

NERC/94/REP

REPORT

Amman,
Jordan,
3-6 July
1994

Twenty-second 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 6 July 1994)

Afghanistan	Kuwait	Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of
Algeria	Kyrgyz Republic -	Somalia
Bahrain	Lebanon	Sudan
Cyprus	Libya	Syria
Djibouti	Mauritania	Tunisia
Egypt	Morocco	Turkey
Iran, Islamic Republic of	Oman	United Arab Emirates
Iraq	Pakistan	Yemen ¹
Jordan	Qatar	

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
Twenty-second	— Amman, Jordan, 3-6 July 1994

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.

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Regional Conference
for the Near East



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, 1994

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SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Country Statements and General Debate

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

1. appealed to all Member Nations to formulate appropriate strategies for sustainable dryland development in the Region (para. 35);
2. appealed to all Member Nations to develop appropriate water harvesting and storage techniques and introduce coherent measures in dealing with natural resource conservation and in minimizing environmental degradation (para. 35);
3. appealed to all Member Nations to exchange information and notify FAO on desert locust and disease outbreaks for timely action to prevent their spread (para. 40);
4. requested all Member Nations to strengthen linkages between national research systems and extension services to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of both in addressing real problems facing the farmers, and to exchange information, experience and research findings among each other (para. 41);
5. called upon Member Nations to take corrective action in improving the marine environment and in increasing fish production in the Region (para. 43).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

6. endorsed the recommendations reached by the Fifth Session of the Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission on the impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes on agricultural development in the Near East Region, and called upon FAO to follow up on these recommendations (para. 36);
7. requested that the impact of the GATT negotiations on agricultural development policies and planning be included as a major agenda item in the forthcoming session of the Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission (para. 37);
8. requested FAO's assistance in strengthening coordination arrangements in the exchange of information between countries of the Region concerning desert locust and disease outbreaks for any country of the Region (para. 40).

FAO Activities in the Region

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

9. requested FAO to strengthen its cooperation with IGOs and NGOs in the Region (para. 64);

10. called upon FAO to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience among Member Nations in the area of waste-water treatment and use for agriculture (para. 65);
11. requested FAO to improve its operations on the Early Warning System for the timely delivery of such pertinent information as that regarding impact on international trade and world marketing (para. 66);
12. requested FAO to continue its close collaboration with Member Nations in providing technical assistance and advice regarding agricultural policy and planning and to enhance training activities in this field (paras 67 and 68);
13. expressed appreciation for the various activities performed by RNEA during 1992-93 and requested FAO to develop criteria for accountability purposes (para. 70);
14. called upon FAO to expand studies in marketing of fruits and vegetables in the Region and requested that it collaborate with other concerned regional organizations in this endeavour (para. 71);
15. requested FAO to explore possibilities of expanding research in the use of solar energy and artificial rain in agriculture with relevant international organizations (para. 72).

Outcome of the 106th Session of the Council and its Implications for the Present and Future Activities of FAO in the Region

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

16. supported the Director-General's new programme which was approved by the FAO Council at the 106th Session with regard to the streamlining of FAO priorities and structures and the initiation of the Special Programmes on Increased Food Production in Support of Food Security in Low-Income Food Deficit Countries (LIFDCs) and the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES) (para. 85);
17. proposed opening an FAO sub-regional office to cater to the needs of the Mashrek countries and invited the Director-General to pursue consultation with Member Nations in this regard (para. 86).

Strategy for Sustainable Dryland Development in the Near East

For the attention of Governments

The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

18. develop/review their strategies and action plans in adopting a systems approach to the sustainable development of drylands. Such an integrated approach should consider the technical, socio-economic and environmental aspects of the problem (para. 94(a));
19. adopt integrated livestock/agriculture systems which included forage crop rotations and the processing of crop residues and by-products to increase feed resources for range off-take fattening operations (para. 94(b));

20. support adaptive research on drylands, including that on grazing management, water harvesting, adapted species of fodder trees, shrubs, legumes and grasses, and animal feeding and breeding systems (para. 94(c));
21. review land tenure legislation and grazing rights to promote sustainable resource utilization (para. 94(d));
22. adopt policies based on the participatory approach at all levels in the decision-making process through adequate and efficient extension services (para. 94(e));
23. reform and strengthen existing organizational structures to define and support the role of national institutions as well as the private sector, specializing in dryland development to ensure the success of development programmes (para. 94(f)).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

24. requested that Member Nations be assisted in reviewing and assessing their strategies and action plans for dryland development, developing better drought strategies and increasing food security (para. 95(a));
25. requested that FAO coordinate efforts made by regional and international organizations and enhance bilateral arrangements in the area of range management (para. 95(b));
26. requested FAO to support efforts in carrying out socio-economic assessments of relevant past and present experiences in dryland development and facilitate the exchange of their results among Member Nations of the Region (para. 95(c));
27. requested FAO to facilitate the relevant training and exchange of genetic material, technology and development experience in these fields among interested Member Nations within and outside the Region (para. 95(d)).

Impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Agricultural Development and Performance in the Near East Region: Framework and Lessons of Experience

For the attention of Governments

The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

28. gradually reduce excessive protection of farm inputs and outputs, which should be determined by market forces (para. 109(a));
29. encourage an appropriate macroeconomic environment for agriculture, especially by maintaining a realistic exchange rate and real interest rates to encourage the efficient utilization of limited resources in achieving the goals of food security (para. 109(b));
30. monitor and assess the impact of structural adjustment measures on vulnerable groups within rural areas, on agricultural productivity, on income distribution and on supply response (para. 109(c));

31. establish and implement appropriate investment and social safety-net programmes to overcome the short-run negative impacts of structural adjustment measures (para. 109(d));
32. reorient state expenditure to focus on strengthening physical infrastructure, investing in human capital, rural education and health; providing information and quality control mechanisms to promote agricultural exports, and providing effective protection for clearly defined property rights in land, water and other farm inputs and outputs (para. 109(e)).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

33. requested that FAO promote the exchange of agricultural policy analysis experiences among Member Nations of the Region by establishing a Near East Regional Network for Agricultural Policies (para. 110(a));
34. requested that FAO continue providing policy advice to Member Nations of the Region in the design, implementation and evaluation of agricultural structural adjustment measures, with a view to achieving the goals of food security and to reducing adverse social impacts on vulnerable groups (para. 110(b));
35. requested FAO to continue providing policy advice and analytical support to governments in formulating policy packages which improve agricultural price policies and which protect investments in rural infrastructure and human resources (para. 110(c));
36. requested that FAO strengthen the technical capabilities of national policy analysts by enhancing training activities in project analysis, agricultural structural adjustment policies and reform needs (para. 110(d)).

