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REPORT

New Delhi,
India,
10-14 February
1992

Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

FAO Member Nations in the Asia Region (as of 14 February 1992)

Bangladesh	Japan	Papua New Guinea
Bhutan	Korea, Republic of	Philippines
Cambodia	Laos	Samoa
China	Malaysia	Sri Lanka
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Maldives	Thailand
Fiji	Mongolia	Tonga
India	Myanmar	United Kingdom
Indonesia	Nepal	Vanuatu
	Pakistan	Viet Nam

FAO Member Nations in the Southwest Pacific Region (as of 14 February 1992)

<i>Australia</i>	<i>New Zealand</i>	<i>Tonga</i>
<i>Cook Islands</i>	<i>Papua New Guinea</i>	<i>United Kingdom</i>
<i>Fiji</i>	<i>Samoa</i>	<i>United States of America</i>
<i>France</i>	<i>Solomon Islands</i>	<i>Vanuatu</i>

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for Asia and the Pacific

First	— Bangalore, India, 27 July-5 August 1953
Second	— Kandy, Ceylon, 20-25 June 1955
Third	— Bandung, Indonesia, 8-18 October 1956
Fourth	— Tokyo, Japan, 6-16 October 1958
Fifth	— Saigon, Republic of Viet Nam, 21-30 November 1960
Sixth	— Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 15-29 September 1962
Seventh	— Manila, Philippines, 7-21 November 1964
Eighth	— Seoul, Republic of Korea, 15-24 September 1966
Ninth	— Bangkok, Thailand, 4-15 November 1968
Tenth	— Canberra, Australia, 27 August-8 September 1970
Eleventh	— New Delhi, India, 17-27 October 1972
Twelfth	— Tokyo, Japan, 17-27 September 1974
Thirteenth	— Manila, Philippines, 5-13 August 1976
Fourteenth	— Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 25 July-3 August 1978
Fifteenth	— New Delhi, India, 5-13 March 1980
Sixteenth	— Jakarta, Indonesia, 1-11 June 1982
Seventeenth	— Islamabad, Pakistan, 24 April-3 May 1984
Eighteenth	— Rome, Italy, 8-17 July 1986
Nineteenth	— Bangkok, Thailand, 11-15 July 1988
Twentieth	— Beijing, China, 23-27 April 1990
Twenty-first	— New Delhi, India, 10-14 February 1992

Report of the
TWENTY-FIRST FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

New Delhi, India, 10 - 14 February 1992

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 1992

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Prime Minister of India
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SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

FAO Activities in the Region

For the attention of the Governments

The Conference:

1. encouraged all Member Nations to pay their assessed contributions to FAO in a timely manner (para. 97);
2. recommended that countries of the region participate more actively in the work of the CODEX Alimentarius Commission, particularly in the CODEX committees on food additives, pesticides, and food labelling (para. 99);
3. underscored the importance of continued work to alleviate rural poverty and suggested that high priority be accorded to strengthening national research and extension capabilities and programmes to promote rural communication, farmer training and increased local participation (para 101);
4. endorsed intensification of pest control activities through Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and emphasized the need to incorporate this practice into national plant protection core programmes and developing countries' extension services (para. 106).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

5. underscored that FAO activities relating to environment and sustainable development, nutrition, forestry, fisheries, genetic resources, biotechnology, integrated pest management and policy analysis and advice should be accorded the highest priority (para. 95);
6. recommended that FAO continue to give priority to the policy advisory role on matters relating to environment and sustainable development (para. 98);
7. suggested that FAO should make renewed efforts to seek UNDP funds and also to explore alternative sources of financing in carrying out training activities to strengthen national capabilities in food quality and safety (para. 100);
8. observed that Regional Commissions of FAO, based at RAPA, facilitated the process of TCDC, often played a critically-important role in providing policy advice to governments and, therefore, recommended that the activities of the regional commissions be summarized and reported to future Conference sessions (para. 102);
9. recognizing the usefulness of the work being carried out by various regional networks, recommended that a synopsis of regional network activities be prepared and presented at future sessions (para. 103);

10. recommended that FAO prepare a supplemental report on FAO activities in the Pacific Island countries in order to facilitate evaluation of previous activities and assist in planning future activities (para. 104);
11. expressed a strong desire that FAO prepare a comprehensive study on selected agriculture and rural development issues in the Asia-Pacific countries, comparable to those prepared for Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean (para. 105);
12. recognizing the role of agricultural cooperatives in alleviating rural poverty, recommended that FAO, as well as other appropriate international agencies fully support the recently created network on agricultural cooperatives (para. 107).

Enhancing Rural Employment and Incomes through the Development of Agro-Processing Industries

For the attention of Governments:

The Conference:

13. expressed its support for an early resolution of the GATT Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations (para. 112);
14. recommended that countries establish procedures for delivery of specialized credit to small-scale industries. They should also be supported by appropriate fiscal and tax policies, and seed capital (para. 116);
15. urged member countries to establish nationwide pollution control measures, carry out environmental impact assessments and assist industries in implementing non-polluting practices (para. 118);
16. emphasized that governments should strengthen facilities for vocational education and skill-development, particularly for women, and also actively seek the involvement of NGOs in providing support services (para. 119);
17. urged Member Governments to view agro-processing as a strategic sector capable of better utilizing available resources, increasing income, and enhancing the quality of life (para. 121);
18. noted that sub-regional groupings like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the South Pacific Commission (SPC), had a role in stimulating cooperative action by sharing regional/sub-regional experiences in agro-processing (para. 123).

For the attention of FAO:

The Conference:

19. suggested that cooperatives in the Region should be networked to promote solidarity, improve product quality and enable access to wider markets (para. 115);

20. expressed the desire that FAO should document an inventory of available agro-processing technologies in the crop sector (para. 122).

Regional Strategies for Arresting Land Degradation

For the attention of Governments:

The Conference:

21. stressed that the prime responsibility for arresting land degradation rested with national governments. They should spearhead integrated land resources management programmes that were consistent with sustainable development principles. A partnership approach between governments, industry, NGOs and local communities was essential for achieving substantial progress in this field (para. 131);
22. recommended that governments, where necessary, should formulate appropriate policies and strategies and strengthen services engaged in research, development and extension. Legislation could offer governments an important tool for promoting means in arresting land degradation (para. 132).

For the attention of FAO:

The Conference:

23. strongly urged FAO to explore the possibility of strengthening collection and analysis of land degradation data (para. 128);
24. recommended that FAO continue to assist Member Nations in formulating national strategies and policies in developing and applying appropriate technologies for arresting land degradation (para. 135).

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

For the attention of Governments:

The Conference:

25. confirmed, as had already been decided at the Twentieth Session, that India and Samoa would continue to represent the region in CGIAR until 1994 (para. 138);
26. urged Member Nations to designate contact persons to facilitate active dialogue with the region's representatives, to keep them informed of the problems and priorities in the region and on the scope for assistance through international research (para. 139).

For the attention of FAO:

The Conference:

27. requested FAO to offer such assistance as would be necessary to strengthen the liaison between the CGIAR and the region (para. 139).

Update on International Conference on Nutrition (ICN)

For the attention of Governments:

The Conference:

28. urged the active participation of Member Nations in all phases of the ICN, including its preparation, the ICN itself, and its follow-up (para. 143);
29. noting that the NGO community played a particularly important role in ensuring the nutritional well-being of people, stressed the need for their continued involvement in the follow-up activities of the ICN (para. 146).

For the attention of Governments and FAO:

The Conference:

30. emphasized that ICN should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather as a step in the continuing process of strengthening and reinforcing the commitment and actions necessary to prevent and alleviate hunger and malnutrition problems (para. 147).

Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources

For the attention of FAO:

The Conference:

31. endorsed the recommendation of the Twenty-sixth Session of the FAO Conference (Rome, November 1991) that FAO should organize the Fourth International Technical Conference for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources in cooperation with other relevant organizations, in particular, the IBPGR and other CGIAR centres (para. 148).

Date and Place of the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

For the attention of FAO:

The Conference:

32. noted the offer of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to host the Twenty-second Session of the FAO Regional Conference, and requested the Director-General of FAO to give due attention to the offer and decide on the date and place of the Conference in consultation with Member Governments (para. 152).

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Organization of the Conference

1. The Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific was held in New Delhi, India, from 10 to 14 February 1992.
2. Member Nations which participated in the Conference were: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, United States of America, and Viet Nam.
3. An observer from the Netherlands was also in attendance as well as 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 Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP). In addition to the above, observers from the following intergovernmental organizations were present: Afro-Asian Rural Reconstruction Organization (AARRO), and the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP).
4. The non-governmental organizations represented were: International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers (IFPAW), International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS), International Union of Forestry Research Organization (IUFRO), World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), World Veterinary Association (WVA) and World Veterans Federation (WVF) and Order of Malta.
5. The Conference noted with satisfaction the presence of the Independent Chairman of the FAO Council, Mr Antoine Saintraint, at the meeting.
6. 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

7. The Inaugural Ceremony of the Conference was held on 10 February 1992. The Director-General of FAO, Dr Edouard Saouma, welcomed His Excellency P.V. Narasimha Rao, the Prime Minister of India, Ministers, delegates, the members of the diplomatic corps and observers. On behalf of FAO and delegates to the Conference, he expressed appreciation for the hospitality extended by the Government of India. He noted that 27 Member Nations of the region sent delegations to this Conference. Many of the delegations present were led by Ministers or Vice-Ministers. He observed that this high level of representation testified to the importance member countries accorded to this Conference.

8. His Excellency, Bal Ram Jakhar, Minister of Agriculture, Government of India, welcomed, on behalf of his Government and people, all participants in the Conference. He recalled that India had the privilege of hosting the FAO Regional Conference on three previous occasions: in 1953, 1972, and 1980. This symbolized India's unstinted support for the objectives and programmes of FAO and to international action, while dealing with the problems of poverty and hunger. He expressed his confidence that the Conference would be mutually beneficial and would greatly contribute toward bridging the technical and the resource gaps in different countries of the region.

