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REPORT

Teheran,
Islamic
Republic of
Iran,
17-21 May
1992

Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for the Near East



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

FAO Member Nations in the Near East Region (as of 21 May 1992)

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 ¹
Iraq	Qatar	
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 ²
Fifth	— Teheran, Iran, 21 September - 1 October 1960
Sixth	— Tel Amara, Lebanon, 30 July - 8 August 1962
Seventh	— Cairo, Egypt, 19-31 October 1964 ³
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
Twenty-first	— Teheran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 17-21 May 1992

¹ On 22 May 1990, the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen merged to form the Republic of Yemen.

² From 1 February 1958 until 28 September 1961, known as United Arab Republic.

³ Known as United Arab Republic until 2 September 1971.

REPORT
OF THE TWENTY-FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR THE NEAR EAST
Teheran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 17-21 May 1992

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TWENTY-FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Teheran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 17-21 May 1992

SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. FAO Activities in the Region

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER NATIONS

The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

- 1.1. give greater attention to agro-silvi-pastoral aspects in forestry policies, plans and programmes, strengthen forestry education and disseminate research results among decision-makers, practitioners and trainers. (para. 67 (a),(b))
- 1.2. institute and adopt liberal market policies that accommodate an appropriate combination of private and public sector financing in providing agricultural services to farmers. (para. 67 (c))
- 1.3. review and update existing food laws and regulations to cope with recent developments. (para. 67 (d))
- 1.4. consider all aspects involved when planning and implementing food loss prevention programmes and establish networks for pre- and post-harvest loss reduction. (para. 67 (e))
- 1.5. adopt policies to enhance and improve the role of women in agricultural development. (para. 67 (f))
- 1.6. adopt policies to promote seed development and ensure adequate implementation of appropriate legislation to promote quality seed development and production. (para. 67 (g),(h))
- 1.7. strengthen and standardize certification programmes and promote regional cooperation in tissue culture. (para. 67 (i))

B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

The Conference requested FAO to:

- 1.8. survey and analyse forestry curricula in the Near East and advise governments on their adaptation to meet the emerging needs of the countries concerned. (para. 68 (a))
- 1.9. organize a regional seminar on community forestry to enable participants to exchange information and experience. (para. 68 (b))
- 1.10. organize a regional seminar on range management to study all technical, socio-political and economic aspects, and suggest other possible means of livelihood for the range communities. (para. 68 (c))
- 1.11. provide advice on policies, timing and sequence of changes in the public and private sectors' roles in providing services and inputs to farmers. (para. 68 (d))

- 1.12 continue to provide technical support to strengthen national food control programmes in the Region; assist Member Nations in the development of appropriate training curricula for food control personnel; and organize national and regional training programmes in food control-related subjects. (para. 68 (e))
- 1.13 provide technical advice to Member Nations in establishing import/export quality control and certification systems. (para 68 (f))
- 1.14 assist in designing and implementing national and regional seed policies and programmes and organize training programmes to strengthen the capabilities of professionals and technicians in the seed production industry. (para. 68 (g))
- 1.15 prepare a regional project on integrated pest management (IPM) for protected vegetable cultivation and approach donors to ensure its funding. (para. 68 (h))
- 1.16 promote cooperation among Member Nations in tissue culture techniques and enhance collaboration among national laboratories in this field. (para. 68 (i))
- 1.17 submit a document to the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for the Near East, providing information on the status and achievements of the Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP), highlighting its impact on recipient countries and proposing alternatives for its reactivation and continuation. (para. 68 (j))

2. Policies Leading to the Efficient Use and Conservation of Water Resources in the Near East Region

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE MEMBER NATIONS

The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

- 2.1 give due consideration to the regulation of ground-water extraction methods regarding recharge, water quality and sea-water intrusion to maintain ground water resources within safety parameters. (para. 82 (a))
- 2.2 clearly define national policies, consistent with the socio-economic environment, for water use in agriculture. (para. 82 (b))
- 2.3 institutionalize coordination and working linkages among various national agencies concerned with water. (para. 82 (c))
- 2.4 improve national data bases and establish data banks for land and water resources giving due regard to quality, use and management considerations. (para. 82 (d))
- 2.5 consider recycling of properly treated waste-water for agricultural use. (para. 82 (e))
- 2.6 follow up on the recommendation made by the Twentieth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (Tunis, Tunisia, 12-16 March 1990) on the use of common water resources. (para. 82 (f))

- 2.7 apply biotechnologies in developing salt- and drought-tolerant plant varieties. (para. 82 (g))
- 2.8 establish units within the agricultural extension system to cater for on-farm water management. (para. 82 (h))

B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

The Conference requested FAO to assist Member Nations to:

- 2.9 formulate comprehensive national policies for the efficient use and conservation of water resources. (para. 83 (a))
- 2.10 organize national/regional workshops to prepare an action programme for the control and/or prevention of sea-water intrusion. (para. 83 (b))
- 2.11 establish or strengthen national information systems for water management and water quality monitoring systems. (para. 83 (c), (d))
- 2.12 strengthen agricultural extension services in the area of on-farm water management. (para. 83 (e))
- 2.13 establish a regional data bank for land and water resources specifying quality, use and management considerations. (para. 83 (f))
- 2.14 establish a regional laboratory for testing and quality control of irrigation equipment and materials. (para. 83 (g))
- 2.15 carry out necessary studies on water valuation as a means of establishing cost recovery systems. (para. 83 (h))
- 2.16 prepare a manual or guidelines for safe and efficient use of fertigation/chemigation. (para. 84 (a))
- 2.17 study, in consultation with Member Nations of the Region, the need to establish a Regional Land and Water Resources Centre. (para. 84 (b))

3. Regional Cooperation for Animal Disease Control and Eradication

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER NATIONS

The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

- 3.1 prepare and implement national programmes for the control of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). (para. 96 (a))
- 3.2 give due support to West Asia Rinderpest Eradication Campaign Coordination (WARECC) and national animal health services for the complete eradication of rinderpest. (para. 96 (b))
- 3.3 intensify regional cooperation in regulating entry/movement of animals and animal materials and in strictly enforcing existing national and international quarantine regulations. (para. 96 (c))
- 3.4 strengthen national veterinary services and consider the advantages of parallel veterinary private sector services. (para. 96 (d))

- 3.5 consider the redefinition of the role, activities, organization and funding of the Middle East Regional Animal Production and Health Project (MINEADep), or, alternatively, consider the establishment of another forum for coordinating animal production and health activities in the Region. (para. 96 (e))
- 3.6 communicate accurate and timely information on the occurrence of animal diseases and collaborate with FAO, OIE and WHO in providing disease information and statistics for the publication of the Animal Health Yearbook. (para. 96 (f))

B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

The Conference requested FAO to:

- 3.7 assist Member Nations in preparing and implementing FMD control programmes and study the possibility of initiating a regional project for that purpose. (para. 97 (a), (b))
- 3.8 convene a regional meeting to discuss the future of MINEADep. (para. 97 (c))
- 3.9 strengthen WARECC by preparing a cooperative agreement to cover and fund vaccination and sero-monitoring activities in Member Nations on an annual basis. (para. 97 (d))
- 3.10 prepare a regional programme, in collaboration with WHO, the countries of the Region and donors, to control and eventually eradicate major zoonoses in the Region and prevent the entry and spread of exotic diseases. (para. 97 (e))
- 3.11 service the establishment of a Regional Epidemiology Investigation Service (EIS) in the Near East Region to address regional cooperation efforts regarding disease diagnosis and information sharing, coordination of animal disease control programmes and establishing disease control priorities within the Region. (para. 97 (f))

