

CCP 65/28
CL 45/6

Report of the thirty-ninth Session of the

COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

to the forty-fifth Session of the Council of FAO

Rome, November 1965



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

COUNCIL	FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS	CL 45/6 5 November 1965
CONSEIL	ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ALIMENTATION ET L'AGRICULTURE	
CONSEJO	ORGANIZACION DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA LA AGRICULTURA Y LA ALIMENTACION	

Item 4 of the
Provisional Agenda

Forty-Fifth Session

Rome, 15 November 1965

REPORT OF THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE
COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

Letter of Transmittal from the Chairman of the Committee on Commodity
Problems to the Chairman of the Council of the FAO

5 November 1965

Chairman of the Council of FAO
Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations
Rome, Italy

Dear Sir,

I have the honor to transmit to you herewith the Report
of the Thirty-Ninth Session of the Committee on Commodity Problems,
which was held in Rome from 3 to 5 November 1965.

Yours faithfully,

D.W. Woodward
Chairman
Committee on Commodity Problems



COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

REPORT OF THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) held its Thirty-Ninth Session from 3 to 5 November 1965 at FAO Headquarters, Rome. The Session was attended by the representatives of 21 Member Countries of the Committee, 19 Observer Countries and 8 International Organizations ^{1/}.
2. The Session was presided over by Mr. D.W. Woodward (New Zealand), Chairman. The Committee's work during the Session was aided by a Drafting Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr M. Krishan (India).
3. The Committee reformulated the Provisional Agenda presented in document CCP 65/20 as follows:
 - I. Adoption of the Provisional Agenda.
 - II. Relations between FAO and Other Organizations Concerned with Commodity Matters, Especially UNCTAD, and the Role of the CCP.
 - III. Implications of the UNCTAD and Argentine Proposals for the Modification of the World Food Program.
 - IV. Special Commodity Matters: Proposal for an Ad Hoc Meeting on Hard Fibers.
 - V. Any Other Business.
4. The Committee was addressed at its opening meeting by the Director-General of FAO, who stressed the importance of the CCP's present discussion which could provide valuable guidance for the Conference at its coming Thirteenth Session. He reported that on the Secretariat level close and satisfactory working relationships between FAO and UNCTAD had been confirmed and strengthened. A stage had now been reached at which the CCP and FAO could better assess the complementarity of their work in relation to that of UNCTAD. As to questions of food aid and surplus utilization, he noted that the Committee would be considering the UNCTAD and Argentine proposals for the modification of the World Food Program and pointed out that the Council and Conference would value the Committee's views on the action that might be taken for the further examination of this question.
5. In the course of its discussions on Agenda Item II the Committee heard a statement by the representative of the United Nations made on behalf of the Secretary General of UNCTAD. He referred to the continued close collaboration between the UNCTAD and the FAO, and expressed the hope that the existing close links between the two organizations would be consolidated and expanded to the mutual benefit of the objectives of both.
6. Under its Agenda Item on Special Commodity Matters, the Committee heard a report from the Secretariat on the recent session of the negotiating conference on sugar and the July and October meetings of the Working Party on Prices and Quotas of the United Nations Cocoa Conference. The Committee noted that the Secretariat had taken part in these meetings and did not consider that action on its part was needed at this stage.

^{1/} A list of participants is given in Appendix A to this Report.

I. RELATIONS BETWEEN FAO AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED WITH COMMODITY MATTERS, ESPECIALLY UNCTAD, AND THE ROLE OF THE CCP

7. In its discussion of this item, the Committee had before it a Secretariat paper on recent international activities on commodity matters relevant to the work of the CCP (CCP 65/23) ^{1/}.

8. The Committee recalled that at its Thirty-Eighth Session it had considered that "there was scope for a real complementarity between the work of FAO on the one hand, and the functions of UNCTAD and GATT on the other" and "expressed the conviction that this complementarity should be reflected in the development of working relations between FAO and the other bodies with a view to avoiding duplication". At the present session, the Committee noted with satisfaction that co-operation between the FAO and GATT Secretariats had continued to develop and expand along established lines. The pattern of fruitful co-operation between FAO and UNCTAD which had developed at the Secretariat level, had been extended and confirmed at the intergovernmental level also in the course of the UNCTAD meetings which had taken place since the Thirty-Eighth Session of the CCP.