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

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

37. recommended continuous consultation with their representatives to the CGIAR regarding their research priorities and receipt of successive reports from their representative on CGIAR meetings (para. 119);
38. supported the Secretariat proposals to improve the effectiveness of the regional representation to the CGIAR and ensure the highest professional qualifications of the selected representatives (para. 120);
39. elected Egypt (Mr. Abd-El-Salam A. Gamaa, Director, Agriculture Research Centre, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Land Reclamation) to represent the Region on the CGIAR for the period 1995-1998 (para. 122).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

40. requested FAO to compile and appraise future country nominations to CGIAR to ensure the matching of candidates' qualifications with recommended criteria, and to bring them to the attention of the Regional Conference (para. 120);
41. requested FAO to brief regional representatives to CGIAR and assist them in improving their interaction with Member Nations of the Region by channelling their demands for information and circulating their reports after each CGIAR meeting (para. 121);
42. elected Egypt (Mr Abd-El-Salam A. Gomaa, Director, Agriculture Research Centre, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Land Reclamation) to represent the Region on the CGIAR for the period 1995-1998 (para. 122).

Follow-up on the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN)

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

43. suggested that permanent national interministerial mechanisms to effectively coordinate the ICN follow-up activities be established (para. 127);
44. urged Member Nations to continue playing an active role in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in the area of food safety, food quality control and consumer protection (para. 129).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

45. proposed that FAO organize a special workshop on the topic of food consumption in Member Nations of the Region to update information available and to discuss related matters on food consumption and nutrition (para. 128).

Review and Assessment of the Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP)

For the attention of Governments

The Conference:

46. agreed that a high-level committee be established, to be headed by His Excellency Habib Ahmed Kassim, the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture of Bahrain and composed of representatives from Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco to review the past performance and develop proposals for the future of NECP. The Chairman of the Committee was authorized to contact the concerned governments in obtaining their final concurrence and to develop the workplan of the Committee (para. 132).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

47. requested FAO to provide, through RNEA, Secretariat services to the newly-established NECP Committee and facilitate its functioning (para. 132).

Draft Declaration on Food and Agriculture

For the attention of Governments

The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

48. submit their comments on the draft declaration by 7 September 1994 (para. 133);
49. observe FAO's Fiftieth Anniversary in a manner commensurate with the importance of the event (para. 135).

Desert Locust Control in the Region and Preparation for Future Campaigns

For the attention of Governments

The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

50. cooperate between themselves and with FAO to ensure the successful implementation of preventive Desert Locust Control Programme in the Central Region (paras 141 and 142);
51. maintain a regular monitoring programme of the Desert Locust during recession periods, especially in affected countries; develop and support adequate infrastructures for desert locust survey and control and prepare contingency plans that could be rapidly activated in emergencies; actively contribute to the activities of the Regional Commission for the Desert Locust Control and keep FAO properly informed on the Desert Locust situation in their respective countries (143).

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

52. requested FAO's further assistance in combating the present Desert Locust upsurge (para. 143).

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

For the attention of FAO

The Conference:

53. requested the Director-General to take into consideration the kind invitation extended by Morocco to host the Twenty-third FAO Regional Conference for the Near East when deciding on the date and place of the Conference, in consultation with Member Governments of the Region (146).

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Inauguration of the Conference

1. The Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for the Near East was held in Amman, Jordan, from 3 to 6 July 1994, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The inaugural ceremony was convened at the Royal Cultural Centre and the deliberations of the Conference continued at Hotel Forte Grand (ex Plaza).
2. The Conference was inaugurated by His Excellency Taher El Masri, Speaker of the Jordanian Lower House of Parliament. The inaugural ceremony was attended by 19 Delegations. Observers from other FAO Member Nations, regional and international governmental and non-governmental organizations and the Independent Chairman of the FAO Council were also present. The list of participants is given as Appendix B to this report. The ceremony was also attended by ministers, high-ranking state officials, heads and representatives of diplomatic and UN missions in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as well as representatives of the news media.
3. In his inaugural address, His Excellency Taher El Masri stated that the Conference was convened under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal in recognition of FAO's dynamic and effective role in promoting sustainable agricultural development and in enhancing food security. In view of the high priority the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan attached to agricultural development, Jordan was privileged in hosting the FAO Regional Conference twice in twenty years, the first being in 1974.
4. He extended a warm welcome to Dr Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO, and to the distinguished Delegates and Observers, and hoped that the Conference would achieve valuable results for the development of agriculture in the Region.
5. His Excellency referred to the recent significant political, economic, regional and international events, some of which had deeply influenced the Region. He referred in particular to the emerging New World Order and to the new economic and political blocs. His Excellency, Parliament Speaker El Masri also referred to the political disputes, civil strife and wars that had ravaged the economies of many countries in the Region, contributed to the widening food gap and food insecurity and diminished cooperation between countries of the Region.
6. His Excellency called for close collaboration among countries of the Region with a view to achieving a higher rate of regional self-sufficiency, overcoming economic difficulties and promoting national and regional development. He pointed out that the success of FAO in achieving its stated objectives would depend on the support of Member Nations of the Organization as well as on the cooperation among Member Nations in the Region.
7. The Parliament Speaker stressed the importance of providing policy advice, based on FAO's experience and knowledge, in the areas of structural adjustment programmes and sustainable dryland development.
8. In conclusion, His Excellency El Masri reiterated his warm welcome to all participants and wished the Conference every success.
9. The Director-General of FAO, Dr Jacques Diouf, addressed the First Plenary Session of the Conference and expressed his profound thanks to His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal for hosting the Conference, and for designating His Excellency Taher El Masri to inaugurate and address the Conference on his behalf.

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

10. His Excellency Mansour Bin Tarif, Minister for Agriculture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Conference.

11. His Excellency expressed his thanks and appreciation for the confidence placed in him by the Conference and stated that Jordan was privileged to host the Twenty-second FAO Regional Conference for the Near East. He wished the Conference every success.

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

13. The Conference appointed His Excellency Adel Mahmoud Aboul-Naga (Egypt) as Rapporteur.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

14. The Provisional Annotated Agenda was adopted by the Conference and the Provisional Timetable¹ was adopted after amendment. The Agenda is given as Appendix A to this report.

