

REPORT

Tallinn,
Estonia,
25-29 May
1998

Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for Europe



Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

ERC/98/REP

REPORT

of the

FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE

**Twenty-first Session
Tallinn, Estonia, 25-29 May 1998**

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Rome, 1998**

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SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

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

For the attention of Governments

The Conference stressed:

1. the necessity to continue reform of the Common Agricultural Policy;
2. the need to meet consumers' expectations on food quality and food safety;
3. the pre-accession strategies enabling applicant countries to adopt the *acquis communautaire*;
4. the challenges facing the agricultural sector in preparation for the next round of WTO negotiations;
5. the importance of economically, ecologically and socially sustainable agriculture which takes into account preservation of the countryside, maintaining viable rural areas and arresting job losses and migration from rural areas for both men and women;
6. the need for sound management of the Region's forestry and fishery resources and ecologically fragile areas;
7. the willingness of Member Nations to share their experiences in overcoming often difficult transition periods;
8. the importance of cooperation at all levels, local, regional, national and international (para. 13).

Follow-up to the World Food Summit

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

9. emphasized the importance of involving NGOs as active partners in the Summit follow-up;
10. took note that few national reports had been submitted by the deadline set which clearly indicated that national governments faced difficulties in this exercise and remedial action was called for;
11. took note that some population groups in economies in transition faced food insecurity due to an unbalanced diet, lacking vital elements and, low incomes, with a major responsibility to be assumed by national health education and information programmes (para. 19).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

12. noted the value of the EMPRES programme, when well focused;
13. recalled the importance it attached to a full analysis of constraints and opportunities before SPFS projects were designed.

Changes in Food and Agricultural Commodity Consumption Patterns in the Region: The Role of the Consumer vis-à-vis the Producer - Towards a Common Approach to Quality

For the attention of Governments

The Conference highlighted:

14. the need to assure food quality and safety, including comprehensive and harmonised food regulations based on Codex Alimentarius and World Trade Organization Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), adequate inspection, sampling and analysis programmes, and efficient and effective food industry control mechanisms at all levels;
15. the need for access to good quality and safe food, including traditional and newer food products, as well as informative labelling, including where appropriate the origin and method of production;
16. the problems that regulations may pose to small and developing countries and the need for a balance to be struck so that adequate measures are taken which do not create further impediments to trade and discriminate against food exporters where control systems are less well developed (para. 20).

The Conference was in general agreement on:

17. the importance of science-based standards, guidelines and recommendations, including those under FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius in attaining harmonised regulations to promote trade of good quality and safe foods;
18. the necessity for active and open dialogues and cooperation between consumers, consumer organizations, government authorities and food producers, processors and marketers which would help to meet consumer demands and nutritional and food safety needs (para. 21).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference noted:

19. the need for FAO and other technical assistance programmes for developing countries and countries in transition to help improve consumer protection and assure improved food quality and safety;
20. the development of a new Joint FAO/IAEA Training and Laboratory Centre in Seibersdorf (Austria), to produce new methods of analysis, standard testing materials, and carry out and coordinate food quality and safety training (para. 22).

The Conference recommended:

21. that FAO continue to use a transparent process to select independent scientific experts to participate in FAO and FAO/WHO expert consultations making recommendations on various aspects of food quality and safety, including chemical and microbiological problems in foods (para. 23).

The Uses and Benefits of Soil Information

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

22. was in general agreement on the importance of adequate soil information systems in the prevention of soil degradation and in assisting in the process of crop forecasting (para. 25);
23. invited the European Commission to examine the possibility of financing the extension of the European Soil Information System (EUSIS) to incorporate information from countries which are entitled to attend the Regional Conference for Europe, subject to its cost-effectiveness and other parallel activities to avoid duplication of effort (paras. 26 and 27).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

24. noted that the issue of scale would need to be addressed but that all participating countries would be invited to take part in the technical consultation process (para. 28).

Report on FAO Activities in the Region, 1996-97

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

25. recalled the recommendation of the 20th FAO Regional Conference that future reports provide quantitative data regarding resources allocated to the Region, and decided to pursue the matter through consultations between the European Regional Group (ERG) and the Secretariat on ways and means to get the requested information (paras. 32 and 36).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

26. welcomed the new format of the document which made a distinction between the main normative and operational activities, followed the structure of the Programme of Work and Budget under major programmes and included a part concerning future programming;
27. requested that activities undertaken by the Joint FAO/IAEA Division in Vienna under sub-programme 2.1.5.3 be reported in the future;
28. underlined the need for FAO to tailor its assistance according to the progress achieved in the transition process by the Central and Eastern European (CEE) and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries;

29. stressed that there was a need for synergy and coordination in the assistance provided to CEE and CIS countries by FAO and by multi- and bilateral donors, in particular with EC programmes and the UN system (IFAD and WFP in particular);
30. underlined the need for FAO to provide support to the countries seeking accession to the EU as well as membership in the World Trade Organization assisting them to meet the required criteria (para. 29);
31. stressed that FAO endeavour focusing attention to the fields of normative advice and technical assistance to Member Nations continuing the transition process; participating in setting up or improving of land cadastre systems and the functioning of farm land markets; continue assistance in support of management of fragile ecosystems, mountain development and in particular sustainable management of forest resources; support in the conservation and management of animal and plant genetic resources; and in the development of nutrition programmes and food control and food health issues (para. 30);
32. stressed that future programme orientations take into consideration the evolving situation in the Region and that priority areas be accompanied by an indication of the Organization's comparative advantage (para. 31).

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

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

33. elected Mr Ervin Balázs, Director of the Agricultural Biotechnology Centre in Gödöllő (Hungary), to represent the Region with the CGIAR for the period 1999-2002 (para. 37).

**Presentation of WAICENT Services with Special Focus on Plant and Animal
Genetic Resources in the European Region**

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

34. suggested that user friendliness and demand-driven data presentation were essential (para. 38).