9. His Excellency, P.V. Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister of India, delivered the inaugural address. He observed that the countries of the Asia and the Pacific Region shared many common bonds, possessed strong agricultural foundations and aspired to improve the welfare of their people. He stressed that the Food and Agriculture Organization played a vital role in improving agricultural policies and planning of developing countries for over 40 years. The Organization's role was even more important now as several countries were engaged in reorienting agricultural policies to meet the challenges of the 1990s and beyond.

10. Most countries in the region, including India, had reached the limits of horizontal expansion in agricultural development. With increasing demands being made on land and water resources, the need to harmonize agricultural development with environmental sustainability had become critically important. While addressing these issues, there was a need for greater equity and accommodation at the international level.

11. The Prime Minister stated that many Asian developing countries could not derive full benefit from global economic growth because of trade barriers in some developed countries and the massive subsidies in protecting their agriculture.

12. Structural adjustments constituted a dynamic process aimed at establishing conditions for viable growth process within countries because they linked domestic economic growth with international economy. However, policies pursued by some developed countries, especially in the field of trade in agriculture commodities, undermined the potential for agricultural development in developing countries. He expressed the hope that the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations would address these issues in a balanced manner, taking into account the development dimension of agriculture in the developing countries.

13. The Prime Minister observed that for developing countries to benefit from advances made in agricultural frontier technologies, developed countries and international organizations such as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and FAO must come forward with resources and long-term scientific and technical support to usher in the "Gene Revolution".

14. He observed that over the past few decades, with shrinking land resources and an increasing rural labour force, poverty had increased. Developing countries faced problems of a bewildering variety. These could be solved only through "hard work and micro-planning, going right down to the village, family and individual levels".

15. The Prime Minister concluded his address by urging that South-South cooperation be strengthened in seeking solutions to the region's common problems. Both economical and technical cooperation among developing countries (ECDC and TCDC) would be ideal vehicles for mutual assistance and transfer of technology.

Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur

16. The delegates unanimously elected His Excellency Bal Ram Jakhar, Minister of Agriculture of India, as Chairman of the Conference.

17. The Conference also elected all the Ministers present as Vice-Chairmen and Dr Ruyat Wiratmadja of Indonesia as Rapporteur.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

18. The Conference adopted the Agenda which is given in Appendix A to this report.

Opening Statement by the Director-General

19. In his opening statement, the Director-General cited a passage from Upanishads - one of India's many ancient books of wisdom - a hymn that proclaimed the theme of the Conference: "From food are born all creatures that live on earth. Afterwards, they live on food. And when they die, they return to food".

20. Taking stock of the 1980s, he observed that farmers responded decisively to the challenges faced by the region. Economically, Asia and the Pacific today was the fastest growing region in the world. Asian developing countries' cereal stocks rose from an average of 60 million tonnes during the 1974 to 1976 period to 93 million tonnes during the 1988 to 1990 period. Aquaculture was developed from a domestic supply industry serving protein-deficient inland areas, into a dynamic export industry. Small farmer dairy development blazed the trail for the "White Revolution". Many national agencies dealing with the agriculture sector evolved into established institutions with stronger service capacities. FAO worked steadfastly in conjunction with the region's farmers, foresters, and fisherpeople throughout this challenging period.

21. In the 1980s, non-governmental organizations creatively influenced vital areas of concern. He said that "Movements from below" could be linked with governments, FAO and other similarly structured institutions in the struggle against hunger.

22. The Director-General welcomed the increasing trend towards regional economic integration and the role of such sub-regional groupings as ASEAN, SAARC and SPC in intensifying inter-country collaboration for development.

23. Despite progress, the Director-General emphasized that the tasks ahead were daunting. Over 300 million people in the Asia and Pacific Region remained ill-fed. In far too many countries, truncated life expectancies prevailed. An average Asian's lifespan was a little more than 63 years, compared to the 81-year lifespan achieved in advanced industrial countries. In this connection, the preparations being made by FAO and WHO for the International Conference on Nutrition to be held in Rome in December 1992 were relevant.

24. The Director-General urged that strategies be found to integrate agriculture growth, farm employment and rural industrialization in increasing rural incomes, and in improving food availability for rural families. These issues were reflected in one of the conference agenda items.

25. The Director-General also referred to structural reforms, increasing land degradation and stalled agrarian reforms as dangerous gaps that were still to be bridged. Improved technology would provide rewards only in conjunction with institutional reforms in areas of land tenure, taxation, inheritance laws, improved credit and marketing facilities. He maintained that without structural reform, hopes for any sustainable agriculture and rural development were ephemeral.

26. The complete text of the Director-General's Statement is given in Appendix E to this report.

II. COUNTRY STATEMENTS AND GENERAL DEBATE ON THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE SITUATION IN THE REGION

Introduction

27. Country statements were presented by the delegates of the following Member Nations: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Korea (Republic of), Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, United States of America and Viet Nam.

28. Several delegations stressed that the Food and Agriculture Organization played a vital role in improving agricultural policies and planning of developing countries for over 40 years. The Organization's role was even more important now as several countries were engaged in reorienting agricultural policies to meet the challenges of the 1990s and beyond.

29. They observed that despite financial constraints, FAO provided effective assistance to member countries through its Regular Programme and Field Programme activities and encouraged all member countries to pay their assessed contributions to the Organization in a timely manner.

30. Countries endorsed FAO's programme of work and the priorities established under the Medium-Term Plan 1994-99 and approved by the Twenty-sixth Session of the FAO Conference in November 1991.

Performance of Agriculture Sector

31. Several countries reported higher aggregate production levels of cereals than in the previous biennium. Despite this overall increase, considerable scope remained for enhancing productivity, as well as for ensuring sustainability of production, especially in rainfed areas. Improvement of cropping patterns and intensity, and crop management practices, among other things still had to be tapped adequately. Approximately ten least-developed countries (LDCs) of the region still faced major constraints in increasing crop production.

32. External conditions influencing agricultural development remained unfavourable. Many countries in the world were facing a period of economic downturn and were affected by stagnating growth, external debts, and low commodity prices. Increasingly strong protectionism in international agricultural trade resulted in deteriorating trade terms for commodities and external assistance fell far short of the actual needs of developing countries.

33. Australia was currently experiencing a severe agricultural crisis. Drought in eastern Australia, depressed commodity prices, restrictions on market access and the continued disruption of world markets due to subsidies came together at a time of general economic downturn.

34. In Bangladesh, the frontier of horizontal expansion of crop land had already been breached: some 9.2 million hectares of land were brought under the plough and the cropping intensity was almost 160 percent. Future gains

in production to keep pace with population growth were feasible only through biotechnology. The delegation, therefore, requested that a regional institute on biotechnology be located in Bangladesh.

35. Bhutan, now in the final half-year of its sixth Five Year Development Plan, accorded agriculture the highest priority. Horticultural crops, mushroom propagation and essential oil production, because of their significant comparative advantage and commercial value, were given a high priority. To remedy chronic manpower shortages, and especially to train personnel for work in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, Bhutan established the National Resources Training Institute (NRTI) in 1992.

36. In 1991, some parts of China were hit by serious floods, and some suffered drought. Nevertheless, overall crop production, (particularly cereals, cotton and oil-bearing crops), registered a second high-yielding year in history. Total output reached 435 million tonnes, slightly lower than in 1990.

37. For India, 1990-91 was the third good agricultural year in succession when record foodgrain crops were harvested. It was anticipated that the total production of foodgrains for 1991-92 reached last year's production level of 176 million tonnes. The Eighth Plan of India aimed not only to sustain self-sufficiency in agriculture production but also to generate surpluses of specific agricultural commodities for export.

38. In the case of Indonesia, prolonged drought adversely affected the rice crop. The aggregate rice production in 1992 was estimated at 44.2 million tonnes, slightly below the previous year's harvest. However, the overall food supply position remained satisfactory, even though the stocks held by National Logistic Agency were estimated to be below normal.

39. Japan observed that, as a nation which had experienced serious food shortages and hunger in the not too distant past, it maintained a strong interest in the stable supply of food on a long-term basis. With regard to basic foodstuffs such as rice, it was necessary to maintain a certain level of domestic production for national food security.

40. Malaysia changed its emphasis from commodity-oriented agriculture to farmers, breeders and fishermen-oriented agriculture.

41. Myanmar reported that its Government recently approved laws which provided land rights to the extent of 1 000 to 5 000 acres for agriculture; 5 000 acres for livestock farming, and 2 000 acres for aquaculture and 500 to 1 000 acres for other ruminants. The ventures were open to foreign participation and were associated with favourable tax-reliefs.

42. Nepal reported increased efforts to establish cold storage facilities for perishable commodities and processing plants for hill-based products such as ginger, large cardamom, fruits, tea, milk, coffee, etc. in both the public and private sectors.

43. In New Zealand, despite a declining trend, agriculture was still significant for the rural economy. Measures to increase returns through increased agricultural processing techniques would have a positive effect on the overall economy.

44. Pakistan reported an innovative reform which envisaged commercialization of agricultural research through private sector investment in collaboration with the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council.

45. In Papua New Guinea, one of the most disturbing statistics was the extent to which imports of agricultural produce were growing: from 26 percent of the total volume of trade in 1984 to 34 percent by 1989. In the first half of 1990, 77 percent of the agricultural export income (from coffee and cocoa) was utilized to import other agricultural products, mainly food. The country was also concerned that farmers' increasing dependence on export commodity production would erode their self-sufficiency in production capabilities.

46. In the Philippines, disruptions caused by volume of agricultural production increased by 4.65 percent in 1991, despite the typhoons, floods, and the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, considered as the most violent volcanic eruption of the century. Paddy production increased 3.76 percent, making the country self-sufficient in rice. Production of foodgrains exceeded 14.2 million metric tonnes, or one million tonnes more than average annual production. In 1991, the Philippines experienced a surplus of commodities despite calamities.

