

REPORT

Tunis,
Tunisia,
12-16 March
1990

**FAO Regional
Conference
for the Near East
Twentieth session**



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

FAO Member Nations in the Near East Region (as of 16 March 1990)

Afghanistan	Kuwait	Somalia
Algeria	Lebanon	Sudan
Bahrain	Libya	Syria
Cyprus	Mauritania	Tunisia
Djibouti	Morocco	Turkey
Egypt	Oman	United Arab Emirates
Iran, Islamic Republic of	Pakistan	Yemen Arab Republic
Iraq	Qatar	Yemen, People's Democratic Republic of
Jordan	Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of	

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for the Near East

First	— Cairo, Egypt, 2-14 February 1948
Second	— Bloudane, Syria, 28 August - 6 September 1951
Third	— Cairo, Egypt, 1-9 September 1953
Fourth	— Damascus, Syria, 10-20 December 1958 ¹
Fifth	— Teheran, Iran, 21 September - 1 October 1960
Sixth	— Tel Amara, Lebanon, 30 July - 8 August 1962
Seventh	— Cairo, Egypt, 19-31 October 1964 ²
Eighth	— Khartoum, Sudan, 24 January - 2 February 1967
Ninth	— Baghdad, Iraq, 21 September - 1 October 1968
Tenth	— Islamabad, Pakistan, 12-22 September 1970
Eleventh	— Kuwait, Kuwait, 9-19 September 1972
Twelfth	— Amman, Jordan, 31 August - 9 September 1974
Thirteenth	— Tunis, Tunisia, 4-11 October 1976
Fourteenth	— Damascus, Syria, 9-16 September 1978
Fifteenth	— Rome, Italy, 21-25 April 1981
Sixteenth	— Nicosia, Cyprus, 25-29 October 1982
Seventeenth	— Aden, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, 11-15 March 1984
Eighteenth	— Istanbul, Turkey, 17-21 March 1986
Nineteenth	— Muscat, Oman, 13-17 March 1988
Twentieth	— Tunis, Tunisia, 12-16 March 1990

¹ From 1 February 1958 until 28 September 1961, known as United Arab Republic.

² Known as United Arab Republic until 2 September 1971.

REPORT
OF THE TWENTIETH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR THE NEAR EAST
Tunis, Tunisia, 12 - 16 March 1990

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, 1990

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TWENTIETH REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Tunis, Tunisia, 12 - 16 March 1990

SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Country Statements and General Debate (paras. 30-54)

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER COUNTRIES

1.1 The Conference strongly urged all member countries, in particular those in the Near East, to timely fulfil their financial obligations to the Organization (para. 33).

B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

1.2 Recognizing the crucial role of the Regional Office for the Near East in accelerating the process of agricultural development in the Region, the Conference welcomed the FAO Conference Resolution (14/89) to reopen the Office in Cairo. It emphasized that functioning from within the Region would render the Office even more effective especially in enhancing efforts towards regional economic cooperation for agricultural development in the Region, and called upon RNEA to coordinate and strengthen these efforts (para. 40) ... to convene an expert consultation on regional economic cooperation and agricultural development in the Near East (para. 46).

2. Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1988-89 (paras. 55-101)

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER COUNTRIES

2.1 The Conference urged FAO member countries, particularly those in the Near East Region, to make timely payment of their assessed financial contributions to FAO's budget for the 1990-91 biennium. The Conference also strongly urged member countries who are in arrears of payment of their financial obligations to pay their outstanding arrears (para. 99).

2.2 Recommendations: para. 100

B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

2.3 Recommendations: para. 101

3. Regional Economic Cooperation for Agricultural Development in the Near East Region (paras. 102-112)

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER COUNTRIES

3.1 Recommendations: para. 111

B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

3.2 Recommendations: para. 112

4. A Balanced Diet - A Way to Good Nutrition (paras. 113-125)
 - A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER COUNTRIES
 - 4.1 Recommendations: paras. 121-124
 - B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO
 - 4.2 Recommendations: para. 125
5. Representation of the Region in the CGIAR (paras 126-135)
 - A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER COUNTRIES
 - 5.1 Recommendations: para 133
 - B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO
 - 5.2 Recommendations: para. 134
 - 5.3 The Conference noted that Jordan would continue to represent the Region on the CGIAR for 1991 and 1992. It elected Tunisia (Mr Mustapha Lasram, Director-General of the National Institute for Agricultural Research) to represent the Region for the period 1991-1994 (para. 135).
6. FAO Activities to Combat Screwworm in the Near East Region (paras 136-141)
 - A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER COUNTRIES
 - 6.1 Recommendations: para. 139
 - B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO
 - 6.2 Recommendations: para. 140
7. Date and Place of the Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for the Near East
 - A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO
 - 7.1 The Conference, requested the Director-General of FAO to determine the date and place of the Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference in consultation with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and other Member Governments of the Region (para. 144).

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Inauguration of the Conference

1. The Twentieth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East was held in the Oriental Palace Hotel, Tunis, Tunisia from 12-16 March 1990, at the kind invitation of the Tunisian Government.
2. The Conference was inaugurated by His Excellency Hamed El-Karoui, the Prime Minister of Tunisia. The inaugural ceremony was attended by heads and members of Delegations and representatives of FAO Member Nations in the Region, observers from a number of other member countries, from regional and international governmental and non-governmental organizations and bodies, and the Independent Chairman of FAO Council. The list of participants is given in Appendix B to this report. The ceremony was also attended by ministers, high-ranking state officials and heads/representatives of diplomatic and UN missions in Tunisia, as well as representatives of the news media.
3. In his inaugural speech, the Prime Minister stated that the Conference was convened under the patronage of His Excellency Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, the President of the Republic of Tunisia, in recognition of FAO's dynamic and effective role in enhancing agricultural development and improving nutrition standards especially in developing countries, and in view of the high priority the Government of Tunisia attaches to agricultural development.
4. His Excellency expressed his concern over the continuing and increasing dependency of most countries of the Region on food imports to meet their domestic demands. He, therefore, called upon member countries to formulate effective policies for enhancing agricultural development, increasing productivity, providing credit facilities, and improving human resource capabilities.
5. His Excellency stressed the need to adopt a regional strategy for agricultural development based on economic cooperation within and between the sub-regional groupings in the Region. In this regard, he stressed the importance of the financial aspects and called for strengthening the role of international and regional financial institutions in providing credit at concessional rates for food and agricultural production and infrastructure projects.
6. His Excellency reviewed the Tunisian Government's major efforts in accelerating the process of agricultural development to achieve national food security. He expressed his appreciation for the effective role played by FAO in assisting the Government in this respect. In particular, His Excellency stressed the role of FAO in assisting the Ministry of Agriculture to formulate and monitor policies for agricultural development and structural adjustment programmes.
7. His Excellency indicated that the heads of countries of the Arab Maghreb Union included food security as a major objective. To this end, a Ministerial Committee on Maghreb Food Security was established with the objective of ultimately formulating a common agricultural policy for the Maghreb countries. His Excellency called upon FAO to assist in this endeavour.

8. His Excellency reiterated his warmest welcome to all participants, wishing the Conference every success.

9. Mr Edouard Saouma, Director-General of FAO, addressed the inaugural session of the Conference and expressed his profound thanks to His Excellency Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia, for having the Conference convened in Tunisia, and for designating His Excellency Hamed El-Karoui, the Prime Minister, to inaugurate and address the Conference.

Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen and Appointment of the Rapporteur

10. His Excellency Nouri El-Zorgati, Minister of Agriculture of Tunisia, was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Conference.

11. His Excellency El-Zorgati expressed his thanks and appreciation for the confidence placed in him through his election as Chairman of the Conference.

12. The Conference resolved that all other Heads of Delegations should act as Vice-Chairmen.

13. The Conference appointed Ms Fatima J. Hayat, member of the Kuwait Delegation, as Rapporteur.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

14. The Provisional Agenda and the Timetable were adopted by the Conference after including an item on "FAO activities to combat screwworm in the Near East Region" under "Concluding Items". The Agenda is given in Appendix A to this report.

Statement by the Director-General

15. Mr Edouard Saouma, the Director-General of FAO, in his inaugural speech expressed his thanks and gratitude to His Excellency Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, the President of the Republic of Tunisia for convening the Conference under his patronage and for designating his Prime Minister to address the inaugural ceremony of the Conference. The Director-General also expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Hamed Al-Karoui, the Prime Minister of Tunisia and his Government for hosting the Conference and for providing excellent meeting facilities, as well as for the generous and warm hospitality of the Tunisian people. The Director-General welcomed delegates and observers to the Conference and wished them every success.

16. The Director-General congratulated His Excellency Nouri El-Zorgati, Minister of Agriculture, on his unanimous election as Chairman of the Conference. He also congratulated the distinguished Vice-Chairmen on their election, and the Rapporteur on her appointment.