Date and Place of the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

35. noted that no proposals had yet been submitted on the date and place of the 22nd FAO Regional Conference for Europe (para. 41).

Any Other Business - Regional Distribution of Council Seats

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

36. requested the Director-General to place this topic on the agenda of the forthcoming Council Session (para. 42).

INTRODUCTION

1. The Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for Europe was held in Tallinn, Estonia from 25 to 29 May 1998 at the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Estonia.
2. The List of Participants is given in Appendix A to this Report.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

3. On behalf of the Director-General of FAO, Mr Manfred Lindau, Regional Representative for Europe, welcomed participants and expressed particular thanks to the Government of Estonia for the generous hospitality and the excellent facilities provided for the Conference. He highlighted the necessity for action aimed at sustainable food security as well as the need for a debate leading to recommendations on issues facing the agricultural sector in the European Region.
4. In his welcome address on behalf of Estonia, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Toomas Hendrik Ilves, underlined the importance of FAO's normative activities of concern to the entire membership of the Region and stressed the impact of FAO's efforts in support of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe undergoing economic and institutional transition.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN, VICE-CHAIRMEN AND APPOINTMENT OF THE RAPPORTEUR (AGENDA ITEM 2)

5. The Conference unanimously elected Mr Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia as Chairman.
6. The following vice-chairmen were elected by acclamation:
 - Mr Dinu Gavrilescu, Minister for Agriculture and Food of Romania;
 - Mr Costas Themistocleous, Minister for Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment of Cyprus;
 - Mr Kalevi Hemilä, Minister for Agriculture and Forestry of Finland;
 - Mr John Slater, Head of Economics and Statistics Group, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of the United Kingdom.
7. Ms Cecilia Nordin Van Gansberghe, Head of Section, Ministry of Agriculture of Sweden, was elected Rapporteur.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND TIMETABLE¹ (AGENDA ITEM 3)

8. The Conference adopted the Agenda as shown in Appendix B to this Report, with the addendum to the Provisional Agenda of "Regional Distribution of Council Seats" to Item 13.

OFFICIAL CEREMONY (AGENDA ITEM 1)

9. The Director-General of FAO, Mr Jacques Diouf, welcomed participants to the High Level Segment and expressed deep appreciation to the Government of Estonia for the generous hospitality extended to all participants and for the excellent facilities provided. The fact that the Region's leaders, responsible for agriculture, were gathered together for the first time in a country situated in the northern outskirts of Europe, laid the foundations for meeting the challenges of agricultural and rural development of the twenty-first century.

¹ ERC/98/1 and ERC/98/INF/2

10. The Prime Minister of Estonia, Mr Mart Siimann, in his welcome address, underlined the importance of cooperation between FAO and Estonia. In particular he referred to the assistance provided by FAO in formulating a long-term agricultural strategy and to FAO's neutral and unbiased advice. He also stressed that Estonia's objective was to develop a dynamic and internationally competitive agriculture which would provide security for the people engaged in the sector, ensure moderate food prices for the consumers, develop a fair revenue system and ensure free movement of goods and exports within the context of rural development and environmental protection.

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL (AGENDA ITEM 4)

11. The Director-General delivered his Statement to the Conference, the text of which is given in Appendix C to this report.

COUNTRY STATEMENTS AND GENERAL DEBATE ON THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE SITUATION IN THE REGION (AGENDA ITEM 5)

12. The general debate was opened by Mr Franz Fischler, Member of the European Commission, responsible for agriculture and rural development who recalled that, on the occasion of the Twenty-ninth Session of the FAO Conference, he had the opportunity to outline how the European Union expected food markets to develop and the impact of these developments on food security. He informed the Conference that the next wave of EU enlargement shaded all previous ones by virtue of the sheer number of candidates for accession and stressed that the applicant countries and the Union itself needed to prepare themselves thoroughly for enlargement and make the necessary accommodations. However, enlargement of the Union towards the east would not only give a clear boost to political stability and security but also raise the profile of the Union's common foreign and security policy.

13. Twenty-one Heads of Delegation took the floor: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, EC, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey (Greece presented their written statement to the Secretariat), to report on the food and agriculture situation in their respective countries and to comment on the overall economic and agricultural situation and on policies and issues affecting the agricultural and rural sectors. These statements drew particular attention to:

- the necessity to continue reform of the Common Agricultural Policy;
- the need to meet consumers' expectations on food quality and food safety;
- the pre-accession strategies enabling applicant countries to adopt the *acquis communautaire*;
- challenges facing the agricultural sector in preparation for the next round of WTO negotiations;
- the economically, ecologically and socially sustainable agriculture which takes into account preservation of the countryside, maintaining viable rural areas and arresting job losses and migration from rural areas for both men and women;
- the need for sound management of the Region's forestry and fishery resources and ecologically fragile areas;
- the willingness of Member Nations to share their experiences of overcoming often difficult transition periods;
- the importance of cooperation at all levels, local, regional, national and international.

14. A number of delegates reported on their TeleFood 1997 activities in their countries and the preparation for TeleFood 1998.