47. The Sri Lanka delegation stressed that productivity could not be an isolated deity for worship in the temple of growth and development. The concept of productivity should have a social meaning and purpose. Agricultural production was carried out primarily by small farmers, whose holdings varied from 0.1 - 1.0 hectares. They needed extensive support in inputs and services. In recent years, small farmer participation in dairy development was encouraged. Duties were levied on imported milk powder and the extra revenue thus generated was used in part to support the dairy development programmes.

Land Degradation

48. Country statements revealed that although some countries appeared to have some constraint-free land, the region as a whole had reached or surpassed the acceptable limits for horizontal expansion of agricultural production. Countries frequently cited accelerated erosion, shifting cultivation and deforestation as the main causes for land degradation in low production areas. Land degradation problems were inseparably linked to such socio-economic and survival issues as lack of alternative employment and income opportunities, as well as inadequate availability of fuelwood, food and forage at the local level.

49. Many countries reported that in high potential areas there was considerable scope for operational improvements in on-farm water management. Introducing effective and adequate drainage systems and integrating the use of surface water and ground water were highlighted by some countries as remedial measures.

50. Recently, the Australian Government released the "National Decade of Landcare Plan" and announced new initiatives in the approach to landcare. The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) continued to work closely with the International Board for Soil Research and Management (IBSRAM) in promoting and coordinating efforts in soil management in countries of the region.

51. The most visibly devastating land degradation in Bangladesh was river bank erosion, often triggered by floods caused by upstream deforestation. About 3.9 million hectares and 1.74 million hectares of land were deficient in sulphate and zinc, respectively.

52. With over 148 million hectares of land subject to water and wind erosion and various other forms of land degradation (such as water-logging, salinity, alkalinity, ravines, etc.), India had recently initiated important activities geared to conserving the natural resources of land, water and vegetation. The National Land Use and Wastelands Development Council had been established under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister. The National Wastelands Development Board had embarked upon an impressive programme of restoration of approximately 1.8 million hectares of degraded land, annually. People's participation was central to its strategy for the conservation and management of land and other natural resources.

53. Pakistan reported that water-logging and salinity had spread. Developing irrigation, particularly in the semi-arid plains of central and lower Pakistan, was proving to be costly.

54. The Philippines had a total land area of 30 million hectares, of which 8.2 million hectares were arable. Only about 7.5 million hectares of total land area were constraint-free. A significant amount of cultivation (700 000 hectares) was already underway in marginal lands. About 100 000 hectares of upland farms had benefited from the Sloping Agricultural Land Technology Programme. A total of 628 Small Water Impounding Projects (SWIPs) or checkdams which store and provide irrigation water in upland rainfed areas, had been constructed, servicing almost 25 000 hectares and benefiting 20 000 farmers.

Agricultural Processing

55. Country statements revealed that rural enterprises were playing an increasingly important role in the economies of many countries. Several countries had launched programmes for the promotion of rural agro-processing industries as part of agricultural structural adjustment measures designed to generate rural job opportunities and off-farm income.

56. The Bangladesh delegation stated that among the agro-industries, the processing of vegetables, fruits and seafood presented opportunities for increasing employment and incomes. They emphasized the need for implementation of training schemes and the provision of fiscal incentives to develop these enterprises.

57. Bhutan reported the establishment of a few fruit and vegetable processing units: Bhutan Fruit Products in Samchi; and three small units in Thimphu, Paro and Bumthang, that produced fruit juices, ketchup, sauces and canned fruit. The production of high-value products such as mushrooms and asparagus was encouraged, and small exports of the latter were made to Thailand and Japan. Lemon grass oil was produced for export to India. However, agro-processing in general was constrained by long distances and high transport costs to external markets; lack of internal infrastructure and markets; financial constraints; lack of entrepreneurial skills, and labour shortages.

58. In China, the development of township enterprises over the past four decades was well-known and contributed as much as 60 percent of the rural social product. Agro-industry absorbed a large number of workers and improved labour productivity. In 1991 investment for agro-processing exceeded 1 000 million yuan and 93 million jobs had been created, enhancing the incomes of some 200 million farmers.

59. India stated that the food-processing sector today accounted for 18 percent of the industrial gross domestic product (GDP) and 19 percent of the country's industrial labour force. Only 0.5 percent of the horticulture produce in India was being processed, whereas in some advanced countries this figure was as high as 60 percent. With the liberalization of trade and industrial policies, fiscal reforms and infusion of new technology, agro-processing industries were now poised to make major production advances.

60. Indonesia observed that agro-industry development was constrained by lack of skilled manpower, particularly those skilled in small agro-industry management, economic evaluation and integrated agri-business planning.

61. The food industry in Japan, which included food marketing and restaurant trade, contributed up to 30 percent of GDP. Agro-processing in rural areas was promoted essentially through local governments and agricultural cooperatives.

62. The Republic of Korea launched a programme for the promotion of rural agro-processing industries as part of agricultural structural adjustment aimed at generating rural job opportunities and off-farm incomes. The government was drafting a law which supported research in food-processing technology and the establishment of food-processing factories in rural areas.

63. Mongolia recently initiated a drive to substitute development of large-scale with smaller- and medium-scale agro-industries. Many efforts had been made to procure small-scale equipment, but this was proving difficult. Mongolia pleaded for increased regional cooperation on a TCDC basis.

64. Philippines reported that there was a strong drive to develop industry in rural areas through a programme known as 'CALABALANGAC 20' in which an industry was exempted from government regulations, especially taxes, if its capital investment was less than half a million pesos. Special categories were defined for these industries, whose sole, main requirement was to register the business.

65. Sri Lanka had concentrated on encouraging the private sector to develop profit-oriented enterprises in rural areas. Government incentives took the form of a 'package' of measures, including lower taxes and infrastructure development. The overall policy was to encourage farmers to remain in the area, preferably on the farm, and to couple agro-processing with production.

66. Agro-industry development in Thailand followed a dynamic path. Through effective integration of such practices as "contract farming" with processing, and through mobilization of the private sector, the country achieved significant success in this sector.

Agricultural Trade

67. Australia strongly supported the collaboration between FAO and the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) on trade facilitation through the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). However, if GATT expectations regarding the elimination of unjustified quarantine barriers were to be met within a reasonable timeframe, more needed to be done to upgrade the status and the terms of reference of the Convention from that of a document deposited with FAO, to an organization capable of meeting the needs of the international community. Australia supported the trade package issued in December 1991 by the GATT Director-General, Arthur Dunkel, since it contained measures to overcome the long-standing problems affecting agricultural markets, and was designed to improve the scope and effectiveness of current GATT rules and operations.

68. Indonesia stated that recently, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Heads of Government agreed to establish a "free trade" area within 15 years. As of 1993, Common Effective Preferences and tariffs would be implemented for manufacturing products and processed agricultural products. Gradual reduction of tariffs for these commodities, leading to free trade in ASEAN sub-region, was envisaged.

69. Japan stated that it could not make commitments on so-called comprehensive "tariffication" measures unless there was a clear commitment to eliminate export subsidies, which were the most trade-distortive measures. As for basic foodstuffs such as rice, it was necessary to maintain a certain level of domestic production for national food security.

70. The Republic of Korea stated that the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations would have a negative effect on the world food security situation. They were likely to cause an increase in world farm prices and a reduction in farm production stocks. Non-trade concerns such as food security, regional development and conservation of the environment needed to be fully reflected in the Uruguay Round results in order to achieve successful world economic growth and to solve world food, agricultural and environmental problems.

Agricultural Research

71. Several countries stated that they were strongly committed to the objectives and work of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, and international agricultural research centres generally. They supported the recent Consultative Group's initiative to recognize the nexus between agriculture, agroforestry and forestry, and the decision to establish the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

Environment and Forestry

72. Many delegations referred to the valuable inputs provided by FAO for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in areas such as biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and forestry. They noted the active involvement of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAPA) in the preparation of the regional input for UNCED. Many countries saw UNCED as a valuable forum for the consideration of forestry issues within the context of sustainable development, where the basic concerns could be identified and common directions established.

73. Country statements also revealed a strong support for the concept of the Tropical Forests Action Programme (TFAP). Australia supported the current efforts to revamp the TFAP, and hoped that this process would result in a successful conclusion in the very near future. Japan also supported the strengthening of TFAP. Furthermore, it endorsed the extended mandate of CGIAR to include forestry research.

74. Bangladesh reported that approximately 2.45 million hectares, or approximately 17 percent of its total land mass was reserved for forests. But actual forest coverage had declined over the past 20 years to about 1.0 million hectares, i.e. 5 percent of the total land mass. The development strategy for forestry, therefore, concentrated on promoting homestead forestry for producing fuelwood, as well as relieving the pressure on reserve forest areas.

75. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea stated that they had planted 400 million trees and had created mulberry plantations in over 30 000 hectares to develop sericulture suited to mountainous and intermediate regions.

76. Indonesia observed that intersectoral linkages between forestry and agriculture, energy and environment were receiving increasing attention in forestry development.

77. Myanmar stated that 50 percent of their land area still had forest cover, and offered a wide choice for biodiversity conservation. There had been modest levels of forest depletion due to agricultural expansion and fuelwood consumption. But these were not attributable to excessive logging. Reforestation in Myanmar was being carried out at the rate of 32 000 hectares annually. Myanmar was of the view that a framework for any global cooperative action on forests should uphold principles such as sovereignty of states over natural resources and take into full account the legitimate needs, endeavours and concerns of developing countries in achieving sustainable development and in eradicating poverty.

78. Maldives stated that their nation faced the prospect of a climate change over which they had no control. The nation was created and sustained by living coral reefs. Their main source of protein was oceanic tuna, and tourists were attracted by the unspoiled nature of the country's environment. Thus climate change would have a drastic effect on their way of life and could even threaten their very existence.