9. There was general consensus in the Committee that the time was not yet ripe for a precise delineation of the respective tasks of the FAO and UNCTAD in the commodity field. The Committee agreed that for the time being there was a need for a pragmatic and flexible approach toward the development of co-operation between the two organizations. The constructive participation of FAO representatives at the First Session of the Committee on Commodities and other UNCTAD meetings, it was pointed out, had facilitated the initiation of close collaboration between the two agencies. It was also noted that the expressed desire of the UNCTAD Committee on Commodities to draw on the work of other bodies had also contributed to this end.

10. The CCP reaffirmed that it was ready to keep the UNCTAD bodies fully informed of its activities and those of its subsidiary bodies. The Committee also expressed the hope that there would be a reciprocal flow of information, and looked forward to the continued participation of UNCTAD officials in its future deliberations and those of its study groups, and of FAO participation in relevant UNCTAD meetings. It suggested that the Secretariats of FAO and UNCTAD should continue to explore the precise means by which the desired co-ordination of activities could be satisfactorily implemented. Proposals for the consideration of governments might be forthcoming from such consultations, though it was clearly premature to attempt to develop fixed and formal procedures.

11. The CCP considered that the guidelines which the UNCTAD Committee on Commodities had established for the Secretary General of UNCTAD in carrying out the duties devolving on him with regard to the program of work of the UNCTAD Committee were particularly useful in this connection. According to these guidelines, it was the responsibility of the Secretary General of UNCTAD "(a) To avail himself of the studies, working papers and other technical documents prepared by existing organizations and bodies competent in the field of international commodity trade; (b) To ensure that this documentation meets the requirements of the Committee's work, and to the extent that it does not, call upon such organizations and bodies to endeavour to modify or adapt such documentation to the needs of the Committee; (c) Whenever the foregoing is not possible or may lead to undue delays, to undertake any necessary action to carry out the required tasks; (d) ...". These guidelines placed on FAO the responsibility to make efforts to meet the requests of UNCTAD bodies for assistance on agricultural commodity problems. The Committee felt, therefore, that the FAO Secretariat should endeavor to continue to assist the UNCTAD as fully as possible under its general guidance.

^{1/} Document CCP 65/22 on FAO Machinery for Studies of and Consultations on Commodity Problems had also been circulated to the Committee as a background paper. It had been submitted by the FAO Secretariat to the First Session of the Committee on Commodities of UNCTAD following a request made by the CCP at its Thirty-Eighth Session.

12. As to the future work of the CCP itself, the CCP noted that its activities were carried out within terms of reference laid down by the FAO governing bodies, and that its activities reflected the particular concern and interests of FAO member nations in the agricultural commodity field. The Committee felt that the program of work of the Committee on Commodities of UNCTAD and the conclusions reached at the First Session of that Committee implicitly recognized that other bodies interested in the commodity field, including the CCP, had a role to play distinct from that of UNCTAD, and that in carrying out their own responsibilities they could contribute materially to the progress of UNCTAD itself. Thus, the CCP had an independent contribution to make to the discussion of international commodity problems, with respect to the study of problems related to production, consumption and trade in agricultural products and to their implications for agricultural development.

13. The Committee noted that the FAO Commodity Review and its own conclusions on the world commodity situation were essential elements for the UNCTAD Committee on Commodities in its evaluation of the overall situation of commodity markets. Furthermore, in as much as the UNCTAD Commodity Review had the task, inter alia, of "identifying the commodities whose market situation warranted urgent attention and the international policy issues relating to primary commodities trade requiring the consideration of the Committee", FAO could assist in this task. The Committee noted the intention of the Secretariat to give special attention in the forthcoming issue of the FAO Commodity Review to the analysis of the market situations and policy problems affecting agricultural commodities giving rise to serious concern.

14. The Committee was informed of the program of studies which the ad hoc Working Party on the Organization of Commodity Trade of the UNCTAD had embarked on, and noted with interest that the FAO had primary responsibility for two of the four papers now being prepared on the subject, namely those on cocoa and selected fats and oils. It felt that it might prove useful to the Committee, at one of its future sessions, to have available the report of the ad hoc Working Party and its related studies. Some delegates felt that the Committee should not enter into substantive discussion of the Working Party's report before consideration by the UNCTAD Committee on Commodities. It was agreed, however, that the FAO paper on oils and oilseeds might usefully form part of the documentation for the Study Group on Oilseeds, Oils and Fats.