15. The Conference was informed of the assistance given by the World Food Programme (WFP) to selected countries in Europe.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD FOOD SUMMIT² (AGENDA ITEM 6)

16. In his introduction of the item, Mr M. Lindau, Regional Representative for Europe, recalled arrangements for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Summit's Plan by the twenty third session of the Committee on World Food Security, in line with Commitment 7 of the World Food Summit Plan of Action. It was recalled that reporting should focus on actions taken towards achieving specific objectives, following the structure of the Commitments and Objectives of the Plan, and where available, results including quantitative assessments under each of the objectives.
17. With regard to the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS), the Regional Representative recalled the steps undertaken to implement the short term actions recommended for the development of FIVIMS, i.e. the activities of the Inter-agency Working Group on FIVIMS (IAWG-FIVIMS) and designation of country focal points; by mid-April 1998, 50 countries had designated their focal points and these had been provided with information and documentation on FIVIMS.
18. The Regional Representative also informed the Conference that by 17 May 1998, the Secretariat had received reports from 68 countries, of which 22 from European Member Nations, and from the European Commission.
19. From the ensuing discussion, the Conference took note of the following:
- The European Union noted that the Regional Conference was an important opportunity for FAO to present information to its membership and to obtain guidance from them. Paper ERC/98/3 was an accurate record of actions and referred to important elements in the World Food Summit follow-up which the EU endorsed. The EU noted that its report on World Food Summit Plan of Action covered the wide range of actions needed to improve food security in this Region and more widely. The value of the EMPRES programme, when well focused, was noted. On the Special Programme for Food Security, the EU recalled the importance it attached to a full analysis of constraints and opportunities before projects were designed. More generally, the EU found it difficult to highlight priority areas for FAO in the Region, in the absence of a clear analysis of FAO's comparative advantages in relation to the countries concerned. Discussion earlier in the week had emphasised the importance, given FAO's limited resources, of clear detailed objectives and priorities which were communicated to member governments and against which progress should be reported at future regional conferences. Country statements of the Conference had further highlighted the importance of assessing the contribution FAO programmes can make to meeting the challenges facing agricultural producers and consumers in parts of Central and Eastern Europe;
 - Norway emphasised the importance of involving NGOs as active partners in the Summit follow-up; at the national level this had been achieved by permanently expanding the Norwegian FAO Committee and also by arranging a major conference which would take place on 15 and 16 October 1998;
 - the Nordic countries had agreed on a coordinated programme for the follow-up of the World Food Summit which centred on (i) sustainable agriculture; (ii) genetic resources/biodiversity; (iii) food safety; (iv) strengthening the cooperation with relevant Nordic and Baltic countries; and (v) international activities;
 - the problem of few national reports submitted by the deadline set. This clearly indicated that national governments faced difficulties in this exercise and remedial action was therefore called for;
 - some population groups in economies in transition faced food insecurity due to an unbalanced diet, lacking vital elements and low incomes, with a major responsibility to be assumed by national health education and information programmes.

² ERC/98/3

**CHANGES IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY CONSUMPTION PATTERNS
IN THE REGION: THE ROLE OF THE CONSUMER VIS-A-VIS THE PRODUCER -
TOWARDS A COMMON APPROACH TO QUALITY³ (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

20. In reviewing the document submitted by the Secretariat, the Conference noted the importance of food safety issues in all countries and highlighted the following:
- the need to assure food quality and safety, including comprehensive and harmonised food regulations based on Codex Alimentarius (Codex) and World Trade Organization Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), adequate inspection, sampling and analysis programmes, and efficient and effective food industry control mechanisms at all levels;
 - that many countries of the Region were actively reviewing and updating food regulations and strengthening control and monitoring activities;
 - that changes in food consumption patterns in some countries, had resulted in nutritional problems, in others, this had led to an improvement of the nutritional quality of the diet;
 - the need for access to good quality and safe food, including traditional and newer food products, as well as informative labelling, including where appropriate the origin and method of production;
 - the social, cultural and ethical dimensions of food to which consumers in some areas of the Region are particularly sensitive;
 - the problems that regulations may pose to small and developing countries and the need for a balance to be struck so that adequate measures are taken which do not create further impediments to trade and discriminate against food exporters where control systems are less well developed.
21. There was general agreement on:
- the importance of science-based standards, guidelines and recommendations, including those under FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius in attaining harmonised regulations to promote trade of good quality and safe foods;
 - the necessity for active and open dialogue and cooperation between consumers, consumer organizations, government authorities and the food producers, processors and marketers which would help to meet consumer demands and nutritional and food safety needs.
22. The Conference noted:
- the need for FAO and other technical assistance programmes for developing countries and countries in transition to improve consumer protection and assure improved food quality and safety;
 - the development of a new Joint FAO/IAEA Training and Laboratory Centre in Seibersdorf (Austria), to produce new methods of analysis, standard testing materials, and carry out and coordinate food quality and safety training.
23. It was recommended:
- that FAO continue to use a transparent process to select independent scientific experts to participate in FAO and FAO/WHO expert consultations making recommendations on various aspects of food quality and safety, including chemical and microbiological problems in foods.

THE USES AND BENEFITS OF SOIL INFORMATION⁴ (AGENDA ITEM 8)

24. In considering the document prepared by the Secretariat, attention was drawn to the actual and potential problems of soil degradation. Examples of current problems included erosion in many areas, the substantial loss of top soil and the loss of good agricultural land to urbanisation where this was limited.

³ ERC/98/4

⁴ ERC/98/5

25. There was general agreement on the importance of adequate soil information systems in the prevention of soil degradation and in assisting in the process of crop forecasting. It was noted that the importance of the issues was recognised in the World Soil Charter of FAO and in the European Soil Charter. A number of databases had been integrated into a single European Information System covering the EU member states, EFTA countries and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

26. The Conference, noting FAO activities in developing a world soil and terrain database, accepted a proposal by the EU presidency that it should invite the European Commission to examine the possibility of financing the extension of the European Soil Information System (EUSIS) to incorporate information from countries which are entitled to attend this Conference.

27. This action would be subject to its cost-effectiveness and would take into account parallel activities in various countries and their national and regional bodies, to avoid duplication of effort.

28. The Conference also noted that the issue of scale would need to be addressed but that all participating countries would be invited to take part in the technical consultation process.