Statement by the Director-General

15. Dr Jacques Diouf, the Director-General of FAO, expressed his thanks to His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal for the warm welcome he enjoyed, together with the FAO staff and the delegations from its Member Nations in the Near East Region, since arriving in Amman. He said that such a friendly and generous attitude was not surprising in this country with an old history that represented the confluence of several civilizations. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan had not only been successful in preserving the values of a great civilization, but had also, under an enlightened and inspiring stewardship, been making significant strides in all spheres of economic activity, and particularly in agricultural development and natural resources conservation.

16. The Director-General congratulated His Excellency Mansour Bin Tarif, the Jordanian Minister for Agriculture on his election to the post of Chairman of the Conference. He also extended his greetings to the Ministers and Heads of Delegations attending the Conference, noting that their presence was a clear indication of the importance the countries attached to this two-yearly high-level regional gathering on agricultural issues.

17. The Director-General indicated that many Member Nations in the Region were going through such profound policy changes initiated in the 1980s to deal with the economic crisis as large current and fiscal account deficits, mounting foreign debt, inflation and high unemployment. The policy changes were showing positive results in many Member Nations, while others were still grappling with the agonizing problems of structural adjustment programmes. The impact of these macro-economic policies on the agricultural sector had therefore to be carefully monitored, adjusted and fine tuned.

18. The Director-General referred to the widening food gap in the Region and expanding food imports. Despite natural resource constraints and often adverse climatic conditions, considerable potential existed for increasing yields in the Region. He emphasized the importance of tapping these potentials through appropriate policies and measures pursued vigorously and consistently.

¹ NERC/94/INF/2.

19. The Director-General was pleased to announce that the Council welcomed his proposals for sharpening FAO's focus in key areas of support to increased food production in Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDCs) and to more energetic action against pests and animal diseases. The Council also supported his proposals on restructuring the Secretariat and decentralization.
20. The Director-General emphasized that, if an additional one billion mouths were to be fed in the next five years, a new agricultural revolution was needed here and now. The new agricultural revolution should be productive, sustainable and equitable.
21. The cereal deficit of developing countries was estimated to rise to over 162 million tons by the year 2010. Unless immediate action was taken to reverse the current trends, LIFDCs would become increasingly dependent on imports to meet minimum food needs without having adequate means to finance them. It was imperative to spearhead a sharply-focused food security programme, expanding both productivity and total staple food production in LIFDCs.
22. The Director-General intended to initiate immediate action on this programme and to have incremental costs met by FAO. Throughout, the participation of other multilateral and bilateral institutions, both financial and technical, would be sought, together with the cooperation of NGOs. In mobilizing support and resources, round table and consultative groups were envisaged to enable the expansion of the programme based on the demonstrated success of pilot projects.
23. The Director-General expressed his deep concern regarding emergency prevention programmes and informed the Conference about the arrangements being made to deal with emergencies. Immediate action involved the establishment of an Emergency Prevention System (EMPRES) as the initial thrust in combating locust and rinderpest outbreaks.
24. The Director-General touched on forestry and desertification control. FAO, together with other partners, would be only too willing to assist the Member Nations of the Region, on request, in formulating and implementing their overall desertification control strategies. He was pleased to say that FAO was actively engaged in providing its legal and technical contribution to the ongoing process of the Convention on Desertification, the completion of which would hopefully create new possibilities for effective national and international action on this item of Agenda 21.
25. The Director-General stressed the relative importance of the fisheries sector to a large number of developing countries, yet the kind of emphasis that it should receive was lacking. In the review of the 1994-95 budget, resources for fisheries were increased. The International Code of Conduct on Responsible Fishing would be submitted for endorsement to the next session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in March 1995.
26. The creation of the Department of Sustainable Development (DSD), by rearranging a number of existing units, was intended to provide a more integrated approach to cross-cutting issues related to social, economic, technical and environmental aspects of sustainable development. It would play a leading role in formulating policies and strategies related to research and technology development, education and extension, rural development, agrarian reforms, gender issues, people's participation, integrated management of natural resources, environmental protection and other sustainable development aspects.
27. The Director-General pointed out that 800 million people suffered from chronic malnutrition and that it was high time to seriously examine the reasons for this disequilibrium and to seek the necessary solutions. In light of this, Dr Diouf intended to convene a World Food Summit in Rome in early 1996 to raise awareness on world food issues at the highest level and to obtain a political commitment for subsequent action geared towards world food security for present and future generations.

28. The Director-General highlighted the importance of the specific issues to be discussed in the meeting, with some emphasis on the Impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Agricultural Development, Strategies for Dryland Development and Near East Cooperation Programme (NECP).

29. The Director-General underlined the important theme pertaining to the efficient use and conservation of water resources. Water was an increasingly scarce resource - much more so in the Near East Region - and yet its misuse was common. Despite huge investments that accounted for a major share of the total public spending on the agricultural sector, irrigation performance indicators were falling short of expected standards. Actions should be initiated now to confront the problem of producing more food with less water, which would be a great challenge for the future.

30. In conclusion, the Director-General assured delegates that FAO, within its competence and resources, would not be found lacking in assisting their endeavors to build a better, brighter and more food-secure future for their people. The Director-General's statement is given as Appendix D to this report.

STATE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN THE REGION

Country Statements and General Debate

31. The delegates unanimously expressed their sincere thanks and deep gratitude to His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal, of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, for having the Conference convened under his patronage, and to His Excellency Taher El Masri, Speaker of the Jordanian Lower House of Parliament, for delivering the inaugural address. They also expressed their appreciation to the Government of Jordan for hosting the Conference and for the generous hospitality offered to the participants, as well as for the excellent facilities provided.

32. The delegates congratulated His Excellency Mansour Bin Tarif, Minister for Agriculture of Jordan, on his unanimous election as Chairman of the Conference, and His Excellency Adel Mahmoud Aboul-Naga on his appointment as Rapporteur.

33. 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, appreciated his comprehensive address to the Conference and applauded its excellent organization. They also recognized the serious efforts exerted by the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for the Near East, Mr. A. Bukhari and the staff of the Regional Office for the Near East, and welcomed and encouraged the staff of the Regional Office to frequently visit Member Nations in gaining first-hand experience and knowledge of the current problems and be better able to give pertinent advice in their resolution.