17. The Director-General warmly welcomed the Distinguished Ministers, Heads and Members of Delegations and Observers, and the Chairman of the FAO Council.

18. The Director-General pointed out that the Regional Conference took place in an unprecedented historical context marked by the end of the Cold War, the consolidation of the will of freedom-aspiring peoples, and the advent of an era of cooperation between East and West. He emphasized that prospects for disarmament should enable considerable economies to be made and urged leaders of the major powers to divert a significant amount of the savings to development aid. He also stressed that the new opportunities to assist East European countries should not result in aid reductions for developing countries.

19. The Director-General noted with satisfaction that the Twenty-fifth FAO Conference had unanimously adopted a Resolution (14/89) authorizing the return of the Regional Office for the Near East (RNEA) to Cairo, Egypt not later than 1 September 1990. The Director-General thanked the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt for its generous offer to provide host facilities for RNEA and to bear the cost of rehabilitating its old premises in Cairo. The Director-General expressed the hope that by operating, once again, from within the Region, RNEA would become more effective in enhancing efforts by Member Governments to promote regional cooperation for agricultural and rural development.

20. The Director-General reviewed the state of food and agriculture in the Region, and noted with concern that the Region's annual agricultural trade deficit exceeded 18 000 million dollars.

21. The Director-General stressed that water was a major constraint for agricultural development in the Region. He also noted with concern that environmental degradation, including soil erosion, deforestation, salinization and desertification, represented another serious constraint for sustainable agricultural development. The Director-General, therefore, announced that he had recently appointed a Special Adviser, with the rank of Assistant Director-General, to assist him in addressing this issue.

22. The Director-General noted with concern that nutrition problems associated with diverse economic and social conditions were widespread in most countries of the Region. He informed the Conference that nutrition problems would be the subject of a World Conference on Nutrition to be held in Rome in December 1992 in collaboration with the World Health Organization.

23. The Director-General stressed the importance of integrating women in agricultural and rural development programmes and called upon member countries to implement the Plan of Action on Women in Development which was approved by the Twenty-fifth FAO Conference (Resolution 7/89).

24. The Director-General expressed anxiety and concern over the outbreak of the screwworm fly in Libya which could have disastrous consequences for livestock, wildlife and the human population. The Director-General stated that FAO, with financial assistance from the Government of Libya, UNDP, IFAD and FAO/TCP implemented a number of projects for the control of the fly and its surveillance in the infested countries, as well as for those countries at risk. The Director-General called upon donors and the international community to assist in this endeavour.

25. The Director-General noted with concern the recent catastrophic floods in Tunisia, and informed the Conference that FAO intended to field a TCP evaluation mission to assess the damage prior to organizing subsequent operations.

26. The Director-General noted with grave concern the various catastrophes facing certain countries in the Region, in particular Sudan, Afghanistan and Lebanon.

27. The Director-General stated that FAO continued to provide technical assistance to member countries of the Region in all fields of food and agriculture, such as land and water development and management, pest control (especially desert locust and grasshopper), watershed management, forestry conservation, inland fisheries and aquaculture, agro-industries, agricultural policies, research, extension, training, rural development, and early warning and food security systems.

28. The Director-General, however, expressed his deepest concern over the financial difficulties currently facing the Organization that rendered FAO efforts even more difficult. He emphasized that at present the situation was extremely critical because many member countries were behind in the payment of their contributions. The Director-General, therefore, strongly urged member countries to make timely payment of their outstanding financial contributions and to fulfil their obligations to the Organization so that he would be able to respond promptly to requests for emergency assistance received from member countries.

29. In concluding his statement, the Director-General reiterated his profound thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, the President of the Republic of Tunisia, His Excellency Hamed El-Karoui, the Prime Minister of Tunisia and the Government for the warm hospitality accorded to the Conference and the excellent facilities extended to it. He thanked the participants and wished the Conference every success. The complete text of the Director-General's statement is reproduced in Appendix D.

STATE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN THE NEAR EAST

Country Statements and General Debate

30. The delegates unanimously expressed their sincere thanks and deep gratitude to His Excellency Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, the President of the Republic of Tunisia, for having the Conference convened under his patronage, and to his Excellency Hamed El-Karoui, the Prime Minister, for honouring the Conference by delivering the inaugural address. They also expressed their appreciation to the Government for hosting the meeting and for the generous hospitality offered to the participants, as well as for the excellent facilities provided.

31. The delegates congratulated His Excellency Nouri El-Zorgati, Minister of Agriculture, on his unanimous election as Chairman of the Conference.

32. The delegates expressed sincere appreciation for FAO's continued efforts in promoting agricultural and rural development in the Region. They commended the Director-General for his dedication to the fulfilment of the cause of FAO and appreciated his comprehensive address to the Conference.

33. In reference to the Director-General's opening address, the delegates noted with deep concern the serious financial difficulties currently facing FAO. They expressed their deepest concern over the serious implications posed by these problems on FAO's plan of work in the Region, and strongly urged all member countries, in particular those in the Near East, to timely fulfil their financial obligations to the Organization.

34. The majority of delegates delivered country statements on the state of food and agriculture, national strategies and policies for agricultural development. It was widely observed that food security and agricultural development assumed high priorities in most national development plans. It was further recognized that despite the achievements realized, food self-sufficiency ratios were still relatively low and further efforts were needed to bridge the regional food gap.

35. Most delegates stressed the need to promote regional self-reliance in food and agricultural products through enhanced intra-regional trade and increased cooperative activities among member countries of the Region.

36. The delegates stressed the importance of research and extension in agricultural development and called for more cooperation among member countries in these fields.

37. Recognizing the diversity and the great potential for regional self-sufficiency in food production, delegates emphasized the need to enhance regional economic cooperation for agricultural development among member countries of the Region.

38. The Conference recommended that Member States of the Region coordinate among themselves the utilization of their common water resources,¹ in a manner that would safeguard the legitimate right of each Member State.

39. Delegates appreciated the leading role of FAO and the financial assistance provided by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, UNDP and IFAD in combating the recent appearance of the screwworm, and called upon donors and the international financial institutions to provide further assistance in this endeavour. Delegates warned against possible recurrent invasions and called for maximum vigilant efforts in this regard.

40. Recognizing the crucial role of the Regional Office for the Near East in accelerating the process of agricultural development in the Region, the Conference welcomed the FAO Conference Resolution (14/89) to reopen the Office in Cairo. It emphasized that functioning from within the Region would render the Office even more effective, especially in enhancing efforts towards regional economic cooperation for agricultural development in the Region, and called upon RNEA to coordinate and strengthen these efforts.

41. The delegates stressed the importance of formulating appropriate strategies for sustainable agricultural development. In particular, they emphasized the need for introducing appropriate measures for natural resource conservation and for minimizing environmental degradation.

1 The Turkish Delegation reserved its right concerning this paragraph on the ground that the Conference was not the appropriate forum to discuss this matter.

42. Some delegates noted with concern that protectionist policies continued to plague international trade relations, and increasing inflationary pressures were compelling developed countries to raise interest rates, decelerate economic growth and, consequently, to reduce the demand for the exports of the developing countries in world markets. They also noted that the agricultural sector in these countries continued to be severely affected by these adverse effects. However, they noted that in this regard some progress had been achieved within the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations.

43. Referring to the recent changes in Eastern European countries and the planned European integration in 1992, some delegates stressed that these developments would have far-reaching repercussions for the economies of most countries in the Region, and that the agricultural sector could not be immune to these changes.

44. The Conference was informed by a delegate that the EEC had suggested that a Convention on Mediterranean Fisheries be held, involving EEC countries, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Malta and Yugoslavia. He proposed that current non-EEC countries within the Region, together with Yugoslavia, should meet to consider the EEC's proposal and to prepare a well-documented brief that would include a series of options in preparation for negotiation.

45. The Conference welcomed document C 89/LIM/44, and Resolution 1/89, regarding the provision of technical assistance to the Palestinian People, which was adopted by the Twenty-fifth FAO Conference held in November 1989 in Rome. The Conference was informed that the Director-General would submit to the FAO Council in its next session (November 1990) and to the FAO Conference in its forthcoming Twenty-sixth Session (November 1991) a report on progress made in relation to the implementation of this resolution, including the incorporation of Palestine in FAO programmes and activities in the Region.

46. Most delegates stressed the crucial importance of regional economic cooperation for agricultural development in the Near East and commended the Conference for inclusion of the subject on its Agenda. Delegates requested FAO/RNEA to convene an expert consultation on the subject to thoroughly examine the intricate issues involved. In this regard, the Secretariat informed the Conference that the forthcoming Session of the Near East Economic and Social Policy Commission could be devoted entirely to discussing these crucial issues.

47. Most delegates noted with appreciation the inclusion of the subject of nutrition on the Agenda of the Conference and stressed the importance of dietary issues in the Region in view of the rapid changes in food consumption patterns.

