

Report of the

**NINTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR EUROPE**

Lausanne, Switzerland, 7-12 October 1974



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

REPORT
of the
NINTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE
(in cooperation with the UN Economic Commission for Europe)

Lausanne, Switzerland

7-12 October 1974

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 1974

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INTRODUCTION

Organization of the Conference

1. The Ninth FAO Regional Conference for Europe was held in Lausanne, Switzerland, at the Palais de Beaulieu from 7 to 12 October 1974, at the invitation of the Swiss Federal Council.

2. The Conference was attended by delegations from 26 Member Nations of the European Region, viz.

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Albania | Hungary | Romania |
| Austria | Ireland | Spain |
| Belgium | Israel | Sweden |
| Bulgaria | Italy | Switzerland |
| Czechoslovakia | Malta | Turkey |
| Denmark | Netherlands | United Kingdom |
| Finland | Norway | Yugoslavia |
| France | Poland | |
| Germany, Fed. Rep. of | Portugal | |
| Greece | | |

3. The following Member Nations from other regions were also present as observers:

| | |
|--------|--------------------------|
| Canada | United States of America |
|--------|--------------------------|

4. The Permanent Observer of the Holy See was also present at the Conference.

5. Representatives of the following organizations and agencies of the UN system were present:

World Food Conference of the United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
United Nations Development Programme
World Food Programme
International Labour Organization
International Atomic Energy Agency

6. Representatives of the European Economic Community were present.

7. Observers from the following inter-governmental organizations attended the Conference:

Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

8. Observers from the following non-governmental organizations attended the Conference:

European Association for Animal Production
European Confederation of Agriculture
International Dairy Federation
International Federation of Agricultural Producers

9. The List of Participants is attached to the Report as Appendix B.

Opening Ceremony

10. The Director-General of FAO, Dr. A.H. Boerma, opened the Ninth FAO Regional Conference for Europe, expressed his thanks to the Swiss Federal Council for the invitation to hold the Conference in Switzerland, and then he invited the President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr. E. Brugger, to take the floor for his opening statement.

11. On behalf of the Federal Council, the President extended a warm welcome to all participants of the Conference and paid tribute to FAO and the Director-General for the great efforts the Organization is constantly making to improve the conditions of life of all people in the entire world. He expressed the hope that all member countries would continue to give their strongest support to this undertaking. The full text of the President's statement is attached at Appendix D.

12. The Director General thanked the President for his highly interesting statement and gave then the floor to the Mayor of the City of Lausanne, Mr. J.P. Delamuraz, who felt greatly honoured that his town had been chosen as the venue of the Conference. He considered it a privilege to be associated with the work of FAO through this important meeting.

Election of Conference Officers

13. On the proposal of the Delegation of Turkey, seconded by the Delegation of Poland, the Conference unanimously elected Mr. J.C. Piot, Director of the Federal Division of Agriculture, as Chairman of the Conference. Following the proposals of the Delegation of Finland, seconded by the Delegation of Italy and Yugoslavia, the Conference elected unanimously as the three Vice-Chairmen, the following delegates:

Mr. A. Esteves Belo, Secretary of State for Agriculture of Portugal

Mr. M.P. Murphy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries of Ireland

Mr. I. Stanciu, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Water Economy of Romania

Adoption of the Agenda

14. The Conference adopted the agenda set out in Appendix A.

Closing of the Conference

15. The Chairman of the Conference Mr. J.C. Piot, Director of the Federal Division of Agriculture expressed his thanks to delegates and observers for their constructive participation in the work of the Conference. He expressed the view that member countries have a joint responsibility for the judicious formulation and successful implementation of FAO's activities and should therefore endeavour to solve the problems together which are confronting world agriculture in general and that of Europe in particular.

16. On behalf of the Director-General of FAO, the Regional Representative for Europe, Mr. G.E. Bildesheim, thanked the President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr. E. Brugger, for his valuable opening statement. He then expressed his gratitude to the Swiss Federal Council, the Federal Department of National Economy, the authorities of the Canton of Vaud and the city of Lausanne for their generous hospitality. He thanked the participating delegations and observers for their positive contribution to the debate and the chairman and vice-chairmen for the able manner in which they had conducted the discussion. A word of thanks was also given to the Swiss Secretariat and in particular to Mr. R. de Pourtalès for their efficient cooperation in the successful running of the Conference.

17. Finally, Mr. A. de Schonen, Head of the French Delegation, expressed the gratitude of the participating delegations to the Swiss authorities and to the Chairmen for the perfect organization of the Conference and for the excellent facilities granted to the participants.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

18. In his introductory statement the Director-General referred chiefly to issues relating to the food situation in the world as a whole as well as the complex problems confronting European agriculture. The Director-General's statement is reproduced in Appendix E.

19. Mr. J. Stanovnik, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe, expressed his appreciation for the close and still growing cooperation between the Commission and FAO. ECE was a multi-disciplinary regional organization which covered a large number of the industrialised countries. It had long experience in promoting cooperation between countries with different economic and social systems, but with many common problems, and its work would receive a further impetus by the successful conclusion of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. ECE could thus provide its own dimension for the discussion of agricultural problems in the region as a positive contribution to its cooperation with FAO.

20. Agriculture in the ECE region, unlike that of many other regions, was a highly capital-intensive and commercialised industry which had profited from the rapid progress of science and technology and had achieved an unprecedented growth of productivity in the post-war period. At the same time, this period had been characterised by a marked expansion of agricultural trade, in particular between industrialised countries, and by a growing integration of agriculture into the economy, which, however, also made ECE agriculture more vulnerable to developments in the rest of the economy and in other countries.

21. Among the general problems, which strongly affected agriculture in recent years, the Executive Secretary referred particularly to the exhaustion of stocks of agricultural commodities which had provided a margin of security in the past, to inflation, to the need for conservation and efficient utilization of energy, to monetary instability, and to the pronounced rise in the balance of payments deficits of many countries. The present situation was fraught with great dangers which could not be met by isolated decisions which were limited to one country or another or to any specific branch of the economy. In order to find the narrow path for economic growth which avoided leading to further instability or imbalances on the one hand or to economic regression on the other, countries had to be conscious of the interdependence of their economies, had to accept multilateral responsibility, and had to cooperate in finding outward-looking solutions which would contribute to a balanced economic order.

22. In his address to the Conference, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Mr. F. Aquino, dealt with the present situation of the Programme and its future policies and priorities. His statement is attached as Appendix F.

AGRICULTURAL POLICIES OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Production Objectives and Policies

23. In the discussion of this item which was based on document ERC:74/2, all delegations expressed concern about the world food situation and the disquieting trends in developing countries. There was general agreement that in the prevailing circumstances the agricultural potential of Europe, its know-how and advanced technology could play an important role. Many delegates made a strong appeal that the forthcoming U.N. World Food Conference should be approached in a constructive spirit and expressed the will to contribute towards the solution of the world food problem.

24. Many delegates pointed out the need for re-examining national production objectives and policies in the light of the changed world situation. Accent should be put on greater food security, on better utilization of productive resources, more rational use of inputs and elimination of waste. In this connection the need was also stressed for a re-examination of such consumption patterns and practices which lead to waste of strategic commodities like, for instance, grains. Studies of human food consumption in relation to nutritional requirements would help in the formulation of more adequate food policies.

25. While the general impression arising from the discussion was that most countries were preparing themselves for a greater production effort, a number of delegates pointed to the uncertainties inherent in the present situation, which made it difficult for the policy-makers to formulate production objectives in a more definite way. The need for flexible production objectives and policies was recognised by several delegates, but it was pointed out that the degree of flexibility in agriculture was probably smaller than commonly thought. Investment decisions tend to commit important and often scarce resources for long periods of time; the production cycle of a number of commodities was determined by nature and could not be arbitrarily changed; farm structures and other conditions in agriculture in many countries made rapid adjustments difficult. The need was felt for more flexible and more adequate policy instruments for better implementing production objectives.

26. The importance of structural policies and the contribution that structural improvements could make to the flexibility of output was recognised by many delegates, but it was pointed out that structural policies could not be easily intensified beyond a certain point. A number of delegates informed the Conference about the structural programmes adopted in their respective countries and the implementation of these programmes stressing, however, the high financial cost of the operations as well as the social and other considerations which must be kept constantly in mind. The importance of integrated regional development, particularly when dealing with the intricate problems of less developed rural areas, was strongly emphasised.

27. On their part, delegates from eastern Europe informed the Conference about structural changes in agriculture in their countries, pointing in particular to the rapid move towards new forms of horizontal and vertical integration embodied in agri-industrial complexes. These new structures, were said to have the advantage of facilitating the application of advanced technology, the achievement of economies of scale and, more generally, a better integration of agriculture with the rest of the economy. The stable development of demand for agricultural products prevailing at present in these countries was also often mentioned.

28. Delegations from south-European countries spoke about their methods of developing agriculture and the difficulties involved. Problems associated with massive transfers of the agricultural labour force to other occupations, fragmented farm structures, inadequate infrastructure etc. were often mentioned as well as the increasing difficulties encountered in trade in agricultural products.

29. Critical observations about the instability of international markets, reinforced by the spread of restrictive trade policies, were often heard in the discussion. No country, it was emphasised by several delegates, should seek to solve its domestic problems at the expense of its trading partners. Hope was expressed that certain countries which felt obliged to introduce or late import restrictions would soon find ways and means for normalizing trade relations with third countries and that in the future, whenever possible, countries faced with domestic problems should consult with their trading partners before taking definitive decisions. Several delegates expressed the readiness of their countries to pay particular attention to the specific interests of developing countries.