34. The majority of delegates delivered country statements on the state of food and agriculture and national policies and strategies for agricultural development in their countries. It was widely observed that food security, economic reform and sustainable 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. Delegates appreciated inclusion in the Agenda of the subject on Strategy for Sustainable Dryland Development in the Near East Region. They stressed the importance of formulating appropriate strategies for sustainable dryland development in the Region. They also emphasized the need for efficient and rational use of water, and further stressed that water shortages would, in the near future, constitute a main constraint to sustainable agricultural development in the Region. They underlined the importance of developing appropriate water harvesting and storage techniques and the need to exchange information and experience in this field. They also emphasized the need for introducing coherent measures in dealing with natural resource conservation and in minimizing environmental degradation.

36. The Conference unanimously expressed satisfaction with the inclusion of the Agenda Item on the Impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Agricultural Development in the Near East Region.² The Conference endorsed the recommendations reached by the Fifth Session of the Economic and Social Policy Commission (Mauritania, October 1993) which discussed this topic, and called upon FAO to follow up on these recommendations.

37. Delegates expressed concern over certain aspects of the Uruguay Round and the signature of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) Final Text. They requested that FAO

² NERC/94/4.

include the impact of the GATT negotiations on agricultural development policies and planning in the countries of the Region as a major agenda item in the forthcoming session of the Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission.

38. Some delegates pointed out the achievements realized by their countries in areas of research and development and expressed their willingness to share such experience with other Member Nations of the Region.

39. Delegates referred to the recent session of the FAO Council which unanimously approved the Director-General's proposals for changing the structure, programmes and policies of the Organization and assured him of their strong belief in the ideas and principles of FAO and their full support for the successful implementation of his proposals.

40. The problem of taking emergency precautions for checking on the spread of desert locust and diseases represented a classical case for regional cooperation. Exchange of information between countries of the Region and urgent notification of desert locust and disease outbreaks in any country was absolutely necessary for timely action to prevent their spread. The Conference expressed its concern that existing coordination arrangements should be strengthened for the proper control of pests and diseases and requested FAO's assistance in this respect.

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

42. 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.

43. Fish provided a sizable source of animal protein for many countries in the Region. While the 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.

Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1992-93

44. Mr Atif Bukhari, ADG/Regional Representative for the Near East reviewed FAO activities undertaken in the Region during the 1992-93 biennium.

45. Mr Bukhari reported on activities implemented in the fields of land and water management including the convening of the Eleventh Near East Land and Water Commission (Tunis, Tunisia, 1992), the Regional Conference on Soil and Water Management under Arid and Semi-arid Conditions (Amman, Jordan, 1993) and the Water Harvesting Expert Consultation (Cairo, Egypt, 1993). He emphasized FAO efforts in enhancing regional technical capacities in the application of innovative techniques and automation as regard irrigation and land levelling.

46. FAO continued to provide technical assistance and advisory support in the areas of developing sustainable crop production systems and establishing networks that promote exchanges of technical information, data and experience among countries of the Region and with European countries.

47. The Conference was informed of the various activities implemented in the area of plant protection, particularly the implementation of the International Code of Conduct on the

Distribution and Use of Pesticides, the enhancement of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), the promotion of a Plant Protection Convention and the endorsement of the establishment of the Near East Plant Protection Organization (NEPPO). The Regional Representative referred to meetings of the Near East Commission for the Control of Desert Locust and its Executive Committee, in 1992 and 1993, and FAO's efforts in monitoring the desert locust population in the Region and in the provision of technical assistance and issuance of monthly bulletins.

48. FAO's activities in the area of agro-industries focused on adaptation of bio-technological techniques for utilization of agro-industrial by-products and for food preservation by irradiation in reducing food losses. In this connection, an Expert Consultation on the Application of Nuclear Techniques in Food Irradiation was convened (Cairo, Egypt, 1993), and FAO collaborated with other UN organizations in the Second Arab Conference on the Perspectives of Modern Technology.

49. The Conference took note of FAO's activities in range management and rehabilitation and of the Organization's collaboration with the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) and the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) in the organization of conferences on sustainable dryland development and with the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (IBPGR), ICARDA and ACSAD in the continued support of the West Asia and North Africa Plant Genetic Resources Network (WANANET).

50. FAO's efforts in the field of animal production and health concentrated on the containment of rinderpest through the strengthening of the West Asia Rinderpest Eradication Coordination Campaign (WARECC).

51. Efforts and progress were made by FAO in promoting regional cooperation and strengthening agricultural research capabilities in Member Nations of the Region. FAO reactivated the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA) to promote agricultural research cooperation and to support agricultural education, training and extension as well as to facilitate linkages between agricultural research and agricultural extension and training.

52. The Regional Representative informed the Conference about the chain of innovative activities related to the development of a Policy Framework and Regional Programme of Action for Women in Agriculture in the Near East (RPAWANE), which would provide a substantive contribution to the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China, September 1995).

53. He also reported on the activities of the Near East and North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA) and the Agricultural Food Marketing Association for the Near East and North Africa (AFMANENA) and noted that these two associations, with FAO technical backstopping, were now operating autonomously within TCDC framework and arrangements. Similarly FAO convened an Expert Consultation on Wheat Trade and Finance in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and AFMANENA, and collaborated with NENARACA in organizing a Seminar on Agricultural Credit Management.

54. The food and nutrition activities during the biennium were centered on the FAO/WHO organized International Conference on Nutrition (ICN), (Rome, December 1992). Twenty-four country papers assessing and analysing national nutrition problems and suggesting actions needed to address them were presented by Member Nations of the Region. FAO provided technical assistance to train extensionists in food and nutrition aspects that would improve food quality control and to select beneficiaries for food subsidy programmes in the Region. FAO also

provided assistance to Member Nations of the Region regarding food safety concerns and selection of laboratory and inspection equipment, food hygiene and food imports inspection.

55. FAO assistance to Member Nations in the formulation of sustainable agricultural development policies and strategies and for the follow-up and monitoring of economic reform programmes continued during 1992-93. Extensive training efforts to enhance regional development capacities and to promote efficient economic management complemented this assistance.

56. The Regional Representative indicated that valuable recommendations were made by the following Regional Commissions which convened during 1992-93:

- a) the Eleventh Near East Land and Water Commission (Tunis, Tunisia, September 1992);
- b) the Fifth Session of the Near East Commission on Agriculture (Cairo, Egypt, 27 June - 1 July 1993), and
- c) the Fifth Session of the Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission (Nouakchott, Mauritania, 17-21 October 1993).