48. A number of delegates informed the Conference of current and emerging nutritional problems in their respective countries and of their plans and programmes to alleviate these problems. They noted with appreciation the technical assistance received from FAO in formulating and implementing these programmes and expressed their wish to see this assistance continued and strengthened.

49. Many delegates called for the liberalization of trade practices in food and agricultural products in the Region, through the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers and the harmonization of food import/export regulations and certification systems.

50. Some delegates emphasized the importance of fish and fish products in human nutrition and reiterated the Region's great potential for increasing the present production level and reducing the food gap. They stressed the need to liberalize trade in fish and fish products within the Region.

51. Delegates pointed out that following the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (1979), and the International Decade of Women (1975-1985), some progress in enhancing the role of women in rural development had been achieved. However, it was noted that further efforts were still necessary to fully integrate women in the mainstream of rural development, including the decision-making process.

52. Delegates reiterated the FAO Conference Resolution (5/87) on the "Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides" and the incorporation of the principle of "prior informed consent" in Resolution 6/89, and called upon member countries in the Region to prohibit imports of banned chemicals.

53. The Conference was informed that the Islamic Republic of Iran - in close collaboration with FAO - had established an International Training Centre for Sand Dune Fixation and Water Harvest, an International School for Training in Food Science and Technology and was launching a comprehensive integrated rural development programme in a selected region in the country. The Delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran indicated that utilization of these facilities by member countries of the Near East could enhance TCDC and ECDC among countries of the Region in these important fields.

54. The Conference was informed that intensive efforts were underway to achieve Yemeni unification. It welcomed these efforts, and called upon member countries of the Region to support these initiatives and, in particular, to provide assistance in improving the country's food and agricultural production, in increasing its food self-reliance and in mobilizing those national and regional resources that would accelerate the process of agricultural development.

Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1988-89²

55. The Conference noted with concern that the problems of financial liquidity that affected the Organization during the 1988-89 biennium had had serious implications on programme implementation. The Conference, however, appreciated that, through a more rational use of resources and a selective choice of activities, FAO's programme in the Region had been satisfactorily implemented.

56. The Conference noted with satisfaction that FAO continued to provide technical assistance to member countries in the fields of development and management of land and water resources, including the formulation, implementation and backstopping of relevant field projects.

57. The Conference welcomed the convening by FAO of the Expert Consultation on Water, Soil and Crop Management (Rome, October 1989) and noted with satisfaction that FAO would produce a "guideline" on the use of saline water for irrigated crop production. It requested FAO to distribute the document to all member countries.

58. The Conference noted with appreciation that FAO had continued its collaboration with international organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP, WHO, and UNEP in the fields of soil and water development and management, including wastewater reclamation and re-use.

59. The Conference appreciated FAO's funding (through TCP) of a regional project on the re-use of wastewater for agriculture, and noted that support from multilateral or bilateral donors was being sought for follow-up activities in this regard.

60. The Conference welcomed collaboration with national, regional and international organizations in the fields of crop production, plant biotechnology, tissue culture and the development and adaptation of varieties of wheat and barley suitable for rainfed areas in the Region.

61. The Conference noted with appreciation that efforts had been continuing to promote and enhance regional cooperation in the fields of plant protection, including plant quarantine, pest control and reduction of post-harvest losses.

62. The Conference welcomed FAO's cooperation with the Arab Society of Plant Protection to produce distribution maps of pests and diseases of economic importance to the Region.

63. The Conference recognized the importance of regional cooperation in the control of virus and virus-like diseases, and therefore expressed the hope that the full-scale regional project on this subject, formulated by FAO, be funded by UNDP.

64. The Conference welcomed the development by FAO of a regional integrated pest management (IPM) approach as a sound and efficient substitute to exclusive reliance on pesticides.

65. The Conference expressed the hope that the regional project for control of rodent outbreaks, formulated by FAO upon request from Member Governments, be funded by UNDP.

66. The Conference noted with satisfaction that FAO's assistance to member countries in the fields of food and agricultural industries focused on actions to upgrade traditional technologies so as to achieve fuller and more economic utilization of available resources. The Conference also noted that FAO's assistance in apiculture and date-based industries had been intensified.

67. The Conference welcomed the introduction of solar box cookers in some countries of the Region.

68. The Conference called for the establishment of a Regional Network of National Institutes for Agro-Industries Development as soon as possible.

69. The Conference noted FAO's continued technical assistance in range management and rehabilitation, pasture development and evaluation and propagation of native forage species.

70. The Conference welcomed FAO's collaboration with ICARDA and ACSAD in training activities and in improving grazing lands in arid and semi-arid zones of the Region.

71. The Conference noted with satisfaction that FAO continued its support to the Near East Regional Research and Development Network on Small Ruminants.
72. The Conference welcomed the initiative to extend the activities of the Regional Poultry Training and Development Centre with special emphasis on training.
73. The Conference appreciated FAO's continued technical and financial assistance to combat the outbreak of the screwworm in some countries of North Africa and called for further intensification of efforts in future so that the danger posed by this insect would be substantially reduced and, if possible, eliminated.
74. The Conference welcomed FAO's efforts to improve member countries' participation and utilization of AGRIS and CARIS. It noted that technical assistance had also been provided to the Arab Documentation Centre of AOAD. The Conference also appreciated that production of AGRIS and CARIS training tools in Arabic was in progress and that the AGRIS/CARIS Classification Scheme, including the Manual for Data Collection and Manual Processing Data in the Multilingual AGROVOC, were adopted and translated into Arabic.
75. The Conference called upon FAO, in collaboration with regional and international organizations, to continue providing technical assistance to the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA).
76. The Conference appreciated FAO's technical assistance to strengthen the national capabilities of member countries in applying remote sensing technologies.
77. The Conference noted that FAO's technical assistance continued to be provided for agricultural education, training and extension.
78. The Conference emphasized the need to improve national capacities to plan and implement rural communication programmes and noted with satisfaction the organization of FAO's "Workshop in the Use of Video for Agricultural Information, Training and Extension", held in Rome in December 1989.
79. The Conference noted with satisfaction that a number of FAO's action-oriented studies on the problems of pastoralists and their socio-economic situation, rural migration, fragmentation of holdings and alleviation of rural poverty were carried out in the Region and that their conclusions could be of great benefit to member countries in the Region.
80. The Conference appreciated the efforts made in reorienting women's programmes away from the narrow home economics approach to the broader perspective of agricultural and rural development programmes.
81. The Conference welcomed the establishment of the Regional Centre for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in the Near East (CARDNE) and hoped that its membership be expanded to include other interested countries in the Region.

82. The Conference noted with satisfaction that FAO's technical and secretarial assistance to the Near East-North African Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA) since its foundation in 1977 had enabled the Association to play a significant role in agricultural credit activities in the Region. The Conference also noted with appreciation that the Association had recently received substantial financial assistance for the second time from IFAD to enable it to fulfil its obligations and carry out its duties in the Region.

83. The Conference recognized that through financial and technical assistance from FAO a new regional agricultural marketing association, Agricultural Food Marketing in the Near East and North Africa (AFMANENA), had recently been established with Headquarters in Amman, Jordan. It noted that the new association would promote and enhance technical cooperation among member countries in the field of agricultural marketing with special emphasis on training, studies and exchange of information, and called upon member countries to support this association.

84. The Conference appreciated that efforts had been made to strengthen nutrition-oriented programmes and promote food control activities.

85. The Conference noted with appreciation that technical assistance had been provided for the collection, analysis and dissemination of current agricultural statistics and that direct technical assistance continued to be provided to countries in the Region in carrying out statistical programmes and national agriculture censuses.

86. The Conference noted with concern the increasing external and internal economic difficulties facing many countries in the Region and emphasized the emerging need for agricultural policy reforms. It, therefore, expressed appreciation for FAO's continued efforts in assisting member countries in agricultural planning and policy analysis, especially with regard to price policies, agricultural sector reviews, multilevel and regional planning, and development of monitoring and evaluation systems.

87. The Conference welcomed FAO's collaboration with regional and national institutions in project and agricultural sector analyses using the FAO-developed computer training packages (DASI and CAPP). In this connection, the Conference appreciated that training activities were tailored to the countries' specific situations and requirements. It also noted with satisfaction that cooperation with the joint ESCWA/FAO Agriculture Division, Baghdad, had continued to grow through participation in the organization of training workshops and other relevant activities.

88. The Conference noted that in the fields of fisheries, action was focused on the development of inland fisheries and aquaculture, the improvement of fisheries statistics and the strengthening of regional collaboration in research and management of fisheries.

89. The Conference noted that FAO technical assistance had been provided to improve fisheries data collection systems in a number of countries in the Region.