REPORT ON FAO ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION, 1996-97⁵ (AGENDA ITEM 9)

29. In reviewing the document submitted by the Secretariat, the Conference:

- welcomed the new format of the document which made a distinction between the main normative activities of direct interest and concern to the entire membership, and the operational activities, geared to assist the former centrally planned economies in formulating measures and institutional reforms for transition to market economies, and which followed the structure of the Programme of Work and Budget under major programmes, and also the part concerning future programming;
- indicated with regret that the document did not mention the activities undertaken by the Joint FAO/IAEA Division in Vienna under sub-programme 2.1.5.3 and requested that such activities be reported in the future;
- underlined the need for FAO to tailor its assistance according to the progress achieved in the transition process by the Central and Eastern European and CIS countries;
- stressed that there was a need for synergy and coordination in the assistance provided to the Central and Eastern European and CIS countries by FAO and by multi- and bilateral donors, in particular with the EC programmes for the CEE and CIS countries (Phare and Tacis) and with the UN system (IFAD and WFP in particular);
- underlined the need for FAO to provide support to the countries seeking accession to the EU as well as membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) assisting them to meet the required criteria;
- took note of the status of implementation or formulation of the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) in the six low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDCs) in the Region;
- expressed appreciation for the activities undertaken by the EASTFISH regional project, through which FAO promotes trade and investment in the Region and supports the participating countries in modernising their aquaculture and fish processing sectors.

30. The Conference found the priority issues in the Region as contained in paragraphs 87 to 90 of the document rather broad. It stressed that FAO should endeavour to focus its attention, particularly in the following fields:

- provide normative advice and technical assistance to Member Nations continuing transition process to ensure greater integration in regional and world markets;
- participate in the development of setting up and/or improving land cadastre systems and functioning farmland markets, including succession property rights and access to land for young people;

⁵ ERC/98/2 and ERC/98/2-Supp.1

- continue to provide assistance in support of management of fragile ecosystems and sustainable mountain development, in particular for the sustainable management of forest resources;
- provide support in the conservation and management of plant and animal genetic resources;
- participate in the development of nutrition programmes, food control and food health issues in general.

31. The Conference also stressed that future programme orientations take into consideration the evolving situation in the Region. Priority areas should be accompanied by an indication of the Organization's comparative advantage on which the Organization should focus its activities, and find partners for requested assistance outside of these areas.

32. The Conference recalled the recommendation of the 20th Regional Conference in Tel Aviv in 1996 that "future reports provide quantitative data regarding resources allocated to the Region under the Regular Programme and from extra budgetary sources, as well as a qualitative assessment of resource utilisation on which recommendation on future directions could be based" (ERC/96/REP, para. 13). These data had been requested to allow members to give recommendations regarding future programme orientation to face priority issues in the Region, as requested by Conference Resolution 14/69 "Authority, Terms of Reference and Constitutional Status of Regional Conferences".

33. Attention was drawn to the need for more specific objectives to meet the challenges of the Region listed in the report of FAO activities (ERC/98/2); and for priorities to be established and made known to both the FAO's membership and more widely, which take into account the programmes of other organizations and the particular expertise of FAO.

34. Having noted with regret that the Conference document ERC/98/2 did not contain data, as called for in the Tel Aviv recommendation, the Conference requested the Secretariat to make available to it the figures for regional planned expenditure to be found in the 1998/99 Programme of Work and Budget, and to indicate when the FAO budgetary systems would be developed to a point where the recommendation of the 20th Regional Conference could be complied with, and to structure its report to the next, i.e. 22nd European Regional Conference, under the priorities identified at this one.

35. To respond positively to the above request, the Secretariat subsequently provided Annex I/6 of the Programme of Work and Budget, 1998/99 which contained information on regional estimates by programmes. The Secretariat explained that it could not provide more detailed information on quantitative data regarding resources allocated by regions under the Regular Programme, because the FAO Programme of Work and Budget, as approved by the Conference, followed a sectorial approach i.e. structured by major programmes. Consequently, the report on expenditures followed the same structure. The Secretariat further indicated that to fully satisfy the recommendation under para. 13 of ERC/96/REP, a new presentation was required on a regional basis allowing for an objective framework to report on a regional basis. Such fundamental change to the present budget presentation could be decided only by the FAO Conference.

36. The Conference reaffirmed the Tel Aviv recommendation, and decided to pursue the matter through consultations between the European Regional Group (ERG) and the Secretariat on ways and means to get the requested information.

REPRESENTATION OF THE REGION ON THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (CGIAR)⁶ (AGENDA ITEM 10)

37. In line with the recommendation in paragraph 20 of ERC/98/6, the Conference established a Sub-Committee (Germany, Iceland, Malta, Poland and Switzerland) to screen the nine candidatures submitted by the following Member Nations: Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia and

⁶ ERC/98/6

Turkey. On the recommendation of the Sub-Committee, the Conference elected Mr Ervin Balázs, Director of the Agricultural Biotechnology Centre in Gödöllő (Hungary), to represent the Region on the CGIAR for the period 1999-2002.

PRESENTATION OF WAICENT SERVICES WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON PLANT AND ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES IN THE EUROPEAN REGION (AGENDA ITEM 11)

38. The Conference expressed appreciation for the World Agricultural Information Centre (WAICENT) presentation and endorsed WAICENT's activities, in particular in the area of plant and animal genetic resources. Furthermore, it suggested that user friendliness and demand-driven data presentation were essential. The Secretariat noted this, and also encouraged further dialogue.

39. The Conference noted that as a result of the FAO/European Federation of Zootechniques/EAAP (European Association of Animal Production) meeting held in Vienna in August 1997, France, through the Department for Genetic Resources had accepted the responsibility to serve as European Regional Focal Point for the conservation of animal genetic resources. The main objective is to establish the basis for the development and management of the network, comprising 37 European Countries, dealing with various aspects of animal genetic resources management.