30. The broader aspects of agricultural policies in western Europe and price policies in particular, were also discussed. The need for re-orienting price policies towards their original purpose - providing guidance to production - was reiterated. But it was recognised that adequate methods for supporting farm incomes, where such support was needed, had not yet been found. Some delegates pointed to the encouraging results obtained by combining price policies with direct support to farmers, particularly in the special case of agriculture in mountainous areas.

31. The problem of agricultural prices and price policies in a situation characterised by rapid inflation, aggravated by the energy problem and the rising prices of inputs, was often raised in the discussions. Several delegates pointed to the limited possibilities for economising on inputs, especially when a greater production effort seemed to be needed. Some delegates were of the opinion that the whole problem of agricultural prices and price policies should be re-examined in the light of present conditions which radically differed from those prevailing in the past. The need for a better integration of agriculture with the rest of the economy was also stressed.

Land Use Objectives and Related Policy in Agriculture and Forestry in Europe

32. Delegations taking part in the discussion of this item expressed agreement with the major points set forth in the document ERC:74/3 including those calling for specific action. In particular, unanimous support was given to the need to conduct land use planning efforts within an integrated regional and national context rather than a sectorial one: that land use objectives and policies must be formulated within the broader context of developmental planning in all its aspects - economic, social, physical, environmental and cultural, wherein agriculture and forestry are but two of a growing array of competitive users. There was also broad agreement that in a region such as Europe, the non-economic (social, environmental and cultural) generally protective objectives and/or the consequences of land use decisions will play an ever-increasing role.

33. Several delegations called for increased attention to the qualitative aspects of land resources and emphasised the need for these to be given greater consideration in not only measuring and evaluating land use changes but also in adopting policies and actions to achieve desired land use adjustments.

34. With regard to definitions and land use terminology currently applied in the countries of the Region the opinion was expressed that work on their improvement in general and on their standardisation and harmonisation in particular should be intensified in order to permit a more meaningful international comparison of national land use data. In this connection the need of increased cooperation between the countries as well as between international organizations dealing with land use problems was stressed.

35. The northern European countries felt that the possibilities offered by remote sensing techniques might usefully be applied for the monitoring of European land and water resources in general and for the correct appraisal of seasonal or periodic changes in particular which are fundamental to adequate land use planning, as well as to the adjustment of agricultural structures.

FISH PRODUCTION AND PROTECTION IN INLAND AND ESTUARINE WATERS IN EUROPE

36. Great interest was expressed by many delegations in the matters presented in document ERC:74/4, and it was proposed that items relating to inland and estuarine fisheries be included in the Agenda of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe on a regular basis, perhaps at four or six-yearly intervals. It was generally agreed that, whilst inland fisheries are not at present important for food production, their contribution to protein consumption is likely to increase through the culture of fish in ponds. Furthermore, the widespread significance of sport fisheries as a recreational facility was widely recognised.

37. Many problems common to inland fisheries, the mobility of the fishery resources and the waters in which they are found and the increasing trade in live fish and fish eggs, were clearly understood to provide the need for international action of the type provided by the European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission (EIFAC), and the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM). Many delegations expressed their great satisfaction with the accomplishments of these bodies in the past, and supported the continuance and strengthening of their programmes.

38. Considerable emphasis was placed on the need for economic evaluation of sport fisheries; although it was pointed out that such studies are very difficult in view of the number of parameters to be taken into account. The need for evaluation of fish stocks was also emphasised, both for the management of sport fisheries and for the assessment of variation produced in fish population by changing pollution conditions. The current EIFAC activities on the survey, monitoring and evaluation of fish stocks were mentioned in this context and found the support of many delegations.

39. Constraints upon the expansion of fish culture activities were widely discussed. Several delegations mentioned the problem of finding new and inexpensive fish feeds and the need for tapping unconventional protein resources for such feeds. It was agreed that fish culture products are generally of high quality and have a very good conversion ratio. Great expansion of aquaculture is envisaged by many countries. This will lead to an increase in trade of live fish and fish eggs with the attendant risk of transmission of highly infectious fish diseases. The work of EIFAC in promoting an International Convention for the Control of the Spread of Major Communicable Fish Diseases, was widely recognised and the continuance of EIFAC activities in this direction was strongly supported by all delegations.

40. One of the greatest problems affecting inland fisheries as a whole was shown to be that of water pollution. The work of EIFAC in preparing a series of water quality criteria, and that of the GFCM in promoting a recent consultation in the protection of living resources and fisheries from pollution in the Mediterranean was acknowledged. It was felt, however, that this work is far from completed and that further expansion in this field is an urgent necessity. An especial need was expressed for common criteria for pollutants enabling international action to be taken for its abatement in order to improve the quality of european inland waters.

41. Particular attention was drawn to the need for cooperation between the various international bodies dealing with water pollution, not only in so far as fisheries are concerned, but also with regard to other users of inland waters. Many delegations agreed that EIFAC, with its long experience of fishery problems in this field, should assume the leading role with regard to the coordination and study of the effects of water pollution on european inland fisheries as indeed in matters relating to inland fisheries in general.

CURRENT AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES IN EUROPE

FAO Activities

42. The Conference expressed general support for the FAO activities contained in document ERC:74/5 which made it possible to establish a useful cooperation among member countries of the region irrespective of their geographical situation, economic and social systems and the level of industrial development.

43. The Conference noted with satisfaction that the activities implemented in Europe were of benefit also to developing countries outside the Region.

44. The opinion was expressed that the existing trends for the strengthening of FAO's cooperation with other international organizations should continue. In this context it was felt that the establishment of Joint FAO/ECE Working Parties on Agrarian Structure and on Farm Rationalization, and on Farm Mechanization will contribute to a more efficient implementation of the Programmes of both organizations in Europe.

45. The Conference showed special interest in the establishment of selected networks among national scientific institutes. In this respect it was proposed that these networks should also refer to economic problems such as agricultural credit. Countries outside the Region also expressed their interest in the network activities.

46. Among other activities of great interest were mentioned the activities on fertilisers, water resources and irrigation, livestock development, animal health, food policies and nutrition, increased efficiency of forest operations, agrarian structure, environmental problems, social security. A number of delegations expressed their interest in other activities such as improvement of marine fisheries in the Mediterranean, home economics, agricultural trade, plant protection, farm rationalization, horticulture, new energy saving technologies and agricultural and forestry statistics. It was also felt that FAO should implement the recommendations of previous Regional Conferences on further work in the field of international agricultural adjustment.

47. As to the future activities in the region it was pointed out that they should be selected in fields which are of common interest to European countries and which are at the same time relevant to developing countries outside the region.

48. Some delegations expressed their hope that FAO would play an active role in the increased European cooperation which was expected to be the result of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

49. Several delegations also referred to the development assistance extended to their respective countries through UNDP/FAO field projects carried out as part of the approved UNDP country programmes for the period 1972-76 covering carefully selected activities in the field of agriculture, forestry and fisheries as listed in the document ERC:74/5.

WFP Activities

50. On consideration of document ERC:74/6 widespread support and satisfaction was expressed for the objectives and achievements of the Programme, also it was pointed out that in relation to the seriousness of the world situation WFP activities were inadequate and should be strengthened. In view of the shortage of resources all delegations intervening in the discussion agreed with the current priorities as set out by the Programme. Considerable emphasis was placed on the necessity to support distressed areas or sections of society through projects which would improve the nutritional intake of vulnerable groups and increase agricultural productivity, both types of projects being closely linked and complementary.

51. There was general agreement that the quantum of project oriented food aid must be substantially increased. This would require not only larger contributions from traditional donors but substantial inputs from potential new donors.

52. Several delegations commented favourably on the role of WFP in the case of food aid in emergencies. In spite of the fact that the resources earmarked for emergencies were inadequate to meet the needs of large scale disasters such as the Sahel, the Programme's infrastructure had provided an essential and vital function in the coordination of such large scale operations. Some delegations expressed the view that greater use should be made of the Programme in this respect.

53. Interest was expressed in WFP involvement in the establishment of the national minimum food security stocks. The Programme has some past experience in this type of project and that experience should be utilized.

FOLLOW-UP ACTION ON SUBJECTS DISCUSSED DURING THE DEBATE

54. In order to have an overall picture of action to be undertaken or continued, the Conference discussed the proposals for activities made under the various agenda items jointly at the end of the debate.

Follow-up action on Production objectives and policies

55. During the debate a number of delegations suggested that ad hoc consultations should be organised to discuss commodity problems of particular interest to the European region. However, a majority of delegations felt that the existing machinery within FAO, such as the CCP and its subsidiary organs, as well as other international institutions such as UNCTAD and GATT, and the possibility of bilateral contacts, were adequate and sufficient to deal with these problems.

56. Some delegations also felt that most of the commodities suggested for consultations were of interest not only to the European region but also to many countries in other regions and would therefore benefit little from a consideration in a purely regional context. Nevertheless, it was recognised that for some commodities of great importance for Europe an exchange of information on production, trade and consumption, might facilitate a better understanding of the situation. It was pointed out that the ECE Committee on Agricultural Problems (CAP) has in its terms of reference the possibility for organizing such exchanges of views and discussions and the Conference invited therefore CAP to use this opportunity to a fuller extent.