57. FAO continued monitoring the food situation in all Member Nations of the Region through its Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS).

58. The Regional Representative informed the Conference about FAO's technical assistance to Member Nations in preparing national fisheries profiles, in drafting fisheries legislation, in creating surveys and furnishing advice on fish trade, in training on fisheries development policies and in supporting regional and sub-regional bodies to enhance their perspective impact on fisheries development in the Region. He also informed the Conference about the conversion in 1993 of the regional project INFOSAMAK into an autonomous, independent body operating under the laws of the State of Bahrain, and that FAO would continue its support to INFOSAMAK in handling the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on fish control, fish production and trade in the Arab countries.

59. FAO's Forestry activities in the Region continued to reflect concern for urgent action in the priority areas of desertification and sand dune encroachment, deforestation and vegetative destruction by overgrazing and fuelwood collection. FAO provided technical support for the development of national forestry plans and for enhancement of community forestry development and protection, and continued to support the exchange of seedlots and assessment of seedlot performance indicators at both national and global levels.

60. The FAO Regional Office for the Near East (RNEA) continued to produce and disseminate information material and press releases, features and fact sheets, and strengthened contacts with the media, press and national news agencies in the Region.

61. The Conference was also informed about RNEA's renewed cooperation with related Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the establishment of Inter-Agency Task Forces (IATFs) to coordinate efforts, to increase complementarity of action, optimize the use of available resources and provide needed technical assistance and advisory services.

62. The Conference commended the wide scope of the activities undertaken by FAO and its Regional Office for the Near East during 1992-93.

63. The Conference noted with satisfaction that despite the limited financial and human resources and difficulties in staff movements in some parts of the Region due to unfavourable political situations, the Organization's planned programmes in the Region had been satisfactorily implemented.
64. The Conference commended FAO's collaboration with other regional organizations and with IGOs and NGOs, and requested the strengthening of this type of cooperation.
65. The Conference noted with satisfaction the activities performed by FAO as regarded waste-water treatment and use for agriculture and called upon FAO to facilitate exchange of knowledge and experience among Member Nations in this important area.
66. The Conference noted with appreciation the services provided by GIEWS and requested FAO to improve its operations for the timely delivery of such information as that regarding the impact on international trade and world marketing.
67. The Conference commended FAO's activities in agricultural policy analysis and planning in the Region and requested FAO to continue its close collaboration with Member Nations in this area.
68. The Conference commended FAO's training activities in agriculture policy analysis and project planning and requested FAO to enhance them.
69. Some delegates requested the even distribution of FAO's activities in the Region and called for their decentralization.
70. The Conference noted with appreciation the varied activities performed by RNEA during 1992-93 and requested FAO to develop criteria for accountability purposes. Some delegates suggested the inclusion in subsequent documents on the biennial regional activities report of a table to give a quantitative picture of activities and projects performed during the reporting period.
71. While appreciating FAO's assistance and advice in marketing, the Conference called upon the Organization to expand studies in marketing of fruits and vegetables in the Region and requested it to collaborate with other concerned regional organizations in this endeavour.
72. The Conference commended FAO's efforts in strengthening agricultural research activities. It requested FAO to explore possibilities of expanding research in the use of solar energy and artificial rain in agriculture with relevant international organizations.

Outcome of the 106th Session of the Council and its Implications for the Present and Future Activities of FAO in the Region

73. Mr José Ramón Lopez Portillo, the Independent Chairman of the Council, expressed his gratitude for being given the opportunity to participate in this Regional Conference. He congratulated and thanked the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for its magnificent hospitality and organization. He also presented a brief summary of the deliberations and conclusions of the 106th Session of the Council of FAO (30 May - 1 June 1994).
74. The Independent Chairman apprised the Conference that the Session was held in an atmosphere of extraordinary cordiality and with a spirit of great creativity and cooperation. This led to the unanimous approval of the Director-General's proposals in relation to his review of the Programmes, Structures and Policies of FAO, according to Resolution 10/93 of the Twenty-seventh Session of Conference.

75. The Conference recognized that the Director-General's proposals had a normative character and that they represented a first step in the process of reinvigoration of FAO. The Council would be informed through the Finance and Programme Committees about the progress made to date on the Director-General's proposals, the value that would result from their implementation and their tangible and non-tangible costs. It was recognized that in the context of the limited budgetary resources, the redistribution of resources that the Director-General's proposals involved represented only 4.5 percent for the biennium 1994-95, or about US\$30 million.

76. The Conference was informed that the Council stressed the importance that FAO maintain and improve its character as a Centre of Excellence, and as a world centre for information on agricultural and food-related matters within its mandate. The Council, therefore, indicated that FAO's reinvigoration did not suggest a change in its mandate.

77. In relation to extending food security worldwide, mainly in Lower Income Food Deficit Countries (LIFDCs), and with the purpose of achieving a higher and sufficient level of production, it was recalled that FAO had already made important progress in the conceptual and operational spheres.

78. The Conference was informed that the Council Members stressed both the importance of promoting food production as well as that of tackling the problems of food availability and access.

79. The Conference noted that the Council concurred with the Director-General's view that the effort relating to food security should combine extra-budgetary financial sources with those from the Regular Programme that would act as catalysts. Special attention should be given to Africa and to all those regions and countries where more than 800 million people still suffer desperate conditions of hunger and extreme poverty.

80. The Conference was also informed of the full support given to an Emergency Prevention System against Transboundary Animal and Plant Diseases and Pests (EMPRES). More attention would be given in ensuring better coordination with national and international organizations working in this field and in using FAO's modest budgetary resources as an incentive and a catalyst to strengthen and reinvigorate cooperation mechanisms.

81. The Director-General's proposals for the structural changes of FAO were also approved enthusiastically, in particular the strengthening of the Regional Offices and the establishment of new Subregional Offices. The proposals for decentralization were firmly supported. Council Members pointed out that this should not lead to the dispersion of efforts, to a divorce between normative and operational activities, or to a loss in the valuable central services that FAO offered. Therefore, many asked for caution and for a gradual approach in separating the normative from the operational activities to avoid isolation of the officers in the field.

82. The Independent Chairman of the Council stated that the new effort by the Director-General concerning decentralization gave Regional Conferences, as this one, a new dimension, an additional importance and an enhanced role in tuning and adjusting the policies and programmes of FAO so that they would better harmonize with the potentials and needs of every Region and subregion.