40. The Conference also took note of the activities undertaken by EAAP in CEE and CIS countries.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE TWENTY-SECOND FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE (AGENDA ITEM 12)

41. The Conference noted that no proposals had yet been submitted on the date and place of the 22nd FAO Regional Conference for Europe.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 13)

Regional Distribution of Council Seats⁷

42. The Conference took note of the statement delivered on this agenda item by the Head of the Delegation of Germany, which is reproduced below in extenso:

- "In meetings previous to the 21st FAO Regional Conference for Europe, the member countries of the European Regional Group had identified the unbalanced distribution of Council seats between the seven FAO Regions and within the European Region as one needing a satisfactory solution. A similar unbalanced situation is found with respect to seat distribution in the subsidiary bodies of the Council.
- This problem has its main cause in the increase of the number of FAO members over the past twenty years, both in Europe and in other regions to a total of 175 Member Nations, whilst the number of Council seats has remained unchanged, i.e. 49.
- The issue of a more balanced distribution of Council seats should therefore be discussed at the 115th Session of the Council in November 1998.
- The Director-General is requested to place this topic on the agenda of the forthcoming Council Session.
- To facilitate the finding of viable options for the solution to this problem, we suggest that a similar procedure be adopted as in the mid-seventies in preparing for the latest change in the number of Council seats (November 1977).
- This entails the establishment by the Council of an inter-regional working party on the composition of the Council, the Programme and Finance Committees and the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters.

⁷ ERC/98/INF/7

43. As Chairman of the European Regional Group, I propose that the foregoing text be included in the Report of the 21st FAO Regional Conference for Europe.”

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT (ITEM 14)

44. With some amendments, the text of the draft report was approved by the Conference.

CLOSURE OF THE CONFERENCE (AGENDA ITEM 15)

45. The Conference expressed deep appreciation to the Government of Estonia for the excellent organization and generous hospitality offered during the Conference to delegations. It also wished to put on record its appreciation for the highly interesting study tours organized for delegations to become acquainted with Estonian agriculture and countryside.

APPENDIX A
ANNEXE A
APENDICE A

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS
LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES

Chairman	:	
Président	:	Toomas HENDRIK ILVES (Estonia)
Presidente	:	
Vice-Chairmen	:	Dinu GAVRILESCU (Romania)
Vice-Présidents	:	Costas THEMISTOCLEOUS (Cyprus)
Vicepresidentes	:	Kalevi HEMILÄ (Finland)
		John SLATER (United Kingdom)
Rapporteur	:	Ms Cecilia NORDIN VAN GANSBERGHE (Sweden)

**MEMBER NATIONS IN THE REGION
ETATS MEMBRES DE LA REGION
ESTADOS MIEMBROS DE LA REGION**

ALBANIA - ALBANIE

Delegate

Selim DEDEJ
Vice-Minister for Agriculture and Food
Ministry of Agriculture and Food
Tirana

ARMENIA - ARMENIE**AUSTRIA - AUTRICHE**

Delegate

Ms Hedwig WÖGERBAUER
Head of the International Department
Federal Ministry of Agriculture
and Forestry
Vienna

Alternates

Hermann REDL
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Federal Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry
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Ernst ZIMMERL
Permanent Representative to FAO
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APPENDIX B

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Official Ceremony
2. Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Appointment of Rapporteur: *for decision*
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable: *for decision (ERC/98/1 and ERC/98/INF/2)*

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement by the Director-General (*ERC/98/INF/4*)
5. Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in the Region

III. SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

6. Follow-up to the World Food Summit: *for discussion and/or information (ERC/98/3)*

The countries of the Region may wish to report on measures taken or envisaged in their respective national plans of action to give effect to the World Food Summit Plan of Action. Particular attention will be given to the situation of low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDCs) in the Region and special initiatives such as the Special Programme on Food Security (SPFS) and the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES).

7. Changes in Food and Agricultural Commodity Consumption patterns in the Region: the Role of the Consumer vis-à-vis the Producer - Towards a Common Approach to Quality: *for discussion (ERC/98/4)*

The main issues arising from changing consumer patterns in the Region would be discussed along with resulting challenges for producers. The debate would focus on the role of the consumer and analysis for scientific and ethical aspects of quality and production of food and agricultural commodities.

8. The Uses and Benefits of Soil Information: *for discussion (ERC/98/5)*

The soil is a natural resource, not renewable in the short term and very expensive to reclaim or improve once it is physically degraded or chemically depleted. There is widespread evidence that soil losses from degradation undermine significantly the productive function of the soil and pose a threat to food security in the Region. Poorly managed high-input farming practices may cause a second generation of environmental problems. Excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides, inadequate nutrient and animal waste containment and uncontrolled industrial development result in pollution of soil and water resources, not only causing health hazards, but also leading to loss of biodiversity and contamination of surface waters.

FAO has embarked, in cooperation with the EU European Soils Bureau and other European institutes and research centres, in the implementation of a project data harmonization on land vulnerability to degradation and soil pollution, which when completed would allow a systematic approach towards successfully facing land degradation problems in the Region.

IV. ACTIVITIES OF FAO IN THE REGION

9. Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1996-97: *for discussion (ERC/98/2)*

The document on this item will comprise a detailed report on FAO activities in the Region, particularly in the LIFDCs, and on the related role of the regional and sub-regional offices. The document will provide information on the activities of the Statutory Bodies concerning directly the European Region.

10. Representation of the Region on the CGIAR: *for decision (ERC/98/6)*
11. Presentation of WAICENT Services with Special Focus on Plant and Animal Genetic Resources in the European Region: *for information*

V. OTHER MATTERS

12. Date, Place and Main Theme of the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for Europe (The Standard Memorandum of Responsibilities will be provided to Member Nations expressing the wish to host the Regional Conference)
13. Any other business
- Regional Distribution of Council Seats
14. Adoption of the Report
15. Closure of the Conference

APPENDIX C**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

*Mr Chairman
Mr Independent Chairman of the Council
Distinguished Ministers
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen*

Six months ago, the FAO Conference met in Rome where it reviewed the state of food and agriculture in the world and the past and future activities of the Organization.