4. Representation of the Region in the CGIAR

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER NATIONS

The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

- 4.1 continue their efforts to strengthen the capabilities of national agricultural research institutions by improving research management, recruiting highly qualified and competent research leaders and allocating adequate funds for research. (para. 103 (a))
- 4.2 promote cooperation and improve coordination among different research institutions operating under various ministries/departments/universities within individual countries to enhance research efficiency and effectiveness. (para. 103 (b))
- 4.3 support the recently established Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA) to enhance regional cooperation in agricultural research. (para. 103 (c))

- 4.4 ensure that designated representatives of the Region in the CGIAR are well-versed in agricultural research needs and programmes in Member Nations of the Region. (para. 103 (d))

B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

The Conference requested FAO to:

- 4.5 continue its assistance to Member Nations of the Region in the formulation and implementation of operational programmes to improve the efficiency of national research institutions. (para. 104 (a))
- 4.6 provide technical assistance in institution building and human resource development to improve organization, management and implementation of national agricultural research programmes. (para. 104 (b))
- 4.7 provide secretarial services and technical assistance to AARINENA, in improving cooperation and coordination among Member Nations. (para. 104 (c))
- 4.8 support efforts by the representatives of the Region in the CGIAR to facilitate the flow of information from national research institutions to CGIAR and ensure feedback. (para. 104 (d))
- 4.9 continue to provide information, and operational and administrative services to the regional representative in the CGIAR. (para. 104 (e))
- 4.10 The Conference noted that Tunisia would continue to represent the Region in the CGIAR for 1993 and 1994 and elected the Islamic Republic of Iran (Dr Ali Ahoonmanesh, Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Research, Education and Extension) to represent the Region for the period 1993-1996. (para. 105)

5. Update on International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) Preparations

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER NATIONS

- 5.1 The Conference urged Member Governments to undergo preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition and ensure that their respective country representation be at the highest possible policy-making and technical levels. (para. 109)

6. Date and Place of the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

- 6.1 The Conference requested the Director-General of FAO to take the kind invitation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to host the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for the Near East into consideration, in consultation with Member Governments of the Region. (para. 110)

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Inauguration of the Conference

1. The Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for the Near East was held in the Esteghlal Grand Hotel, Teheran, the Islamic Republic of Iran, from 17 to 21 May 1992, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
2. The Conference was inaugurated by His Excellency Hassan Habibi, First Deputy President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. 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 Nations, from regional and international governmental and non-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations and bodies, and the Independent Chairman of the 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 the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as representatives of the news media.
3. In his inaugural address, His Excellency Hassan Habibi stated that the Conference was convened under the patronage of His Excellency Hojjatoleslam Ali Akbar Hashimi Rafsanjani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in recognition of FAO's dynamic and effective role in promoting sustainable agricultural development, especially with regard to increasing water use efficiency, conserving water resources and eradicating livestock diseases in countries of the Region, and in view of the high priority the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran attached to agricultural development.
4. His Excellency Habibi extended a warm welcome to the distinguished Delegates and Observers, and hoped that the Conference would achieve valuable results for the development of agriculture in the Region. He stressed the specific aspects of the Region, namely climatic, demographic and geopolitical similarities.
5. His excellency referred to the many significant world events in recent years which had deeply influenced the Region and neighbouring countries.
6. His Excellency stressed that agriculture and the environment were two inseparable issues. Preservation of the environment would positively contribute to human well-being. To control and prevent environmental pollution, he called for regional and international cooperation and harmonization of efforts. In this respect, importance was attached to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.
7. His Excellency called for close collaboration among countries of the Region, with a view to achieving regional self-sufficiency, overcoming economic difficulties and promoting national and regional development. He stated that available financial resources within the Region would significantly contribute to development if they were properly used. In this respect, he stressed that United Nations agencies could play an important role in assisting countries of the Region to achieve efficiency by adequately allocating available resources.

8. The First Deputy President commended FAO and its Regional Office for preparing valuable documents on water, livestock and collaborative research activities.

9. His Excellency Habibi highlighted a number of development objectives, including: self-sufficiency in food production, sustainable agricultural development, conservation of the environment and the generation of sufficient employment opportunities for the rural community.

10. For these objectives to materialize, His Excellency called for: exchanging information, experience and expertise among the countries of the Region; enhancing economic cooperation endeavours with the ultimate objective of establishing a regional common market, promoting coordinated agricultural research programmes and establishing a regional agricultural research centre.

11. In conclusion, His Excellency Habibi wished the Conference every success.

12. The Director-General of FAO, Mr Edouard Saouma, addressed the inaugural session of the Conference and expressed his profound thanks to His Excellency Hojjatoleslam Rafsanjani for hosting the Conference, and for designating His Excellency Habibi to inaugurate and address the Conference.

13. Mr Saouma stated that the Conference was held under the theme of "Fraternity and Action". This was the first time such a high-level gathering took place after the serious events that had shaken the Region over the last few years. This high-level gathering underlined a mutual will to establish dialogue, understanding and peace, as well as a determination to promote agricultural development and food security. The Conference was also a recognition of FAO's role in the Region.

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

14. His Excellency Issa Kalantari, Minister for Agriculture of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Conference.

15. His Excellency Kalantari expressed his thanks and appreciation for the confidence placed in him by the Conference.

16. The Conference resolved that all other Heads of Delegations would be Vice-Chairmen.

17. The Conference appointed His Excellency Habib Ahmed Kassem (Bahrain) as Rapporteur.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

18. The Provisional Agenda and the Timetable were adopted by the Conference. The Agenda is given in Appendix A to this report.

Statement by the Director-General

19. Mr Edouard Saouma, the Director-General of FAO, expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Issa Kalantari, Minister for Agriculture, and his Government for hosting the Conference and for providing excellent facilities, as well as for the warm and generous hospitality of the Iranian people. The Director-General welcomed the Delegates and Observers to the Conference and wished them every success.

20. The Director-General further congratulated His Excellency Issa Kalantari, Minister for Agriculture, on his unanimous election as Chairman of the Conference. He also congratulated the distinguished Vice-Chairmen on their election, and the Rapporteur on his appointment.

21. The Director-General warmly welcomed the distinguished Ministers, Heads and Members of Delegations and Observers, and the Independent Chairman of the FAO Council, Mr Antoine Saintraint.

22. The Director-General expressed satisfaction that the FAO Regional Office for the Near East had returned to its original seat in Cairo where, because of its central location within the Region, would render more effective services to Member Nations. He said that he was particularly pleased to have been able to secure the services of Mr Atif Yehya Bukhari as Representative. Moreover, the recent establishment of an FAO Representation in the Islamic Republic of Iran would strengthen the existing cooperation between that country and the Organization.

23. The Director-General expressed his deep concern over the wars and natural disasters that had ravaged the economies and damaged the environment in several countries of the Region and whose serious repercussions would continue to be felt in the future. He also referred to the internal conflicts that devastated a number of countries and that contributed to serious food shortages by spreading malnutrition, starvation and the spectre of famine.

24. Moreover, the slowdown of world economic activity had adversely affected the developing countries of the Region. Many countries had to face increased problems associated with the return of large numbers of migrant workers, loss of remittances, and disruptions in trade, tourism and capital flows. For the first time in recent history, a number of rich countries had to resort to borrowing from international banks. Persisting protectionism in industrialized countries had been exacerbated by depressed prices for primary commodities.

