had not been enlisted for research and training in this field so far. The Conference suggested that the proposal of Pakistan to establish a Regional Centre for Buffalo Research and Training be considered.

142. The Conference observed that the South Pacific sub-region was relatively free from major contagious animal diseases. However, in other parts, the Region had animal health problems, for example, Rinderpest was endemic in South Asia. The Conference noted that FAO had prepared a South-Asia Rinderpest Eradication Campaign. It urged full support for this campaign. Efforts to control foot-and-mouth disease, haemorrhagic septicaemia, and hog cholera should be continued.

143. The Conference noted that FAO was supporting South Pacific Island countries to remain free from animal diseases. Countries needed to strengthen present animal quarantine facilities.

144. The Conference observed that some progress had been achieved in improving the genetic potential of local cattle and buffalo. But overall achievement continued to be extremely limited. As a result, the proportion of highly productive animals in most developing countries remained marginal. The Conference therefore requested FAO to help countries develop programmes for genetic improvement of indigenous animal resources, based on exotic breeds, adapted to local conditions.

145. The Conference welcomed the initial application of biotechnology to problems of animal production and health. The Conference requested FAO to accord priority to biotechnology, specially animal reproduction, disease diagnosis and control.

146. The Conference observed that pricing and marketing of livestock products influence livestock development. Countries were urged to develop appropriate institutional mechanisms to formulate and implement national livestock sector pricing policies. Where such institutions already existed in the crop sector, it would be useful to include livestock products within their purview. Some delegates, however, cautioned that administered or regulated pricing could lead to resource misallocation.

147. The Conference suggested that FAO assist countries, upon request, in preparing comprehensive studies and in organizing national training courses on livestock pricing and marketing policies.

148. The Conference recognized that several countries experienced inadequacy of data in the livestock sector and suggested that FAO help improve their data base.

Promoting Agroforestry for Improved Land Husbandry

149. The Regional Forestry Officer introduced the Secretariat document 1/. He stated that in many countries of the Region the arable land frontier had already been reached and that problems of land degradation and loss of soil fertility were acute. He detailed how agroforestry, which sought to achieve a more productive, sustainable and diversified output from the land, had considerable scope and potential in solving the deep seated problems of soil degradation and rural poverty in the Region.

150. The Conference emphasized that the problems of soil degradation warranted a search for a wide range of solutions. It felt that agroforestry might well prove to be a technique with considerable scope and potential because of benefits that could accrue on three fronts: economic, social and environmental.

151. The Conference endorsed the view that agroforestry had the potential to improve the productivity of land in four situations: (i) critical watershed areas of major river systems where the over-riding demand was for conservation; (ii) shifting cultivation areas where agroforestry could be the land use option which harmonized the ecological considerations with the socio-economic imperatives of slash-and-burn practices; (iii) encroached forest lands; and (iv) marginal lands and wasteland.

152. In considering the suitability of agroforestry, the Conference discussed the various forms of agroforestry which traditionally existed in many parts of the Region, as well as in a variety of new, and experimental, combinations. The Conference noted that two forms of agroforestry, namely the one which combined crops and trees, and one involving pastures, legumes, animals and trees, were the most relevant in the context of improved land husbandry in the Region.

153. The Conference emphasized that agroforestry programmes, in some ways, were a departure from conventional forestry. Agroforestry was more complex and less well understood. There were conflicts and trade-offs in reconciling agroforestry with existing approaches to forestry development and land use. The Conference, therefore, suggested that multidisciplinary research and in-depth studies be undertaken to promote agroforestry along sound lines.

154. The Conference emphasized that Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries had a key role to play in promoting agroforestry. International organizations like FAO and International Council for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) should facilitate the process of sharing of knowledge and expertise on agroforestry among developing countries. The FAO should also consider organizing a regional meeting on agroforestry.

155. The Conference observed that skills and requirements demanded of staff promoting agroforestry were much broader than conventional forestry or agronomy. They included an understanding of planning land use, crop husbandry, animal husbandry and human sociology. In the light of the above, the Conference urged that suitable curricula on agroforestry be devised and introduced in forestry and agriculture education/ training institutions.

156. In promoting awareness of agroforestry among farmers, both agricultural extension and forestry extension systems had a role to play. The Conference urged that these extension organizations be strengthened to meet the needs of agroforestry. The FAO should continue to give high priority to developing extension organization and methods.

157. The Conference underscored the crucial role of appropriate rural institutions such as farmer associations and cooperatives in promoting agroforestry. Forest based industries and parastatal bodies engaged in forestry activities should also be actively involved.