(State of world food and agriculture)

Although according to the latest estimates the overall world economy grew by a satisfactory rate of approximately 4 percent in 1997, the food and agricultural situation and prospects present contrasting features. Agricultural production only increased by an estimated 1.1 percent and cereal stocks are still below the security threshold. Furthermore, development aid has tended to fall since the late 1980s not only in real terms but also in current prices, hovering in recent years at a nominal US\$60 billion. This has affected the agriculture sector more than other sectors as its share has fallen from about 30 percent in the mid-eighties to barely 12 percent in recent years.

Prospects for 1998 are mixed. World economic growth is forecast to slowdown significantly, to about 3 percent, mainly reflecting the financial crisis in Asia. There is still great uncertainty about the resolution of the crisis and its worldwide implications, including for food security. As regards prospects for food, a small increase of about 0.7 percent in global staple food production is expected in 1997/98. For the group of low-income food-deficit countries, however, staple food production is forecast to decline by about 2 percent. FAO's first forecast of 1998 cereal production is 1 895 million tonnes, only slightly below last year's record of 1 908 million tonnes. Should this forecast materialize, cereal supplies would meet expected consumption requirements in 1998/99 but global reserves would continue to remain below minimum safe levels.

(Principal achievements of the Organization)

(Implementation of the Summit Plan of Action)

FAO's activities in the previous biennium were marked by the World Food Summit held in November 1996. Since then, several initiatives have been undertaken to implement the resulting Plan of Action:

- 150 national strategies for agriculture and food security towards the year 2010 have been drafted with the governments of developing Member Nations and others in transition;
- the Special Programme for Food Security is now operational in 30 countries, including 2 in the European Region, and under formulation in 40 others, including 4 in the Region;

- the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases has registered a number of successes, in particular against rinderpest and desert locust. In this context and under the umbrella of the European Commission for the Control of Foot and Mouth Disease efforts have been pursued to prevent or mitigate outbursts of the disease in the Region and ensured emergency preparedness and contingency planning; and
- the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information Mapping System has been fully established.

During the last biennium, the Organization continued to help implement the Marrakech agreements by organizing regional workshops and executing national projects. The Organization will also step up its action to assist in the preparation of future trade negotiations, working closely with the WTO, the World Bank and UNCTAD.

In accordance with the directives adopted by the Summit, FAO has also encouraged the launching of "Food for All" campaigns to mobilize civil society. A number of countries have already initiated a process of national consultation to this effect. The "TeleFood 1997" operation that was broadcast by some one hundred television channels in over 60 countries gave 500 million viewers an added insight into the problems of hunger and malnutrition and laid the foundations of a system for the raising of funds which - already this year - will finance small projects of direct assistance to rural communities in developing countries, helping them boost agricultural production. As endorsed by the last Conference of FAO, TeleFood is to be an annual event to be held within the celebration of World Food Day. The next edition will be held from 16 to 18 October 1998 and will be larger in scale than last year.

Actions for the advancement of women are given priority status in FAO's programmes and projects. In particular, the Special Programme for Food Security should improve the access of rural women to technologies, inputs and credit, which is why special emphasis has been placed on poultry raising and market gardening. To underline the importance of women in the food production chain, the theme chosen for the 1998 World Food Day is "Women Feed the World".

Finally, interagency cooperation for implementing the Summit Plan of Action has been put in place with the establishment of a Network on Rural Development and Food Security led by FAO and IFAD. The mechanism for monitoring the Summit Plan of Action has also been set up and the Committee on World Food Security will evaluate progress next week, as you will yourselves for the Region.

(Other achievements)

Among the other FAO initiatives with worldwide impact undertaken during the 1996/97 biennium, I should like to mention:

- with regard to the sustainable use of natural resources, the adoption of the World Plan of Action of the International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources, the revision of the International Plant Protection Convention, and the recent successful completion, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, of the negotiation for a legally binding convention on international trade in hazardous chemicals and pesticides;
- as regards forests, programmes focusing on the contribution of forestry to food security, on effective and responsible forest management and on maintaining a balance among the economic, ecological and social benefits of forests; assistance in formulating national forestry programmes; support to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and to the Eleventh World Forestry Congress hosted by Turkey;

- regarding fisheries and aquaculture, the reinforcement of the regional bodies and the staging of 21 technical consultations on the management of marine fishery resources of different regions, within the framework of the Kyoto Plan of Action on the Sustainable Contribution of Fisheries to Food Security and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

(Processing, analysis and dissemination of information)

The Organization has, of course, continued to pursue its function of collecting, processing, analysing and disseminating information, for example by publishing the annual report of the *State of Food and Agriculture* which now includes a section on developments in food security as a follow-up to the Summit. This document is complemented by *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture* and *State of the World's Forests*. The *Sixth World Food Survey* was published in 1996. As for the long-term world outlook for agriculture and food security, a study will be carried out on the likely scenario until 2015, with a more general evaluation taking us to 2030.

With respect to the dissemination of information, the introduction of new technologies has rationalized and modernized systems, while reducing costs. The World Agricultural Information Centre (WAICENT) as you have been able to witness from the demonstration of two days ago now offers ready access to essential information for food security and sustainable rural development: FAOSTAT for statistical data, FAOINFO for textual information and FAOSIS for specialized information systems, in particular on animal genetic resources, pesticides and the Global Information and Early Warning System.

(Partnerships)

The Organization has also strengthened coordination and cooperation with its partners to ensure that all its programmes can be implemented against a backdrop of budgetary constraint: with the World Bank and the regional banks through new agreements, mainly for the implementation of the Special Programme for Food Security; with the food and agriculture institutions based in Rome, IFAD and WFP; with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, its Technical Advisory Committee and its institutes; with the other UN agencies under the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination; with the Commission of the European Union and with the private sector and the community of non-governmental organizations.