57. The Conference also had before it a list of proposals and suggestions for follow-up activities for FAO's work in the European region based on the statements of the various delegations during the debate. In addition to the suggestion on ad hoc consultations mentioned above, this list contained the following proposals:

- (a) Relationships between production and structural policies;
- (b) The problem of agricultural price policies and the prices of inputs under the present economic conditions;
- (c) Influence of marketing on consumption prices;
- (d) Agricultural development in backward areas and depressed regions of European countries, with particular regard to social and income policies;
- (e) Cost aspects of agricultural production;
- (f) Development of agricultural production and rational utilization of commodities and stocks in Europe, with particular reference to the improvement of human nutrition and health.
- (g) The role of new technology and scientific research as an important means of increasing agricultural production and its rational use.

58. The Conference considered this list both to arrive at an order of priorities for follow-up action as well as to consider whether one or more of these points could be suggested as agenda items for the Tenth Regional Conference for Europe.

59. With regard to the priorities for future action to be assigned to these topics, there was general agreement that the highest emphasis should be put on points (a) and (d) as they were considered to be dealing with essential aspects of agricultural development in the European region and could therefore merit consideration at the next regional conference.

60. Interest was also expressed in points (f), (g) and (c).

Follow-up action on Land Use Objectives and Related Policy Issues in Agriculture and Forestry

61. The Conference followed the same procedure with regard to Item 5(b) of the agenda, where the following proposals were considered:

- (a) The possibility of establishing a research network for the utilisation and interpretation of the material provided by the remote sensing receiving station in Europe;
- (b) Bringing up-to-date and expanding the coverage of the present document ERC:74/3 on land use policy with the cooperation of Member Governments so that it could become a more comprehensive and useful instrument for land use planners;
- (c) Further cooperation with ECE for the purpose of studying in greater depth the competition for land by the various sectors of the economy, such as industry, transportation, agriculture, protection of natural resources and urban development.

62. There was general agreement that point (c) should be pursued. With regard to point (a) several delegations suggested that this topic should be dealt with first at an expert level within FAO's European Commission on Agriculture and European Forestry Commission, in order to determine more clearly its value and possibilities. Lower priority was assigned to point (b) although certain delegations did believe that such an exercise would be very useful.

63. The Conference also felt that follow-up action should be taken with reference to fish production and protection in inland and estuarine waters in Europe as well as to FAO and WFP activities in the Region which are contained in paragraphs 36, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45, 50, 51 and 53 of the present report.

VENUE OF THE NEXT REGIONAL CONFERENCE

64. The Romanian Delegation expressed its gratitude to the Swiss Federal Council for the very comfortable and pleasant arrangements made for the Ninth Regional Conference and recalled that, as early as 1971, the Romanian Government sent an official invitation to the Director-General of FAO to hold the Tenth Regional Conference for Europe in 1976 in Bucharest. This invitation was renewed at the Eighth Regional Conference in Munich. On behalf of their government, the Romanian Delegation renewed again this offer and expressed the hope that this invitation would be favourably received by the delegations present and by FAO.

65. The Portuguese Delegation invited the Organization to hold its Eleventh Regional Conference for Europe in 1978 in Portugal.

66. The Chairman thanked the Romanian and Portuguese Delegations on behalf of all the delegations present, and assured them that their invitations which were supported unanimously, would be conveyed to the Director-General of the Organization.

AGENDA

1. Opening Ceremony
2. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairmen
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Statements of the Director-General of FAO and the Executive Secretary of ECE
5. Agricultural Policies of European Countries:
 - a) Production objectives and policies;
 - b) Land use objectives and related policy issues in agriculture and forestry
6. Fish Production and Protection in Inland and Estuarine Waters in Europe
7. Current and Future Activities in Europe:
 - a) FAO Activities
 - b) WFP Activities
8. Other Business
9. Adoption of the Report
10. Closure of the Conference

LISTE OF PARTICIPANTS - LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS
LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES

Chairman
Président
Presidenta

J.C. PIOT (Suisse)

Vice-Chairmen
Vice-Présidents
Vice-Presidentes

A. ESTEVES BELO (Portugal)
M.P. MURPHY (Irèland)
I. STANCIU (Roumanie)

Independent Chairman of the Council
Président indépendant du Conseil
Presidenta independiente del Consejo

G. BULA HOJOS

Chairman of Inland Fisheries Advisory
Commission
Président de la Commission Européenne
Consultative pour les pêches dans
les eaux intérieures
Presidenta de la Comisión consultativa
europea de pesca en aguas interiores

D.E. VAN DRIMELEN

MEMBER NATIONS OF THE REGION - ETATS MEMBRES DE LA REGION
ESTADOS MIEMBROS DE LA REGION

ALBANIA - ALBANIE

Délégué: S. MARIANI
Vice Recteur de l'Institut supérieur
d'agriculture Tirana

Suppléant: DABULLA Agif
Directeur, Institut des Etudes et des Terres
agricoles Tirana

AUSTRIA - AUTRICHE

Delegate: H. RUDL
Sektionsrat
Chairman, Austrian National FAO
Committee Vienna

Alternate: F. KOBSA
Ministerialrat
Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry Vienna

Associates: P. ROSENEGGER
Permanent Representative of
Austria to FAO Rome

T. KASTINGER
Oberkommissär
Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry Vienna

BELGIUM - BELGIQUE - BELGICA

Délégué: M. STUYCK
Directeur général, Ministère de
l'Agriculture Bruxelles

Suppléant: A. DEBOUVERIE
Directeur, Ministère de
l'Agriculture Bruxelles

Adjoint: M. HUET
Directeur, Station de recherche
des eaux en forêt
Ministère de l'Agriculture Bruxelles

BULGARIA - BULGARIE

Délégué: D. JUROUCOV
Ministre adjoint de l'agriculture et
de l'industrie alimentaire Sofia

Suppléant: K. BROUSSARSKI
Directeur, Institut d'économie
rurale Sofia

Conseillers: G. LYAKOV
Secrétaire, Ministère des Affaires
étrangères Sofia

K. TANOUCHEV
Spécialiste en Chef, Ministère de
l'agriculture et de l'industrie
alimentaire Sofia

CYPRUS - CHYPRE - CHIPRE

not represented

CZECHOSLOVAKIA - TCHÉCOSLOVAQUIE - CECOSLOVACIA

Delegate: K. ČAKAJDA
Vice-Minister of Agriculture and
Food Prague

Alternate: J. ROSA
Director, Federal Ministry of
Agriculture and Food Prague

Associates: J. NEUMANN
Secretary, Federal Ministry of
Agriculture and Food Prague

S. STAMPACH
Permanent Representative of Czecho-
slovakia to FAO Rome

DENMARK - DANEMARK - DINAMARCA

Delegate: J. PEDERSEN
Secretary-General, Federation of
Danish Smallholders' Societies Copenhagen

Alternates: Mrs. S. BRAMSEN
Head of Section, Ministry of
Agriculture Copenhagen

H. LARSEN
Agricultural Counsellor,
Royal Danish Embassy Beirut

FINLAND - FINLANDE - FINLANDIA

Delegate: S. SUOMELA
Director-General, National Board
of Agriculture Helsinki

Alternates: A. NIKKOLA
Head, Bureau of International Affairs
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Helsinki

M. KELITKANGAS
Professor, University of Helsinki Helsinki

O. ROSENDAHL
Finnish/Swedish Agricultural
Producers Association Helsinki

FRANCE - FRANCIA

Délégué: A. de SCHONEN
Ministre plénipotentiaire,
Représentant permanent de la France
auprès de l'OAA Rome

Suppléant: P. HALIMI
Administrateur civil,
Ministère de l'Agriculture Paris

Conseillers: J. CHOULET
Chef du Service de la Pêche et de l'Hy-
drobiologie
Ministère de la Qualité de la Vie
Paris

Mme. D. BODIN-RODIER
Chargée de mission au Bureau des
Affaires européennes et internatio-
nales, Ministère de l'Agriculture Paris

GERMANY, (FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF) - ALLEMAGNE, (REPUBLIQUE FEDERALE D*)
ALEMANIA, (REPUBLICA FEDERAL DE)

Delegate: J. ERTL
Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture
and Forestry
Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture
and Forestry Bonn

Alternates: F. PIRKHAAR
Ministerialdirektor, Federal Ministry
of Food, Agriculture and Forestry Bonn

W.A.F. GRABISCH
Ministerialrat, Federal Ministry of
Food, Agriculture and Forestry Bonn

GERMANY, (FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF) - ALLEMAGNE, (REPUBLIQUE FEDERALE D')
ALEMANIA, (REPUBLICA FEDERAL DE)
(cont'd) (suite) (cont.)

Associates:

H. KOPPS
Federal Research Institute for Fisheries
(Bundesforschungsanstalt für Fischerei) Bonn

G. LIEBER
Regierungsdirektor
Alternate Permanent Representative of the
Federal Republic of Germany to FAO Rome

W. SCHOPEN
Regierungsdirektor, Federal Ministry
of Food, Agriculture and Forestry Bonn

Adviser:

S. FAGENBER
Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture
and Forestry Bonn

GREECE -- GRÈCE -- GEORGIA

Délégué:

G. PLASTIRAS
Directeur général au Ministère
de l'Agriculture Athènes

Suppléant:

J. BALATZIS
Chef, Section des Politiques agricoles
Ministère de l'Agriculture Athènes

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K. KAZAROCZKI
Vice-Minister, Chairman of the
Hungarian National FAO Committee Budapest

Alternate:

K. KARCSAI
Secretary-General of the Hungarian
National FAO Committee Budapest

Associates:

B. SZALÓCZY
Department Chief
Ministry of Agriculture and Food Budapest

G. HEDVÉGI
Permanent Representative of
Hungary to FAO Rome

Miss G. ERDELYI
Officer, Ministry of Foreign
Affairs Budapest

Mrs. J. DÜRR
Senior Officer, Hungarian National
FAO Committee Budapest

HUNGARY - HONGRIE - HUNGRIA
(cont'd) (suite) (cont.)