83. The Conference noted that the Director-General's proposal for the establishment of the new Department for Sustainable Development afforded greater visibility to this important issue and permitted enhanced coordination and support endeavours for sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry, thus responding to the objectives of the United Nations Conference on Environmental Development (UNCED) and Agenda 21.

84. The Conference was informed of the Council recommendations to ensure that these issues permeated all normative and operational activities of FAO, where pertinent, and to ensure that other departments of FAO worked in a coordinated manner within the global objective of achieving sustainable development.

85. The Conference supported the Director-General's new programme, which was approved by the Council at its 106th Session in Rome. The Conference also supported the proposed sharpening of priority focus through initiation of the Special Programmes on Increased Food Production in Support of Food Security in LIFDCs and on an Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES).

86. The Conference proposed opening an FAO sub-regional office to cater to the needs of the Mashrek countries. The nomination of Jordan to be the Host Country for this Office was supported. Some delegates proposed the establishment of criteria in selecting host countries for future sub-regional offices in the Region, if any. The Conference invited the Director-General of FAO to pursue consultations with Member Nations in this regard.

SELECTED ISSUES ON AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Strategy for Sustainable Dryland Development in the Near East

87. The Conference considered the document before it,³ which reviewed the present status of agriculture in the drylands of the Region, identified factors which constrained development efforts and suggested strategies required in realizing the development goals in questions.

88. The Conference recognized the importance of drylands, which covered at least 10 million square kilometers of landmass, and provided life and support for 180 million inhabitants, as well as the rapid social, economic, technical and political changes affecting them, during the last few decades.

89. The Conference also considered the main strategy components for sustaining dryland development: marketing and rural infrastructure, tenure reform, range rehabilitation, production improvement from mixed farming, agroforestry, maintenance of biodiversity and potential role of biotechnology which should all be addressed when preparing national and regional strategies.

90. The Conference also recognized that political will, existence of marketing facilities and infrastructure, promotion of land tenure and grazing rights and community participation in decision-making were the principal aspects to be weighed in developing a strategy that ensured sustainable dryland development.

91. The Conference noted, in particular, the need to review national development strategies and action plans in the Region to improve their effectiveness by removing institutional and organizational constraints, providing a socio-economic environment conducive to development, improving community participation and providing the data and information necessary for effective dryland development planning.

92. The Conference took note that the excessive use of agricultural inputs and new technologies not adapted to the Region led to negative impacts on the environment and consequently, on sustainable dryland development.

93. The Conference noted the importance of the guidelines provided in the document in assisting national bodies to prepare/revise national strategies and action plans and to stimulate sustainable development of the drylands in the Region.

A. Recommendations to Member Nations

94. The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

- a) develop/review their strategies and action plans in adopting a systems approach to the sustainable development of drylands. Such an integrated approach should consider the technical, socio-economic and environmental aspects of the problem;
- b) adopt integrated livestock/agriculture systems which included forage crop rotations and the processing of crop residues and by-products to increase feed resources for range off-take fattening operations;

³ NERC/94/3.

- c) support adaptive research on drylands, including that on grazing management, water harvesting, adapted species of fodder trees, shrubs, legumes and grasses, and animal feeding and breeding systems;
- d) review land tenure legislation and grazing rights to promote sustainable resource utilization;
- e) adopt policies based on the participatory approach at all levels in the decision-making process through adequate and efficient extension services; and
- f) reform and strengthen existing organizational structures to define and support the role of national institutions, as well as the private sector, specializing in dryland development to ensure the success of development programmes.

B. Recommendations to FAO

95. The Conference requested FAO to:

- a) assist Member Nations in reviewing and assessing their strategies and action plans for dryland development, developing better drought strategies and increasing food security;
- b) coordinate efforts made by regional and international organizations and enhance bilateral arrangements in the area of range management;
- c) support efforts in carrying out socio-economic assessments of relevant past and present experiences in dryland development and facilitate the exchange of their results among Member Nations of the Region; and
- d) facilitate relevant training and the exchange of genetic material, technology and development experience in these fields among interested Member Nations within and outside the Region.

Impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Agricultural Development and Performance in the Near East Region: Framework and Lessons of Experience

96. The Conference reviewed the document,⁴ which provided an assessment of the impacts of structural adjustment programmes on agricultural development in selected countries of the Region, reviewed the origin and elements of structural adjustment programmes, discussed lessons learned and proposed recommendations for consideration by the Conference.

97. The Conference noted that structural adjustment and stabilization programmes, as recommended by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), had been adopted by many Member Nations in the Region. It also took note of the importance of these programmes in reducing internal and external deficits, increasing efficiency in the economy and reducing government expenditure. Furthermore, the Conference realized that although the specifics of adjustment "packages" varied from one Member Nation to another the core of macroeconomic programmes in the Region was almost similar.

⁴ NERC/94/4.

98. The Conference noted that agriculture in the Region did not receive enough attention during the past decades. This was recognized to be detrimental to the sector's development. It was noted that the thrust of the structural adjustment programmes in many Member Nations aimed at correcting this situation.

99. The Conference recognized that structural adjustment was necessary, but not sufficient for achieving sustainable long-run growth and food security at the national and household levels. However, the Conference noted that social and administrative constraints often impeded implementation. Therefore, it emphasized the need for complementary policies to support infrastructure and human capital formation and to mitigate the social costs of adjustment.

100. The Conference recognized the varied impacts of structural adjustment within the agricultural sector and among rural people in the Member Nations of the Region. It noted that, in most of these countries, owners of scarce resources (land) received more of the benefits than owners of abundant resources (labour), and there could also be differences in impacts, by farm size, crop mix and location.

101. The Conference noted that the speed of the supply response to policy measures was a crucial factor for the success of sustained adjustment. It stressed that measures to enhance farmers' response to policy changes, such as public investment in rural infrastructure, should therefore be introduced and enhanced. It emphasized the need to protect investments in rural infrastructure and human capital, as far as possible, from budget cuts.

102. The Conference noted that structural adjustment programmes should be part of the needed reformulation of State action to promote equitable and sustainable growth, and to reduce poverty, and should be seen as a "useful beginning".

103. The Conference noted that structural adjustment programmes should be country-specific and that programme components should be carefully designed in accordance with existing economic, social and political conditions in the country undertaking adjustment, with due consideration to the speed and sequencing of these programmes.

104. The Conference recognized the numerous trade-offs between short and long-run costs and benefits, efficiency and equity, and social and economic objectives. It noted that these trade-offs sometimes created delays in implementing adjustment programmes.