25. The Director-General expressed hope for a successful outcome of the long, drawn-out GATT Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. Success in those talks would lay the foundation for a more equitable, open and dynamic trading system. Without such a system, it would be difficult for the countries of the Region to continue their pursuit of national policy adjustments that dealt with complex issues such as market and exchange rate liberalization.

26. The Director-General stressed two major constraints adversely affecting the Region, namely water shortage and pests. Demand for water was seriously approaching the limits of the available resources. Problems related to water use in the Region were many and diverse: low irrigation efficiency, water pollution, water-logging, inefficient drainage systems

and lack of sound policies and strategies. A water summit had been advocated by a number of leaders of the Region. It was, therefore, no coincidence that one of the major documents before the Conference dealt with this issue.¹

27. Turning to another aspect of agricultural development of significance to the Near East Region, the Director-General stressed the importance of livestock production and its protection against the spread of infectious diseases.

28. Recent experience had shown that without close and strong cooperation efforts among countries of the Region, major catastrophes could occur. The recent incidence of the New World screwworm in Libya was a striking example. The successful FAO-led campaign to control this lethal pest served to strengthen faith in the capacity of the international community to respond to major emergencies with speed and generosity.

29. The Director-General also stressed the importance of expanding regional cooperation efforts in controlling animal diseases to preserve the animal resources of the Region. Enhanced cooperation in disease diagnosis techniques, in information exchanges, efficient promotion of measures for quarantine control and for the coordination of animal disease control programmes among countries of the Region was nevertheless still desirable.

30. The Director-General then reviewed the preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN), due to be held in Rome in December 1992, under the joint sponsorship of FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO). He said that the Conference would be the first worldwide gathering of its kind to address a broad range of issues affecting the nutritional status of the world population. The regional preparatory meeting on ICN held in Cairo, in April 1991, reviewed a comprehensive Secretariat report on the regional food and nutrition situation as well as a Draft Plan of Action and a Draft Declaration that would be brought to the attention of the International Conference.

31. The Director-General stated that problems linked to environmental degradation caused in particular by deforestation, soil erosion, overexploitation and desert encroachment were of major concern to the Near East Region. The importance of sustainable agricultural development, which had been identified as one of the main medium-term challenges outlined in the FAO Medium-Term Plan (MTP) for 1992-97, was stressed within this context.

32. The Director-General then outlined regional priorities and highlighted FAO's activities under the Field Programme, with 250 ongoing projects for a total approved budget of US\$ 450 million, including Technical Cooperation Projects (TCPs).

¹ See NERC/92/3

33. The Director-General stressed that FAO, through its Regional Office for the Near East, would continue its catalytic and supportive role in ECDC/TCDC by promoting new concepts and approaches through inter-country consultations, training activities and regional organizations and networks.

34. In conclusion, the Director-General stressed that chronic tensions and recent strife must give way to peace, stability and cooperation in the Region. The complete text of the Director-General's statement is reproduced in Appendix D.

STATE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN THE REGION

Country Statements and General Debate

35. The delegates unanimously expressed their sincere thanks and deep gratitude to His Excellency Hojjatoleslam Akbar Hashimi Rafsanjani, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for having the Conference convened under his patronage, and to His Excellency Hassan Habibi, the First Deputy President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for delivering the inaugural address. They also expressed their appreciation to the Government for hosting the Conference and for the generous hospitality offered to the participants, as well as for the excellent facilities provided.

36. The delegates congratulated His Excellency Issa Kalantari, Minister for Agriculture, on his unanimous election as Chairman of the Conference, and His Excellency Habib Kassem on his appointment as Rapporteur.

37. They also 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 fulfillment of the cause of FAO and appreciated his comprehensive address to the Conference. They also recognized the efforts deployed by the ADG/Regional Representative for the Near East, Dr Atif Y. Bukhari, to ensure the smooth functioning and efficiency of the Regional Office after its relocation to its original seat in Cairo. They welcomed and encouraged the staff of the Regional Office to visit Member Nations on a more frequent basis to gain first-hand experience and knowledge of the current problems and be in a better position to provide pertinent advice.

38. The majority of delegates delivered country statements on the state of food and agriculture and national strategies and policies for agricultural development in their countries. They appreciated the inclusion in the Agenda of the two subjects: "Policies Leading to the Efficient Use and Conservation of Water Resources in the Near East Region", and "Regional Cooperation for Animal Disease Control and Eradication".

39. The importance of efficient and rational use of water and of exploring new water resources was stressed by most of the delegates. They further stressed that water storage would, in the near future, constitute a main constraint to sustainable agricultural development. They underlined the importance of developing appropriate water harvesting and storage techniques, as well as the need to exchange information and experience in this field.

40. Some delegates pointed out the achievements accomplished by their countries in recycling waste-water to supplement fresh-water resources. They expressed their willingness to share such experience with other Member Nations.

41. Delegates expressed their concern regarding the repeated drought in the Region since the early eighties, the decreased agricultural output, especially in rainfed areas, and the increasing desert encroachment and soil degradation. They stressed the role of regional cooperation endeavours in minimizing the devastating effects of drought.

42. A proposal for establishing a regional soil and water research centre to formulate regional programmes in developing water resources and in accelerating their implementation was presented.

43. The problem of checking the spread of diseases represented a good potential in promoting regional cooperation efforts. Exchange of information among countries of the Region and urgent notification of disease outbreaks in any country was absolutely necessary for timely action in preventing the spread of disease. Many delegates expressed their concern that existing coordination arrangements were inadequate for appropriate animal disease control, and requested FAO's assistance in this respect.

44. The need to produce quality vaccines in the countries of the Region was stressed. Many delegates called for the identification of national veterinary laboratories to act as regional referral centres in testing vaccines and other biological materials.

45. The need to strengthen linkages between national research systems and extension services to increase their efficiency, effectiveness and impact in addressing the real problems facing the farmers was brought to the attention of the Conference.

46. The role of FAO in promoting ECDC/TCDC was commended by many delegates, who stressed the importance of South-South cooperation and the need for its promotion within the Region.

47. Fish provided a sizable source of animal protein for many countries in the Region. While overall regional fish production was below potential, recent events had further exacerbated the situation. Delegates expressed the need to take corrective action in improving the marine environment and in increasing fish production.

48. The world economic recession that prevailed during the late 1980s had its negative effects on the economies of the Third World, including countries of the Region, with slackened demand for agricultural and other primary commodities and increased balance-of-payment deficits. Delegates noted the potential for regional cooperation efforts to take place in this area by enhancing intra-regional agricultural trade.

49. The Near East Region continued to face such major challenges as low development rates, income inequality, country and regional disparities, rapid population growth, environmental degradation, external debt, protectionism and unfavourable terms of trade. At a time when developed countries were experiencing a recessionary economic period and external development resources had become very limited, these difficulties constrained regional efforts to combat hunger and poverty.

50. Sustained agricultural development was inseparable from environmental conservation for future generations. Some delegates expressed their concern with the ongoing environmental degradation and expressed the urgent need for its containment. In so doing, they indicated the need for rational use of resources conducive to sustainable development, and urged developed countries to intensify their efforts in alleviating harmful environmental effects.

51. The trend towards privatization, promotion of free market operations and decentralization of agricultural planning was acknowledged by several delegates. Such a trend would require the implementation of appropriate

structural adjustment programmes and the release of free market mechanisms, especially with regard to the provision of agricultural inputs and services.

52. Delegates commended FAO for arranging a symposium on developing the agricultural sector in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Rome, October 1991). They supported its conclusions and recommendations, and called upon FAO to study the possibility of implementing them.

Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1990-1991²

53. The return of the Regional Office for the Near East to its original seat in Cairo as of 1 September 1991 was warmly welcomed by the Conference as a step forward in enhancing its ability to readily respond to the needs of the Member Nations.