90. The Conference noted with concern that continuation of the destruction of woody vegetation and overgrazing had resulted in desert encroachment and accelerated soil erosion. It called upon member countries to adopt necessary measures to conserve the natural resource base.

91. The Conference noted with satisfaction that FAO continued to strengthen the managerial and technical capabilities of forestry policy-makers and forestry institutions in the Region.

92. The Conference noted that FAO technical assistance had been provided for the development of national programmes in the field of arid zone forestry and for the control of desertification.

93. The Conference noted with satisfaction that within the framework of FAO's programme of cooperation with financing institutions, funding for a number of investment projects in the Region had been approved.

94. The Conference appreciated that the Regional Office for the Near East (RNEA) continued the production - in Arabic - of information materials, such as press releases, features and fact-sheets. It also noted that contacts with the Arab media, including the press and national news agencies in the Region, had been strengthened.

95. The Conference commended the constructive spirit of collaboration between FAO's technical units and the Joint ESCWA/FAO Agriculture Division (JNEA), particularly in the fields of Natural Resources, Rural Development, Food and Agriculture Information and Food and Agricultural Policy Analysis.

96. The Conference appreciated the efforts made by FAO to strengthen nutrition-related activities in the Region, particularly with regard to the establishment of nutrition surveillance systems and the promotion of traditional foods. It also noted with satisfaction the assistance rendered to member countries in the field of food quality control.

97. The Conference noted that:

- a) The Near East Regional Commission on Agriculture held its Third Session in Nicosia, Cyprus from 11 to 15 September 1989;
- b) The Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission held its Third Session in Cairo, Egypt from 15 to 19 October 1989; and
- c) The Regional Commission on Land and Water Use in the Near East held its Tenth Session in Amman, Jordan from 11 to 14 December 1989.

98. The Conference reviewed the recommendations of these Regional Commissions and endorsed their conclusions. The Conference called upon the Director-General of FAO to take these recommendations into consideration when the next FAO Programme of Work and Budget would be formulated.

Recommendations to member countries

99. The Conference urged FAO member countries, particularly those in the Near East Region, to make timely payment of their assessed financial contributions to FAO's budget in the 1990-91 biennium. The Conference also strongly urged member countries who are in arrears of payment of their financial obligations to pay their outstanding arrears, so that FAO's programmes could be implemented fully without delays and/or reductions.

100. The Conference called upon member countries to:

- Rationalize - through improved management - the use of their water resources, including the re-use of marginal water and sewage effluents for agricultural irrigation;
- Intensify the production of basic food crops, including legumes, through the adoption of appropriate cropping systems and the introduction of improved varieties and sound technologies;
- Strengthen inter-country and regional cooperation in the field of plant protection with special emphasis on promoting plant quarantine, combating pre- and post-harvest pest problems and controlling virus and virus-like diseases;
- Enhance inter-country and regional cooperation and coordination of animal disease surveillance, diagnosis and vaccination programmes;
- Pay special attention to the improvement and management of rangeland, by integrating rangeland management into existing socio-economic structures and farming systems, by cultivating fodder crops and by integrating legumes to replace fallow in crop rotation;
- Strengthen their capabilities in agricultural policy analysis by supporting field projects, workshops and training activities in this field;
- Re-examine their agrarian reform policies and rural development programmes to ensure that they aim at the reduction of inequalities and at the improvement of living conditions in the rural areas;
- Strengthen their regional cooperation in the fields of agrarian reform and rural development by joining the recently established Regional Centre for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in the Near East (CARDNE);
- Make special efforts to inform and educate the public - through mass media - on nutritional problems which have resulted from rapid changes in lifestyles and food consumption habits.

Recommendations to FAO

101. The Conference requested FAO to:

- Continue its technical assistance to member countries in the efficient and rational use of water resources, including the re-use of marginal water, waste water sewage effluents;
- Continue its collaboration with concerned regional and international organizations in the fields of soil and water development and management, including reclamation and re-use of waste water;
- Support training of specialists in major rainfed field crops, through cooperation with ICARDA and other concerned regional and international organizations;

- Assist member countries in the development and adaptation of integrated pest management approaches to substitute the exclusive reliance on pesticides;
- Continue its efforts during the 1990-91 biennium to expand the use of solar box cookers in countries of the Region where solar energy was available most of the year;
- Continue its efforts to establish a Cooperative Regional Network of National Industries for Agro-Industrial Development in the Near East;
- Support the application of biotechnology to food and agricultural processing and the utilization of agriculture residue;
- Support and coordinate the programme of rinderpest control in Western Asia;
- Continue its support to the Near East Regional Cooperative Research and Development Network on Small Ruminants;
- Support the training of range and fodder specialists and strengthen its cooperation with ICARDA in the fields of range management and improvement;
- Continue its support to the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA);
- Promote and support the use of communication/audiovisual materials and methodologies to train local staff and extension workers;
- Support the integration of women in rural development activities;
- Continue its support to the Regional Centre for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in the Near East (CARDNE);
- Continue providing advice and support to the Near East-North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA);
- Provide technical assistance and advice to the recently established Agricultural Food Marketing Association for the Near East and North Africa (AFMANENA);
- Continue providing technical assistance in agricultural planning and policy analysis, in particular assistance regarding food and agricultural development strategies, policies and plans;
- Support the improvement of national capabilities for price policy analysis, the development of monitoring and evaluation systems, the upgrading of agricultural policy and planning capabilities and continue its efforts in analysing the impact of structural adjustment programmes on agriculture and rural development;
- Support activities designed to strengthen the exchange of data on fisheries among countries of the Region;

- Support efforts to improve the quality and scope of fishery statistical information at national and regional levels;
- Provide assistance for the formulation and implementation of inland and aquaculture pilot fishery projects;
- Support training in fisheries research, development and management;
- Support training activities and updating of forestry curricula for professional, technical and vocational training institutions;
- Continue its collaboration with ACSAD and the Transnational Green Belt Project for North Africa (TGBPNA) in the fields of afforestation and control of desertification;
- Provide assistance in forestry research, forest protection and forest management.

SELECTED ISSUES ON AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Regional Economic Cooperation for Agricultural Development in the Near East Region

102. The Conference reviewed the document on "Regional Economic Cooperation for Agricultural Development in the Near East" which assessed the need for agricultural cooperation in the Near East Region, particularly within the context of spiralling food gaps and pressing economic difficulties; reviewed past experiences in regional cooperation and prospects for the new emerging sub-regional communities; discussed policy implications of various approaches to regional cooperation and proposed a pragmatic approach for effective agricultural development cooperation.

103. The Conference commended FAO for preparing a comprehensive document on the subject and, in particular, for proposing a pragmatic approach for regional economic cooperation in agricultural development.

104. The Conference noted with concern that the Near East Region was presently encountering macro-economic difficulties which had a direct bearing on its welfare and political stability. It further noted that agriculture was at the centre of these difficulties as reflected in an alarming food gap that could reach unmanageable proportions by the year 2000, if appropriate measures and actions were not taken promptly.

105. The Conference recognized that failure of food production to keep pace with the surge in food demand could be partially explained by water shortage and technical factors reflecting traditional farming practices. It also noted that other factors included the delinked nature of the agricultural resource base, the inefficient utilization of natural resources in agriculture, and the adoption of national food strategies that disregarded region-wide opportunities for agricultural development. The Conference, therefore, concluded that there was a strong case for effective regional agricultural cooperation in the Region.

106. The Conference reviewed past experience in Near East regional cooperation, and observed that they had not been highly successful due to many political, economic and institutional factors. However, it noted with satisfaction that a new thrust had been given to regional cooperation by the recent establishment of three sub-regional Arab communities; the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC); the Arab Cooperative Council (ACC) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). The Conference recognized the similarities in objectives and organization of these communities, but also noted the differences in their character and potential for promoting agricultural development.

107. The Conference recognized that effective cooperation hinged on full awareness of the prerequisites and impediments related to basic forms of regional cooperation and integration. It noted that the trade-oriented approach envisaging the ultimate establishment of a common market along the EEC line was invariably attractive, but could encounter many difficulties in the Near East Region. The Conference further observed that another version made use of the harmonization and coordination processes as major instruments in capturing regional agricultural development cooperation; and yet another version relied chiefly on joint projects.

108. The Conference emphasized that international experience had shown that these approaches to regional agricultural cooperation were not mutually exclusive; and called upon community groupings to develop and adopt optimum combinations of trade and development strategies. Thus, given the broad range of alternative options for regional cooperation, the Conference stressed that the real challenge confronting policy-makers was the design of the optimum "mix" of trade- and development-oriented strategies which would enable emerging communities to capture the new opportunities, while averting the risks that clouded the world food situation.