105. The Conference noted that delaying reforms was costly and the choice between gradual implementation and rapid approaches should be assessed on social as well as economic grounds. It also noted that from the Region's experience, gradual but progressive implementation, without delays, proved to be more suitable to most Member Nations of the Region.

106. The Conference noted that under structural adjustment programmes reorientation of the role of the Government in development assumed a high priority. It recognized that the State needed to stop excessive intervention in the economy and minimize state-owned productive activity where a competitive market either already existed or could be created.

107. The Conference noted that sustainable agricultural and rural development in the Region would not be possible without careful natural resource management. Inappropriate or non-existent pricing policies had seriously weakened growth and poverty alleviation by constraining farmers' incentives. It also noted that structural adjustment programmes would be sustainable with expanded peoples participation in the decision-making process.

108. The Conference noted with concern the possible adverse short-run impact of structural adjustment on growth and, consequently, on the incomes of the poor. The Conference recognized that the achievement of social objectives and the maintenance of household food security required complementary short-run policies such as Social Adjustment Funds. It recognized the need for greater emphasis on the social costs of adjustment, and adjustment with a human face.

A. Recommendations to Member Nations:

109. The Conference called upon Member Governments to:

- a) gradually reduce excessive price protection of farm inputs and outputs, which should be determined by market forces;
- b) encourage an appropriate macroeconomic environment for agriculture, especially by maintaining a realistic exchange rate and real interest rates to encourage the efficient utilization of limited resources in achieving the goals of food security;
- c) monitor and assess the impact of structural adjustment measures on vulnerable groups within rural areas, on agricultural productivity, on income distribution and on supply response;
- d) establish and implement appropriate investment and social safety-net programmes to overcome the short-run negative impacts of structural adjustment measures, and
- e) reorient state expenditure to focus on strengthening physical infrastructure; investing in human capital, rural education and health; providing information and quality control mechanisms to promote agricultural exports; and providing effective protection for clearly-defined property rights in land, water and other farm inputs and outputs.

B. Recommendations to FAO:

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

- a) promote the exchange of agricultural policy analysis experiences among Member Nations of the Region by establishing a Near East Regional Network for Agricultural Policies;
- b) continue to provide policy advice to Member Nations of the Region in the design, implementation and evaluation of agricultural structural adjustment measures, with a view to achieving the goals of food security and to reducing adverse social impacts on vulnerable groups;
- c) continue to provide policy advice and analytical support to governments in formulating policy packages which improve agricultural price policies and which protect investments in rural infrastructure and human resources; and
- d) strengthen the technical capabilities of national policy analysts by enhancing training activities in project analysis, agricultural structural adjustment policies and reform needs.

Preparation for the 1996 World Food Summit

111. The Conference was informed of FAO's preparations for the 1996 World Food Summit.⁵

112. The Conference was provided with a range of data concerning the persistence of food insecurity in many countries, the population increase and the decline in agricultural investment. The deep concern over these developments expressed by the Twenty-seventh Session of the Conference was recalled, as well as the Conference's call for immediate action to achieve food security.

113. The Conference noted that the Director-General had consulted a number of Heads of State and governments in all regions on these issues. He was aware of a consensus that the convening of a World Food Summit as early as possible was warranted and was commensurate with the seriousness with which they viewed the problems of food insecurity. The Conference further noted that it was the Director-General's intention to convene the World Food Summit in early 1996. The purpose of the Summit was to raise awareness and political will at the highest level within national administrations, as well in the realm of public opinion, on the unacceptability of continued food insecurity and the need for global commitments and actions to redress the problem. The Summit was expected to lead to the adoption of policies at international and national levels, and the adoption of a Plan of Action. In so doing, there was no intention to propose new organizational structures or additional financial mechanisms.

114. The Conference was informed that preparations would involve broad-based consultations with governments, Non-Governmental Organizations, the private sector and the UN system. To keep costs to a minimum, these would be carried out principally during meetings and other events already scheduled to take place.

115. The Secretariat would present the major issues relevant to world food security through a series of analytical background papers covering past developments, the present situation and proposals for future action. The papers would mainly be based on **Agriculture: Towards 2010** and other studies by the Organization. The Secretariat would also prepare a draft policy document for consideration by the Summit, as well as a Plan of Action. The Summit documents would be first submitted to a special Ministerial Meeting in Quebec, Canada (14-16 October 1995) in connection with the commemoration of FAO's Fiftieth Anniversary. Ministers of Agriculture and Development Cooperation would be invited to attend this meeting. Also in the context of the Anniversary of the Organization, the Federal Government of Canada and the Government of the Province of Quebec would organize a three-day international symposium on food-security-related issues in Quebec (11-13 October 1995). The symposium would be attended by representatives from governments, Non-Governmental Organizations and the private sector. These two events would permit symposium participants representing NGOs and the private sector to present their perspectives on food security issues at the Ministerial Meeting.

Representation of the Region on the CGIAR

116. The Conference was informed of the latest developments regarding the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).⁶ From its inception, the CGIAR had increased the number of International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) which it financed from five to eighteen. After this expansion, the Group had decided to undertake important changes in the

⁵ NERC/94/INF/11.

⁶ NERC/94/5.

programmes and structures of the IARCs. It was therefore important that developing countries be adequately represented in the CGIAR along with the Representatives of donor countries and donor institutions so as to ensure that changes in the CGIAR system would be directed to meet the priority needs of developing regions.

117. Representation of the Near East Region during the present biennium was ensured by the Islamic Republic of Iran and Tunisia. The representation was usually entrusted to a country for two biennia. As Tunisia would complete its four-years term by the end of 1994 whereas the Islamic Republic of Iran's term would continue until the end of 1996, nominations were therefore invited to replace Tunisia as representative of the Region.

118. Prior to proceeding with the selection of a representative, the Conference received a progress report by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran as representative of the Region to the CGIAR. The representative had sought the views of Member Nations of the Region on their priorities for agricultural research and the needs for support by the IARCs to their national programmes. These views had been conveyed to the CGIAR and, as a result, the CGIAR system had inter alia given support to several workshops organized in the Region dealing with training and research management issues.

119. The Conference welcomed the report and recommended to continue the practice by which countries of the Region should be consulted by their representatives to the CGIAR regarding their research priorities, and to receive successive reports from their representative on CGIAR meetings. In this context, the importance of conducting further research on management of scarce water resources in agriculture was underlined.