54. The Conference noted with satisfaction that, irrespective of adverse political conditions leading to restricted staff movements in some parts of the Region, FAO's financial problems and vacant regional posts, the Regional Office had been able to implement the greater part of its work plan under the Programme of Work and Budget for 1990-91. The Programme continued to concentrate on achieving sustainable agricultural development, increasing farmers' income, raising living standards, alleviating rural poverty, and promoting food security and self-dependence.

55. The Conference welcomed the convening of the FAO Expert Consultation on Fertigation/Chemigation (Cairo, Egypt, September 1991) and requested FAO to continue to provide assistance to Member Nations in promoting this relatively recent advanced technique designed to economize on irrigation water use and agricultural chemicals applications for soil amelioration and pest and disease control.

56. FAO was commended for involving regional networks in the execution of the regional programme in keeping with the goal of promoting institution building in Member Nations and involving them within the mainstream of agricultural development programmes.

57. The Conference appreciated FAO's efforts in the field of animal production and health, and particularly appreciated the positive results of FAO's efforts in containing and eradicating the New World screwworm (NWS) in Libya and the Front Line States.

58. Moreover, FAO's efforts in rinderpest containment in the Region were appreciated. In this respect, the strengthening of the West Asia Rinderpest Eradication Coordination Campaign (WARECC) through cooperation agreements between FAO and Member Nations of the Region was welcomed.

59. The Conference took note of the effective development of the activities of the Near East and North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA) that had been able to independently secure finances necessary for its proper functioning after have been initially supported by FAO. The Conference also commended FAO for supporting the newly established Agricultural Food Marketing Association for the Near East and North Africa (AFMANENA), and urged member associations to pay their dues and

² NERC/92/2

contributions to enable it to carry out its functions. The Conference further requested FAO to continue to provide every possible assistance in this respect.

60. The Conference welcomed the Draft Agreement for the establishment of the Near East Plant Protection Organization (NEPPO), as revised by the Technical Consultation (Rome, 7-17 April 1992), and the consensus reached by the Consultation that Morocco would be the seat of NEPPO.

61. It was noted that three regional commissions were held during 1990-91, namely:

- a) The Eleventh Session of the Near East Forestry Commission, Ankara (Turkey, 15-19 October 1990).
- b) The Fourth Session of the Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission (Damascus, Syria, 13-17 October 1991).
- c) The Fourth Session of the Near East Commission on Agriculture (Amman, Jordan, 8-12 December 1991).

62. The Conference reviewed the recommendations of these three Commission Sessions, endorsed their conclusions and called upon the Director-General to take their recommendations into consideration when formulating the next FAO Programme of Work and Budget.

63. Recognizing such major challenges facing agriculture in the Region as low development rates, rapid population growth, environmental degradation, urban and rural income disparities, rural poverty, and unfavourable terms of trade for agricultural commodities, the FAO Medium-Term Plan (MTP) for 1994-99 would focus on:

- a) promoting infra-regional cooperation to assist Member Nations in achieving sustainable agricultural development, increasing farm income and attaining higher self-sufficiency food production levels;
- b) promoting more equitable income distribution within rural populations and between rural and urban areas, as well as concentration on rural poverty issues and improvement of nutritional levels. In so doing, the Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for the Near East (CARDNE) could serve as a forum;
- c) providing assistance to national research centres and promoting research cooperation through TCDC initiatives while focusing on:
 - integrated plant nutrition techniques and high-yielding varieties;
 - integrated pest management systems;
 - integration of animal and crop production systems;
 - efficient use of land and water resources;
 - promotion of integrated water-shed management;
 - promotion of cost-reducing and energy-saving technologies; and
 - promotion of alternative sources and formulas for livestock and poultry feed production.

64. The MTP for 1994-99 would support the four FAO-initiated regional organizations, namely NENARACA, AFMANENA, CARDNE and INFOSAMAK, active in

the areas of agricultural credit, food marketing and distribution, rural development and fish marketing information, respectively.

65. The regional MTP for 1994-99 would also focus on forest land area planning, management of man-made forests, strengthening of forestry institutions and the promotion of public commitment and participation in expanding forested areas.

66. FAO fisheries programmes in the Region would be geared to improving policy formulation, developing favourable conditions for investment in the fisheries sector, increasing the accuracy of data collection systems and promoting infra-regional cooperation in the utilization of common fisheries resources.

Recommendations to Member Nations

67. The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

- a) give greater attention to agro-silvi-pastoral aspects in forestry policies, plans and programmes and to strengthen forestry education;
- b) take measures to ensure systematic dissemination of research results among decision-makers, practitioners and trainers;
- c) improve the performance of public and private sectors, institute liberal market policies, adopt policies that accommodate an appropriate combination of private and public sectors financing in providing agricultural services to farmers, and in preventing further land fragmentation and reduction in the size of land holdings;
- d) review and update existing food laws and regulations in adopting recommended food analysis methodology for official use in food control;
- e) consider all technical, socio-economic, institutional and environmental aspects when planning and implementing food loss prevention programmes; and establish national networks, linked through a regional network, for pre- and post-harvest loss reduction;
- f) adopt policies to enhance and improve the role of women in agricultural development;
- g) adopt national seed policies to promote seed development and maintain breeder stock when supporting additional multiplication phases;
- h) ensure adequate implementation of appropriate legislation to promote seed development and production, adopt credit and price policies that promote the use of quality seed; and
- i) strengthen and standardize certification programmes, and promote regional cooperation in tissue culture in producing large quantities of disease-free vegetatively-propagated materials.

Recommendations to FAO

68. The Conference called upon FAO to:

- a) survey and analyse forestry curricula in the Near East, and advise governments on their adaptation to meet the emerging needs of the countries concerned;
- b) organize a regional seminar on community forestry to enable participants to exchange information and experience in this important field which has not yet received serious consideration by many countries in the Region;
- c) organize a regional seminar on range management to study all technical, socio-political and economic aspects, and suggest other possible means of livelihood for the range communities;
- d) provide advice on policies, timing and sequence of changes in the public and private sectors' roles in providing services and inputs to farmers, and advise and assist with activities to enhance cooperation between the public and private sectors;
- e) continue to provide technical support to strengthen national food control programmes in the Region; assist Member Nations in the development of appropriate training curricula for food control personnel; and organize national and regional training programmes in food control-related subjects;
- f) provide technical advice to Member Nations in establishing import/export quality control and certification systems;
- g) assist in designing and implementing national and regional seed policies and programmes and organize training programmes to strengthen the capabilities of professionals and technicians in the seed production industry;
- h) prepare a regional project on integrated pest management (IPM) for protected vegetable cultivation and approach donors to ensure its funding;
- i) promote cooperation among Member Nations in tissue culture techniques and enhance collaboration among national laboratories in this field; and
- j) submit a document to the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for the Near East, providing information on the status and achievements of the Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP), highlighting its impact on recipient countries and proposing alternatives for its reactivation and continuation (Appendix E).

SELECTED ISSUES ON AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Policies Leading to the Efficient Use and Conservation of Water Resources in the Near East Region³

69. The Conference reviewed the document on "Policies Leading to the Efficient Use and Conservation of Water Resources in the Near East Region" which summarized the present situation, discussed the implications and progress achieved to date in keeping with the International Action Programme for Water and Sustainable Development, and derived conclusions and recommendations regarding different aspects of the problem.

70. The Conference commended FAO for preparing a comprehensive document on the subject and, in particular, for proposing action-oriented recommendations to be implemented by both Member Nations and by FAO.