Similarly, cooperation has been stepped up with many Member Nations. Over the past three years, some 1 300 experts have been implementing FAO programmes under agreements for cooperation between developing countries and countries in transition and cooperation with academic and research institutions, and by hiring retired experts. In support of the Special Programme for Food Security, a number of South-South cooperation agreements have enabled more advanced developing countries, with FAO assistance, to provide a critical mass of field technicians in the rural communities of other developing countries. So far three countries are already providing such assistance and negotiations are ongoing with 18 others. Developed countries are also encouraged to support the South-South cooperation by complementing the contributions made by the participating developing countries, whether they are donors or beneficiaries. Finally, with a view to building national capacities, FAO is looking into training opportunities offered by Member Nations in the areas of its mandate for students and trainees from developing countries and will itself employ young professionals, within the limit of available resources, so that they can add practical experience to their academic training.

(Investment)

One of FAO's ongoing concerns is to promote investment in agriculture. During the last two years, 13 projects prepared with the assistance of the Investment Centre in the Region were approved for financing for a total value of US\$411 million, including US\$278 million in external loans.

FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme continues to act as a strong catalyst on account of its defining characteristics of rapid approval, limited project duration, low costs and practical orientation. A total of 49 new projects were implemented in the Central and Eastern European countries of the Region in 1996-97.

(Restructuring and decentralization)

The restructuring of FAO has proceeded under conditions of severe budgetary limitations, with a focus on identifying savings and improving efficiency through decentralization. The number of posts fell from 4 185 in January 1994 to 3 599 in January 1998. Growing attention is now being given to training staff and raising the contingent of women professionals while continuing to ensure equitable representation of Member Nations: the number of countries not represented among the staff dropped from 54 in January 1994 to 29 in April 1998, taking into account ongoing recruitment. The decentralization process is completed: all the new liaison and subregional offices are open and the Regional Offices have been substantially strengthened; Member Nation coverage by the network of FAO representatives has been extended through multiple accreditation and the use of National Programme Officers and National Correspondents. At present, 39 percent of the staff are assigned to decentralized offices.

(Programme of Work and Budget 1998/99)

I should like to conclude this overview of the highlights of the last two years by recalling that the Conference approved a Programme of Work and Budget for 1998/99 with zero nominal growth which, in real terms, amounts to a reduction of 3.7 percent. Despite this, however, the Organization has a unanimously endorsed programme which, in contrast to the two previous biennia, will not need adjustment. I think I can safely say that the Organization has successfully completed its period of reform and that it can now look to the future with confidence and buckle down to its appointed mission of helping to achieve sustainable food security for all.

(General Situation in the European Region)

Mr Chairman,

Allow me now to briefly review the situation of food and agriculture in the European Region and the main subjects that the Conference is addressing.

(Food Situation in Europe)

During the last two years, overall gross agricultural production in the Region has given signs of steady recovery from the low levels of 1994/1995, mainly due to crop production, in particular cereals, while livestock production has not yet shown the expected reversal of declining trend. It is also worth noting that the progress made in crop production was mainly based on productivity gains in the majority of the main producing countries. Another positive aspect is the moderate but continued agricultural recovery in the Central and Eastern European Subregion.

The year 1997 has been marked by momentous developments for European agricultural policies. The inauguration on 1 January 1997 of the Baltic Free Trade Agreement in agricultural products and the conclusion of bilateral Free Trade Agreements between Estonia, on the one hand, and Hungary and Poland, on the other, have been of major significance for the Baltic Region. The

presentation by the European Union of "Agenda 2000" has opened the debate on the future of agriculture in Europe and may have wide ranging influence on forming future agricultural policies of the European Union countries. Similarly, the start of accession negotiations to the European Union by six countries is already having its impact on policy developments in the candidate countries.

Member Nations of the Central and Eastern European Subregion pursue their transition policies in the agricultural sector, including privatization and restructuring, and although they find themselves at different stages of the reform process there has been general progress in this field. FAO is privileged to have been associated in the member governments' efforts for designing specific development policies for agricultural and food and for creating the corresponding institutional background in several countries in transition.

(Food Quality and Safety)

One of the important subjects which has been examined during this session by your senior officials is how to ensure the quality and safety of food that is put on the market with a view to protecting the health of consumers. Although the Marrakech Agreement provides a frame for a better quality of traded food products, different country groups have different standards based on their geographic location, their level of development and their participation in international trade. As European integration is being extended to new members, the need is stronger than ever in the Region for the harmonization of food quality and safety standards.

The Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures, better known under the short name of SPS Agreement, and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, the TBT Agreement in brief, are important instruments in achieving this harmonization and promoting agricultural commodity trade. The Codex Alimentarius Commission - now strong of 162 member countries, of which 38 members from the European Region - and its subsidiary bodies have for a large number of years worked to pave the way. For this reason the Codex guidelines and recommendations have under the SPS Agreement formally become the reference for the evaluation of national sanitary measures. The work carried out by the Codex Alimentarius is a conspicuous example of collective consensus building on a vital issue of common concern. FAO, which jointly with WHO, provides the Secretariat of the Commission and lends its technical expertise for the formulation of its recommendations, is proud of this recognition of the work undertaken by the two organizations in this area and for the contribution the Codex makes in improving the safety and quality of food and in promoting international trade. At the same time FAO is aware, as you are aware, that a lot still needs to be done to come up with harmonized, universally accepted sanitary and phytosanitary standards based on solid scientific evidence. Therefore FAO, besides the support it provides to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, also assists, within available resources, individual Member Nations, in their efforts in revising food legislation, in elaborating methodologies for risk analyses and in strengthening their administrative and technical capacities.