158. The Conference stressed that in some countries, security of land tenure and right to the use of trees were important constraints in developing agroforestry. Where people had doubts over the ownership and control over the trees they planted, they were likely to withhold the long-term commitment necessary to promote agroforestry. The Conference, therefore, suggested reexamination of the concerned legislation and procedures, where necessary and appropriate.

159. The Conference felt that when available land was needed for producing food and/or cash crops, many farmers did not see any reason for planting trees, particularly when returns could be expected only some years in the future. Therefore, the Conference underscored the need for offering appropriate incentives to farmers willing to practise agroforestry.

160. The Conference noted that water and soil conservation problems in the region were growing in severity and that agroforestry could help rehabilitate degraded catchment areas. In these areas, the problem was exacerbated by prevailing rural poverty. The Conference, therefore, urged the adoption of strategies which ensured that poverty alleviation and environmental protection complemented each other.

161. The Conference felt that shifting cultivation was one of the most important causes of deforestation and degradation of tropical and subtropical forests in the Asia-Pacific Region, and suggested that Governments consider increasing support for strategies and programmes designed to better manage shifting cultivation lands in situ, through appropriate agroforestry solutions.

162. The Conference stressed the need for Governments to undertake wasteland surveys and promote viable agroforestry practices to restore and make these lands productive.

163. The Conference devoted particular attention to the relevance of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan for solving the major environmental problems and land use conflicts between agriculture and forestry in the Region. The Conference urged Member Nations to step up efforts to formulate national tropical forestry action plans for concerted intersectoral approaches between agriculture and forestry. Agroforestry as an essential tool for sustainable agriculture and improved land husbandry should be accorded a high priority within the frameworks of national tropical forestry action plans.

IV. OTHER MATTERS

Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

164. The Regional Plant Production and Protection Officer introduced the Secretariat document 1/ entitled "Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)".

165. The Conference appreciated FAO's assistance in ensuring contacts by regional representatives with member countries to facilitate the feed-in of national views to the CGIAR and feedback from the Group to member countries.

166. The Conference observed that agricultural research had become an activity of major economic significance and should be strengthened according to the countries' needs. In this context, the Conference appreciated that the priorities and strategies of the CGIAR were kept under continuing analysis and review to meet the changing needs of developing countries.

167. The Conference appreciated the action taken by FAO on the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Association on Agricultural Research Institutions and recommended that member governments endorse its Constitution and encourage the designated national institutions to become members of the Association.

168. The Conference suggested that APAARI constitute a forum where the Region's representatives to the CGIAR, CGIAR institutes, and leaders of national research systems should hold consultations, share information and foster linkages.

169. Keeping in view the good work done by the Region's representative from Thailand during his four-year tenure ending 1988, the Conference extended the term of Thailand for the final two years up to 1990. Further, the Conference also noted that the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference had elected Bangladesh as the new representative for the period 1986 to 1990.

170. The Conference stressed that a rotational approach enabled as many countries as possible to represent the Region on the CGIAR, and therefore decided that the term of the elected countries in the future should be four years.

171. Noting that the research needs of the Pacific Island countries were unique and needed to be adequately reflected in the CGIAR meetings, the Conference urged that future Conferences give due consideration to Island countries while electing regional representatives.

172. The Conference observed that the role of the regional representatives and reporting of CGIAR activities should be strengthened. In this context, the Conference suggested that the delegation to the FAO Regional Conference may include the representatives of Asia and the Pacific Region on CGIAR, to facilitate reporting to the Conference on the activities of the Group.

1/ APRC/88/7

Place and Date of the Twentieth FAO Regional Conference for
Asia and the Pacific

173. The Twentieth Regional Conference was likely to be held sometime between April and July of 1990. Therefore, a decision on the venue of the Conference would be made by the Director-General in the second half of 1989. In doing so, the Director-General would take into account any firm offer received by him during the next 12 months or so. It was understood that one of the member countries had had informal discussion with the Director-General and would be making a formal offer during the stipulated period.

NINETEENTH REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Bangkok, Thailand, 11 - 15 July 1988

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Inaugural Ceremony.
2. Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen and Election of Rapporteur.
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable.

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement by the Director-General.
5. Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in the Region.
6. Report on FAO Activities in the Region including Action taken on the Main Recommendations Made by the 18th Regional Conference and Programme of Work 1988-89 in the Region.

III. SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- ✕ 7. Food Production for Nutritional Adequacy in the Asia-Pacific Region.
- ✕ 8. Progress and Problems of Livestock Development in the Region.
- ✕ 9. Promoting Agroforestry for Improved Land Husbandry.
10. Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

IV. CONCLUDING ITEMS

11. Any other business.
12. Place and Date of the 20th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific.
13. Adoption of the Conference Report.
14. Closure of the Conference.