71. The proposal to establish a Regional Centre for Land and Water Research was thoroughly discussed but one delegation was not in its favour.⁴ While some delegations felt that the recommendations of the Twentieth FAO Regional Conference in this respect sufficed and that the Region already had enough centres dealing with land and water research, others proposed that FAO might undertake, in consultation with Member Nations, a study to be presented to the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference on the need to establish a centre of this nature.

72. It was noted that water security had become a major concern for the Region and that several efforts had been made to manage and ensure efficient water use for sustainable agricultural development. Yet, under current water use patterns and demographic rates, water demand in the majority of the countries would exceed renewable water resources within the next 10 to 20 years, if not sooner. Some countries were already meeting part of their water requirements from non-renewable water resources.

73. It was further noted, with concern, that water quality standards had also deteriorated. Over-pumping of ground water in some localities had resulted in a critical drop in water levels and sea-water intrusion. Disposal of untreated urban wastes into rivers, streams and/or draining ditches had degraded the quality of surface water. Excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides had also contributed to surface and underground water pollution.

³ NERC/92/3

⁴ The Saudi Delegation was of the opinion that the subject of water had previously been considered at the Twentieth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East, held in Tunis in 1990. Consequently, previous recommendations would be sufficient. As regards the establishment of a Regional Land and Water Research Centre, the Saudi Delegation did not support the establishment of such a centre because the subject of common water resources in the Region had become a political issue and had been under consideration at the highest level in each country. Should the intention be to make use of water research studies, research centres already existed in some countries of the Region and any interested country could use research results and studies published by these centres.

74. The Conference noted that soil and water management could not be mutually exclusive, especially under arid and semi-arid climatic conditions. Land and water use master plans should be integrated. It further noted that water and land policies in most countries of the Region were designed and implemented by different governmental agencies, a practice that resulted in fragmented and sometimes conflicting functions in resource management.

75. The Conference noted that conventional surface irrigation was still the most prevalent method employed by most countries of the Region. With few exceptions, the shift to water-saving technologies, especially drip irrigation, had been very slow, and real progress in improving surface irrigation methods had been very limited. Moreover, agricultural extension programmes in the Region ignored the subject of on-farm water management to a great extent.

76. The Conference recognized that many parts of the irrigated lands in the Near East Region suffered from water-logging and salinity problems due to excessive irrigation, irrigation canal seepage and improper drainage systems. Therefore agricultural research and extension institutions should collaborate in improving surface irrigation practices and methods. Precision levelling and water application control should be considered an alternative method in improving surface irrigation techniques.

77. It was noted that medium and small-scale farmers in countries where localized or micro irrigation was employed faced problems related to the use of uncertified and/or deficient materials and services. There were no certified testing laboratories in the Region to assess the quality of imported or locally produced irrigation materials and equipment.

78. New trends in water use were being popularized in the Region. In addition to the re-utilization of marginal-quality waters, urban wastewater was being treated and used in the Region despite some socio-cultural resistance.

79. Developing countries as a whole accounted only for approximately twenty percent of the total global water quality measurement stations in the world. The Conference recognized that water resource management and planning should also focus on water quality monitoring.

80. The recent publication of an FAO manual on the design and construction of water-harvesting schemes in arid and semi-arid areas was well received by the Conference.

81. The absence of a clearly-defined policy consistent with the preservation of socio-economic environments and the promotion of agricultural and water management objectives was recognized as one of the main causes of deficient irrigation management. Good irrigation management required a multidisciplinary approach which would be difficult to pursue within the present framework of specialized fragmented institutions unless collaboration efforts, working linkages and cooperation mechanisms were created.

Recommendations to Member Nations

82. The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

a) give due consideration to the regulation of ground-water extraction methods regarding recharge, water quality and sea-water intrusion to maintain ground-water resources within safety parameters.

b) clearly define national policies, consistent with the socio-economic conditions for water use in agriculture. In this respect, national water and land use plans should be reviewed periodically and consideration should be given to the introduction of water use charges to increase water use efficiency;

c) institutionalize coordination and working linkages among various national agencies concerned with water;

d) improve national data bases and establish data banks for land and water resources giving due attention to quality, use and management considerations;

e) consider recycling of properly treated waste-water for agricultural use;

f) follow up on the recommendation made by the Twentieth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (Tunis, Tunisia, 12-16 March 1990) on the use of common water resources;

g) apply biotechnologies in developing salt- and drought-tolerant plant varieties; and

h) establish units within the agricultural extension system to cater for on-farm water management.

Recommendations to FAO

83. The Conference requested FAO to assist Member Nations to:

a) formulate comprehensive national policies for the efficient use and conservation of water resources;

b) organize national/regional workshops to prepare an action programme for the control and/or prevention of sea-water intrusion;

c) establish/strengthen national management information systems for water use;

d) establish/strengthen national water quality monitoring systems;

e) strengthen agricultural extension services in the area of on-farm water management;

f) establish a regional data bank for land and water resources specifying quality, use and management considerations;

- g) establish a regional laboratory for testing and quality control of irrigation equipment and materials; and
- h) carry out necessary studies on water valuation as a means of establishing cost recovery systems.

84. The Conference also requested FAO to:

- a) prepare a manual or guidelines for safe and efficient use of fertigation/chemigation; and
- b) study, in consultation with countries of the Region, the need to establish a Regional Land and Water Research Centre, and ways and means to strengthen cooperation and collaboration among existing national centres.

Regional Cooperation for Animal Disease Control and Eradication⁵

85. The Conference considered the document entitled "Regional Cooperation for Animal Disease Control and Eradication", which reviewed national animal health services in the Region and current regional cooperation activities for livestock disease control, discussed expanding regional cooperation in controlling animal diseases and current FAO activities and provided recommendations for strengthening regional cooperation.

86. The Conference, having expressed concern over the existence of many contagious diseases, noted with satisfaction that animal health services in the Region had unique strengths compared to other parts of the world. Many countries had sufficient and well-trained human resources, adequate financing and ample supplies for animal health services.

87. One general weakness of animal health services throughout the Region, with few exceptions, was the lack of inter-country coordination and collaboration. This was particularly manifested by the inability to enforce quarantine measures and control of animal movements, a matter that adversely affected progress made in disease control within individual countries. The situation had been further aggravated because of political tensions and civil strife in the Region.

88. The Conference commended FAO for its leading role in activities related to the containment and eradication of the New World screwworm (NWS) in Libya and the Front Line States. It also noted with satisfaction the collaboration among countries within and outside the Region and organizations in that respect.

89. While noting with satisfaction the strengthening of the West Asia Rinderpest Eradication Coordination Campaign (WARECC) through Cooperation Agreements between FAO and countries in the Region, the recent rinderpest spread to Turkey confirmed the fact that there were pockets of the disease which needed to be eliminated. In this respect, the decision taken by Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran to join WARECC was welcomed. Countries not currently participating in one of the three rinderpest eradication campaigns for Africa, South Asia and the Near East were encouraged to join.

⁵ NERC/92/4

90. The Conference appreciated the assistance provided by FAO in combatting the outbreak of rinderpest in Southeastern Turkey and in preparing the Action Plan for emergency rinderpest control in the border areas.

91. FAO's objective to globally eradicate rinderpest by the turn of the century was appreciated.

92. Recognizing that the third phase of the Middle and Near East Regional Animal Production and Health Project (MINIADEP) with its long history of promoting animal production and health programmes in the Region, was due to end by December 1992, it was felt that a redefinition of its activities, organization and funding was called for.