Advisers: Miss A. GEREBEN
Secretary, Hungarian National FAO
Committee Budapest

Miss K. BAKK
Officer Hungarian National FAO
Committee Budapest

ICELAND - ISLANDE - ISLANDIA

not represented

IRELAND - IRLANDE - IRLANDA

Delegate: H.P. MURPHY
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister
of Agriculture and Fisheries Dublin

Alternates: E.A. ATTWOOD
Chief Economist, Department of
Agriculture and Fisheries Dublin

P. GRIFFIN
Principal Officer, Department of
Agriculture and Fisheries,
Chairman of the Irish National FAO
Committee Dublin

ISRAEL

Delegate: F.D. MAAS
Special Adviser to the Minister
of Agriculture Jerusalem

Alternates: Mrs. L.M. ROMAN
Director, Technical Assistance and
Foreign Relations Bureau,
Ministry of Agriculture Jerusalem

B. HILLEL
Deputy Permanent Representative
of Israel Geneva

ITALY - ITALIE - ITALIA

Délégué: A. PANATTONI
Professeur à l'Institut d'Economie
et de Politique agraire de l'Université
de Pise Pise

ITALY - ITALIE - ITALIA
(cont'd) (suite) (cont.)

Suppléant: V. de ASARTA
Chef, Bureau des Relations extérieures,
Ministère de l'Agriculture et des Forêts,
Secrétaire général du Comité National
italien de la FAO Rome

Adjoint: P. VICENTINI
Inspecteur forestier
Ministère de l'Agriculture Rome

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Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Valletta

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N. BUCKLE
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of Agriculture and Fisheries Valletta

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PAISES BAJOS, REINO DE LOS

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Minister Plenipotentiary, Permanent
Representative of the Kingdom of the
Netherlands to FAO Rome

Alternate: A. STOFFELS
Cabinet Adviser, in charge of
International Matters The Hague

B. STEINMETZ
Fishery Expert, Ministry of
Agriculture and Fisheries The Hague

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Delegate: J. RINGEN
Director-General of Agriculture
Ministry of Agriculture Oslo

NORWAY - NORVEGE - NORVEGIA
(cont'd) (suite) (cont.)

Alternate: A. LÜCHEN
Secretary-General, National
Nutrition Council Oslo

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Vice-Minister of Agriculture Warsaw

Alternate: Mrs. E. RASZEJA-TOBIASZ
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Polish National FAO Committee Warsaw

Associates: W. LIPSKI
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C. MUSZALSKI
Head of Section of the
Department of International
Organizations
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Warsaw

T. BACKIEL
Vice-Director of the
Inland Fisheries Institute Warsaw

Mrs. M. PIOTROWSKA
Senior Officer of the
Polish National FAO Committee Warsaw

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Secretary of State for Agriculture Lisbon

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Director of Agricultural Extension
Services Lisbon

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Délégué: I. STANCIU
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Représentant permanent suppléant
de la Roumanie auprès de la FAO Rome

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|---------------|---|-----------|
| Délégué: | J.-C. PIOT Directeur de la Division fédérale de l'Agriculture Département fédéral de l'économie publique | Berne |
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| | H. SANDOZ Directeur du service vaudois de Vulgarisation agricole | Lausanne |
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| | H. RUFELI Collaborateur scientifique, Institut fédéral pour l'aménagement, l'épuration et la protection des eaux (EAWAG) | Dübendorf |

TURKEY - TURQUIE - TURQUIA

Delegate: K. OZAL
Minister of Food, Agriculture and
Animal Husbandry Ankara

Alternate: O. OZDURAL
Deputy Under-Secretary of State of the
Ministry of Food, Agriculture and
Animal Husbandry Ankara

Associates: I. SEZGER
Director General of the Foreign Relations
Department of the Ministry of Food,
Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Ankara

K.N. KAHILLOGLU
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Ministry of Commerce Ankara

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Permanent Representative of Turkey
to FAO Rome

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Delegate: J.H.V. DAVIES
Under-Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and
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Alternates: E.G. RICHARDS
Director of Land and Use Planning
Forestry Commission London

A.A.W. LANDYMORE
Counsellor for FAO Affairs
British Embassy
Permanent Representative of the
United Kingdom to FAO Rome

B.W. BROWNSLEY
Principal, External Relations Division
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and
Food London

YUGOSLAVIA - YUGOSLAVIE

Delegate: I. KUSTRAK
Federal Minister of Agriculture Zagreb

YUGOSLAVIA - YOUGOSLAVIE
(cont'd) (suite) (cont.)

Alternates:

| | |
|--|----------|
| M. TRKULJA Adviser of the Federal Government | Belgrade |
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| V. DAMJANOVIC Assistant of Minister of Agriculture and Secretary of Yugoslav National FAO Committee | Belgrade |

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| | |
|---|------------|
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World Food Programme Rome

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Chief, Resources and Purchases Branch Rome

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Moyen-Orient et l'Europe Genève

A. PETROV
Service Formation et orientation profes-
sionnelle Genève

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AGENCE INTERNATIONALE DE L'ENERGIE ATOMIQUE
ORGANISMO INTERNACIONAL DE ENERGIA ATOMICA

C. LAMM
Acting Director
Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Atomic Energy
in Food and Agriculture Vienna

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de la Commission des Communautés Euro-
péennes Genève

B. ADINOLFI
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Délégation Permanente à Genève
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Chief, Agriculture Division Moscow

Kir V. KALININ
Counsellor, Agricultural Department Moscow

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| Information Officer Chargé d'information Oficial de Información | H. CHAZINE |

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SECRETARIA DE LA CONFERENCIA
(cont'd) (suite) (cont.)

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Assistant Administratif
Asistente Administrativo

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Documentaliste
Encargada de Documentos

Mrs. M. DE LA FUENTE

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Directeur-General
Directeur général
Director General

E.M. OJALA

Assistant Director-General, Economic and
Social Policy Department
Sous-Directeur général, Département des
politiques économiques et sociales
Subdirector General, Departamento de
Política Económica y Social

FAO STAFF - FONCTIONNAIRES DE LA FAO - FUNCIONARIOS DE LA FAO
(cont'd) (suite) (cont.)

| | |
|------------------|---|
| G.E. BILDESHEIM | Regional Representative for Europe, Regional Office for Europe Représentant régional pour l'Europe, Bureau régional pour l'Europe Representante Regional para Europa, Oficina Regional para Europa |
| D. CHRISTODOULOU | Agrarian Reform Policy Officer, Human Resources, Institutions and Agrarian Reform Division Spécialiste des politiques des réformes agraires, Division des ressources humaines, des institutions et de la réforme agraire Oficial de Políticas de Reforma Agraria, Dirección de Recursos Humanos, Instituciones y Reforma Agraria |
| S. D'AMICO | Senior Economist, Commodities and Trade Division, Geneva Economiste principal, Division des produits et de commerce, Genève Economista principal, Dirección de productos y comercio, Ginebra |
| J.J. DE JONG | Senior Field Programme Officer, Regional Office for Europe Fonctionnaire principal chargé des programmes extérieurs, Bureau régional pour l'Europe Oficial Superior, Programas de Campo, Oficina Regional para Europa |
| M. EL MIDANI | Chief, North East, North Africa and Europe Services - Agricultural Operations Division Chef du Service du Proche-Orient, de l'Afrique du Nord et de l'Europe - Division des Opérations Agricoles Jefe del Servicio del Cercano Oriente, Africa del Norte y Europa - Dirección de Operaciones Agrícolas |
| L.W. FITZGERALD | Senior Officer, Production Economics and Farm Management Service Fonctionnaire Principal, Unité de la gestion des exploitations et de l'économie de la production Oficial Principal, Dependencia de Administración Rural y de la Economía de la Producción |
| P. HAAPISEVA | Economist, Joint ECE/FAO Agriculture Division, Geneva Economiste, Division mixte de l'agriculture ECE/FAO, Genève Economista, Dirección Mixta CEPE/FAO de Agricultura, Ginebra |

FAO STAFF - FONCTIONNAIRES DE LA FAO - FUNCIONARIOS DE LA FAO
(cont'd) (suite) (cont.)