(Harmonization of Soil Data)

It has become commonplace to speak of the Earth as a global village, of global markets, of the increasing interdependence of decision making. As there is no doubt that we are increasingly heading to globalization on various aspects of our everyday life, planning for the future needs also to be seen in a broader context. In this context, your senior representatives have also deliberated on ways and means of harmonizing methodologies to obtain homogeneous information on soil characteristics, land valuation, soil degradation and thus facilitating land use planning. It is not, I think, necessary to underline the numerous advantages the existence of homogeneous information on soils would bring about in terms of planning, crop modelling and forecasting, in the transfer of research results and in policy decision making. Although the difficulties resulting from the long tradition of national and subregional methodologies are well understood, there is no doubt that the advantages by far outweigh the cost of adapting to the global harmonized system.

Mr Chairman,

The subjects on the Agenda of this Conference, even if they deal with topics as different as food quality and soil data have a common denominator, the key word of which is harmonization. And these, obviously are not the only topics on which concerted international efforts need to be made. Interdependence is increasingly a fact of life, not only within a region but globally. It is encouraging to see that European integration progressively embraces an increasing number of countries in the Region. Even if prudence advises a cautious step-by-step process, it is to be hoped that eventually it will become a union of all European nations that wish to become members.

But the role of Europe, whose civilization and progress for thousands of years has been based on a dynamic agricultural sector which continues today to be a motor of prosperity, while being a key element in preserving the environment and improving the quality of life, is not confined to the Continent. The contribution Europe is making to the global food security is of utmost importance and deserves a special mention. Through food assistance to face natural calamities or to relieve man made suffering, through transfer of agricultural technology, be it in the field of production, post harvest losses or food processing - and to which FAO modestly contributes through inter-regional programmes such as the European System of Cooperative Research Networks in Agriculture (ESCORENA) - as well as through programmes of assistance to developing countries implemented bilaterally or in partnerships with FAO, Europe is an essential factor of world stability and progress.

Mr Chairman,

The challenge of ensuring sustainable food security for all still lies ahead of us as recalled by the World Food Summit. The high number of under-nourished people, particularly in low-income food-deficit countries witnesses of the need for our efforts to continue unrelenting. FAO together with all its partners is giving the highest priority in helping these countries overcome this fundamental challenge.

I frankly believe that it is possible to overcome this challenge and that it is in the interest of all countries to do so. I think that this is well understood by European nations. I wish and hope that we continue in this direction and we intensify our efforts until we achieve the objectives we have set ourselves by subscribing to the commitments of the World Food Summit.

I wish you continued success in your deliberations.

Thank you.

APPENDIX D
LIST OF DOCUMENTS

ERC/98/1	Annotated Agenda
ERC/98/2	Report on FAO Activities in the Region, 1996-97
ERC/98/2-Supp.1	Report on meetings of Statutory Bodies of the European Region
ERC/98/3	World Food Summit Follow-up
ERC/98/4	Changes in food and agricultural commodity consumption patterns in the Region: the role of the consumer vis-à-vis the producer - towards a common approach to quality
ERC/98/5	The uses and benefits of soil information
ERC/98/6	Representation of the Region on the CGIAR
<u>ERC/98/INF/...</u>	
ERC/98/INF/1	Information Note
ERC/98/INF/2	Timetable
ERC/98/INF/3	List of Documents
ERC/98/INF/4	Director-General's Statement
ERC/98/INF/5	Resolution No. 14/69 "Authority, Terms of Reference and Constitutional Status of Regional Conferences"
ERC/98/INF/6	Statement of Competence by the European Community (EC) and its Member States
ERC/98/INF/7	Regional Distribution of Council Seats
ERC/98/INF/8	List of Delegates

FAO members in the European Region (18 November 1997)

Albania	France	Norway
Armenia	Georgia	Poland
Austria	Germany	Portugal
Azerbaijan	Greece	Romania
Belgium	Hungary	Slovakia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Iceland	Slovenia
Bulgaria	Ireland	Spain
Croatia	Israel	Sweden
Cyprus	Italy	Switzerland
Czech Republic	Latvia	The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Denmark	Lithuania	Turkey
Estonia	Luxembourg	United Kingdom
European Community (member organization)	Malta	Yugoslavia
Finland	Moldova	
	Netherlands	

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for Europe

First	-	Rome, Italy, 10-15 October 1949
Second	-	Rome, Italy, 10-15 October 1960
Third	-	Rome, Italy, 8-13 October 1962
Fourth	-	Salzburg, Austria, 26-31 October 1964
Fifth	-	Seville, Spain, 5-11 October 1966
Sixth	-	St. Julian's, Malta, 28-31 October 1968
Seventh	-	Budapest, Hungary, 21-25 September 1970
Eighth	-	Munich, Germany, Fed. Rep. of, 18-23 September 1972
Ninth	-	Lausanne, Switzerland, 7-12 October 1974
Tenth	-	Bucharest, Romania, 20-25 September 1976
Eleventh	-	Lisbon, Portugal, 2-7 October 1978
Twelfth	-	Athens, Greece, 22-27 September 1980
Thirteenth	-	Sofia, Bulgaria, 4-8 October 1982
Fourteenth	-	Reykjavik, Iceland, 17-21 September 1984
Fifteenth	-	Istanbul, Turkey, 28 April-2 May 1986
Sixteenth	-	Cracow, Poland, 23-26 August 1988
Seventeenth	-	Venice, Italy, 3-7 April 1990
Eighteenth	-	Prague, Czechoslovakia, 24-28 August 1992
Nineteenth	-	Killarney, Ireland, 6-10 June 1994
Twentieth	-	Tel Aviv, Israel, 29 April-3 May 1996
Twenty-first	-	Tallinn, Estonia, 25-29 May 1998

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