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STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Mr Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

I am glad that your Conference this year can be held in your own Region, and particularly in the country which has been the home of our FAO Regional Office for so many years. I would especially like to thank His Excellency the Prime Minister. We are honoured that despite his many obligations he has made it possible to join us at the opening of the Conference.

I also wish to express FAO's gratitude to Mr Kibria, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), for making available ESCAP's facilities and support services for this Conference. We regret that he is unable to be here with us today.

It is a good omen that we are meeting for a second time in Bangkok, twenty years after the Regional Conference was first held in this captivating, beautiful city, capital of the Kingdom of Thailand, ruled by an enlightened Sovereign to whom I know I can pay tribute on your behalf. Over the years, we have observed with growing admiration, the keen interest of His Majesty the King in agriculture and rural development. Since his accession to the throne, over 1 200 projects have been undertaken, on his personal initiative, in such diverse sectors as land and water resources, livestock production, fisheries and forestry. The pioneering role of these projects cannot be over-emphasized: they have, as it were, shaped the country's agricultural development. FAO is proud to have been associated from the outset with many of these projects, which have their origin in His Majesty's vision and dynamism.

At His Majesty's side, his gracious Consort has worked unceasingly to better the lot of the people of Thailand. To honour her work in furthering education, the introduction of small-scale rural industries, the status of rural women and the fight against poverty, FAO struck a medal bearing a likeness to Her Majesty Queen Sirikit. The theme was Ceres, the Roman goddess of agriculture. It was my great honour, here in Bangkok on 11 May 1979, to personally present this medal to Her Majesty.

Diversity and unity within the Region

When it comes to discussing the food and agriculture situation within the Region, one is forced to recognize that generalized analysis cannot do justice to such a vast and so diverse a Region: from small islands to massive continents, from tropical jungles to desert steppes, from arid lands to lush

vegetation. The human landscape is equally varied with its multitude of cultures, civilizations, languages, religions, political systems and economies ranging from extreme poverty to the highest levels of per caput incomes.

But if I have to sum up in one word the underlying characteristic of the Region, my unflinching reply would be: vitality. Effervescence, dynamism, change, evolution, movement and boundless energy have all made their mark on the Region's resounding successes, as well as its response to its worst crises. This vitality is the driving force behind the rapid growth of your Region.

You, the leaders of your countries, embody this vitality, tempered by wisdom and experience. Your mission is to channel the vital force which abounds everywhere in the Region, and guide it with your sure touch for the common good. Convinced that your discussions and conclusions will reflect this, I would like to touch upon the major items on your agenda.

Cereal production

Progress in cereal production has been spectacular for over a decade. Between 1961 and 1986 cereal production in the developing countries of the Asia and Pacific Region grew at an annual rate of 3.8 percent, a level substantially higher than in the rest of the world. This remarkable achievement reflects mainly enlightened and vigorous government policies coupled with the hard work and skill of the Region's farmers. However, there have been substantial variations between countries; growth rates were equal to or above the regional average in eleven countries and below the average in nine others.

We have every reason to be confident in the Region's future, even though fluctuations in production sometimes do occur, as happened last year, following one of the weakest and most erratic monsoons on record. Cereal production fell in 1987 by 3.2 percent to 698 million tons. Moreover, there was considerable variation between countries.

I must pay tribute to the way the affected countries responded to this production shortfall, relying mainly on their own resources. Several of those most seriously affected were able to maintain essential food supplies without recourse to exceptional external assistance by drawing upon reserve stocks they had accumulated through prudent national food security policies in years when growing conditions were more favourable; thus, the cereal stocks held by the developing countries of the Region fell during 1987/88 by some 20 million tons to 86 million tons, their lowest level since the beginning of the decade. Other countries increased their commercial imports of cereals, while food aid shipments from outside also rose slightly. Early FAO estimates indicate that a serious decline in the overall per caput consumption of cereals in the Region in 1987/88 was averted. However, there were consumption declines in individual countries, while serious localized food shortages were encountered among vulnerable and drought affected populations.

Following the sharp decline in cereal stocks, the outcome of this year's harvests will be even more crucial than is usually the case to the Region's food supplies. Fortunately, the southwest monsoon started on time and the rains have so far been widespread and abundant. The weather in the next two months will be critical. Should crop conditions be unfavourable in the next few months, increased cereal imports could be needed at a time when supplies

on world markets are tighter than for several years, particularly those of rice. The situation will need to be monitored very closely over the next few months. This becomes all the more important in view of the current unfavourable outlook for cereal and soybean harvests in North America, due to drought. Supplies of cereals on international markets are expected to become tighter in the year ahead. Already world market prices have risen sharply and the could still go up further.