E. KALKKINEN
Director, Joint ECE/FAO Timber Division, Geneva
Directeur, Division mixte du bois ECE/FAO, Genève
Director, Dirección Mixta CEPE/FAO de la
Madera, Ginebra

D.E. LARIMORE
Economist, Situation and Outlook
Group, Policy Studies and Situation
and Outlook Service
Economiste, Groupe de la situation et
des perspectives, Service des études
sur les politiques, la situation et
les perspectives
Economista, Grupo de Situación y
Perspectivas, Servicio de Estudios
de Políticas, Situación y Perspectivas

E.-L. LITTMANN
Economist, Joint ECE/FAO Agriculture
Division, Geneva
Economiste, Division mixte de l'agri-
culture ECE/FAO, Genève
Economista, Dirección Mixta CEPE/FAO
de Agricultura, Ginebra

P. MEIHL
Economist, Joint ECE/FAO Agriculture
Division, Geneva
Economiste, Division mixte de l'agri-
culture ECE/FAO, Genève
Economista, Dirección Mixta CEPE/FAO
de Agricultura, Ginebra

V. MERZLOV
Economist, Joint ECE/FAO Agriculture
Division, Geneva
Economiste, Division mixte de
l'agriculture ECE/FAO, Genève
Economista, Dirección Mixta CEPE/FAO
de Agricultura, Ginebra

C.F. PENNISON
FAO Permanent Representative to EEC
Représentant permanent de FAO auprès
de la CEE
Representante permanente de la FAO ante
la CEE

R. PLANTIER
Economist, Joint ECE/FAO Agriculture
Division, Geneva
Economiste, Division mixte de
l'agriculture ECE/FAO, Genève
Economista, Dirección Mixta CEPE/FAO
de Agricultura, Ginebra

R. STAMENKOVIĆ
Director, Joint ECE/FAO Agriculture Division,
Geneva
Directeur, Division mixte de l'agriculture
ECE/FAO, Genève
Director, Dirección Mixta CEPE/FAO de
Agricultura, Ginebra

FAO STAFF - FONCTIONNAIRES DE LA FAO - FUNCIONARIOS DE LA FAO
(cont'd) (suite)

H.J. VON HULST

Chief, Agricultural Engineering
Service
Chef, Service du génie agricole
Jefe, Servicio de Ingeniería Rural

R. WELCOMME

Fishery Resources Officer, Fishery
Resources and Environment Division
Biologiste des pêches, Division des
ressources halieutiques et de
l'environnement
Biólogo de Pesca, Dirección de
Ambientes y Recursos Pesqueros

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OPENING STATEMENT BY MR. E. BRUGGER, PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to our country on behalf of the Federal Council.

In particular, I should like to greet Dr. Boerma, Director-General of FAO, and his collaborators. I should also like to greet my colleagues, the Ministers of Agriculture, and all the delegations of the European member countries of FAO, as well as the observers from the whole world. I am very grateful that you have accepted our invitation to meet on the shores of the Lake of Geneva.

Since the Eighth Regional Conference, which was held in Munich two years ago, the world agricultural situation has deteriorated. While at that moment we regretted the slow increase of production in the developing countries in 1971, we still had in mind the problems of the agricultural surpluses in the developed countries. In 1972 world agricultural production remained stationary and food production even decreased by 1 per cent. The first consequence of this evolution was the reduction of stocks at a disquieting rate and a strong increase of food prices. The situation improved slightly in 1973 but the latest estimates of the world harvests for the current year are not very reassuring.

This information may seem surprising as in many European countries there are presently problems of acute over-production in some sectors of livestock production such as beef and milk.

However, we should remember that if Europe considered as a whole is a great agricultural producer, she consumes still more than she produces. For this reason and in this context the FAO Regional Conference for Europe is particularly significant. The choice of the two main subjects of the agenda, i.e.

- (a) Production objectives and policies of agriculture, and
- (b) Land use objectives and related policy issues in agriculture and forestry,

seems to me particularly wise. The debates on these problems are, as it were, a follow-up to the debate on agricultural adjustment which took place in Munich.

The conclusions of the Conference on these questions are of great importance not only for the countries of the European region but equally for the world as a whole, since any decision regarding agricultural production in our region has an important impact on the world food economy.

In addition, the present meeting follows immediately the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee of the World Food Conference. Those among you who have participated in the work of that Committee will understand the responsibility which we have in relation to the world community. This responsibility goes beyond our policy of development cooperation and affects also our internal political decisions. The interdependence of all countries is real and has now been sufficiently proven.

Honoured delegates, you all have great responsibilities in a vital sector of human society, that of food and agriculture. It is certainly not exaggerated to say that a first responsibility of the authorities of each country is to ensure a minimum food supply to its population. This supply can only be assured satisfactorily by a stable and adequate internal production since any excessive interdependence of countries in this field presents almost insurmountable difficulties as recent events have shown.

Furthermore, the maintenance of a capable and productive agriculture is indispensable in modern industrial society. Agriculture also makes it possible to correct the excesses in the framework of the social characteristics and tasks which it must accomplish, such as the protection of the environment and the conservation of a natural balance, elements which are necessary to the well-being of human society.

These considerations do not mean that I am trying to minimize the importance of international agricultural trade or that I favour self-sufficiency in food for each country. Such an attitude would be illusory in a region where the food habits of the populations have become so diversified in the course of time. The role of international agricultural trade is precisely that of permitting a larger choice as regards food, i.e. to improve the nutritional level of the population through a supplementary food contribution while at the same time assuring a wise balance between production and consumption by means of an adequate distribution.

Another important point on the agenda of the Conference is the conservation of natural resources. This problem will certainly be considered in the context of the debate on land use objectives and also concerns the production of fish and the protection of fishery resources.

The degradation of natural resources is the phenomenon which has shown us most clearly the limits of economic growth, in any event as far as the highly industrialised regions are concerned.

Another factor of degradation is the abandoning of land which had earlier been cultivated. In the mountainous regions of Europe this phenomenon advances quite rapidly and threatens large areas while in other regions it is the concentration of human activities which endangers the natural resources.

This disturbing development is due first of all to our unrestrained search for further material well-being. While we can admit that the improvement of this material well-being is still for many a need since it is the basis of development, it is also necessary to identify its limits.

This search of further material advantages, if it touches upon social and human values of society and encourages indifference or deliberate ignorance of the problems of others, is contrary to the social ethic, contrary to what I would call the quality of life of which many factors are not measurable.

You will also examine the activities of the World Food Programme. This programme was created with the purpose to utilize the agricultural surpluses to alleviate the problems of the poorest of our world. It now faces very serious supply problems as surpluses have been replaced by scarcities. I should like to underline how much Switzerland appreciates the work carried out up to now by the World Food Programme and I should like to add that we sincerely wish that its work should continue as long as the need for it is felt. The scarcity of resources of the World Food Programme requires even greater efforts to concentrate its activities in the most affected countries and within these countries on the poorest sectors of the populations.

Finally, I should like to pay tribute to FAO and to its Director-General for the great efforts which it deploys constantly in favour of the improvement of the conditions of life of the peoples of the entire world. Its work does not aim only at material development but also takes into account the social aspects of development. I should like to encourage FAO strongly to pursue its task with all its strength. I also hope that all countries will continue to give their strong support to the Organization which plays a key role in the United Nations system.

To conclude, I should like to express the wish that the debates of this Conference will make it not only possible to tackle the economic and technical problems with which we are faced but that they should contribute also to a better mutual understanding of the particular problems on the European level as well as in a worldwide framework. I also hope that this understanding will continue in a favourable atmosphere at the time of the World Food Conference which will be held in Rome in November next.

I wish you all a very fruitful debate and a pleasant stay in our country.

OPENING STATEMENT BY DR. A.H. BOERMA, DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

This Regional Conference for Europe is the last of FAO's Regional Conferences in any part of the world that I shall be attending as Director-General. I am therefore personally very pleased that this last appearance among our Member Nations gathered at the regional level should be in Switzerland, the country which has become almost a symbol of the international spirit. Here, within the borders of this Confederation, great humanitarian movements such as the Red Cross have been born and countless meetings of the nations of the world have been welcomed with traditional Swiss hospitality. I should like to thank the Federal Government most warmly for having invited us and the authorities of the Canton of Vaud and this beautiful city of Lausanne for the very fine arrangements they have put at our disposal.

I come before this European Regional Conference at a time when, I know, the problems of agriculture in this Region, at least in Western Europe, are more complex and troublesome than they have been for many years. I very much sympathise with your concerns and I can assure you that I do not in any way underrate their importance. However, I think that my main responsibility on this particular occasion is to direct the Conference's attention chiefly to issues that relate to the food situation in the world as a whole. In a world where the stresses and strains of rapidly increasing interdependence are becoming more evident with every month that passes - you have only to think of the effects of inflation and energy prices - it is no longer possible, if it was ever desirable, to isolate the food situation in any Region from the general global scene.

Mr. Chairman, when we last met in Munich two years ago, I think that few of us could have forecast with accuracy the sudden dramatic turn of events that was shortly to occur in the world's economy. More specifically, even though I then voiced my deep concern about the trends of agricultural production and trade in the developing countries, we were not yet in a position to appreciate the full magnitude of the effects of that year's adverse weather, stock policies and commercial transactions on the world's supplies of food. We could not know that, in the following year, we should look back at 1972 as the first year since the Second World War in which total world food production actually declined. Or that we should be in a state of constant anxiety about the continuously dwindling world reserve stocks of cereals. Or that we should be subjected to such fierce rises in food prices, with grains going up to three times what they had cost the previous summer. Yet it has all come to pass. And, despite the fact that in 1973 world harvests were generally good and that there has been some partial relief in grain prices, we have now already for nearly two years been living in the shadow of great dangers.

What, then, is the present situation and outlook? As in 1973 - when, as I say, the world was generally fortunate in its crops - we have again this year been anxiously awaiting the outcome of the harvests on which the prospects in the near future so largely depend. But this year we have not been so fortunate.