93. The presence of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in some countries of the Near East seriously affected animal and animal product export trade within and outside the Region. Coordination among national and regional FMD control programmes was a necessary requirement for the complete eradication of the disease from the Region.

94. Satisfaction was expressed that FAO was preparing a Regional Technical Cooperation Project to formulate guidelines for the control of brucellosis in small ruminants and to identify areas of priority assistance for participating countries.

95. The Conference noted with appreciation that FAO was developing a proposal for the establishment of a Regional Epidemiology Investigation Service for the Near East to address intra-regional cooperation disease control programmes, and identify disease control priorities within the Region.

Recommendations to Member Nations

96. The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

- a) prepare and implement national programmes for the control of FMD;
- b) give due support to WARECC and national animal health services for the complete eradication of rinderpest;
- c) intensify regional cooperation in regulating entry/movement of animals and animal materials and in strictly enforcing existing national and international quarantine regulations. In this respect, special attention should be given to the periodical review of relevant legislation and regulations;
- d) strengthen national veterinary services, and consider the advantages of parallel veterinary private sector services;
- e) consider the redefinition of the role, activities, organization and funding of MINEADEP or, alternatively, consider the establishment of another forum for coordinating animal production and health activities in the Region; and
- f) communicate accurate and timely information on the occurrence of animal diseases and collaborate with FAO, OIE and WHO in

providing disease information and statistics for the publication of the Animal Health Yearbook.

Recommendations to FAO

97. The Conference requested FAO to:

- a) assist Member Nations in preparing and implementing FMD control programmes;
- b) study the possibility of initiating a regional project for the control of FMD;
- c) convene a regional meeting to discuss the future of MINEADEP;
- d) strengthen WARECC by preparing a cooperative agreement to cover and fund vaccination and sero-monitoring activities in Member Nations on an annual basis;
- e) prepare a regional programme, in collaboration with WHO, the countries of the Region and donors, to control and eventually eradicate major zoonoses in the Region and prevent the entry and spread of exotic diseases; and
- f) service the establishment of a Regional Epidemiology Investigation Service (EIS) in the Near East Region to address regional cooperation efforts regarding disease diagnosis and information sharing, coordination of animal disease control programmes and establishing disease control priorities within the Region.

Representation of the Region in the CGIAR⁶

98. 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, outlined recent developments in the CGIAR system, recalled past representation of the Region on CGIAR and summarized criteria for selection of Member Nations and their responsibilities.

99. Although progress had been made in many countries of the Region, much remained to be done in most of them to reach a fully effective capacity for well-organized, science-based research. With few exceptions, there were no long-term research strategies in the countries of the Region. The majority of national research policies for the normal five-year development plans were primarily based on proposals by scientists and did not necessarily respond to national priorities.

100. The Conference noted with satisfaction that FAO continued to provide technical assistance to strengthen the agricultural research capacities of its Member Nations, and enhance and strengthen cooperation between national research institutions and regional and international research centres, especially those belonging to the CGIAR. FAO's assistance to the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA) was appreciated.

⁶ NERC/92/5

101. The Conference took note of recent developments in CGIAR, especially with respect to the addition of four new international research centres to its membership, namely, the International Council for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), the International Centre for Living Aquatic Resource Management (ICLARM), the International Irrigation Management Institute (IIMI), and the International Network for the Improvement of Banana and Plantain (INIBAP).

102. The Conference re-emphasized the importance of adequate and effective representation of the Region in the CGIAR and urged Member Nations elected to represent the Region to effectively participate in all the CGIAR meetings and to support their representatives. In this regard, the Conference appreciated FAO's endeavours to strengthen the liaison between the CGIAR and the representation in the Region.

Recommendations to Member Nations

103. The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

- a) continue their efforts to strengthen the capabilities of national agricultural research institutions by improving research management, recruiting highly qualified and competent research leaders and allocating adequate funds for research;
- b) promote cooperation and improve coordination among different research institutions operating under various ministries/departments/universities within individual countries to enhance research efficiency and effectiveness;
- c) support the recently established AARINENA to enhance regional cooperation in agricultural research; and
- d) ensure that designated representatives of the Region in the CGIAR are well versed in agricultural research needs and programmes in Member Nations of the Region.

Recommendations to FAO:

104. The Conference requested FAO to:

- a) continue its assistance to Member Nations of the Region in formulating and implementing operational programmes to improve the efficiency of national research institutions;
- b) provide technical assistance in institution building and human resource development to improve organization, management and implementation of national agricultural research programmes;
- c) provide secretarial services and technical assistance to AARINENA, in improving cooperation and coordination among Member Nations;
- d) support efforts by the representatives of the Region in the CGIAR to facilitate the flow of information from national research institutions to CGIAR and ensure feedback;

- e) continue to provide information, and operational and administrative services to the regional representatives in the CGIAR.

105. The Conference noted that Tunisia would continue to represent the Region in the CGIAR for 1993 and 1994 and elected the Islamic Republic of Iran (Dr Ali Ahoonmanesh, Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Research, Education and Extension) to represent the Region for the period 1993-1996.

Update on ICN Preparations

106. The Conference took note of the ongoing preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN), jointly convened by FAO and WHO to be held at FAO Headquarters, Rome, in December 1992.⁷ Preparations for the ICN would consist of building upon country level experiences to enhance activities designed to prevent and alleviate malnutrition at national, regional and global levels. The active participation of Member Nations in all phases of the ICN, including its preparation, the Conference itself, and its follow-up, was considered an essential part of the ICN process. The recommendations of the Twentieth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (Tunis, Tunisia, 12-16 March 1990) had been considered in the technical preparation for the ICN.

107. Several countries in the Region had already nominated national Focal Points to coordinate country-specific activities and to facilitate communication with the ICN co-sponsors.

108. The FAO/WHO Near East and Eastern Mediterranean Regional Meeting for the Preparation of the ICN was held in Cairo, Egypt, in April 1992 and the report of the meeting had already been distributed to Member Nations. In addition to recommendations pertaining to each issue, the report contained regional priorities and observations to be included in the ICN Declaration and Plan of Action.

109. Due to the major importance of the ICN, Member Nations of the Near East were urged to undergo preparations for it and ensure that their respective country representation be at the highest possible policy-making and technical levels.

⁷

CONCLUDING ITEMS

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

110. The Conference welcomed the kind invitation extended by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to host the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for the Near East. It requested the Director-General of FAO to take this kind invitation into consideration when deciding on the date and place of the Conference, in consultation with Member Governments of the Region.

Adoption of the Report

111. The Conference adopted the present report, as amended.

Closure of the Conference

112. Mr Edouard Saouma, the Director-General of FAO, expressed his gratitude to His Excellency the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Government and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran for hosting the Conference, for the generous hospitality and for the excellent arrangements and facilities which greatly contributed to its success. He expressed his appreciation and thanks to His Excellency Hassan Habibi, the First Deputy President, for inaugurating the Conference. He paid special tribute to the Chairman, His Excellency Issa Kalantari, Minister for Agriculture of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as to the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur. He thanked the National Organizing Committee and the Secretariat for their efforts in ensuring the smooth functioning of the Conference.

113. In his closing statement, His Excellency Issa Kalantari, Chairman of the Conference, reiterated his profound thanks and appreciation to the Director-General of FAO and the Regional Representative for the Near East for their continued efforts in making the Conference a success. He thanked their Excellencies the Ministers, and 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 constructive recommendations and conclusions.