79. New Zealand supported FAO's efforts to heighten awareness regarding environmental issues, as well as the incorporation of environment and sustainable development criteria into its programmes and activities. The UNCED scheduled to take place in June 1992 provided an opportunity to collectively commit participating countries to the goal of protecting the environment and promoting sustainable resource management policies.

Statements by the Observer Delegations

80. Statements were made by representatives of the Afro-Asian Rural Reconstruction Organization (AARRO), the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

81. The representative of AARRO presented a brief account of their organizations's objectives and activities to promote agriculture development in Third World countries. He stated that their experience to overcome the situation of land degradation revealed that appropriate policies on land reforms and taxation played an important role. AARRO had been scheduling training programmes and international seminars on different themes of agricultural development to discuss these aspects.

82. The representative of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions stated that ICFTU would soon be holding its Fifteenth World Congress at Caracas, Venezuela in March, 1992, and would be considering the crucial theme: "Free Trade Unions for a Democratic World Order - The Role of the ICFTU". It would also discuss another significant theme: "Environment and Development - The Trade Union Agenda". The ICFTU believed that free trade unions had a vital role to play in eliminating poverty and in creating freely chosen, productive employment for all working men and women throughout the world in keeping with the goal to achieve just and environmentally stable world development.

83. The Chief of the Agriculture and Rural Development Division, ESCAP, stated that in 1990 a Group of Eminent Persons deliberated on the vision of its future orientation, role and functions. The main thrust of their recommendations was a shift from the secretariat's present sectoral basis of work to a thematic approach. At its annual session in Seoul, Republic of Korea in 1991, ESCAP's Commission generally endorsed the recommendation of the Group of Eminent Persons. In conformity with the thematic approach, the proposed sub-programme on environment and sustainable development would comprise: policies and plans; environment and development; natural resources development and management; energy development and management; and natural disaster reduction. The sub-programme proposed for the theme of poverty alleviation through economic growth and social development would include: growth strategies and structural reform; employment, income generation and distribution; social policy, including human resources development; social insurance and social services; population issues, including rural-urban migration; agriculture and rural development; human settlements and urbanization; and women in development and integration of vulnerable groups.

84. The Director of CIRDAP stated that the institution's programme of work was based on four areas of concern. These were: Agrarian Development; Institutional and Infrastructural Development; Resource Development including Human Resources; and Employment. Of the 137 projects encompassing various aspects of rural development so far taken up by the Centre, 128 had already been completed. CIRDAP had undertaken research studies focusing on the dynamics of socio-economic changes in the rural society with specific reference to the poor. CIRDAP had also carried out regional training courses on: (a) Preparation and Analysis of Rural Development Projects; (b) Monitoring and Evaluation Methods and Techniques in Rural Development; and (c) Training Methodology for Trainers of IRD Functionaries. These training courses were also planned to be held at the national level.

III. REPORT ON FAO ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION 1990-91

85. The Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific (ADG/RR) introduced this Agenda Item.

86. He stated that as in the previous biennium, the Organization's capacity to respond to these spiralling needs was further eroded by persistent financial constraints. Unpaid current assessed contributions and arrears were the highest ever in FAO's history. The frozen programme level did not permit FAO to more strongly support the promising potential held out by the food and agriculture sector.

87. He highlighted FAO's programme to promote sustainable and environmentally sound soil management practices. The Regional Office supported TCDC networks on bio and organic fertilizers and problem soils. Some Pacific countries were assisted in marketing, distributing and utilizing fertilizers. Identification of strategies to arrest growing land degradation and introduction of improved irrigation management with farmers' participation were accorded priority.

88. FAO carried out a broad range of activities in such priority areas as crop diversification in rainfed areas, germplasm conservation and utilization, pest management, vegetable seed and planting material development, and increasing production of annual oilseed crops, root crops and coconut.

89. Pest control activities were intensified through integrated pest management (IPM) in rice, vegetables and cotton. Particular emphasis was given to incorporate IPM into core programmes of national plant protection and extension services.

90. FAO sought improvements in both production and productivity of the livestock sub-sector. This required application and adaptation of improved technologies in: range and pasture management, animal nutrition, breeding and genetics, as well as animal husbandry systems disease control and improved processing and marketing methods.

91. In the fisheries sector, FAO accorded a high priority to the following: inland fisheries development, assistance to aquaculture, small-scale fisheries development, formulation of fisheries policies and implementation of practical training in monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing operations.

92. FAO activities in forestry focused on sound management of forest resources, development of forest food, fodder and fuel systems, agroforestry, watershed management and the management of protected areas for conservation of wildlife and biological diversity of tropical forests. Sixteen countries of the region initiated the preparation of Tropical Forests Action Plans. A new regional programme on Forestry Research Support in the Asia Pacific Region, funded by the Asian Development Bank and UNDP, had also been launched.

93. The FAO Regional Representative further stated that the Regional Office forged stronger links with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and with intergovernmental and other agencies. For example, the first FAO/WHO Regional Preparatory Committee Meeting for the International

Conference on Nutrition (ICN), held at RAPA in January 1992, was attended by over 36 country delegations, NGOs, and the media. The meeting participants discussed regional nutritional problems and current programmes to identify inputs for the ICN to be held at Rome in December 1992.

94. The Conference agreed with the issues highlighted and the focus of FAO's programme in the region, as incorporated in FAO's Medium-Term Plan 1994-99: Regional Dimensions.¹

95. The Conference endorsed the priority areas of FAO's work as approved by the Twenty-sixth FAO Conference in November 1991. It underscored that FAO activities relating to environment and sustainable development, nutrition, forestry, fisheries, genetic resources, biotechnology, integrated pest management and policy analysis and advice should be accorded the highest priority.

96. The Conference also noted that despite financial constraints, a wide range of activities were supported through a combination of the Regular Programme and Field Programme activities of the Organization.

97. The Conference encouraged all Member Nations to pay their assessed contributions to FAO in a timely manner.

98. The Conference noted with appreciation the valuable inputs provided by FAO to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in a number of areas such as bio-diversity, sustainable agriculture and forestry. The Conference also noted the active involvement of RAPA in preparing the regional input for UNCED. In view of the growing emphasis on environmental issues and sustainable development, the Conference recommended that FAO continue to give priority to the policy advisory role on matters relating to environment and sustainable development.

99. The Conference strongly supported the work of the CODEX Alimentarius Commission in protecting the health of consumers and in facilitating trade, caused by differing national food standards through the removal of non-tariff barriers. The Conference recommended that countries of the region participate more actively in the commission's work, particularly in the CODEX committees on food additives, pesticides, and food labelling.

100. The Conference noted that its activities under the Regional Food Control Training Network were curtailed due to lack of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) funding. It was suggested that FAO should make renewed efforts to seek UNDP funds and also to explore alternative sources of financing in carrying out training activities to strengthen national capabilities in food quality and safety.

101. While recognizing the importance of major current issues such as environment, bio-technology and structural adjustment in agriculture, the Conference underscored the importance of continued work to alleviate rural poverty. It suggested that high priority be accorded to strengthening national research and extension capabilities and programmes to promote rural communication, farmer training and increased local participation.

¹ APRC/92/2-Sup.1.

102. The Conference observed that Regional Commissions of FAO, based at RAPA, facilitated the process of TCDC. Often the Commissions played a critically important role in providing policy advice to governments. The Conference therefore recommended that the activities of the regional commissions be summarized and reported to future Conference sessions.

103. Noting that work of the regional networks was reported in various instances,² and recognizing the usefulness of obtaining a consolidated presentation of activities by these networks, the Conference recommended that a synopsis of regional network activities be prepared and presented at future sessions.

104. The Conference recommended that FAO prepare a supplemental report on FAO activities in the Pacific Island countries. This would greatly facilitate evaluation of previous activities undertaken and assist in planning future activities.

105. The Conference expressed a strong desire that FAO prepare a comprehensive study on selected agriculture and rural development issues in the Asia-Pacific countries, comparable to those prepared for Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

106. The Conference endorsed intensification of pest control activities through Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in rice, vegetables and cotton. It emphasized the need to incorporate the practice of IPM into national plant protection core programmes and developing countries' extension services.

107. Recognizing the role of agricultural cooperatives in alleviating rural poverty, the Conference recommended that FAO, as well as other appropriate international agencies, fully support the recently created network on agricultural cooperatives.

² APRC/92/2.

IV. ENHANCING RURAL EMPLOYMENT AND INCOMES THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRO-PROCESSING INDUSTRIES

108. The Regional Agricultural Engineering and Agro-Industries Officer introduced the Conference Document.³ While highlighting the rationale for developing agro-processing industries, he stated that the frontiers of horizontal expansion in agriculture had already been breached in many countries. With declining land area to agriculture population ratios, agro-processing could generate higher income from the same or even less unit area of land.

109. In this context, to arrest the rural-urban migration and to enhance rural employment and incomes, agro-processing industries needed to be explicitly integrated into rural industrialization strategies. This called for appropriate policies and technologies, as well as supporting institutions capable of reaching the village and household levels to provide rural entrepreneurs with necessary incentives in developing different types of agro-industries. He noted that the scope for agro-processing was wide and included enterprises processing agricultural raw materials, livestock, marine and inland fisheries, as well as forest products.

110. He outlined the current approaches to rural industrialization in some countries of the Region. He dealt with the macro-economic issues affecting agro-processing industries and the measures needed to improve their competitive strength. He underscored the need for creating appropriate policies including financial support, tax incentives, price guarantees, infrastructure, services and technology development to establish a sound basis for development of agro-industries.

111. The Conference noted that the active development of special market niches for products in which a country had comparative advantage, the development of non-traditional markets, and cooperation between developing countries of the Region deserved to be further explored.

112. Many countries observed that competition from developed countries operating from protective trading blocs limited the export potential for agro-industrial products from developing countries. In this context, the Conference expressed its support for an early resolution of the GATT Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations.

113. The Conference underscored the need to build on indigenous knowledge bases and generate relevant technologies. Such possibilities should be pursued through increased spending for research and development purposes and by providing assistance to pioneering firms.