Nutritional situation

The overall impact of the long-term trend in the Region's cereal production on its food and nutrition situation has been positive. Nonetheless, some problems have been encountered. Many countries in the Region are in transition from a period in which home-grown food, including livestock products, was the dominant production pattern, to a stage of urbanization in which the ability to buy a balanced diet from commercial sources is not yet matched by sufficient purchasing power.

Our Fifth World Food Survey shows that the prodigious rise of cereal production has certainly given an important boost to the available calorie supply. But this development, due largely to the Green Revolution, has had one unfortunate side-effect: grain legumes such as beans and lentils have become rather marginal crops. The prices of these nutritious foods, now grown in smaller quantities on family farms, have shot up at a time when the shift to a monetary economy has not yet generated sufficient purchasing power to allow a satisfactory intake of beans, meat and fish.

The result is a net rise in the intake of cereals and sugar, followed by fats, particularly fried foods. The consumption of roots and tubers, particularly in the islands and in Indonesia, remains steady. The calorie intake from foods of animal origin is not increasing and the share of beans and pulses in the diet is declining.

On the whole, per caput dietary energy supplies are increasing despite population expansion. The proportion of undernourished people has dropped from 21 percent in 1971 to 17 percent in 1981, and there is every indication that this downward trend will continue. However, such progress also highlights those pockets of undernourishment and dietary imbalances which still remain.

There are two possible solutions:

- One approach would be to implement incentive policies designed to encourage an expansion of production of pulses, dairy products, small animal husbandry and artisanal fisheries. Within this approach the small farmer should be the main beneficiary of incentive policies.
- A second complementary approach would be to expand consumer education policies.
- Despite the enormity of the problems which still face the Region, the determination of its leaders and its people offers every hope that the proportion of undernourished people will not only decline but that their number will begin to fall. The problem of malnutrition is primarily one of poverty.

Livestock production

The importance of the contribution of livestock products to nutrition is evident. In most developing countries of the Region, the intake of animal protein in the diet is at present less than 10 percent. Animal husbandry is primarily the province of the small farmer. Development efforts should therefore focus on the small farmer.

One offshoot of the upsurge in cereal production has been the availability of enormous amounts of straw, a major component in the feed of ruminants, particularly cattle and buffalo. The nutritional value of straw can be greatly enriched by urea treatment, a simple, inexpensive technique. And yet, the practice is not spreading.

The animal breeding and genetic situation leaves much to be desired. Farmers are not using selected bulls; artificial insemination is still too rare; and bovine genetic resources are insufficient. In China, the situation in the swine sector is quite the reverse as China possesses and wisely manages extremely rich and perhaps unequalled genetic resources.

The conclusion of these few observations is that progress in animal husbandry is largely dependent on extension -- the dissemination of skills and techniques. Where this has been possible, where peasants have been motivated and their energy mobilized, excellent results have been obtained. We need only recall the impressive progress of dairy production in India and in Indonesia, and the large-scale operation now underway in China.

Climatic factors make livestock production a particular problem throughout much of the Region. Developing countries are still incurring heavy losses from infectious diseases which have been successfully wiped out in the developed countries. Like bacteria, parasites and other viruses are no respecters of borders and so control campaigns must be regional rather than local or national. With this end in mind, FAO has drawn up a regional project for the eradication of the dreaded disease, rinderpest.

Victory in the battle against animal diseases requires unflinching political will, resolute effort and close cooperation among all interested countries. But the poverty of many countries, which are in no position to underwrite vaccination campaigns, finance the necessary extension effort and ensure the field services needed, remains a major stumbling block.

Agro-forestry

The competition between people and livestock for land resources is repeated in another area: I refer to the conflict between agriculture and forestry. In a region which holds 69 percent of the world's farm population and only 28 percent of its farmland, the threat to forests is obviously exacerbated.

An estimated 10 million hectares of forest cover were lost in the Region between 1975 and 1985 to the benefit, if one can call it that, of crops which the land cannot long sustain. Shifting cultivation, which covers a total of some 75 million hectares and provides a livelihood for roughly 30 million people, aggravates the threat to tropical and subtropical forests. The results of deforestation are unfortunately the classic ones of erosion, loss of fertility, soil impoverishment and watershed degradation.

We must halt this rush towards the abyss. Ways must be found to exploit the land's resources without exhausting them. One viable solution is agro-forestry. The idea is to achieve sustained and diversified production, as opposed to mono-cropping, which quickly drains the land of its nutrients. Good silvo-pastoral practices can be used to restore degraded watersheds and stabilize eroded slopes. Ecological needs can be reconciled with socio-economic requirements.