109. To this end, the Conference welcomed FAO's proposed pragmatic approach for regional agricultural cooperation. It stressed that the approach pinpointed the optimum "mix" of trade- and development-oriented strategies which should be tailor-made to the specific conditions and resource endowments of each community. It further stressed that the selection of joint activities should be based on demonstrable mutuality and balance of interests, and of comparative region-wide costs and returns. The Conference also emphasized that the pragmatic approach conceived the cooperation process as a learning exercise, thereby proceeding gradually in a sequence that involved a hierarchy of common actions and which reflected clear linkages between the activities carried out at every stage of regional economic integration.

110. The Conference urged member countries in the Region to carefully consider the following policy implications in their efforts towards enhanced regional economic cooperation to achieve agricultural development: shifting emphasis from national food strategies to a region-wide perspective; establishing gradual, sustainable and sequential community-specific agricultural cooperation strategies; establishing links among sub-regional communities and other regional groupings; enhancing intra-regional trade; and intensifying intra-regional capital flows.

Recommendations to member countries

111. More specifically, the Conference called upon member countries to:

- Establish community-specific data and information systems on key variables such as food and agricultural supply, demand, domestic and international prices, trade, etc.
- Estimate and analyse communities, regional, internal and external demand functions for food and agricultural production, including demand projections under different assumptions;
- Estimate and analyse the regional and communities natural resource endowments, in particular common water resources, and their potential utilization;
- Based on the above analyses, identify intra-communities' comparative advantages (i.e. comparative advantage at the community level), and opportunities for production specialization among member countries;
- Initiate agricultural harmonization processes simultaneously at both the community and regional levels. At the latter level, the exercise could be generally modest and could aim primarily at establishing common measures, including the unification of terms and standards, and joint research activities. At the community level, harmonization could be centred on resolving existing conflicts among national plans and policies;
- Subsequently, initiate a coordination process at the same two levels. At the regional level, coordination could focus on the Region's policies vis-à-vis the rest of the world, through efforts at the GATT negotiations to open Western markets to Near Eastern agricultural products. At the community level, coordination could typically centre on the establishment of effective agricultural "linkages" (i.e. generating a cohesive network of joint productive activities) among member countries;
- Establish an appropriate institutional framework for region-wide joint action to confront common dangers and threats such as droughts, environmental degradation, encroachment of animal and plant disease, locusts and others.

Recommendations to FAO

112. The Conference requested FAO to:

- Assist the new communities in strengthening their agricultural data base and information systems;
- Assist member countries and regional communities in:
 - . estimating and analysing their internal and external demand functions for food and agricultural production;
 - . surveying and analysing their natural resource base (including land, water and labour) and its potential utilization in food and agricultural production;

- . identifying intra-communities' comparative advantage and opportunities for spatial agricultural production specialization;
- Assist member countries in designing and implementing harmonization policies, with particular emphasis on those aspects that could ultimately lead to a coherent common agricultural policy. Also assist in identifying priority areas of regional agricultural coordination that could lead to effective linkages;
- Provide technical support for the promotion of intra-community and region-wide joint agricultural investments, including project identification, preparation and appraisal;
- Serve as a focal point in alerting regional groupings and communities about adverse developments in the global economic, agricultural and ecological environments. Conversely, interest these communities in emerging opportunities that could be of mutual benefit to their member countries;
- Assist in the identification of concrete opportunities for intra-community and intra-regional agricultural trade intensification. The provision and analysis of detailed intra-regional trade matrices could be extremely useful in this respect;
- Carry out in-depth technical studies on relevant topics of the subject, in particular on harmonization of agricultural policies, analyse major components of the proposed pragmatic approach, and assess the fisheries resource base potential in the Region;
- Organize an expert consultation and/or devote the entire forthcoming Session of the Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission to discussing these and other relevant issues;
- Provide technical assistance to support the emerging trend towards Yemeni unification by carrying out an in-depth analysis on regional comparative advantage and opportunities for spatial agricultural production specialization within the country.

A Balanced Diet - A Way to Good Nutrition⁴

113. The Conference reviewed the document entitled "A Balanced Diet - A Way to Good Nutrition" which emphasized the need for a balanced diet as a fundamental prerequisite in achieving, sustaining and promoting good health and nutrition among the people of the Near East Region; discussed the conceptual basis and characteristics of a balanced diet; examined the current food supply and consumption patterns in countries of the Region; approved the recommended nutritional goals for different categories of country groupings, and elicited suitable measures for achieving a balanced diet.

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114. The Conference recognized that in order to promote good health and prevent both over- and under-nutrition, a balanced diet should contain sufficient amounts of essential nutrients to cater to the nutritional requirements of the consumer, should include a variety of food from different food sources to ensure provision of all the essential nutrients, and should be economically affordable, culturally acceptable and safe.

115. The Conference assessed the current food availability and food consumption patterns in the countries of the Region according to their level of income and per capita DES and in relation to the causation and prevalence of malnutrition and nutrition-related diseases in each category. It noted the great diversity in food consumption patterns in the Region and recognized the influence of rapid urbanization on populations moving away from traditional diets.

116. The Conference noted with concern that in high-income countries, consumption of energy, protein and fat, particularly of animal origin, and sugar was generally excessive and reached levels comparable to those prevailing in industrialized countries, thus leading to rising incidences of nutrition-related diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, dental cavities and obesity. It further noted that widespread decline in breastfeeding and lack of knowledge in preparing and in administering infant formulas led to gastroenteritis, and that in some countries it was contributing to high infant mortality. It also recognized the widespread prevalence of iron deficiency anaemia, particularly among women and children, in the Region.

117. The Conference recognized that the current food consumption levels were generally inadequate to meet the nutritional requirements, particularly for dietary energy and some essential nutrients, in many low-income group of countries in the Region. It further noted with deep concern that low birthweights, high infant mortality, growth retardation, iron deficiency anaemia, Vitamin A deficiency and goitre were widespread within this group.

118. The Conference noted that the intermediate-income group of countries was in a transitional phase and shared the nutritional problems of both high- and low-income groups, with the food consumption and nutritional problems of the higher social strata similar to those of high-income groups, while the lower income strata shared problems similar to those of low-income countries. However, the overall trend in food consumption patterns in this group of countries was clearly directed towards that of high-income countries.

119. The Conference, after reviewing food supply, consumption and dietary characteristics of countries of the Region in relation to their nutritional requirements and the prevalence of nutrition-related diseases, emphasized the need to establish nutritional goals and dietary guidelines for the three groups of countries. It also endorsed the view discussed in the document that quantitative nutritional goals developed by WHO to prevent coronary/heart disease and European dietary guidelines were suitable for the high-income group of countries in the Region.

120. Recognizing the overall satisfactory food and nutrition situation in the intermediate-income groups of countries, the Conference agreed that the dietary goals and guidelines suggested for high-income groups were also adequate for this group. However, aware of the great heterogeneity of food consumption levels among socio-economic strata and between urban and rural areas, it recommended that these goals be adapted by individual countries to meet their specific needs.

Recommendations to member countries

121. The Conference urged member countries in the region to:

- Adopt national nutritional goals to serve as a basis for planning national food supply and a balanced diet as a prerequisite for good health and nutrition of the population;
- Initiate public awareness campaigns to publicize the need and requirement for a balanced diet;
- Review, update and harmonize their food laws and regulations, strengthen their institutional capacities to control the quality and safety of foods and promote intra-regional food trade through the elimination of non-tariff barriers;
- Mobilize financial and human resources to design and implement programmes to improve the availability and consumption of nutritionally-desirable and safe food, and develop a national infrastructure and institutional capacity to deal with nutritional problems.

122. The Conference urged the low-income group of countries in the Region to:

- Exert special efforts to increase food production and, in particular, that of staples and legumes, and to improve their handling, processing and storage in a simple way in order to improve their availability to rural areas;
- Enhance production and consumption of the usually neglected horticultural traditional food crops to balance family diets, improve family incomes and augment national food supplies;
- Modify food import patterns to meet the basic nutritional requirements of the population, especially in terms of energy;
- Channel food aid for the benefit of the vulnerable groups and poor segments of the population;
- Direct consumer subsidies specifically towards the disadvantaged sections of the population in order to improve their access to food;
- Iodize salt or introduce other suitable measures in areas where endemic goitre is a problem;
- Promote breastfeeding for children up to 4-6 months and thereafter encourage its continuation up to two years, and promote the use of local weaning foods;

- Develop and improve primary health care to provide for regular immunization, oral rehydration and nutrition education;
- Develop national capabilities and enhance domestic institutions to deal with nutritional issues, particularly in the planning, formulation and implementation of national nutrition programmes, in data collection and analysis, in training human resources and in development of cooperation and coordination for intersectoral programmes.

123. The Conference urged the intermediate-income group of countries to:

- Channel food production in accordance with the nutritional needs of their population, particularly improve production of cereals, legumes, traditional food crops and animal products;
- Diversify imports, particularly of cereals;
- Direct food consumer subsidies specifically to disadvantaged groups to improve their access to food;
- Take measures to prevent decline in breastfeeding, enforce regulations regarding breast milk substitutes and promote utilization of local foods for weaning;
- Improve infrastructure and utilize human resources to plan and implement national nutritional programmes.