114. The Conference observed that agro-processing enterprises, when located in non-urban areas and linked to local resources, generated employment opportunities and promoted equitable distribution of incomes. They also increased the potential for regional development.

³ APRC/92/3.

115. Recognizing the role of agro-processing in enhancing rural incomes, the Conference observed that cooperative ownership of agro-processing factories had been successful in providing downstream benefits to the rural poor. The Conference, therefore, underscored that networking of cooperatives in the Region would promote solidarity, improve product quality and enable access to wider markets.

116. The Conference recognized that, despite their strategic importance for overall rural development, many small-scale units suffered from several weaknesses, including inadequate financing. The Conference recommended that countries establish procedures for delivery of specialized credit to small-scale industries. They should also be supported by appropriate fiscal and tax policies, and seed capital.

117. Many countries observed that market-driven, privately owned small-scale industries had proven to be effective and that the role of the government should be restricted to providing them with technical assistance.

118. In view of a growing awareness regarding the quality of the environment and the risk of widespread pollution through dispersed and numerous small-scale industries, the Conference urged member countries to establish nationwide pollution control measures, carry out environmental impact assessments and assist industries in implementing non-polluting practices.

119. The Conference emphasized the need for vocational education and skill-development, particularly for women. Governments also needed to actively seek the involvement of NGOs in providing support services.

120. Some countries observed that, in addition to boosting incomes, agro-processing industries assisted in increasing the availability of food by reducing post-harvest losses. Higher incomes and increases in net food supplies were vital to meet the nutritional needs of rapidly growing populations.

121. The Conference urged Member Governments to view agro-processing as a strategic sector capable of better utilizing available resources, increasing income, and enhancing the quality of life.

122. Some countries expressed the desire that FAO should document an inventory of available agro-processing technologies in the crop sector.

123. The Conference noted that sub-regional groupings like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the South Pacific Commission (SPC), had a role in stimulating cooperative action by sharing regional/sub-regional experiences in agro-processing.

V. REGIONAL STRATEGIES FOR ARRESTING LAND DEGRADATION

124. The Regional Soil Management and Fertilizer Use Officer introduced the relevant Conference Document.⁴ He stated that technologies designed to arrest land degradation were either already known, or in the process of being developed.

125. These strategies and technologies needed to address causes rather than symptoms. Problems arose mainly from high population pressure, land scarcity, extreme rural poverty and inequitable sharing of resources. Non-participation of the concerned population, including the landless and women in decision-making exacerbated these problems.

126. He emphasized that environmental penalties associated with current land, water and forest management practices applied to land with both low and high production potential. Mismanagement of low potential areas in the region could adversely affect sustainability of production in adjacent high potential land. To address land degradation problems, the framework of action needed to embrace all types of land uses.

127. The Conference noted with appreciation that several countries presented overviews and updated statistics on the status of land degradation and strategies and programmes being undertaken to alleviate the situation.

128. The Conference noted that continuous monitoring of the status of land degradation would be potentially costly but important for assessing the severity of regional impacts. The Conference strongly urged FAO to explore the possibility of strengthening collection and analysis of land degradation data.

129. The Conference observed that a number of countries appeared to have some land available, free of physical constraints to cultivation. But the region as a whole seemed to have either reached or surpassed the safe limits for the horizontal expansion of agricultural production.

130. The Conference endorsed the view that the most serious form of land degradation affecting low production potential areas was accelerated erosion triggered by deforestation and destruction of ground cover. It continued to threaten and erode areas under forest cover, as well as grazing land in several countries. The loss of forest and ground cover was associated with shifting cultivation, overgrazing, lack of employment and income opportunities, inadequacy of fuelwood at the local level and other factors. The Conference, therefore, emphasized that it was at the local level that tangible solutions needed to be found.

131. The Conference stressed that the prime responsibility for arresting land degradation rested with national governments. They should spearhead integrated land resources management programmes that were consistent with sustainable development principles. A partnership approach between governments, industry, NGOs and local communities was essential for achieving substantial progress in this field.

⁴ APRC/92/4.

132. The Conference recommended that governments, where necessary, should formulate appropriate policies and strategies and strengthen services engaged in research, development and extension. Legislation could offer governments an important tool for promoting means in arresting land degradation.

133. The Conference underlined the importance of innovative as well as traditional conservation farming systems and agroforestry in low potential areas to prevent land degradation. In this context, the Conference noted with concern the funding difficulties being experienced by TCDC networks engaged in promoting these practices, in particular the Asia Soil Conservation Network for the Humid Tropics (ASOCON).

134. The Conference stressed that in high production potential areas, operational improvements should focus on improved water use, adequate drainage and integrated plant nutrition.

135. The Conference recommended that FAO continues to assist Member Nations in formulating national strategies and policies in developing and applying appropriate technologies for arresting land degradation.

VI. REPRESENTATION OF THE REGION IN THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP
ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (CGIAR)

136. The Regional Plant Production Officer introduced the Conference Document.⁵ He explained the role played by FAO as co-sponsor of CGIAR in setting policies for international agricultural research centres and in ensuring that research priorities and needs of developing countries were appropriately addressed.

137. The Conference appreciated the efforts of FAO in closely cooperating with the International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) of CGIAR, both at the field level and through policy inputs to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Group itself.

138. The Conference confirmed, as had already been decided at the Twentieth Session, that India and Samoa would continue to represent the region in CGIAR until 1994.

139. The Conference urged Member Nations to designate contact persons to facilitate active dialogue with the region's representatives, to keep them informed to problems and priorities in the region and on the scope for assistance through international research. FAO was requested to offer such assistance as would be necessary to strengthen the liaison between the CGIAR and the region.

140. The Conference noted with appreciation the report from India, one of the Regional Representatives to the CGIAR, which attended the meetings of the International Centre's Week (ICW) held during the last biennium.

141. The Conference welcomed the entry of agroforestry, forestry, irrigation and fisheries research into CGIAR. It noted the progress achieved in the preparations for the establishment of the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

⁵ APRC/92/5.

VII. UPDATE ON INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION (ICN)

142. The Director, Food Policy and Nutrition Division, FAO, Rome introduced this agenda item.⁶ He stated that the ICN was being held to provide the world community with an opportunity to critically assess the continuing problems of malnutrition and how they could most effectively be addressed. FAO and WHO would jointly convene the ICN to be held from 5-11 December 1992 in Rome.

143. The Conference urged the active participation of Member Nations in all phases of the ICN, including its preparation, the ICN itself, and its follow-up.

144. The Conference noted with satisfaction that country papers were being prepared to summarize each country's nutrition situation, including the extent and causes of nutrition problems, past experience in addressing them and plans for future action.

145. The Conference noted that ICN would be linked to country and regional-specific activities through regional and sub-regional intergovernmental meetings. The first regional ICN preparatory meeting was held at FAO Regional Office, Bangkok, during January 1992.

146. Noting that the NGO community played a particularly important role in ensuring the nutritional well-being of people, the Conference stressed the need for their continued involvement in the follow-up activities of the ICN.

147. The Conference emphasized that ICN should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather as a step in the continuing process of strengthening and reinforcing the commitment and actions necessary to prevent and alleviate hunger and malnutrition problems.

⁶ APRC/92/INF/4.

VIII. CONCLUDING ITEMS

Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources

148. The Conference endorsed the recommendation of the Twenty-sixth Session of the FAO Conference (Rome, November 1991) that FAO should organize the Fourth International Technical Conference for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources in cooperation with other relevant organizations, in particular, the IBPGR and other CGIAR centres.

Date and Place of the Twenty-second Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific

149. The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea offered to host the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific in 1994.

150. The Republic of Korea delegation fully supported the offer made by DPR Korea on the understanding that the solemn obligation of the host country to ensure the full and equal participation by all member countries be respected. It requested the Chairman of this Conference and FAO to ensure that the "all nation" clause for guaranteed unrestricted and unconditional participation applicable to all members, be included in the agreement with the host government.

151. In response, the DPR Korea delegation assured that no preconditions and restrictions would be imposed on any member countries' participation in the Conference.

152. The Chairman of the Conference noted that the offer of DPR Korea to host the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific would be conveyed to the Director-General of FAO, who would decide on the date and place of the Conference in consultation with Member Governments.

Adoption of the Report

153. The Conference unanimously adopted the draft report presented by the Rapporteur.

Closure of the Conference

154. In their closing statements, all delegations expressed their appreciation to the Government of India, especially the Minister of Agriculture, for hosting the Conference as well as for the generous hospitality and excellent meeting arrangements. They were particularly appreciative of the field visits organized by the host country. The Conference commended FAO for the relevant and meaningful nature of the issues chosen for discussion and the excellent quality of the documentation. The exchange of views on various agenda items had been constructive and had resulted in useful and sound recommendations.

155. In his closing statement, the Assistant Director-General of FAO and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, conveyed the appreciation and thanks of FAO to the Government of India, on behalf of the Director-General of FAO. He stressed that the Ministry of Agriculture had even

discovered the secret of Camelot: the Indian hosts had managed to arrange for the sun to come out and the winter to give way to spring.

156. On behalf of the Government of India, Minister Bal Ram Jakhar delivered the closing statement. He was of the opinion that the Regional Conference had been successful and had benefited from two broad ranging and thoughtful speeches: that of the Prime Minister of India and that of the Director-General of FAO. Both statements had remarkably traced the emerging outlines of critical issues of the future.

157. He welcomed the Regional Conference's reiteration of the urgent need for Member Nations, in collaboration with FAO, to conserve the natural resource base and the genetic riches found in the Region. From the scientist J.M. Cousteau he quoted: "From space, the only borders we see are natural - glistening coasts, blue rivers, thrusting mountains, billowing clouds - all indifferent to flags and parliaments and armies".

158. In closing, he reminded the Conference of a pertinent statement made by the Director-General: "The unfulfilled promise of food still lies in the tropics. This sun-drenched belt of land, could be the food granaries for the world of our children". He then declared the Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific closed.