15. The Committee expressed the wish that the FAO Secretariat should respond to requests for collaboration in the preparatory work on the formulation of a General Agreement on Commodity Arrangements. FAO could make a contribution to this work because of its accumulated experience in international commodity policy matters, and also because international commodity arrangements were not restricted to trade aspects alone. It was recognized today that the structural problems connected with the entire pattern of production and consumption of agricultural commodities could not be omitted from the consideration of viable commodity arrangements. In view of its particular interest in these fields, it was felt that the CCP should be kept regularly informed of the progress made in the preparatory work being undertaken in this regard.

16. On the question of promotional measures under UNCTAD recommendation A.II.4, the CCP recognized that, insofar as such matters concerned agricultural commodities, they also fell within the responsibility of FAO, which should continue and strengthen its activities in this field as far as possible. The Committee therefore requested that more complete information be provided by the Secretariat on FAO's past, current and intended future activities in the relevant fields. This information would assist the CCP in considering what further contribution could be made by FAO.

17. With regard to the establishment by the UNCTAD Committee on Commodities of a Permanent Group on Synthetics and Substitutes, the CCP noted that FAO would be formally invited to attend the meetings of the Group in a consultative capacity. In view of the work already carried out by FAO on the problems of synthetics and substitutes, and the wide range of agricultural commodities threatened by such competition, the Committee felt that FAO was well qualified to assist the Permanent Group in its future work.

It welcomed the Secretariat's intention of calling more specific attention in the work programs of the relevant FAO study groups to the problems raised by synthetics and substitutes.

18. The Committee also considered the question of the role of the CCP's individual commodity study groups in relation to the UNCTAD activities. It believed that, on the basis of their technical expertise, the study groups could make an effective contribution to the work of the UNCTAD; a number of questions were however involved and it was therefore considered appropriate to hold this subject over for fuller discussion at the Fortieth Session of CCP. The study groups should, in the meantime, take into account the deliberations and recommendations of the various UNCTAD bodies, while continuing to report to and carry out the instructions of their parent body, the CCP. It was, however, agreed that in principle, the reports of the CCP study groups should be transmitted to the relevant UNCTAD bodies. It was also suggested that, on occasion, it might be desirable for a representative of the particular study group to be present at the relevant UNCTAD session. The Committee also felt that, on occasion, it would be useful if its own Chairman could attend the meetings of the UNCTAD Committee on Commodities.

19. The Committee requested the Director-General of FAO to draw the attention of the Secretary General of UNCTAD to its view that, given FAO's primary responsibility for agriculture, it was desirable that proposals for new study groups on agricultural commodities be referred to the CCP.

20. The precise role which the Advisory Committee to the UNCTAD Board and its Committee on Commodities would play within the UNCTAD framework had not yet been clarified. The CCP noted, however, that one member of the six-man Committee was nominated by the Director-General of FAO and stressed the necessity of his playing an active part in that body.

21. The Committee took note of extracts from the Report of the Forty-Fourth Session of the FAO Council, presented to it in document CCP 65/21, dealing with matters relevant to the CCP's work. Reference was made to the views of the Council (Report, para. 33) regarding the organization of work on the Indicative World Plan. One delegate expressed the opinion that, in the light of the Council's views, the work being done by the Secretariat with respect to the Indicative World Plan should be brought under the supervision of the CCP. In this connection the delegate stated that consideration should be given to the organizational arrangements that might be required for the CCP to discharge this function, perhaps by setting up as a first step a sessional working party to consider the Indicative World Plan, which was on the agenda for the Committee's Fortieth Session. In the light of experience thus gained, it would be possible to decide on what further arrangements, if any, might be required. The Committee was informed that the Director-General considered that it would be preferable for the CCP as a whole to concern itself with the review or discussion of the Indicative World Plan, especially in the preparatory stage. There was little debate on this matter since other delegates were not in a position to comment on these views at the present stage.

II. IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNCTAD AND ARGENTINE PROPOSALS FOR THE MODIFICATION OF THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM

22. Under this item of the Agenda the Committee discussed the implications of the UNCTAD Recommendation A.II.6 and the Argentine proposal for the modification of the World Food Program. These matters had been considered by the Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) of the World Food Program at its Seventh and Eighth Sessions. The IGC had been assisted by a study prepared by an independent expert appointed by the Executive Director of the World Food Program, in accordance with a request made by the IGC at its Seventh Session. The FAO Council at its Forty-Fourth Session had felt that it would be useful if the CCP would give attention to the expert's report. The text of this report had been circulated to the CCP as CCP 65/24 - Implications of the UNCTAD and Argentine proposals for the modification of the World Food Program. The Committee's deliberations were also assisted by a Secretariat paper (CCP 65/26) - Food Aid and Surplus Utilization - The Argentine Proposal for a World Food Fund.

23. The Committee expressed its appreciation of the work of the expert and generally agreed with the main conclusions in his report. It was informed of the discussions which had taken place on this report at the Eighth Session of the IGC, which had agreed that the proposal raised a number of fundamental issues involving such organizations as the UN, FAO, IBRD, IMF and GATT. These issues, while of particular significance to the World Food Program, went beyond the terms of reference of the IGC. The IGC therefore had referred the whole matter to its parent bodies for consideration.

24. While recognizing that a number of the issues raised were of interest to various international agencies, the Committee was conscious of the practical difficulties in organizing a single comprehensive joint study. It noted, however, that many of the matters to be analyzed were within the fields of work of FAO. It thought that it would be desirable for the Council to request the Director-General to examine as soon as possible the best way to embark on such a study. This would involve the preparation of an outline of the scope that should be covered in a comprehensive study of the issues, a review of the work already done or under way in FAO or elsewhere that was relevant, and an indication of the further work needed. Informal consultations with the Secretariats of other interested agencies would be helpful even in this preliminary stage, since some of the questions to be studied called for the special competence of these other bodies.

25. The Committee felt that the preliminary work should not be limited to the issues listed by the IGC, since a number of other aspects were also important, such as the implications of the proposals for total aid to developing countries, the aid-giving capacity of donor countries, the impact on agricultural trade as a whole, and the possible effects on prices of food commodities not in surplus.

26. The results of this preliminary survey should be presented to the CCP for consideration at its Fortieth Session. In the light of this survey the CCP could make further recommendations to the Council. Certain delegates felt that a firm decision to proceed with a comprehensive study should be taken at the present session. Other delegates stated that they had not yet had time to give adequate consideration to the matter, and a preliminary survey on the lines indicated would be helpful to their governments in formulating their views.

III. SPECIAL COMMODITY MATTERS: PROPOSAL FOR AN AD HOC MEETING ON HARD FIBERS

27. The Committee had before it a request from the Government of Tanzania, the main producer and exporter of sisal, that an ad hoc meeting be convened as soon as possible to consider the problems of hard fibers. To assist the Committee in considering this request, the Secretariat submitted a paper (CCP 65/25) which indicated that prices had declined seriously in the last eighteen months. The Observer for Tanzania stated that his Government regarded the current situation of hard fibers as critical and feared that the advent of synthetic substitutes was likely to lead to a continuance of depressed prices. This outlook called for action to ensure that sisal remained competitive. National programs for reducing costs and improving qualities of hard fibers could go some way in this direction. But fully effective discouragement of substitution by synthetics called for a much greater degree of stability in world prices of the hard fibers; and such stabilization could only be accomplished through international action. His Government felt that the proposed ad hoc meeting should examine the various aspects of the problem and consider the establishment of a permanent study group.

28. Delegates of both producing and consuming countries felt that there was a strong case for an ad hoc meeting. It was noted that not only African countries but also several developing countries in Latin America and in the Far East were affected by hard fiber problems in view of the adverse effects of the present low prices on the foreign exchange earnings needed for development.

29. The Committee recalled that at its Thirty-Sixth Session it had endorsed recommendations of a first ad hoc meeting held in March 1963 which included, inter alia, the calling of a second ad hoc meeting in about two years from that date. It felt that it was now time to implement the earlier recommendation and it therefore requested the Director-General to convene such a meeting as soon as practicable, in March 1966 if possible. The agenda of the meeting would include the following items:

- I. Up-to-date review of the market situation;
- II. Improvement in statistical and other information on production, consumption and trade in hard fibers;
- III. Assessment of short- and long-term prospects for demand for hard fibers;
- IV. Approaches to stabilization of world hard fiber markets;
- V. Report and recommendations to CCP.