It is still too early to draw up a final balance for the year. But it is clear that, in the last few months and even weeks, the situation regarding world food supplies has deteriorated. It is now almost certain that world food production may again fall in 1974. This would then be the second time in three years, following more than a quarter-century in which production generally increased.

The two main critical areas have been the United States, where there has been severe drought and now frost in farming areas, and Asia, where the monsoon has behaved very erratically. Thus, in the United States, earlier estimates of bumper wheat and feedgrain crops have had to be sharply revised downwards as the season has advanced. It is true that the wheat crop there will still be a record one, but not big enough to make up for the previous fall in stocks. And the results for feedgrains and soybeans will be well below last year's. In other key areas of the developed world, performance has also been ragged. Canada, for example, faces the lowest wheat supply in over ten years since adverse weather has meant a reduction in the area planted. And, as you know, Western Europe, while likely to have a considerably larger wheat crop than last year, will see a substantial drop in the output of coarse grains. The wheat harvest in the Soviet Union is also falling well short of the target that has been set for this year, although there are hopes that this may be at least partially offset by the coarse grain harvest.

In Asia, the main concern of course is the vital rice crop. Since this has still to be harvested, the picture is not yet complete. But we know that, while some countries are expecting good harvests, others have been badly treated by the monsoon. This started unpropitiously late and then vented itself in ravaging floods which struck various countries, notably Bangladesh, parts of India, Burma, Thailand and the Philippines. More recently, in parts of India, for example, the monsoon has lifted too early, leaving large areas in conditions of severe drought.

It now seems unlikely, in consequence, that this year's overall world rice crop will be any larger than last year's. This in itself is already disturbing when one recalls that world production of cereals has to increase each year to meet rising world demand with its in-built population escalator now moving at the rate of about 80 million more people a year in the world. But there are more immediately visible and fearful threats for millions of people in Asia as a result of this perverse combination of floods and drought.

The rapidly worsening situation in India has now been widely reported in the newspapers. With the total output of rice, sorghum, millets and other grains much lower than the bumper harvests of last year, large numbers of people are already going seriously short of food. Some are clearly menaced by starvation. Normally, there might be hopes of recouping to some extent with a larger winter crop of wheat, barley and pulses. But this year, with the crisis in fuel and fertilizers, such hopes are faint. It is clear that India, Bangladesh - where the rice crop has been badly damaged by the floods - and several other developing countries in Asia and elsewhere will need to import much larger quantities of food in the months ahead. But, as you know, their balance of payments has now also sharply deteriorated. In a situation where the food bill of the developing countries has risen from about four billion dollars in 1972-73 to at least ten billion dollars in 1973-74, they will simply be unable to pay for all that they urgently need. It should also be remembered that there has been a very sharp cut in food aid programmes in the last year or so. Thus, if what is shaping up as large-scale human disaster is to be avoided in countries like India, they will need both considerable financial help to facilitate commercial imports and substantially increased food aid.

However, it is not just a question of immediate shortages or possible famine. The whole general atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity about basic food supplies in which the world has been plunged for the last two years must now be prolonged for at least another year. Not only must we now anxiously await the results of the 1975 harvests, aware in the meantime that there is simply no assurance that a major food emergency in the world can be met. There is also the fact that the vital rebuilding of stocks, which are now at rock-bottom levels, must also be put off for another year. Thus, to the extent that larger stocks are necessary for achieving the essential long-term objective of minimum world food security which I have proposed and the FAO Conference has endorsed, we shall still be that much further away from attaining it in the course of the year ahead.

I have broadly sketched the most disturbing features of the world food situation as I see it today. I should now like to dwell for a few minutes on one particular aspect of it which is in some ways symptomatic and which has recently been of special concern to FAO. This is the shortage of fertilizers and pesticides.

In the agriculture of the modern world, with its intense demands for increased productivity, the use of fertilizers and pesticides has spread with tremendous speed in recent times. They are now as vital in developing countries striving to modernize and rapidly expand production as in the great mechanized farms of the developed world. But now, at the most crucial juncture, the world has been running short of them.

So far as fertilizers are concerned, the present situation amounts in itself to a major world problem. With supplies falling far short of market requirements and prices rising steeply, developing countries have had to compete with the industrialized nations for the inadequate supplies available. Many of them have been unable to obtain the amounts of fertilizer they were seeking. All of them have had to cope with the pressure on their balance of payments resulting from much higher prices.

With regard to pesticides, worldwide demand for them has also been soaring, while production at present has levelled out, if not actually entered into decline. The halt in growth of production has been largely a result of environmental restrictions introduced in the developed countries, which are in principle very commendable but which in practice, looked at in terms of food needs throughout the world, may seem rather over-zealous. By the end of this year, there may well be a worldwide deficit of pesticides of as much as 30 per cent. Again, both developed and developing countries will be affected. But here the developing nations are at an additional disadvantage. While they produce about half of their fertilizer requirements, they depend almost entirely on imports from industrialized nations to meet their pesticide needs.

In May of this year, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations - ECOSOC - adopted a Resolution on emergency measures in regard to the supply of fertilizers and pesticides. Among other things, it requested me to draw up an emergency plan of operations for increasing the supply of fertilizers to developing countries, including the establishment of a fertilizer pool. It also asked me to call an emergency session of the FAO Council to consider this plan. This initiative by ECOSOC has very important implications, not least the fact that the Resolution provides the necessary political backing for the efforts which FAO has been making since 1958 to set up international arrangements for the supply of fertilizers to developing countries.

The Council met in July and authorized us to launch an International Fertilizer Supply Scheme as an overall framework for efforts by the international community to increase the availability of fertilizers for developing nations. The Scheme involves the participation of governments, the fertilizer industry, financial agencies and FAO, which acts as a kind of clearing-house, endeavouring to match fertilizer supplies with fertilizer deficits and with the necessary finance. Thus, the Scheme is a broad framework to cover both bilateral and multilateral action. It also specifically includes a fertilizer pool, which is to be made up of voluntary contributions to FAO in fertilizers or in cash and is thus purely multilateral in character.

To keep the chronology of events straight, I should say, with regard to pesticides, that the FAO Council, while calling for the allocation of pesticide supplies to meet the needs of developing countries, felt that the whole situation was so complex that we should place the emphasis on getting complete information before any further action is taken on supply arrangements. We have thus so far concentrated mainly on gathering the necessary data and on consultations with the various parties concerned.

To return to fertilizers, how have the Scheme and the pool been faring? I need hardly say that, from the earliest moment, we were actively in touch with governments to get operations started. We have also been assessing very carefully and systematically the shortfall in supplies, particularly in those countries most seriously affected by the economic crisis. This, coupled with an assessment of the availability of supplies, has confirmed in greater detail the truly critical nature of the supply situation and thus offers a more precise guide for action.

It is perhaps more relevant, however, to inquire what the response to the whole initiative has been. There have been a few encouraging signs. At the Council meeting, four countries - three of them European - stated their readiness to make contributions to the pool. More recently, the Netherlands, acting in concert with Ethiopia and FAO, has played the decisive role in mounting the first actual shipment under the Scheme, whereby 3,000 tons of fertilizer will be supplied to Ethiopian farmers at last year's prices. I also know that some other countries are studying what role they might play in the Scheme.

But, in general, I fear that the response has so far been most disappointing. There have been hardly any signs of an increase in ear-markings for fertilizer aid under bilateral programmes. The fertilizer industry, for its part, has ear-marked certain quantities for supply arrangements under the Scheme. But it has done so on the basis of prevailing export prices, so that this can hardly be regarded as contributing to aid. Most important of all, it is clear that the success of the whole Scheme depends on firm financial backing from governments, without which it is not possible to obtain supplies from producers as and when they are needed. And here the general response has been very insignificant relative to the needs of developing countries.

Let me make one thing clear. FAO regards the mandate with which it has been entrusted as being one to promote both bilateral and multilateral action. We are not in this business to enlarge the range of activities that we can carry out on our own but to bring about a concerted, integrated approach by all in a position to help, since this is clearly the only way to achieve the results that are needed. Having said this, let me renew the appeals that have been made by ECOSOC and the FAO Council. I know, as I said at the beginning, that you have your own increased share of difficulties and that you rightly find it hard to see why the shortage of fertilizers in developing countries should be regarded as a problem of your making. I can appreciate all this. But Europe is part of the world. And I think it would be deeply regrettable if the nations of Europe - or the other traditional and potential donor countries, I agree - failed to provide this essential support we ask to sustain the food production needed for the peoples of those countries which are the most obvious and defenceless victims of the present world economic upheaval.

Mr. Chairman, I think I have now said sufficient about some of the most critical aspects of the present world food situation. I would thus like to turn to some of the proposals that are being advanced to deal with it in the context of the United Nations World Food Conference which, as you know, meets in Rome in less than a month's time.

To speak frankly, this could be one of the most crucial international conferences ever held. It could also, in view of the magnitude of the human interests at stake and the consequences of failure, be one of the most inglorious. But, at the very least, governments will be confronted with responsibilities as to what to do about the realities of the world food situation on a broader scale and under more searching worldwide attention than ever before.

Basically, the proposals before the Conference to deal with the world food problem - starting now, but covering a time-span of at least up to 1985 - form three main pillars. These are increased production in developing countries, food security and food aid. I can only say that I am extremely pleased that the proposals for action should have been formulated in terms of these three broad lines of direction, since they are precisely those which FAO has always been most strongly advocating.