124. The Conference urged the high-income group of countries to:

- Modify food import patterns in accordance with nutritional needs of the population and enforce strict quality and safety controls;
- Launch public awareness campaigns to promote nutritionally-desirable food as a means of increasing their demand;
- Enforce regulations on breast milk substitutes;
- Modernize institutional capacity and human expertise, particularly as regards food quality control, development of nutrition and food research institutes, training of scientific and administrative personnel and support for institutes involved in enforcing food laws.

Recommendations to FAO

125. The Conference requested FAO to assist member countries in:

- Developing and training human resources and in enhancing national institutional capabilities to deal with nutritional issues;
- Improving information exchange through intercountry workshops, conferences and scientific publications;

- Providing technical assistance to assess the state of food and nutrition, especially in rural areas, to establish nutritional goals, to prepare guidelines for planning food production in accordance with nutritional needs, to improve nutrition education, including food safety and quality control, to undertake studies on the relation between food consumption and food production and to formulate and monitor national nutritional programmes.

Representation of the Region in the CGIAR⁵

126. The Conference considered the document entitled "Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)" which briefly reviewed the status of agricultural research in the Region, recent developments in the CGIAR system, past representation of the Region on CGIAR and criteria for selection of member countries and their responsibilities.

127. The Conference stressed that an efficient national agricultural research system was an essential prerequisite for sound agricultural investment and that sustainable agricultural development required a well established and efficiently managed research programme.

128. The Conference noted that although some progress had been achieved in certain fields of agricultural research in many countries of the Region, more efforts were still needed to support and strengthen national research institutions so that they would become fully effective and competent and play a leading role in increasing agricultural production in the Region.

129. The Conference noted with satisfaction that FAO continued to provide technical assistance to enhance and strengthen cooperation between national research institutions and regional and international organizations in general, and the international agricultural research centres of the CGIAR in particular.

130. The Conference noted with satisfaction that FAO continued to provide assistance to the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA).

131. The Conference took note of recent developments in the CGIAR in relation to possible future support for some research activities currently carried out by "non-associated" centres, and the intention to cover certain research areas in forestry and fisheries.

132. The Conference emphasized the importance of efficient and effective representation of the Region in the CGIAR, and urged member countries elected to represent the Region to effectively participate in all the CGIAR meetings and to support their representatives in becoming fully prepared to examine issues, problems and priorities of research in the Region. In this regard, the Conference appreciated FAO's readiness to strengthen liaison between the CGIAR and the representation of the Region.

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Recommendations to member countries

133. The Conference urged member countries in the Region to:
- Continue their efforts to strengthen the national capabilities of agricultural research institutions through improvement of research management, recruitment of highly qualified and competent research leaders and allocation of adequate funds for research;
 - Enhance cooperation and improve coordination between fragmented research institutions operating under various ministries, departments and universities within individual countries to reduce duplication of efforts and waste of scarce human and financial resources;
 - Strengthen regional cooperation and inter-country activities in agricultural research by supporting the work of the recently established AARINENA to enhance TCDC in agricultural research in the Region;
 - Ensure that designated representatives of the Region in the CGIAR are well-versed in agricultural research needs and programmes in member countries of the Region, and that their respective countries would be willing to facilitate and support their attendance and participation in all meetings of the CGIAR.

Recommendations to FAO

134. The Conference requested FAO to:
- Continue its assistance to member countries of the Region in the formulation and implementation of operational programmes to improve the efficiency of national institutions;
 - Provide technical assistance in institution building and human resource development to improve organization, management and implementation of national agricultural research programmes;
 - Provide secretarial services and technical assistance to AARINENA to improve research cooperation and coordination in the Region;
 - Support efforts of the representatives of the Region in the CGIAR in consulting with leaders of selected national research institutions in the Region to facilitate the flow of information from national research institutions to CGIAR and ensure feedback;
 - Continue to circulate to member countries of the Region reports of designated representatives on attendance at CGIAR meetings;
 - Continue to provide operational and administrative services for the regional representatives, including briefing material, guidelines and agendas for meetings, relevant information and background documentation and facilitate travel arrangements.

135. The Conference noted that Jordan would continue to represent the Region on the CGIAR for 1991 and 1992. It elected Tunisia (Mr Mustapha Lasram, Director-General of the National Institute for Agricultural Research) to represent the Region for the period 1991-1994.

FAO Activities to Combat Screwworm in the Near East Region

136. The Conference considered the Information Note on FAO activities to combat screwworm in the Near East Region. It highly appreciated the actions taken by the Government of Libya in controlling the disease and by the governments of neighbouring countries in protecting their territories. It further commended FAO for providing, in collaboration with UNDP, IFAD and other international organizations, effective assistance in this endeavour, and noted that these efforts had prevented the spread of the screwworm parasite beyond the boundaries of the initially infested areas.

137. The Conference, however, noted with concern that the present threat to livestock populations and human beings, although now confined to one country in the Region, could have serious consequences for the entire Region and neighbouring regions. It, therefore, stressed the need for immediate regional action aiming at final eradication and called for the establishment of an effective mechanism for the coordination of various efforts in this regard.

138. The Conference noted with satisfaction that FAO has prepared proposals for a full-scale eradication programme to be submitted to donors. It stressed the need for continuous intensive surveillance, identification of all suspect cases in all territories at risk, and control of animal movement, including export and import.

Recommendations to member countries

139. More specifically, the Conference called upon member countries to:

- Strengthen the screwworm surveillance and investigate all suspect cases;
- Strengthen the control of animal movements, particularly with regard to international import, export and migration across national borders;
- Prepare national emergency (contingency) plans for immediate action in case of screwworm occurrence;
- Intensify public awareness campaigns and secure the participation of farmers in the campaign;
- Establish effective national reporting systems linked with international information programmes.

Recommendations to FAO

140. The Conference requested FAO to:

- Organize the donors' meeting for a screwworm eradication programme based on the use of sterile flies;
- Alert other regions, monitor the screwworm situation in the world and disseminate information on its occurrence;
- Coordinate the international screwworm control campaign in cooperation with other UN agencies;

- Assist member countries and regional committees of the Region in providing technical assistance to undertake eradication, control and prevention measures;
- Train personnel and support concerned institutions in surveillance and control programmes.

141. The Conference urged the international community and, in particular, the respective international donors' organizations and donor countries, to provide the necessary financial support needed for a final eradication programme.

CONCLUDING ITEMS

Acknowledgements for the Outgoing Assistant Director-General, Regional Representative for the Near East

142. The Conference held a special session, attended by the Director-General, to pay tribute to Mr Salah Jum'a the outgoing Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for the Near East, on the occasion of his retirement. The Director-General commended Mr Jum'a for his outstanding contributions and distinguished services to FAO/RNEA activities in the Region. He wished him happiness in the years to come. The Conference joined the Director-General in praising Mr Jum'a's dedicated services to FAO in the Region and expressed its sincere wishes for his retirement.

Appointment of Assistant Director-General, Regional Representative for the Near East

143. The Director-General subsequently announced at the special session that he had appointed Mr Atif Yahia Bukhari as Assistant Director-General, Regional Representative for the Near East to succeed Mr Jum'a. He introduced him to the Conference, underlined his high academic background, long experience in the field of agriculture and close association with FAO. He wished him every success in his new post. The Conference welcomed the Director-General's decision, congratulated Mr Bukhari on his appointment and wished him every success in carrying out the duties and responsibilities of his new position.

Date and Place of the Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

144. The Conference welcomed the kind invitation extended by the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the Twenty-first Session of the FAO Near East Regional Conference. It requested the Director-General of FAO to take this kind invitation into consideration, when deciding the date and place of the meeting in consultation with Member Governments of the Region.

Adoption of the Report

145. The Conference adopted the present report after introducing some amendments.

Closure of the Conference

146. His Excellency Suleiman Arabiyat, Minister of Agriculture, Jordan, speaking on behalf of all the delegates, thanked His Excellency Zine El-Albidine Ben Ali, the President of the Republic of Tunisia, the Government, and the people of Tunisia for the generous hospitality, the warm welcome and excellent arrangements provided. He thanked His Excellency Hame El-Karoui, the Prime Minister of Tunisia for inaugurating the Conference. He paid tribute to His Excellency Nouri El-Zorgati, Minister of Agriculture, Tunisia, for his able guidance as Chairman of the Conference. He thanked the Director-General of FAO and the Conference Secretariat for the efforts made in preparing the Conference documents and for the smooth and efficient management of the meeting.