114. The Chairman declared the Conference closed at 13.00 hours on Thursday, 21 May 1992.

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 Region
6. Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1990-1991

III. SELECTED ISSUES ON AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

7. Policies Leading to the Efficient Use and Conservation of Water Resources in the Near East Region
8. Regional Cooperation for Animal Disease Control and Eradication
9. Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)
10. Update on ICN Preparations

IV. CONCLUDING ITEMS

11. Any Other Business
12. Date and Place of the Twenty-second Regional Conference for the Near East
13. Adoption of the Report
14. Closure of the Conference

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Reports Officer:	S. Galal, RNEA

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

NERC/92/1	Annotated Agenda
NERC/92/2	Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1990-91
NERC/92/2-Sup. 1	FAO Medium-Term Plan 1992-97 - Regional Dimensions
NERC/92/2-Sup. 2	Meetings of Regional Commissions
NERC/92/3	Policies Leading to the Efficient Use and Conservation of Water Resources in the Near East Region
NERC/92/4	Regional Cooperation for Animal Disease Control and Eradication
NERC/92/5	Representation of the Region in the CGIAR
<u>NERC/92/INF SERIES</u>	
NERC/92/INF/1	Information Note
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NERC/92/INF/4	Update on ICN Preparations
NERC/92/INF/5	Action Taken on the Main Recommendations of the Twentieth Regional Conference
NERC/92/INF/6	Statement by the Director-General
NERC/92/INF/7	Fourth International Technical Conference for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources - Information Note

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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

First of all, let me say how happy I am that the Twenty-first FAO Regional Conference for the Near East is being held once more in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran: a country rich in history, and a great and ancient civilization; a long-standing agricultural tradition with an impressive agricultural potential. Its fertile lands spread from the plains of Khuzistan to the Caspian coasts and Mesopotamia: its leaders are eager to exploit this potential in a sustainable manner to serve the people.

You will recall that Iran hosted the Fifth Regional Conference in 1960. As we gather here today, we find ourselves again overcome by the genuine and warm hospitality of our hosts. On behalf of you all, may I whole-heartedly thank the Government and people of Iran.

I would also wish to extend a warm welcome to all of you, and a special greeting to the Ministers attending. Their presence testifies to the importance they attach to this regional agricultural summit. I am confident that your active participation in the deliberations of this Conference, under the able guidance of His Excellency Issa Kalantari, will enrich the dialogue and lead to sound recommendations.

REGIONAL OFFICE AND FAO REPRESENTATION

It is satisfying to see that the FAO Regional Office for the Near East has resumed its original seat - Cairo - albeit a year later than originally planned. I am particularly pleased to have been able to secure the services of Mr. Atif Yehya Bukhari as the new Regional Representative. Before joining FAO, Mr. Bukhari was closely associated with our Organization, serving as Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to FAO from 1978 until the end of 1989. In this capacity, he was an active delegate in all sessions of FAO's Governing Bodies and a member of the Finance Committee, on which he served with distinction from May 1978, and whose Chairman he was from 1986 to 1989. Under his leadership, you can rest assured that the team of regional technical officers stands ready to expand its services to Member Nations and to provide technical assistance and advice. With its presence now assured within the Region itself, its effectiveness will undoubtedly be enhanced.

It is also gratifying to see that the recently established FAO Representation in the Islamic Republic of Iran is now in operation. I am confident that the presence of an FAO Representative in this country will strengthen the existing cooperation between Iran and the Organization. I assure you that FAO will spare no effort in assisting the Government in enhancing agricultural production.

OVERALL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE REGION

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

The Near East Region is emerging from a ruinous war which damaged the economies and the environment of many countries, and which will continue to have serious repercussions in the future.

Internal conflicts are also devastating a number of countries of the Region, raising the spectre of famine. In the Sudan, despite a sharp recovery in the cereal harvest, the food supply situation remains precarious. In Somalia, fighting continues in and around Mogadishu and recent efforts to deliver food aid have failed, leading to widespread hunger and deaths from starvation. Afghanistan, which is still in a state of civil war, continues to face increasing problems with food shortages reported, particularly in Kabul.

Serious food shortages also persist in Iraq despite some increase in imports. Food prices continue to rise and large sections of the populations cannot afford to purchase food at these prices. In the aftermath of the war, it is inevitable that this year's harvest in June will also be poor. For its part, FAO is trying to provide assistance in conducting another weed and sunnpest aerial spraying operation in the Nineveh, Dohuk, Erbil and Suleimanya Governorates in order to prevent further production losses.

Before the civil war in 1975, Lebanon's economy was one of the healthiest and most developed in the Region. Because of the civil unrest, however, much of its agricultural capacity has been destroyed. It will require years of efforts to regain the agricultural productivity of the pre-war situation. Furthermore, floods and unusually heavy snowfall have caused serious damage to agriculture and affected an estimated 100 000 people.

Last year and the first months of 1992 have been marked by an unusually large number of disasters. In quick succession we have witnessed drought in Morocco, with serious implications for the current crop season; floods and snowstorms in Jordan, which forced the Government to request the urgent provision of agricultural inputs and food relief to Jordanian farmers; and a devastating earthquake in Turkey, causing the death of hundreds of people.

The refugee situation in the Region is becoming alarming. Over the years millions of people have fled their own lands to find shelter in other countries which too often are equally poor and unable to support the refugees. There are still some 3 million refugees from Afghanistan in Pakistan alone who continue to require massive international assistance.

The slowdown of world economic activity has adversely affected the developing countries of the Region. Moreover, as a result of the recent war, many countries have had to face increasing problems associated with the return of large numbers of migrant workers, the loss of remittances, disruptions in trade, tourism and capital flows. In 1991, oil prices dropped significantly as a result of the decreased demand for oil, which led to an increased gap between oil revenues and the costs to be met for reconstruction and recovery. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, for the first time in recent history, have had to resort to borrowing from international banks.

DEBT-SERVICING AND PROTECTIONISM

Many of the Region's countries have been caught in a stranglehold of debt-servicing with much of their export earnings being absorbed by interest payments on external debts and their economic difficulties, including debt-servicing, further compounded by the shortage of official aid. In the Region, these now stand at US\$21 billion a year, for which 38 percent of the Region's total export earnings are used. Worldwide, they now exceed US\$153 billion a year.

Furthermore, the adverse impact of the protectionism that persists in the industrialized countries regarding market access for the Region's exports has been exacerbated by the depressed prices of primary commodities, particularly oil. Today the price of a barrel of oil is much lower in real terms than ten years ago. As for agricultural commodities, the Region continues to face an increasingly negative trade balance with imports in 1990 totalling US\$22 billion as opposed to US\$7 billion in exports. And if I may stress this point, it would seem to me that in order to reverse this unfortunate trend, a successful outcome to the long-drawn-out Uruguay Round negotiations has more than ever become crucial. It would lay the foundations for a more equitable, open and dynamic trading system, without which it will be difficult for countries in the Region to continue their pursuit of national policy adjustments in dealing with such complex issues as market and exchange rate liberalization.

Despite some improvements in regional food consumption patterns, food production continues to lag. As a result, the volume of food imports has grown sharply. The reasons for this relatively poor performance are too numerous to examine here in any detail. But there are two major constraints which this Conference has chosen to bring before you and which have weighed heavily on the Region since recorded history began - water and pests.