IV. COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CONSULTATIVE SUB-COMMITTEE ON SURPLUS DISPOSAL (CSD)

30. The Chairman informed the Committee of a communication received from the Chairman of the Consultative Sub-Committee on Surplus Disposal (for text, see Appendix B). The Committee agreed to consider at its next session the matters raised by the Chairman of CSD in this letter.

V. MATTERS REQUIRING ATTENTION OF THE COUNCIL

31. The Committee wished to draw the attention of the Council to its discussion concerning the relationships between FAO and other organizations concerned with commodity matters, especially UNCTAD, and the role of the CCP (paras. 7 - 21), and hoped that this discussion would be of value to the Conference in its consideration of the relevant items on the agenda of its Thirteenth Session.

32. The Committee also wished to call the attention of the Council to its consideration of future work to be initiated by FAO, with a view to further examination of the issues arising out of the UNCTAD Recommendation A.II.6 and the Argentine proposal for the modification of the World Food Program (paras. 22 - 26).

APPENDIX A

LIST OF MEMBER NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
REPRESENTED AT THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION

Chairman:

D.W. Woodward (New Zealand)

MEMBERS OF THE CCP

ARGENTINA

L.H. Tettamanti
Ministre Plenipotentiaire
Embajada de Argentina
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Embajada de Argentina
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R.J. Turazzini
Secretario
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AUSTRALIA

K.W. Ryan
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R.J. Cornish
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BRAZIL

L.A.P. Souto-Maior
First Secretary of Embassy
Permanent Delegation in
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Mrs Y. Magno Pantoja
Resident Representative
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Chef du Service des
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* * * * *

OBSERVER COUNTRIES

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Ministero dell'Agricoltura
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Rome

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Representante Permanente
ante la FAO
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INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

(i) Intergovernmental

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

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Administrateur principal
Bruxelles

FEDECAME

R.A. Vallarino
Embajador
Embajada de Panamá
Roma

(ii) Non-Governmental

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

R. Hewlett
Liaison Representative with FAO
IFAP
Rome

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF FOOD AND
ALLIED WORKERS' ASSOCIATION

T. Bigi
Segretario Generale
UILIA
Rome

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (cont'd)

(i) Intergovernmental

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

H.J. Van Tuinen
Counsellor
Agriculture Division
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Pier Paolo Fano
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UNITED NATIONS

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(ii) Non-Governmental (cont'd)

INTERNATIONAL WOOL TEXTILE
ORGANIZATION

R. Dodi
Member of the Council
Rome

APPENDIX B

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CONSULTATIVE
SUB-COMMITTEE ON SURPLUS DISPOSAL (CSD)

Mr. D.W. Woodward
Chairman
39th Session
Committee on Commodity Problems
Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations
Rome, Italy

Washington
29 October 1965

Dear Sir,

While the Consultative Sub-Committee on Surplus Disposal is not expected to report to the Thirty-Ninth Session of the Committee on Commodity Problems, I should like to take this opportunity - in connection with Agenda Item III: Food Aid and Surplus Utilization - to call attention to several matters concerning the work of the Sub-Committee.

The 117th Meeting of the Sub-Committee, which was held on 12 October 1965, noted that since its inception in mid-1954, the discussions in the Sub-Committee had understandably tended to focus on the United States agricultural surplus disposal programs under Public Law 480. However, there has not only been some change in the countries which are recipients of PL 480 commodities, but it is also believed that other exporting countries have adopted programs of special transactions or, from time to time, have made special sales of agricultural products.

In this latter context, the Sub-Committee would suggest that the CCP should request the Director-General of FAO to remind Member Nations that the Sub-Committee is the recognized forum for the exchange of information and for consultations in the field of agricultural surpluses. In order for the Sub-Committee to discharge its functions effectively, Member Nations should, as far as is practicable, furnish at the earliest possible date information pertinent to the work of the Sub-Committee, and in particular all policies, plans and programs for the disposal of surplus agricultural commodities through exports on concessional terms or as food aid.

It would also be useful if the Director-General would again invite Member Nations to consider membership in the Sub-Committee, which meets monthly in Washington, D.C., and to indicate adherence to the FAO Principles of Surplus Disposal. At present, the Sub-Committee is composed of 32 Member Countries and 26 Observer Countries, while 49 Countries have expressed their adherence to the Principles.

Yours sincerely,

A.S. Tuinman
Chairman
Consultative Sub-Committee on Surplus Disposal
Committee on Commodity Problems