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Inaugural Ceremony.
2. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairmen and Appointment 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 Asia and the Pacific Region.
6. Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1990-91.

III. SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

7. Enhancing rural employment and incomes through the development of agro-processing industries.
8. Regional strategies for arresting land degradation.
9. Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)
10. Update on ICN preparation.

IV. CONCLUDING ITEMS

11. Any other business.
12. Date and place of the 22nd FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific.
13. Adoption of the Report.
14. Closure of the Conference.

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LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

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APPENDIX C

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

APRC/92/1	Provisional Annotated Agenda
APRC/92/2	Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1990-91
APRC/92/2-Sup.1	FAO Medium-term Plan 1994-99 - Regional Dimensions
APRC/92/3	Enhancing Rural Employment and Incomes through the Development of Agro-processing Industries
APRC/92/4	Regional Strategies for Arresting Land Degradation
APRC/92/4-Corr.1	Corrigendum to APRC/92/4
APRC/92/5	Representation of the Region on the CGIAR
<u>APRC/92/INF/Series</u>	
APRC/92/INF/1	Information Note
APRC/92/INF/2-Rev.2	Provisional Timetable
APRC/92/INF/3	Provisional List of Documents
APRC/92/INF/4	Update on International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) Preparations
APRC/92/INF/5	Action Taken on the Main Recommendations of the 21st Regional Conference
APRC/92/INF/6	Director-General's Statement
APRC/92/INF/7	Fourth International Technical Conference for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources
APRC/92/INF/8-Rev.2	Provisional List of Delegates and Observers
<u>APRC/92/OD/Series</u>	
APRC/92/OD/1 to APRC/92/OD/4	Orders of the Day
APRC/92/REP	Draft Report

APPENDIX D

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY SHRI P.V. NARISIMHA RAO, PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

Mr Director-General, Jakharji, distinguished guests,

It gives me great pleasure to inaugurate the Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific. I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you. I hope during your stay you will also be able to see a little bit of our country and its agricultural development.

The countries of the Asia and the Pacific Region share many common bonds and have similar aspirations to improve the welfare of their people, and to enhance the quality of life. For most of us, a strong agricultural base is vital to meeting these challenges. Experience in many parts of the world has shown that regional and international cooperation has a very important role to play in this regard.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations symbolizes the spirit of international cooperation and humanity's common desire to once and for all time, rid the world of hunger and famine. It has for over 40 years played a vital role in helping the developing countries to improve their agricultural policies and planning. FAO Regional Conferences provide the Member States an excellent opportunity to deliberate problems of world agriculture and of rural communities, and to devise appropriate strategies. I am therefore very happy that this Session of the Regional Conference is being held in India, at a time when we, nationally, are engaged in reorienting agricultural policies to meet the challenges of the 1990s and beyond.

The application of the fruits of research in agricultural sciences and technology in India, from the mid 60s, enables us to improve productivity of several crops very significantly. Despite having reached a plateau in terms of net sown area, it was possible to sustain the growth rate in production due to enhancement of productivity. In the 1980s with the country having reached a measure of stability in the vital foodgrains production sector, increasing attention focused on improving productivity in areas where the growth rate was relatively slow compared to the well-endowed areas. Here too, a measure of success has been achieved, though we have still a long way to go. Our challenge now is to improve agricultural production through adoption of a farming systems approach in difficult areas such as the rainfed tracts and the hilly regions. We also have to devote greater attention to productivity increases in non-cereal areas like oilseeds, cotton and horticultural produce.

Future increases in foodgrains production will have to come from better and more effective utilization of infrastructure already created, as well as from rainfed areas, and those without assured irrigation, which constitute 70 percent of our cultivated areas. Prevention of soil erosion and moisture conservation on watershed basis and optimum use of available resources and technologies therefore becomes extremely important. The gains, however, are likely to be manifold, without requiring the same order of capital investment.

Agriculture has been at the forefront of national planning and economic development in India. Agriculture planning in the future will in addition to raising production, increasingly need to focus on enhancing the farmers' well-being in a more holistic sense. This includes provision of non-farm needs, as well as a remunerative income commensurate with their investments and risks.

Like most other countries in our region, India is reaching limits to horizontal expansion in agricultural development. With the increasing demands being made on the land and water resources and technological changes, the need to harmonize agricultural development and environmental sustainability is becoming increasingly important. The challenge before society is to promote a model of agricultural development designed to ensure sustainability and ecological regeneration in the degraded areas. These patterns cannot be imposed from above, and have to gradually evolve and be consciously nurtured. In addressing such issues, there is also need for greater equity and accommodation at the international level. The structures of global production and trade must be conducive to more rational and equitable management of the earth's resources. We need to evolve a global consensus and common understanding. In this context, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) being held in Rio in June 1992, can play a very important role.

Closely linked to the issue of sustainable agricultural development is the question relating to plant genetic resources. With rapid developments in bio-technology, the question of conservation of our genetic endowment and access of the farmers to these resources has acquired critical importance. A network of modern gene banks needs to be established to conserve these most valuable resources. Effective action under the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, and any other international instruments to be evolved, should ensure germplasm conservation and equitable utilization of this vital resource.

In order to benefit from advances made in frontier technologies in the field of agriculture, developing countries must also establish their own research facilities in basic, as well as applied, sciences particularly in areas of genetic engineering, tissue-culture, embryo transfer, biological control of pests and diseases, bio-fertilizers, etc. Developed countries and international organizations like the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and FAO need to come forward with resources and long-term scientific and technical support for such research facilities in the developing countries so that farmers in the developing world are able to fully benefit from the forthcoming 'Gene Revolution'. Hunger has been recognized by the international community as a global challenge and needs to be met through global cooperation.

Modern economic development also entails relieving pressure from land and agriculture. Over the past few decades, with the limited land resources, the rapid growth in rural labour force and the relatively slow growth of rural off-farm sector the problems of small land holder farmers as also the landless labourers have become particularly serious. It needs to be realized that a lasting solution to rural poverty in the developing countries cannot be found only within the farm sector. Effective policies are also required to promote non-farm activities. Although agricultural growth is essential for the food security in the developing countries, the

problems of rural unemployment and under-employment, as well as those relating to the low income of small farmers, need to be saved by simultaneously developing the non-farm sector in the rural areas.

Agricultural diversification, as well as agro-processing supported by appropriate pricing policies and market infrastructure, in addition to increasing land and labour productivity, would also lead to higher farmer incomes which would generate better standards of living for the people in the rural areas. It would also generate the much needed investments for the agricultural sector. Such diversification would also usher in a shift towards production of commodities such as animal and marine products, fruits, vegetables and flowers which have bigger demands in high-income countries. Increasing the share of the agricultural commodities marketed and consumed in processed form will also result in expansion of employment, enhancement of incomes and greater household food security in the rural areas.

Ensuring household food security and nutrition also require long-term interventions aimed at promoting overall economic and social growth. The world today has over 500 million people throughout the developing countries who are not consuming enough food to lead active and healthy lives and are living in unsanitary environments with inadequate access to clean water and social services. The national development plans would, therefore, need to be supplemented by adequate social safety nets and income transfer measures which ensure priority targeting of benefits to the malnourished and food-insecure households. This must be an integral part of our efforts to implement the overall two-pronged approach to food security, i.e., increasing food production and improved access to food. In this context, I commend the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization for convening the International Conference on Nutrition in Rome in December 1992, and I am sure it will make an important contribution in these areas.

A number of developing countries undergoing economic reforms and restructuring are experiencing difficulties aggravated by heavy indebtedness, mounting inflation, deteriorating terms of trade, low agricultural growth rates and adverse demographic trends. The need for direct intervention measures by way of providing increased food aid from external sources, strengthening of national public distribution systems, increased income transfer and social investments acquires greater relevance and importance for these countries to alleviate short-term problems associated with such adjustments. To reduce the economic and social costs, the adjustment process should be fully supported by the international community.

Structural adjustment is a dynamic process which aims at establishing conditions for a viable growth process within the economy and in the relationship between the domestic and international economy. The policies pursued by some development countries especially in the field of trade in agriculture and commodities, undermines the potential for agricultural development in the developing countries. Many Asian developing countries are restricted from deriving the full benefit from global economic opportunities on account of trade barriers in developed countries and the massive amounts spent in protecting their agriculture. It is hoped that the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations will address these issues in a balanced manner, taking into account the development dimension of agriculture in the developing countries.

The need for strengthening South-South cooperation in seeking solutions to our common problems needs to be pursued with greater vigour. I feel economic and technical cooperation among development countries (ECDC and TCDC) is an ideal vehicle for mutual help and transfer of technology. For example, Asian countries account for more than 90 percent of the world's paddy production. There are striking differences with reference to production and productivity of rice in various countries of the region. They can work together to improve productivity in their countries.

The agricultural sector is particularly suited to assist countries in learning from each other and in helping each other to increase productivity and production of various crops. The success of the TCDC Programming Exercise in Agriculture Sector held in New Delhi in October 1991 is indicative of the potential that exists for collaborative action in fostering mutual technical cooperation, in nurturing confidence in each other's technical capabilities, and in enhancing the quality of international cooperation.

Your participation in the deliberations of the Conference during this week will enrich the FAO's ability to deal with intractable problems of hunger, malnutrition and environmental degradation. I wish you all success in your deliberations.

Thank you.

APPENDIX E

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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

Conference theme

In the Upanishads - one of India's many ancient books of wisdom - there is a hymn that proclaims the theme of our meeting. It reads:

"From food are born all creatures that live on earth. Afterwards, they live on food. And when they die, they return to food."

The quest for this most basic of human needs is what brings us to New Delhi today.

Indian hospitality

As we gather for the Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference, we find ourselves, once again, appreciative beneficiaries of Indian hospitality. This warm hospitality is a tradition of long-standing.

As you may recall, India hosted the very first Regional Conference. It was held in Bangalore in 1953. For the Eleventh and Fifteenth Regional Conference, held in 1972 and 1980, respectively, the venue shifted to New Delhi.