147. Mr Salah Jum'a, former FAO Regional Representative for the Near East, spoke on behalf of the Director-General. He expressed his gratitude to His Excellency the President of Tunisia, the Government and the people of Tunisia for hosting the Conference, for the generous hospitality and for the excellent arrangements and facilities which contributed substantially to the success of the Conference. He expressed his appreciation and thanks to his Excellency Hamed El-Karoui, the Prime Minister, for inaugurating the Conference. He paid special tribute to the Chairman, His Excellency Nouri El-Zorgati, Minister of Agriculture, Tunisia, the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur, whose presence and experience made this meeting a notable success. He thanked the National Organizing Committee and the Secretariat for their efforts in ensuring the smooth running of the Conference.

148. In his closing statement, His Excellency Nouri El-Zorgati, Chairman of the Conference, reiterated his profound thanks and appreciation to the Director-General of FAO and the former Regional Representative for the Near East for their continued efforts in making the meeting a success. He thanked their Excellencies the Ministers, the Heads and Members of Delegations for their active participation and invaluable contributions. He paid tribute to all those who took part in preparing and servicing the Conference. He noted that the Conference was able to discuss in depth the Agenda items and reach concrete and constructive recommendations and conclusions.

149. The Conference Chairman declared the Conference closed at 12.00 hours on Friday, 16 March 1990.

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTION ITEMS

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

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement by the Director-General
5. Country Statements and General Debate on the State of Food and Agriculture in the Near East Region
6. Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1988-89

III. SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

7. Regional Cooperation for Agricultural Development in the Near East
8. A Balanced Diet - The Way to Good Nutrition
9. Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

IV. CONCLUDING ITEMS

10. Any Other Business
11. Date and Place of the 21st Regional Conference
12. Adoption of the Report
14. Closure of the Conference

الملحق "ب"
APPENDIX B

قائمة بأسماء المشاركين
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

هيئة مكتب المؤتمر
OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE

Chairman: H.E. Nouri-El ZORGATI (Tunisia) الرئيس: السيد نوري الزرقاطي (تونس)

Vice-Chairmen: All Heads of Delegations نواب الرئيس: جميع رؤساء الوفود

Rapporteur: Ms F.J. HAYAT (Kuwait) المقرر: الأنسة فاطمة جوهر حيات (الكويت)

Independent Chairman of the Council: A. SAINTRAINT رئيس المجلس: انطوان سان تران

البلدان الأعضاء في الاقليم
MEMBER NATIONS IN THE REGION

AFGHANISTAN

أفغانستان

ALGERIA

الجزائر

Delegate

Abdellasiz KHELLEF
Ambassador of Algeria
Tunis

مندوب
عبد العزيز خلف
سفير الجزائر
تونس

Alternates

Rabah DEKHLI
Counsellor
Ministry of Agriculture
Algiers

مناوبون
رباح دخلي
مستشار
وزارة الفلاحة
الجزائر

Mrs Amina BOUDJELTI
Second Counsellor
Alternate Permanent Representative
of Algeria to FAO
Rome

السيدة أمينة بوجلطي
السكرتير الثاني
الممثل الدائم المناوب لدى المنظمة
روما

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مدير مركزي
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الجزائر

Rabah M. AMEUR
Minister Counsellor
Embassy of Algeria
Tunis

رباح عامر
وزير مفوض
سفارة الجزائر
تونس

البحرين

BAHRAIN

مندوب

Delegate

Mohammed Abdulwahab AL-KHALIFA
Head of Agricultural Research
Ministry of Commerce and
Agriculture
Manama

محمد عبد الوهاب الخليفة
رئيس مصلحة البحوث الزراعية
وزارة التجارة والزراعة
المنامة

Alternate

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Plant Production Specialist
Ministry of Commerce and
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Manama

مناوب
أحمد مبارك السعد
خبير محاصيل
وزارة التجارة والزراعة
المنامة

CYPRUS

قبرص

Delegate

Andreas GAVRIELIDES
Minister of Agriculture and Natural
Resources
Nicosia

Alternates

Chrysanthos LOIZIDES
Agricultural Attaché
Alternate Permanent Representative
of Cyprus to FAO
Rome

George CAMELARIS
Agricultural Officer
Department of Agriculture
Ministry of Agriculture and Natural
Resources
Nicosia

DJIBOUTI

جيبوتي

Delegate

Mohamed Moussa CHEHEM
Minister of Agriculture and
Rural Development
Djibouti

مندوب
محمد موسى شهم
وزير الزراعة والتنمية الريفية
جيبوتي

Alternate

Mohamed Ali AHMED
Agriculture Engineer
Ministry of Agriculture and
Rural Development
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مناوب
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NERC/90/INF/8-Rev.1	Provisional List of Delegates and Observers	
<u>NERC/90/REP Series</u>		
NERC/90/REP/1	Draft Report of the Conference	
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APPENDIX D

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Mr Chairman,
Honourable Ministers,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first of all to say how glad I am that the Twentieth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East is being held in Tunisia. This country, at once so young but so rich in history and ancient civilization, with its venerable agricultural tradition, is a commercial and cultural meeting-point of the Arab world, Europe and Africa. Tunis, noble heir to one of the great early cities of the Mediterranean world, welcomes us today with a warmth and a generosity that exemplify its time-honoured tradition of hospitality. On behalf of you all, may I thank the Government and people of Tunisia, and the city of Tunis, wholeheartedly.

I extend a most cordial welcome to all those taking part, and a special greeting to the large number of ministers attending, whose presence endows this meeting with the character of a regional summit on agriculture.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Your meeting inaugurates the 1990 cycle of Regional Conferences. It takes place in an unprecedented historical context, marked by the end of the Cold War, the consolidation of the will of freedom-aspiring peoples, a great leap forward for democracy, and the advent of an era of cooperation between East and West. This is an exciting moment in history, in which stirrings of hope mingle with the uncertainties and misgivings that remain. Today, I should like to stress just two aspects of this new situation. First, the prospects for disarmament, which with each passing day become more real, should enable considerable economies to be made, and one may hope that the leaders of the major powers will have the wisdom to divert a significant portion of the amount saved thereby to development aid. Second, we must ensure that the new opportunities to help the countries of eastern Europe do not have the effect of reducing aid to developing countries. Authoritative voices have already strongly reaffirmed the priority of cooperative action in favour of the Third World.

THE REGIONAL OFFICE'S RETURN TO CAIRO

The present assembly follows in the wake of the recent FAO Conference, at which important decisions were taken on a large number of issues. We shall have the occasion to come back to some of the major ones, but first I should like to point out one that is of particular interest to the Near East. With its Resolution 14/89, the Conference in effect decided, with the assent of every country in the Region, to reopen our Regional Office in Cairo, and to do so by 1 September 1990. I should like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to the Egyptian Government which, after generously hosting our Regional Office for so many years, has agreed to welcome it back, and to take upon itself the task of refurbishing its premises. This work is currently under way, and we hope that it can be completed on schedule. In any case, we cannot but be gladened at seeing our regional activities once again emanating from a centre located within the Region itself.

THE REGION'S AGRICULTURE; SITUATION AND PROBLEMS

Given the characteristic features of the Region, there is no need to stress the importance of its agricultural activities. Any attempt to make observations that are valid for the entire area immediately runs into a major difficulty: the extreme diversity of a region that comprises 27 Member States and covers an enormous area, from the Indian Ocean in the east to the Atlantic in the west, from Pakistan to Mauritania, and from the 40th parallel north almost to the equator. There are enormous disparities among these countries in many respects: natural resources, both mineral and agricultural, climate (especially rainfall), population density and types of activity, level of income and nutritional status.

It nevertheless remains true that the Region as a whole is experiencing a considerable and growing food deficit, and that, with few exceptions, food production is falling behind population growth. Agricultural imports, which mostly consist of food, continue to increase. The proportion was 13 percent in 1988. In the same year, the Region's agricultural trade deficit topped 18 thousand million dollars.

IRRIGATION

From one end of the Region to the other one can fairly say that irrigation remains the key to agricultural development. Truly extensive irrigation combined with the large-scale application of inputs can produce spectacular results, as we have clearly seen in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where wheat production has leapt from 120 000 tonnes to over 3 million tonnes in just a few years. Efforts are multiplying throughout the Region. From Yemen to Morocco, from Turkey to Algeria, we see dams being built, rational irrigation systems that take into account both land-use planning and management questions, and research on the use of water of borderline quality and the recycling of treated waste water.

All these measures require large-scale investments. The countries of the Region have shown themselves willing to make them, as far as their means allow. All of them, in fact, are devoting the maximum possible resources to agricultural development and food self-sufficiency.

ENVIRONMENT

There is one problem that knows no frontiers, and that affects agriculture in every single country, namely environmental degradation. Your Region has not been spared: erosion is eating away its soils, deforestation is destroying its already scarce forests, salinization is corroding its land and desertification is gradually encroaching upon its farmlands and grasslands. Its pollution-contaminated waters are slowly losing their fish stocks. The FAO Conference has stressed the need to redouble efforts to tackle this worldwide problem. That is why I have just nominated a Special Adviser, with the rank of Assistant Director-General, who will assist me in all matters concerning the environment and sustainable development. With the cooperation of all of your countries, we plan to take resolute action at regional level.