The position of FAO

We can see from this rapid overview how much the Region, beset by difficulties, needs help and assistance to overcome them. It is the purpose of FAO, your Organization, to provide such assistance. You know how close this mission is to my own heart, and how it absorbs the energies of all my colleagues. The problem is knowing just what resources we have or will have to get on with this fundamental task.

As you know, this is a period of very grave crisis for our Organization. Should it persist, our activities and indeed our very existence are threatened. You are aware of the cash flow crisis which arose in 1986-87 due to shortfall in the payment of contributions, particularly by the major contributor, which has paid only a tiny portion of its assessed contribution. As a result, we have had to cut our services to Member Nations by 25 million dollars.

In 1988, we have been forced to make a further cut of 20 million dollars. The cut would have been much higher without the extraordinary contribution of 15 million dollars by our host country, Italy. That makes 45 million dollars lopped off our programmes in two years, at a time when our services to member countries have never been needed more urgently.

I don't need to be a prophet to announce that 1989 is going to be an even harder year. The FAO runs the real risk of suffocating from lack of oxygen to keep its programmes alive. The FAO Conference, of course, authorized me to attend to the most urgent needs through credit facilities, but within what limits? This year at the lowest estimate we shall need to borrow some 5 million dollars. But, if we are to ensure full execution of the Programme of Work approved by the Conference for the 1988-89 biennium, by the end of 1989 we may very well need to borrow up to ten times as much.

On FAO's part, we have completely reworked the Programme of Work and Budget; we are devoting an enormous expenditure of time and energy to reviewing and sharpening our priorities -- attempting to discern and safeguard the essential, and to successfully manage our programmes with less money. There can no longer be talk of trimming the fat. We have had to cut right down to the bone. If we go any further, we may well paralyze FAO and depress staff morale beyond the point of no return. We do have irrevocable commitments to staff, and above all to our member countries. Nor is FAO a purely mechanical enterprise whose activities can be compartmentalized with no harm done. The FAO is a living organism in which all parts work together. We have just seen to what extent agriculture, livestock production and forestry are interdependent. There is no way we can make cuts in one sector without feeling the pain in all the others, and in the Organization as a whole.

As instructed by the Conference, we are in the process of a review of certain aspects of FAO's goals and operations with a view to making its contribution more effective. The Programme and Finance Committees devoted seven full days to determining ways of organizing and carrying out this study. They reached unanimous conclusions on the method to follow, the experts, and so forth. They adopted a procedure which will very soon allow them to review the preliminary Programme of Work and Budget for 1990-91. I ask you, however, what possible significance this much-sought-after review can have if it is performed on a moribund FAO, and when the needs of the developing countries are so immense?

I, therefore, now appeal to the reason and good sense of member countries, even more than to their generosity. At this time, it is imperative that we stand shoulder to shoulder. Help from the richest countries is indispensable. Might not those materially in a position to do so take their inspiration from Italy's example and consider the possibility of early payment of their contributions? The Council of FAO will be discussing these matters, and will probably be appealing to member countries, particularly the major contributor, to act to ensure the survival of the Organization, and enable it to comply with its mission. I ask the Regional Conference to give serious thought to this grave problem: it will be up to the Conference to decide whether it wishes to voice an opinion on the matter.

Conclusion

When the stakes are so high -- the destiny of thousands of millions of human beings -- I just do not believe that the most favoured countries will turn a deaf ear to the urgent appeals addressed to them. I also firmly believe they will hear these appeals even better when they can look across and see nations who are themselves resolved to make every conceivable effort of their own to leave underdevelopment behind them.

I have full confidence in your Region, in its rulers, and in its throngs of men and women. I know that the vitality and dynamism I mentioned at the outset are a match for the urgent and grave challenges you face. You remember Tagore's phrase: "We are too poor to be late." Decisive, concerted action now to conserve and develop the Region's resources in such a way that the neediest will get a share of the fruits of development, this is the aim of your Regional Conference. Primarily, this requires a collective effort to ensure that a civilized human community will survive and flourish, and be able to look calmly and confidently towards the twenty-first century. May I, in closing, share with you one vision of the human landscape from that great poet and noble son of your Region whom I have just cited, Rabindranath Tagore:

"Where the mind is without fear and
the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken
up into fragments by narrow/domestic
walls;
Where words come out from the depth of
truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms
towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not
lost its way into the dreary desert sand
of dead habit."

May your work help to make this vision a reality.

Thank you very much.

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