Over the years, India has given to the Organization some of its most talented citizens, many of whom served with distinction, in member countries the world over.

Tribute to India's leaders

In this legion of exemplary leaders, one of the most outstanding is Dr B.R. Sen, who served as the fourth Director-General of FAO from 1956 to 1967.

The scope, sophistication and impact of FAO programmes in the 1990s may be attributed in large measure to the wisdom, vision and human compassion of Dr Sen. Invariably, he measured FAO's programmes against the yardstick of service for those in need.

FAO's appreciation may be seen in the way the Organization has honoured citizens of this country. FAO struck Ceres medals to commemorate late Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Shri Jaya Prakash Narayan and Dr Sen.

May I, therefore, convey to the Prime Minister of India, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, and the Minister of Agriculture, Shri Balram Jakhar, our gratitude for your country's continuing welcome and support for FAO's programmes.

Agriculture's historical sweep

It was my privilege to work in this country in the early sixties - a tour of duty proved a valuable and formative experience. During this assignment, I discovered that FAO conferences held in this vast region are permeated by a sense of agriculture's long and sacred history.

It is easy to understand why this is so. Natural scientists, for example, tell us that almost half of the plants in this region originated from two countries - China and India; that *Oryza sativa* or rice - one of India's important contributions to world agriculture - was sown to the north and west of the Deccan Plateau during the first millenium before Christ; that by the seventh century before Christ, rice fields had spread eastward to the Ganges Delta.

Historians further record that by the fifth millenium before Christ, Chinese farmers were harvesting millet; and that peas and water chestnuts were being grown in the Spirit Caves of northern Thailand, as early as 7000 B.C.

The theme of humankind's cycle of life and death, blending with land and water, runs through the literature that snaped this region. Vedic hymns, chanted the tenth to seventh centuries B.C., mirror agricultural cycles in the "land of five rivers," as people reached out for values beyond food and physical survival.

This rich matrix produced illustrious personalities, among them Nobel Laureates. Rabindranath Tagore probed the mystical in the lyrical lines of the *Gitanjali*, while Mother Teresa continues to see divinity in the squalor of Calcutta's slums.

It was from this rich cultural stream, too, that Mahatma Gandhi emerged. Who can forget his adage: To a people famished and idle, the only form in which God dares to appear is work and the promise of food?

Conference series for the 1990s

The Conference we begin today is the first in the series planned for the 1990s. It forms part of FAO's continuing effort to enhance the welfare of the farmer and to ensure adequate food for all. We are meeting to shape policies to ease our transition into an uncertain twenty-first century.

Such policies must enable Asian agriculture to support populations, historically unprecedented in size, density or migration movements. It must do so, however, without pawning, in the process, the natural resource base of succeeding generations.

"We do not inherit the land from our parents," as an Indian proverb puts it so well. "We merely borrow it from our children."

Assessing the region's record

Taking stock of our work offers a useful starting point.

Where were we at the beginning of the 1980s? What have we accomplished since then? Where have we fallen short? And what tasks, in the 1990s, command priority on our limited resources?

The historical record of the 1980s indicates that farmers responded decisively to the challenges faced by the region. Economically, Asia and the Pacific today is the fastest growing region in the world.

This strong performance is partly due to the enlightened policies that many governments adopted which reinforced the small-scale rural producer as the foundation for an economy-wide structural transformation.

The men and women, who till your fields and fish in your waters have demonstrated that the once seemingly irreversible advance of hunger can be stopped.

Regional cereal production, in the 1980s, grew at a rate of almost 3.0 percent a year, thus pulling ahead of the region's population growth and outstripping more than the one percent growth in cereal production achieved by the rest of the world. Four of six major rice-deficit countries worked their way to self-sufficiency.

In some countries, full granaries mean enhanced food security. Asian developing country cereal stocks rose from an average of 60 million tons for the 1974 to 1976 period to 93 million tons for 1988 to 1990.

FAO's Regional Food Security Commission reports near universal adoption of foodgrain, trade and stock policies to stabilize supply and prices - although economic access to food remains a troublesome issue.

Gains in critical sectors

There were remarkable gains in other sectors.

Asia today accounts for two-thirds of the world's irrigated area. FAO statistics, carefully gathered by the Organization's fertilizer programme, reveal that almost 30 percent of the world's mineral fertilizers are used by farmers of this region.

Over the last two decades, per caput dietary energy supply grew by almost 10 percent, scraping by the normative requirements set by FAO and the World Health Organization, and the proportion of malnourished people in Asia has dropped.

This is not to say the crisis of poverty and malnutrition in the Asian countryside has been overcome. In fact, the lethargy and apathy that malnutrition spawns is so widespread in poorer societies that they are considered normal. Lazarus at the gate blends in, unnoticed, with the scenery.

In the 1980s, aquaculture grew from being a domestic supplier, serving protein-short inland areas, into a dynamic export industry. Small farmer dairy development blazed the trail for the "white revolution" in India.

Many national agencies - ranging from economic planning offices to agricultural universities - evolved into established institutions with stronger capacities for service. Agricultural banks of the region, for example, finance training provided by the Asia Pacific Rural Credit Association (APRACA), based in the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAPA).

These achievements are relevant to our Conference, for they also reflect this region's aspirations.

FAO, I am proud to note, worked steadfastly by the side of your farmers, foresters and fisherpeople throughout this challenging period.

Given the severe resource constraints, programmes carried out by the FAO Regional Office were, of necessity, modest. They included work on small farmer development, sustainable agriculture, pesticides, artisanal fisheries, renewable energy, biotechnology and animal health and production.

But the priorities you set at previous Regional Conferences assured the relevance and catalytic potential of these programmes. The results of FAO's integrated pest management and control programme for countries of this region won the prestigious B.R. Sen Award for its chief technical advisor last November.

Following the successful experience in Latin America, today seven commissions and 16 technical networks operate through RAPA in cooperation with your experts, pooling the skills and experience of the region. The scope of this effort is documented comprehensively in Document APRC/92/2.

Backdrop of radical change

All these achievements were made amid overwhelming political change.

This was, after all, the decade when the Cold War petered out. The world pulled back from the paralyzing prospect of nuclear incineration. Walls of repression collapsed as people's pent-up aspirations for freedom were released.

The spirit of liberty swept the States of Eastern Europe into the ranks of free nations, and from the Soviet Union's rubble emerged the Commonwealth of Independent States. Recent elections in Nepal and Bangladesh have released new wellsprings of creativity in the people.

This region has left its stamp on the reshaping of our globe.

The first display of "people's power" on television screens which make our world a "global village", was in 1986 when millions of Filipinos, in non-violent protest, successfully turned back tanks and bayonets.

The "velvet revolution" of Czechoslovakia and the "Solidarity" battlecry of Poland followed shortly thereafter.

From these stunning displays of "people's power", we recall the shuffle of thousands of unshod feet: those of the simple people whom Mahatman Gandhi led to the seashore at Dandi in 1930 peaceful protest against the salt tax.

This tradition of non-violence has deep roots in Asia. The values it asserts deserve more than a mere footnote in history.

"Movements from below"

In the 1980s, a creative influence was provided by non-governmental organizations. Their innovative approaches affected vital areas of concern, ranging from agrarian reform and participatory development to human rights and the status of women.

In this field, FAO owes much to the foresight of Dr B.R. Sen. Long before the impact of "people's power" for development was recognized, Dr Sen established the "Freedom from Hunger Campaign." FFHHC provided a channel whereby "movements from below" could link up with governments, FAO and other similarly structured institutions in the age-old struggle against hunger.

A growing openness to "movements from below" is emerging, even in countries that are locked in public intervention policies. Laos, Viet Nam and Cambodia today are building bridges to social movements and the private sector, given their proven ability to mobilize resources and skills.

Regional economic integration

This surge toward liberty is matched by movements toward economic integration. The European Economic Community is setting the pace. Aware of this trend, the Twenty-sixth FAO Conference amended our Basic Texts to allow regional economic integration organizations to apply for membership, and subsequently admitted the EEC as the first Member Organization of FAO.

Regional groupings are responding quickly to these changes. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, for example, is working steadily toward the creation of a free trade area for the twenty-first century.

FAO executes projects in agriculture, fisheries and forestry for ASEAN. From this experience, we can attest to ASEAN's growing capacity to conserve, nurture and renew, on an intercountry basis, its common life support systems. The Association is also increasingly able to articulate unified, principled stands vis-à-vis those of the more powerful negotiators and economic groups.

In this regard, I am heartened by the summit declaration of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to intensify intercountry collaboration for development and economic integration. The South Pacific Commission is wisely gearing its programmes for the decade ahead.

Science-based productivity

In my view, regional economic integration represents a viable opportunity. FAO stands ready to encourage and support efforts to move in this direction.

Placed in the hands of farmers, science is the key to unlocking productivity. Asia and the Pacific has led all developing regions in the allocation of funds for agricultural research.

The nine million hectares China has sown to hybrid rice, developed by its scientists, represent the pay-off for such investment.

FAO supports the research of institutions such as the International Rice Research Institute. Work on the effects of the thinning of the ozone layer on rice - a critical staple of this region - is just one example.

It is on the sloping uplands of Asia that the most severe problems of poverty, population pressure and environmental degradation interlock. The Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions, with the encouragement of RAPA, seeks to focus work on appropriate technology for small farms in long-neglected upland rain-fed areas.

Equally significant are flexible and path-blazing programmes set up by FAO and agencies such as the Asian Development Bank and UNDP. These three agencies, for example, launched the Forestry Research Programme which is an effort to marshal a critical mass of knowledge from Asian scientists with the aim of achieving environmentally sensitive forest management by focusing on people.

Equity, growth and stability

As you will recall, the Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference, held in 1982, unanimously adopted the Jakarta "Declaration on Equity, Growth and Stability". This document called for a greater commitment to eliminating poverty and establishing human solidarity.