Everything in the long run hinges on increased production in developing countries. We simply cannot go on in a situation where the regions containing over 70 per cent of the world's population produce less than 40 per cent of its food, especially when the population there is rising so much faster. In the documentation for the World Food Conference, you will find an estimate that, if the present rate of increase in production is not accelerated by more than a third, the developing countries as a whole may, in some ten years from now, be facing annual cereal deficits approaching 85 million tons in normal years and over 100 million tons in years of bad crops. To increase production on the necessary scale would require, in addition to much greater efforts and investment by developing countries themselves, a rise in the annual flow of external resources from other countries from about \$1.5 billion at present to at least \$5 billion by 1980. You may flinch at this figure. But what is the alternative? It is exceedingly unlikely that the developing countries as a whole could finance commercial imports of grains to cover anything like the gaps I have mentioned. Assuming that vast numbers of their people are not to be left to starve, the amount of food aid that would then be required would cost a great deal more than the \$5 billion in external resources that I quoted as being needed for increased production.

The second pillar is that of World Food Security. You are all, I think, familiar with our proposals for a co-ordinated system of national stock-holding policies to which I have briefly referred and which are now embodied in an International Undertaking for acceptance by governments. I will therefore not go into this again now. But there are two closely related factors I would like to mention.

One is the question of price stabilization. An international understanding on price levels which are reasonable for both producers and consumers would be of immense help in the practical operation of meaningful stock policies. Such an understanding would provide a mechanism for co-ordinated action on the accumulation and release of stocks in accordance with the conditions of supply and demand. Moreover, a framework of more stable prices would help to create conditions which would facilitate more purposeful planning with regard to production and stocks in major grain-producing countries.

The other factor that has an immense bearing on world food security is the need for an improved food information and outlook system covering the whole world. Specifically, it has been suggested that the World Food Conference might wish to request the cooperation of all governments in furnishing, on a regular basis, all the information required by the FAO Food Information and Early Warning System on crop conditions and other relevant aspects of their food supply and demand situation affecting world food security. Frankly, I think that, in present world circumstances, governments can hardly do less. If I may put the matter in its starkest terms, I believe we would all agree that the withholding of vital information on food questions that might affect the lives of millions of people is something which would clearly run counter to the whole spirit and intent of the international community in convening the World Food Conference.

The third pillar for the action proposals before the Conference is that of food aid. Here we are concerned, firstly, with more effective arrangements to deal with emergency food needs and, secondly, with the necessity for more rational, systematic longer-term food aid policies better adjusted to more general requirements such as meeting the minimum nutritional needs of vulnerable groups. We must face the fact that, even with a considerably increased rate of agricultural production in developing countries, many of them are going to need food aid for a number of years to come. They are going to need it, moreover on a more secure basis than in the past. This is another responsibility which the international community cannot escape if the World Food Conference is to lead to meaningful results in the light of present realities. I would just offer two comments. In the first place, it is stated in the documentation for the Conference that "the cost of food aid in future should be equitably shared between food-exporting and other high income countries." This is important, because I believe that a wider international approach to food aid is essential if the decisions or recommendations that the Conference may make on the subject are to be properly

implemented. Secondly, I would recall the perhaps rather obvious but essential point that, if the need for food aid is to diminish, the most rapid, effective and generally desirable way of bringing this about is of course through a greater flow of resources for increased agricultural production in developing countries.

To sum up, if the World Food Conference is going to lead to the kind of results that are now desperately needed, the international community as a whole must be prepared to face up to quite unprecedented efforts. Above all, it must demonstrate a real willingness to channel very much larger resources into the agriculture of the developing world. In the first place - and I would like to stress this here very strongly - it will involve maximum involvement by developing countries themselves. In the past, there is no doubt that they have not invested sufficiently in their own agriculture, they have generally been very laggard in reforming out-dated institutions and they have done little to involve the vast numbers of their rural people in the development process. All this must change. But, as I have said time and again, they cannot do the whole job alone. They must have help from the richer countries - all the richer countries. And it is perhaps clearer now than ever before that this help must be on a far larger scale than rich countries as a whole have been prepared to envisage in the past. The World Food Conference is going to be a moment of truth, at which it will be revealed whether or not governments are prepared to face up to their collective responsibilities which have now become no less important - often more important - than national ones. Many of the richer countries, I need hardly repeat, are themselves facing new difficulties. But there is no doubt that all richer countries are in a position where they can afford to be more generous and where, in the present crisis, they need to be more generous in their own interests as well as those of the poorer nations. For no country can benefit from a chaotic world situation such as now threatens us.

Mr. Chairman, as I indicated at the beginning, I felt that, under present circumstances, I should, at this particular European Regional Conference, concentrate very largely on the world situation. I should now, however, like to focus more on European agriculture. The issues in this Region are of course varied, since, among other things, the level of development of European countries is far from homogeneous. But recent events have once more shown very clearly that, even in countries where agriculture contributes relatively little to gross national product, the smooth development of the agricultural sector is essential both to the health of the national economy and to the orderly functioning of international trade relations. I am certain that much will be said about this during your debates, particularly when you discuss the agenda item regarding the production objectives of agricultural policies.

We have proposed this item as the central theme of this Conference, because it seemed to us to be one of the logical consequences of the discussions on agricultural adjustment which took place at the last Regional Conference two years ago. In the light of present circumstances, I think that the choice was a timely one. Obviously, other aspects of European agricultural development, such as structural and social policies, are equally important in bringing about an improvement in the living conditions of farm populations. But at present the emphasis appears to be on the need for a more harmonious functioning of international agricultural trade relations, and in this context, production policies, linked as they must be with price policies, deserve perhaps the highest priority.

I cannot help but refer to certain restrictive measures, notably the decision to suspend imports of beef, which a number of countries have felt it necessary to adopt recently. Let me say that I fully understand the reasons behind these measures and that I know that they have been adopted reluctantly and with regret. Nevertheless I am sure you will agree that they have had a most harmful effect on exporters, particularly in the developing world. I do not need to enlarge on this now. What I am more concerned to point out in the present context is that such measures are the consequence of a distortion of the production process in the countries which have had to impose them. It is, therefore, in the interests of these countries to find ways and means of preventing the situation from deteriorating to the point where measures of this kind are the only way out. I do not pretend to be able to offer the

solution to these extremely complex problems. I would, however, like to take you back to the conclusions of your discussions on agricultural adjustment two years ago when you agreed on what were then called the "nine points". These, you will remember, were meant to be guide-lines for future agricultural policies at national and international levels.

In recalling these famous nine points, I will confine myself to citing those which are most immediately relevant. There was, for instance, the fourth point, which suggested that price policies should be designed primarily to orient production and not to support low-income farms. There was the seventh, which recommended that developed countries in Europe and elsewhere should "pay attention to enlarging the agricultural export opportunities particularly for developing countries in all regions", with especial reference to the least developed countries. There was the eighth, which considered it "essential that the various countries together pursue agricultural adjustments at the farm, national, regional and global levels simultaneously." And then there was the ninth, which states that "further international co-operation is needed to develop a worldwide framework within which governments could work together toward greater consistency in their national and regional agricultural adjustment policies".

In the light of the agricultural problems which Europe - and the rest of the world - have to face at present, it seems to me that these nine points deserve renewed attention. Their common denominator is the need to act together, not in isolation, with each country or group of countries taking as much account as possible of the needs of others. I must say frankly that I would have hoped that Europe would have advanced rather more in this direction by now. Let me commend to you further reflection on your own wise conclusions of two years ago and the increased practical application of them as rapidly and as widely as possible in the general interests of international cooperation.

You may ask - and I have often asked myself - what contribution FAO has to make towards achieving this objective in a highly developed region like Europe where many contacts are already well established and where many international negotiations are already a familiar part of everyday life. I believe FAO's usefulness in this context derives from the fact that, as you well know, it continues to be the only international organization for agriculture which cuts across all political and economic groupings. Thus, in the European context as in others, FAO can provide the forum for enlarged multilateral consultations - which I believe are now essential - on a number of issues related to the harmonization of agricultural production and trade policies. Consultations on these issues at the European level - backed by the necessary studies which FAO is also equipped to undertake - would prepare the ground for more informed consideration of them at a worldwide level - in our Committee on Commodity Problems, for example. A good example of such an issue, I think, is that of price policies and their effect on production. Another, particularly in the light of recent developments, is that of production and trade policies regarding beef. There is no doubt that more purposeful international consultations are needed on this and that further studies on the whole European beef situation would contribute to the achievement of rational solutions. I may say that we are already undertaking studies on some other questions relevant to the "nine points", notably agrarian structures, farm modernization and certain technological problems. We would appreciate your broad guidance concerning all such studies when you come to take up the agenda item on "Current and Future Activities in Europe".

Mr. Chairman, although most of my statement today has been concerned with the world food situation, I have merely been able to touch on some of the problems, immediate and long-term, which characterize this truly critical state of affairs. The more I think about it, the more I am certain that the thing which we must fight against above all is indifference. Although there have been some signs recently that some richer countries may be prepared to do a little more to help those in greatest need, their policies in general still remain too inward-looking. We can simply no longer afford this. If we do not direct our main efforts to the construction of a world society that is more open and just, I dread to think what that society will become.

So, in these last few words to a European Regional Conference, let me, as a European myself, urge that we do not leave things too late. The skills, the wisdom and the strength of Europe have never been more needed in the world than now.

Thank you.