WATER RESOURCES

Most of the Near East countries have a semi-arid or arid climate with 75 percent of their crop land dependent on often erratic rainfall. Water demands are fast approaching the limits of the available resources. During the past three decades, irrigated land increased from 30 to 38 million hectares. Egypt is using nearly 87 percent of its renewable water resources, Libya 77 percent and Saudi Arabia 62 percent, to cite only a few examples. Water is vital to life. It should be managed wisely and efficiently. Unfortunately, the problems related to water use in this Region are many and diverse: low irrigation efficiency, overuse, water pollution, soil salinity and waterlogging, inefficient drainage practices and lack of sound policies and strategies. If remedies are not introduced to improve the current situation, acute shortages of water for agricultural and domestic use are anticipated by the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The use of river basins and underground aquifers that serve more than one country may lead to conflicts in the future. A number of leaders of the Region, conscious of this problem, are considering convening a water summit to debate this vital issue. It is, therefore, no coincidence that one of the major documents before you entitled "Policies Leading to the Efficient Use and Conservation of Water Resources in the Near East Region" seeks to tackle this very important problem in some depth.

I trust that your debate on this document will contribute to a better management of the water resources in the Region.

REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR DISEASE CONTROL

Another aspect of agricultural development of importance to this Region is animal production. Many of the early inhabitants of the Near East were nomads and livestock owners. Their wealth was measured in terms of the number of heads of camels or sheep owned.

According to FAO's data for 1990, which is still incomplete, total livestock products contributed more than US\$14 billion to the economies in the Region.

This important sector of the economy should, therefore, be protected and the spread of infectious diseases must be checked.

Recent experience has demonstrated that, without close and strong cooperation among the countries of the Region, major catastrophes can occur. The New World screwworm is a striking example. When this lethal pest was first detected in Libya in 1989, all predictions led to pessimism. Had action not been swift, the spread of this pest would have had devastating effects on the great wildlife resources of Africa and caused a huge loss to the livestock resources on which so many people depend. The success of the FAO-led campaign also strengthens our faith in the capacity of the world community to respond to a major emergency with speed and generosity.

A more recent example of concern to your Region was the outbreak of rinderpest in southwestern Turkey in October 1991. A technical consultation which gathered authorities from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey was convened by FAO and held in Rome last November. This led to the formulation, with FAO/TCP support, of a three-year coordinated campaign to eradicate rinderpest from the five countries concerned.

Expanding regional cooperation is an essential prerequisite to controlling infectious animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease, rinderpest and brucellosis, as well as non-infectious diseases like the endo- and ecto-parasites, and to preserving the animal resources of the Region. This means better regional cooperation on disease diagnosis, exchange of information, efficient measures for quarantine control and for the coordination of animal disease control programmes between your countries.

For this reason we believe our Agenda item "Regional Cooperation for Animal Disease Control and Eradication" (Document NERC/92/4) is highly relevant and requires your careful consideration.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION (ICN)

Another cause of concern to your countries is the poor nutritional level of many people in the Region caused by a lack of economic access to food and the persistent shortfall in food production. However, because of the extreme diversity of conditions existing in the Region, problems related to nutrition differ from country to country. In high-income countries, nutritional problems are linked to poorly balanced diets or even to over-nutrition, while in poorer countries food, even when available, is not accessible to a large portion of the population because of lack of purchasing power.

It is therefore timely for our Conference to receive a progress report on preparations for the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN), the first worldwide conference of its kind (Document NERC/92/INF/4). As you are

aware, FAO and WHO are co-sponsors of the meeting, which will take place from 5 to 11 December this year at FAO Headquarters.

The ICN presents a unique opportunity for the international community to address the broad range of issues affecting the nutritional status of the world population. It is therefore important for all regions to take part actively. I am happy to say that progress is being made. Several of your countries have nominated focal points to coordinate ICN activities at national level while others have prepared country reports.

The regional meeting on the ICN held in Cairo last month reviewed a comprehensive Secretariat report on the food and nutrition situation prevailing in the Region, and the ensuing Draft Plan of Action and the Draft Declaration will be submitted to the ICN.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS/SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Problems linked to environmental degradation caused in particular by soil erosion, deforestation, overexploitation and desert encroachment are of notable concern to your Region. In this connection, FAO has participated actively and is making its contribution to the UNCED preparatory process. We will of course participate in the Conference itself next month in Brazil and, as always, stand ready to play an active role in its follow-up.

Sustainable agricultural development has been identified as one of the main medium-term challenges for FAO as outlined in our Medium-Term Plan 1992-97. Thus the Organization has embarked on a major effort aimed at redefining priorities, instituting necessary organization arrangements, strengthening interdisciplinary linkages, and streamlining field programmes. FAO will be at your side, should you so request, in implementing any activities falling within its competence that are initiated to combat environmental degradation and enhance sustainable agriculture.

Let us not forget that our resources are finite, while our needs continue to grow. Tomorrow's challenges will take the shape of an ecologically balanced access to the world's resources. What is needed is a strategy for sustainable agriculture and rural development.

FAO'S ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION

By now you may well be asking, given this background, how FAO has responded to the requests for assistance emanating from your Region?

The report on relevant FAO activities (Document NERC/92/2) which is before you attempts to answer this question. Suffice it to say that our FAO Field Programme in the Region comprises 260 ongoing projects, with a total approved budget of US\$450 million, including FAO/TCP projects.

PROMOTING ECDC/TCDC

Faced with the continuing insignificance of inter-regional trade, subregional groupings such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Maghreb Union, and the Pakistan Islamic Cooperation Free Trade Area have emerged to promote cooperation and trade among the participating countries. The good will is there, but more efforts are still needed to remove barriers to inter-country and inter-regional trade in all sectors - most of all, in agriculture.

FAO, through its Regional Office, will continue its catalytic and supportive role in ECDC/TCDC by promoting new concepts and approaches through inter-country consultations and training activities and by supporting regional organizations and networks. These efforts will focus mainly on issues pertaining to crop production, small ruminants, pasture and forage resources.

CONCLUSION

Mr Chairman,

In concluding, may I say that I am fully aware that the many and complex problems of the Region, its great diversity and the many disparities among its member countries do not easily lend themselves to solutions. But, equally, there is no doubt in my mind that it possesses both the know-how and the natural resources necessary to secure the economic well-being of its people and the full development of its agricultural potential. To do so, however, there is one essential precondition to be fulfilled. The chronic tension and strife of recent years must give way to a situation of peace, stability and cooperation. And because this Regional Conference is, above all, a venue for cooperation at a meaningful level in an important sector of economic activity, it is my sincere hope that it can make an effective contribution to this end.

RECOMMENDATION ON THE
NEAR EAST COOPERATIVE PROGRAMME (NECP)


Introduced by Tunisia and Morocco

The Regional Conference,

1. Recalling the recommendation of the Twelfth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East held in Jordan (1974) which welcomed and supported the tendency of Governments of the Near East Region, to allocate part of their resources to promote a system of self-help in the Region, under the FAO/Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP), the focal point of which being FAO,
2. Taking note of the establishment of the FAO/Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP) in 1976, promoting regional development assistance and self-help, with a view to accelerating regional agricultural development in the Region,
3. Expressing its appreciation and thanks to the Governments of Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who by contributing financially to make the NECP possible, provided a unique opportunity for regional cooperation and solidarity among the countries of the Region,
4. Recording its appreciation to FAO and its Director-General for the effective management of the NECP and the arrangements made for its smooth functioning, in full harmony and cooperation with the FAO Regional Office for the Near East and the Technical Divisions in FAO Headquarters,
5. Noting that the NECP funds have now been entirely allocated to country and regional projects, bringing to an end the first phase of the programme,
6. Aware of the need for the NECP to continue its vital catalytic role in enhancing food production in the Region,

Requests the Director-General of FAO to submit a document to the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for the Near East, providing information on the status and achievements of the NECP, highlighting its impact, and proposing alternatives for its reactivation to strengthen cooperation in the field of agricultural development and food production in the Near East Region.

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