In Indochina today, those hopes may finally be within reach. Some of the swords are being hammered into ploughshares.

FAO is establishing a liaison office in Phnom Penh. When it is operational, our projects will assist Cambodian farmers to replant fields once sown with over half a million lethal mines.

The stream of "boat people" from Viet Nam may have peaked. But refugee camps are likely to remain with us through much of the 1990s. These camps are stark reminders of the fragility of our achievements.

Last year, there was a devastating combination of armed conflict in Sri Lanka, floods in Bangladesh, drought in Indonesia and volcanic eruptions in the Philippines. These disasters underscore how, despite progress, our safety margins remain slim.

Dimensions of future tasks

We should have no illusions. The tasks ahead are daunting. Over 300 million people in this region remain ill-fed.

Dietary shifts in the Pacific Islands - where imported cereals dislodged traditional staples in urban households - have triggered severe nutritional deterioration. Island countries are afflicted by some of the highest rates of malnutrition and nutrition-related diseases in the world.

In far too many countries, truncated life expectancies prevail.

Today, an average Asian's life span is a little over 63 years, which is already more than a decade longer than those of Africans. But it still falls far short of the 81 years achieved by women in advanced industrial countries like Japan.

Moreover, these figures mask the unacceptable injustice of lifespans shortened by poverty and hunger in specific countries: 49 years in Cambodia and in the low 50s in Laos, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea.

Information and popular aspirations

Shorter lifespans prevailed through much of the 1980s: the same decade that ushered in an "information explosion." The satellite dish symbolizes the impact of media. It has shown people that education, better nutrition and a strong health care programme can prolong life. Within the short span of two decades, these boosted life expectancy in China by a generation.

Today, the poor realize that deprivation, stunted lives and early graves are not inevitable. Such knowledge unlocks aspirations of tremendous force since the disparity affects life itself.

In the 1990s, such aspirations will erupt into more insistent demands for reforms of a social order that seem to vest a franchise to life in the affluent.

"Penury corrodes the spirit of the poor", as the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi observed on the occasion of her address to the Fifteenth FAO Regional Conference. "The wealth of the prosperous grows in isolation. [It] does not provide support to those who need it... Poverty cannot be the destiny of mankind. And we have only one adversary: economic and social injustices... We must stimulate economic growth without damage to ecological harmony."

It is timely that our Conference will have a progress report on preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition.¹ FAO and WHO are, as you know, co-sponsors of this global meeting which is to take place in December 1992.

The best-drawn nutritional plans, however, will have little impact on the bleak lives of impoverished people in our villages, unless they are matched by measures that increase rural incomes. Increased food availability is meaningless to the rural family that cannot buy it.

This basic truth underpins the paper before you, entitled: "Enhancing Rural Employment and Incomes Through the Development of Agro-Processing Industries."²

The rural population in this region increased from 1.4 billion in 1950 to an estimated 2 billion in 1990. Huge pools of rural labour are force-feeding migration streams into urban slums.

Strategies have to be found to integrate agricultural growth, off-farm employment and rural industrialization. A key strategy in China encourages workers to "leave the farms but not the countryside." This concept merits careful attention.

¹ APCR/92/INF/4.

² APCR/92/3.

We can ill-afford euphoria. Our achievements are at best a limited victory. We must not rest until hunger has been totally eradicated.

Roadblocks to future growth

These gains I have mentioned did not come cheaply. Your countries won them despite the harsh economic climate of the 1980s.

In fact, little progress has been made in reducing onerous external debts. Worldwide, these now exceed US\$1.35 trillion US dollars. Debt service has been compounded by the severe reduction of official aid.

Furthermore, the adverse impact of persisting protectionism has been exacerbated by depressed prices of primary commodities. The value of agricultural exports of the developing countries rose only slowly, even in nominal terms. In this context, the outcome of the long, drawn-out Uruguay Round negotiations is crucial; but failure could spell economic stagnation and devastation, especially for the poor and the weak.

In some countries, budgetary deficits eroded critical food distribution programmes for vulnerable groups. In others, the implementation of structural reforms has run into difficulties as incomes have stagnated.

Unfinished agenda items

In 1979, your governments defined the structural changes needed at the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. WCARRD's Programme of Action remains valid. In fact, the Review Team on WCARRD informed the Twenty-sixth FAO Conference that, "as in the 1970s, a new world consensus on agrarian reform and rural development is again emerging".

We must respond to this consensus far more decisively than we did in the 1980s. As the limits of arable land are breached in country after country, agrarian reform emerges as part of the unfinished business to be placed on the agenda of the 1990s.

Half of the world's poor reside in this region. Many are drifting, in ever larger numbers, into marginal and ecologically brittle areas.

Significantly, the number of landless wage-dependent families among them are increasing. Almost half of all rural households are landless. And the growing pools of educated but jobless youth constitute a volatile tinderbox.

No task commands higher priority than reducing poverty. The 1980s was aptly termed the "lost decade for the poor." Nearly one-half of the world's poor lived in South Asia at the start of this decade. We must promote the productive use of the poor's most abundant asset: labour. The 1990s must not be a clone of the 1980s.

The eradication of penury, I wish to stress, is not a benevolent luxury. It is a condition of our continual survival as a human community.

Panorama of the future

Earlier, I referred to the long sweep of agriculture's history in this region. The equally long panorama of the future is striking.

The challenges that the 1990a thrust upon you - the agricultural policy-makers of this Region - are unprecedented in history.

Never before were farms of this region called upon to feed such large populations.

India alone added the equivalent of ten Australias to the region's population in the last decade. If the demographic transition to lower birth rates falters in the larger countries of this region - as it did in the Philippines and Viet Nam - the region's agriculture will have to feed more than 3.7 billion people in the near future.

Never in the past were food systems required to sustain such dense urban concentrations.

In 1990, there were nine cities in Asia with over eight million people: Shanghai, Beijing, Bombay, Calcutta, Seoul, Tianjin, Jakarta, Manila and, of course, our host city, New Delhi.

Ten short years from now, Dhaka, Karachi, Bangkok, Teheran and Bangalore will enter this cramped category.

Never before were the farmers of Asia and the Pacific ever burdened with such an unsought chore: that of repaying external debts at levels which sap their capacity for future growth.

At no time in the region's history did the blight of soil degradation spread over 36 percent of potential cropland.

For the first time ever, the annual deforestation rates exceed 4.7 million hectares - roughly double the rate of a decade ago. Over 75 million hectares have been laid to waste by shifting cultivators. As a consequence, fallow cycles are shortening, thereby denying respite to the exhausted land.

Bills for ecological deficits and wasteful practices, incurred in the past, are falling due.

FAO's regional commissions and networks - specially these on forestry, farm management and related fields - continue to help sharpen awareness that such losses in valuable topsoil and genetic resources are unsustainable.

The capacity of individual countries to address these issues varies. But there is an increasing realization of the extortionate costs which ecological collapse will entail.

FAO is therefore working with countries, through field programmes and the adoption of Tropical Forests Action Plans, to check the environmental rot.

Thus, our agenda item "Regional Strategies for Arresting Land Degradation"³ is highly relevant. This issue will dominate the agenda of this region in the 1990s.

Our paper provides a comprehensive overview on the threats to this most basic of resources: land and water. You will examine this issue from the viewpoints of waterlogging, soil salinity, inefficient use of water and "mining" of soil fertility.

Asian voice

Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand raised an eloquent Asian voice on these threats in her 1991 World Food Day address:

"Two stark figures illustrate the seriousness of this threat. Deserts in Asia are spreading at the rate of one million hectares yearly. And deforestation today is double that set in the early 1980s..."

The Princess welcomed FAO's initiative in assisting countries to draw up a Programme of Action at the Conference on Sustainable Agriculture and the Environment in the Netherlands. She observed:

"A common thread runs through all (such) documents, namely: Our natural resources - be they forests, land or seas - are to sustain all humans as beneficiaries and, more important, as trustees... In the use of these resources, we are not to diminish the prospects of those who will come after us. Faithful stewardship is an ideal shared by all the great ethical systems of our world."

Our resources are finite. Tomorrow's challenge will take the shape of "ecological access" to resources. Your governments must develop a strategy for sustainable agriculture and rural development.

To be effective, governments and international agencies such as FAO must seek, with greater intensity, the support of community-based organizations. The needs of the rural poor must form the starting point and the end of policies.

Structural reforms

Above all, we must address causes - not merely symptoms - of the problems that confront men and women daily on their farms. Improved technology will pay off only when matched by institutional reforms in land tenure, taxation, inheritance laws, improved credit and marketing facilities.

Without structural reform, hopes for any sustainable agriculture and rural development are ephemeral.

³ APRC/92/4.

As I told the Fifteenth FAO regional Conference, there is no shortage of blueprints. The World Soil Charter, adopted by the Twenty-first FAO Conference in 1981, is still valid a decade after its adoption. So is the Peasant's Charter, drawn up by WCARRD in 1979.

The continual degradation of land and stalled agrarian reform are dangerous gaps that are still to be closed.

Basic alternatives

Asia and the Pacific today finds itself at a development crossroad.

It can maintain agricultural progress through increased productivity only if benefits are shared more equitably by the poor. Social equity, in turn, is the only credible incentive to ensure conservation of the ecological base. These conditions would enable the region to enter the twenty-first century with confidence.

The alternative is continued wastage of this region's natural resource base, which is under pressure from the build-up of population and still unsatisfied human aspirations. The permanent insecurity of the poor would harden into despair.

In the ultimate analysis, our Conference agenda is a joint effort to empower the weakest among us. We seek to help them move on to more humane levels of living. Policies that serve the deprived, as Mahatma Gandhi insisted with rocklike integrity, uplift all.

In the Punjab, three thousand years ago, farmers chanted an ancient Vedic hymn. This song catches in haunting beauty, the task before us as we approach the end of this millenium. "Harness the ploughs," the *Rig-veda* proclaims. "Fit on the yokes, now that the womb of the earth is ready to sow the seed therein."

Namaste!

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