NUTRITION

The diversity of conditions that I have mentioned is reflected in regional variations in nutrition problems. In high-income countries, calorie intake is more than sufficient, and nutritional illnesses are linked to poorly balanced diets or even to overeating (obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases). In poorer countries, despite notable progress, undernutrition is still rife, giving rise to deficiency illnesses such as anaemia (especially that caused by iron deficiency), xerophthalmia and endemic goitre. These problems, together with the need to introduce consumer protection regulations, have led to regional action, in particular to the creation of several related regional bodies. As the Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission recommended, we are prepared to give them our full support.

As you are no doubt aware, all these problems will be the subject of a World Conference on Nutrition to be held in Rome in December 1992. We are actively engaged in making preparations for this, in cooperation with the World Health Organization. In the next few days, you will be looking at the question of a balanced diet, one of the items on your agenda, from a regional standpoint. I have no doubt that concrete measures will emerge from this discussion. At the same time, it will be the Near East's specific contribution to the preparation of the World Conference.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

You also have a debate on regional cooperation in agricultural development on your agenda. This item is covered in the basic document NERC/90/3, which you have before you. It summarizes the various efforts being made in this direction, analyses the difficulties that have so far prevented their full development, sets out the pre-conditions for decisive change in this field, and broadly outlines a potential approach. Wisdom suggests proceeding gradually, in successive stages, and setting modest goals to begin with. Indeed, the best results to date have been achieved by groups formed to deal with highly specific issues, and through bilateral agreements among the Region's countries. We have now reached the subregional level. I should like especially to acclaim the measures enacted within the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and the Maghreb Economic Union. I wish these bodies every success, and sincerely hope that they will lead to a progressive broadening of the structures for economic and agricultural cooperation in the Region.

WOMEN

The FAO Conference approved the Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Agricultural and Rural Development which I had prepared at its request. The Plan's aim is essentially to provide social, economic and juridical support to women in their role as agricultural producers, and to increase their participation in decision-making. I note with satisfaction that even before the Conference passed this resolution, in fact in October 1989, the Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission had recommended that the governments of the Region take steps to enhance women farmers' integration into major agricultural development programmes.

SCREWWORM FLY

Besides these questions which concern the whole Region, there are others of a more limited geographical scope that nonetheless deserve your attention. First of all, there is the appearance in the Region of the screwworm fly. This is a formidable pest that attacks herds, wild animals and even human beings. It latches on to the slightest sore and proceeds to devour the skin tissue, often with ultimately fatal results. Previously, this insect was confined to the New World. In April 1989, however, it appeared in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, where it began to wreak havoc, threatening to spread across to neighbouring countries - Tunisia, Algeria, the Niger and Chad. In June 1989, we called a meeting that drew up an action programme. FAO has set up an emergency operations unit within the Agriculture Department to help select and prepare projects. With the help of financial contributions from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, UNDP, IFAD and our own Technical Cooperation Programme, a number of projects have been launched to ensure the necessary monitoring and to push back this scourge. Since the most effective control method is the so-called "sterile insect" technique that relies on irradiation, the joint FAO/IAEA Division has been called upon to play a leading role in the effort. It is receiving excellent cooperation from Mexico, a country that has suffered a great deal from screwworm, and which currently possesses the only existing facilities for producing sterile insects of this species. Constant vigilance is required, and the extent of the financial resources needed - some 25 million dollars per year for at least two years - calls for action by a number of donors and an international approach.

FLOODS IN TUNISIA

Tunisia, which so generously welcomes us today, has recently been ravaged by catastrophic floods to which the international community cannot fail to respond. It is clear that the first thing to do is to assess the extent of the damage, and our first step has been to send out an on-site evaluation mission, funded by the Technical Cooperation Programme. Its report will put us in a better position to organize subsequent operations.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

That, unfortunately, does not exhaust the list of catastrophes that have befallen different countries in the Region. It has to be said that some of the most serious are partly or wholly the result of human action.

THE SUDAN

In the Sudan, for example, drought, internal conflicts and the ensuing displacement of persons have combined to generate emergency situations, particularly in the southern and western parts of the country. A recent crop assessment mission has forecast that the 1989/90 cereal production will barely exceed two and a half million tonnes, as against five million tonnes in 1988/89. In the south, because of the restrictions imposed on the emergency operations, the threat of imminent famine hangs over the population in and around Juba. In the west, the drought and the refugee influx have caused scarcities in the regions of Darfur and Kordofan. The need for food aid is extremely high, and I urgently appeal to the international community to do its utmost to help the Sudan to ward off the danger of a disastrous famine.

AFGHANISTAN

The crisis in Afghanistan has been brought about not by natural causes but by civil war. A great many farmers have been forced to flee, abandoning their crops. Many roads have been cut, disrupting food supplies. The Government has had to cut back heavily on wheat purchases. Massive population displacements have unbalanced distribution systems. Severe shortages are occurring, and the first victims are, as always, the most vulnerable groups, particularly children and pregnant women. There has been a slight improvement in the south, but the situation is increasingly critical in the northern provinces.

The United Nations has responded to the need for international assistance by setting up a coordinating body based in Geneva. FAO is fully involved in this work. Several donor countries have responded generously to the appeals launched by the Coordinator, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, for food aid, supplies of inputs, and so forth. Japan, for example, has donated 10 million dollars for the purchase of inputs to be channelled through FAO. But donations of protein-rich food are still disappointingly small: the chances of reaching the targets set for 1990, of which the food and agriculture sector accounts for almost a third, appear minimal.

LEBANON

If the efforts and appeals by such moral authorities, with the support of such coordinating bodies, seem to have so little chance of achieving the hoped-for results, what chance then have the sporadic efforts made to come to the aid of another country horribly torn apart by bloody internal conflicts, and of which I hardly dare speak because it means so much to me personally, namely Lebanon? Given the scope of the destruction, especially the virtual annihilation of all agricultural activity, the needs are immense: food aid, medical supplies, inputs, what more need I add? Meeting together here where ancient Carthage once flourished, let us not forget ancient Phoenicia, the cradle of Mediterranean civilization, but today the victim of a mortal tragedy. And let us not fail to grant it a place in our concern,

FAO'S WORK IN THE REGION

FAO has not been indifferent to any of the Region's problems, be they general or local, transient or long-lasting. It has supplied the Near East with all possible aid in all possible forms, and continues to do so: meetings, consultations, missions, advice, studies, projects, networks, and technical assistance. In addition to the spheres I have just mentioned, assistance extends to the most diverse sectors: agro-industry, improved seeds and crops, pest control (particularly locust and grasshopper control); small ruminants and poultry; watershed management, forestry, conservation; fisheries and aquaculture; agricultural extension, research, teaching and training; agrarian reform and rural development, and early warning and food security systems.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Unfortunately, our efforts are being made ever more difficult by a financial situation that has become the most serious problem facing the Organization. In saying this, I feel torn between shame and indignation: in the face of the immense human tragedies encapsulated by words like poverty, malnutrition, hunger and underdevelopment, how can we admit that our most worrying problem is that of money, of the resources at our disposal? Isn't this an unacceptable paradox and an outright scandal?

Yet, that is the way things stand. Our financial situation, which has been difficult for some years, is now extremely critical because too many member countries are behind in the payment of their contributions. Amid all the grave and urgent problems of world agriculture, the FAO Conference was forced to bring these administrative matters to the fore. It stressed the need for member countries to pay their contributions without delay, and appealed to them to settle any arrears at the earliest possible occasion. I should like to repeat that appeal here and now. It is not directed only at the few conspicuous late payers, but at the countries of this Region as well. Some have substantial arrears that are hard to explain, for there is no apparent economic justification, and they seem to derive simply from administrative cumbersomeness and lethargy. I urgently entreat the countries of the Region to help us to serve them as we would wish.

CONCLUSION

It was a duty to you and to myself to highlight some of the main problems that the Region must tackle. They are serious, and they will not be solved without a strong, sustained and concerted effort by all of the countries you represent. As you know, FAO is more than willing to offer you its full support. Even so, the path is strewn with difficulties.

We should not, however, look upon the picture I have just outlined too pessimistically. The situation in the Near East, like life itself, is made up of both light and shadows. I, for my part, feel confident. I am convinced that the governments and peoples of the Region will draw upon their ancient wisdom, immense experience, and the diverse resources of each individual country to find the stores of creativity, heart and energy necessary to ensure that everyone may gain access to well-being and dignity. I am confident that the Near East can thereby make a rich and original contribution to humanity's slow, painful, and yet impressive march toward greater harmony. It is in this spirit that I offer you my very best wishes for the unqualified success of your endeavours.