ADDRESS BY DR. FRANCISCO AQUINO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

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

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate, on behalf of the World Food Programme, in this Ninth FAO Regional Conference for Europe.

I am also happy to be here in this beautiful city of Lausanne, and to be again in Switzerland, a country which has been from the foundation of our Programme a strong supporter and counsellor for our activities. Switzerland is of course known everywhere as a generous donor of aid and host to organizations engaged in extending help to developing countries and needy peoples around the world.

We are meeting on the eve of an important event in human affairs, the World Food Conference. The Director-General of FAO has already underlined, in his statement, the crucial significance of that Conference and the exceptional circumstances which demanded its being called. No more difficult or important task faces the peoples and governments of the world than choosing and then implementing wise measures for assuring future food supplies.

There is no need for me to describe here the present food crisis and the effects of that crisis. Anybody who has managed a food budget in the last year or so knows these things very well. The World Food Programme has also felt the full impact of the spiralling prices of food and transport. These price rises have so reduced the purchasing power of our monetary pledges that various restrictive measures have had to be applied in order to make optimum use of the Programme's reduced real resources and satisfy the highest priority needs in recipient countries.

The overall food situation and the changes in the economic status of certain countries in the developing world are being followed closely by WFP in undertaking new projects and especially in planning its future activities. The possible role that the Programme can play in the next ten years cannot in fact be assessed in isolation. It has to be cast against the background of expected trends in food demand and supply and the way in which different developing countries are affected by such trends.

Projections for food demand and food output up to 1985, prepared for the World Food Conference, indicate that at the world level no food deficit is likely to appear. Indeed, at that level, output is expected to exceed demand. However, the picture changes when the developing countries, as a group, are considered separately. In these countries, the demand for food is expected to exceed output, and the imbalances to be of far greater magnitude than those currently being experienced. Such imbalances will probably not be of great consequence to developing countries which are exporters of oil or of other demand-inelastic primary products, but they will certainly affect - and, I would add, dramatically - those countries which are not benefiting from rising commodity prices.

In WFP, as well as in other food aid agencies, we are particularly concerned with the prospective trends in demand and supply of cereals. This is because the core of food aid is composed of these commodities. Should present tendencies continue, the net deficit of cereals in the developing countries which are net importers is anticipated to be of the order of 100 million tons per year by 1985, or almost three times their gross imports in 1969-71. This deficit would be still greater if provision were made to meet the minimum nutritional requirements of vulnerable groups in the developing countries, and the more so, in certain years, if crop failures took place in addition. Again, the situation is likely to be particularly acute in those developing countries which cannot rely on an adequate inflow of foreign exchange owing to the lack of appropriate primary products for export.

These projections are of course subject to correction, depending on the accuracy of varying assumptions regarding population, income growth and income distribution. But there is no doubt about the main conclusion to be drawn from them: that should present trends continue food deficits in developing countries will grow substantially larger during the next decade. Quite rightly, therefore, the World Food Conference will focus its attention on measures designed to curb present trends and in particular to expand food production in the developing countries. It will also consider the assistance, both financial and technical, that the international community can provide towards the attainment of that goal. Crucial recommendations are expected from the World Food Conference regarding the size and quality of the international flows of new resources for food and agricultural development and about the mechanisms for the mobilization and use of such resources.

However, transfers of capital and technology - and the growth of the purchasing power of the masses to sustain the necessary large increases in food production in the Third World - will take time. While waiting for the results of such measures to materialise, the growing food deficits of the developing countries will have to be met either by commercial transactions or by food aid, or by both. I would expect, in fact, that, for quite a number of years, such transactions in food will play a key role in bridging the gap between domestic demand and supply. But in view of the projected size of the transfers, fundamental changes in the structure of payments and trade would be required in order to effect them mainly through commercial channels. Although the international community might endeavour to make such changes in the near future, difficulties of various types will no doubt be encountered. I am therefore convinced that, at least for some time to come and for a certain group of developing countries, food aid will be necessary to meet that part of the food deficit which would still exist after all that is feasible has been done to increase domestic output and commercial transactions.

In addition, food aid will be essential in order to create a hedge against output fluctuations. The establishment of food stocks in a selected number of developing countries under the FAO scheme for minimum World Food Security is a vital step toward meeting, inter alia, unpredictable crop failures. But again I should emphasise the need for an adequate level of resource transfers in favour of participating developing countries for the scheme to be successful. FAO missions to study the possibility and implications of establishing food reserves have already visited some countries, and others of a similar type are planned for the immediate future. WFP is participating in these missions. It should be noted in this context that WFP has already undertaken a few projects for the establishment of price stabilization reserves, thus gaining valuable experience in this field.

The key policy decisions facing the World Food Programme in the coming years need to be set. I repeat, within the wider context of the type of issues to be discussed at the World Food Conference. Obviously, decisions on the policy and priorities to be adopted by the Programme will be largely dependent on the amount of resources that will be placed at its disposal. Since food aid in general will have a primary role to play for some time to come and since its volume will no doubt be significant, the real issue that confronts the international community is whether and to what extent donor governments will decide to utilise a multilateral channel such as WFP for the purpose. Resources to become available to the Programme in the near future will depend on this decision.

It may be worthwhile in this connection to recall the recommendation made by the UN General Assembly after it had considered our report on "Food aid and related issues during the Second Development Decade" to the effect that "the U.N. General Assembly draws the attention of member States to the advantage of channelling a greater proportion of food aid through multilateral channels Without prejudice to the special role of privately sponsored international programmes, it would be desirable when expanding multilateral food aid to place special emphasis on using WFP"

Let us hope that countries will follow that recommendation. For the present our resource position is very tight indeed. This has greatly discouraged the formulation of new projects and yet we have in the pipeline requests totalling 600 million dollars. To be more specific about our resource situation, price increases over the past 15 months have meant that even a two-fold increase in our present resources would do little more than restore them in qualitative terms to the level prevailing prior to June 1973, while a three-fold increase would represent no more than a 50 percent increase in the Programme's maximum activities of the past.

Our most recent, carefully-researched estimates show that even on the basis of commitments at the existing low level, by the end of 1975 the Programme will be short of about 100 000 metric tons of wheat and wheat products, 130 000 tons of coarse grain and products, 83 000 tons of dried skimmed milk, 19 000 tons of butter oil and about 5 000 tons of various other commodities.

These shortages would be considerably higher but for the stringent management measures taken to reduce the gap between supply and demand in our activities. During the past 12 months new commitments have been reduced to \$63 million and 88 per cent of them have gone to the least developed of the developing countries or special hardship areas such as the Sahel zone. In contrast, the Programme could actually handle without changes in structure, in a period of two years and given adequate time for systematic programming, much larger quantities of food aid. These are in the order of: 1.5 million tons of cereals: 175 000 tons of dried skimmed milk; 50 000 metric tons of butter oil; 36 000 tons of edible oil; 15 000 tons of canned meat; 12 000 tons of pulses; 10 000 tons of cheese; 10 000 tons of canned or dried fish; and 8 000 tons of sugar. These amounts do not include the Programme's ability to administer whatever share it may be allocated of the proposed International Food Reserve for Emergencies which, it has been suggested, should initially comprise 500 000 tons of cereals plus appropriate quantities of dried milk and other essential food for relief operations.

While the countries of this region are, for the most part, traditional donors to the Programme, both directly and through the EEC, we have in the past, when resources were larger, been able to help some European countries in their social and economic development plans as well as in cases of emergency.

Because of the shift of priorities to least-developed and other special hardship countries, the Programme's activities in this region are diminishing and, with few exceptions, future projects in Europe are unlikely. This fact should serve to underline the serious situation facing the Programme, for we are all aware that there are areas in the region which still badly need development assistance.

The very limited resources available for 1975 have obliged us to restrict new commitments for the next year to a maximum of US \$120 million and we will have to concentrate this aid on assistance to LDCs and special hardship areas. As I have said before, this amount will cover only a fraction of the total volume of requests of US \$600 million now in our pipeline. I am convinced that if the Programme's resources were to become more adequate, we could extend our assistance beyond the present small group of recipients and fulfil a number of urgent and deserving requests, particularly for the feeding of vulnerable groups in a larger number of countries. In addition, I feel the Programme would be in a position to participate more effectively in the establishment of food reserves under the FAO World Food Security Scheme, as well as in assisting countries stricken by sudden calamities. The Programme has, since its inception, accumulated a considerable amount of experience in the field of emergency aid and has, on several occasions - India, Bangladesh, the Sahel Zone, Ethiopia - assumed coordinating functions for multilateral food aid far beyond our own resources. The amount of resources presently available for emergency operations is limited to US \$10 million per year and I am confident that with an increased flow of multilateral donations the World Food Programme could fulfil far better its functions within the UN system in the field of emergencies.

I am sure that government representatives at this Conference will understand my position as Executive Director and the reasons why we in the Programme await with some anxiety the outcome of next month's world Food Conference.

There is no shortage of ideas for solving the food problem, and the world as a whole is not short of resources and technology for putting these ideas to work. What we are short of is the commitment to action, with a reluctance on the part of both governments and people to make the necessary effort and sacrifices to solve the problem of world food production and distribution.

Until that problem is solved, the burden of food aid is the burden of every country or group of countries with the means to help. The extent and nature of the commitment cannot be viewed as the burden of a few countries but involves the widest possible sharing of responsibility.

For its part, the World Food Programme stands ready to respond to whatever challenge and demands are placed on it by the world community.