120. The Conference supported the Secretariat proposals to improve the effectiveness of the regional representation to the CGIAR as indicated in the document. It was essential to ensure highest professional qualifications of the selected representatives. To this end, nominations including the Curricula Vitae of their candidates should be sought well in advance from the interested Member Nations of the Region. These nominations should be compiled and appraised by the FAO Secretariat according to the recommended criteria and brought to the attention of the Regional Conference. The Regional Conference would then establish a Committee consisting of three Member Nations, nationals of which would not propose their candidature, to recommend nominee/s for the Conference's decision.

121. The regional representatives should be given sufficient time for briefing prior to the CGIAR meetings. FAO, the CGIAR and TAC Secretariats should continue to brief the representatives as required and deemed necessary by them. In addition FAO should assist the representatives in improving their interaction with countries of the Region by channelling their demands for information and circulating their reports after each CGIAR meeting. A two-way exchange of information should also be facilitated between these representatives and the CGIAR donors.

122. The Conference noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran would continue to represent the Region in the CGIAR for 1995-96, and the Conference elected Egypt (Mr Abd-El-Salam A. Gamaa, Director, Agriculture Research Centre, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Land Reclamation) to represent the Region on the CGIAR for the period 1995-98.

Report on the Follow-up to the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN)

123. The Conference took note of the document⁷ which described the actions taken by Member Nations of the Region and by FAO to implement the recommendations included in the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition adopted at the International Conference on Nutrition (Rome, December 1992).

124. The Conference was informed of progress made to date including substantive discussion in FAO Governing Bodies (i.e. Commission on Agriculture (COAG), Council, Conference, etc.) during 1993 on ways to achieve ICN goals, and the need for FAO and WHO to jointly prepare and provide to their Member Nations a comprehensive report on ICN implementation by 1995.

125. The Conference was also informed of work already carried out or scheduled in this biennium in the Near East Region and the important contribution of nutritional improvement to the achievement of overall food security. The Conference was informed that an FAO/WHO Inter-Country Workshop on ICN Follow-up was scheduled to be held in Alexandria, Egypt, (September 1994), and that another ICN follow-up workshop was planned for the Gulf countries.

126. The Conference took note of the ongoing technical and financial assistance provided by FAO to Member Nations to enhance ICN follow-up activities in preparing their plans of action for nutrition. The active participation of Member Nations in the follow-up was considered to be a crucial stage of the ICN process in continuing the momentum of the public awareness created at the ICN.

127. In order to facilitate the implementation of the objectives of the ICN in Member Nations of the Near East Region, the Conference suggested the establishment of permanent national interministerial mechanisms to effectively coordinate the ICN follow-up activities.

128. The Conference also proposed the organization of a special workshop by FAO on the topic of food consumption in Member Nations of the Region to update the obsolete information available and to discuss related matters on food consumption and nutrition.

129. The Conference commended the excellent work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, pointed out its increased global role in the area of food safety and food quality, and urged the Member Nations of the Near East to continue playing an active role in the Region's Codex work. Several Member Nations welcomed FAO's assistance in improving their countries' food quality control and consumer protection activities.

Review and Assessment of the Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP)

130. The Conference considered the information document before it,⁸ and expressed satisfaction with the assistance that had been provided through the Programme.

131. The Conference appreciated FAO's suggestion to revive the NECP and, in starting its second phase, to designate a high-level committee to seek the views and positions of potential donors and recipients on its possible replenishment. The committee would review the past performance of the Programme and develop proposals for the future that would then be submitted to the next Regional Conference.

⁷ NERC/94/INF/5.

⁸ NERC/94/INF/6.

132. The Conference agreed to establish a high-level committee headed by His Excellency Habib Ahmed Kassim, the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture in Bahrain and composed of representatives from Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco. The Conference authorized His Excellency Habib Ahmed Kassim, Chairman of the committee, to contact the concerned governments in obtaining their final concurrence and to develop the workplan of the committee in consultation with the Regional Office for the Near East, which would also provide Secretariat services to the committee.

Draft Declaration on Food and Agriculture

133. The Conference was informed that the "Draft Declaration on Food and Agriculture"⁹ had been prepared by the Secretariat in response to FAO Conference Resolution 4/93 on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Organization in 1995. In accordance with the Resolution, a draft declaration would be submitted to all Regional Conferences in 1994. Member Governments were asked to submit their comments in writing before a given deadline. In the case of the Near East Region, the deadline for such comments was 7 September 1994.

134. The Draft Declaration would be revised by the Secretariat in accordance with the written submissions from Member Nations. The revised Declaration would then be submitted to the Hundred and Eighth Session of the Council (June 1995) for consideration to the World Food Day/Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Observance (16 October 1995, Quebec, Canada) and finally to the Twenty-eighth Session of the FAO Conference for adoption.

135. The Conference was further informed that the Fiftieth Anniversary Resolution adopted by the last FAO Conference in 1993 also called upon all Member Nations to observe FAO's Anniversary in a manner commensurate with the importance of the event. Many activities were already under consideration. For example, more than fifty Member Nations had already decided to issue commemorative stamps and over twenty-five countries had so far indicated that they would issue commemorative coins.

136. In order to facilitate the consideration of Member Nations of commemorative events, the Director-General had decided that the 1995 World Food Day theme be "Food for all."

137. The Delegation of Canada informed the Conference about the planned events in Quebec City to mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of FAO in October 1995. The Federal Government of Canada, the Government of the Province of Quebec and the City of Quebec were organizing an international commemorative symposium from 11 to 13 October 1995 on food security-related issues. The Fiftieth Anniversary Observance would take place on 16 October at Quebec's Château Frontenac, the very site where FAO was founded in 1945. The events would conclude with the endorsement of the "Quebec Declaration" - the Fiftieth Anniversary Declaration on Food and Agriculture. The Government of Canada would also host a special Ministerial Meeting (14-16 October, 1995) at the Director-General's invitation in preparation for the World Food Summit.

Desert Locust Control in the Region and Preparation for Future Campaigns

138. The Conference took note of the document¹⁰ on the situation and outlook of the present Desert Locust upsurge in West Africa and North-West Africa, the Near East, and South-West

⁹ NERC/94/INF/8.

¹⁰ NERC/94/INF/9.

Asia and the urgent need to carry out surveys and control operations in infested and summer breeding areas.

139. The Conference noted that the narrow gap between desert locust upsurges was possibly due to such favourable environmental conditions as good rains, soil moisture and vegetation, and to reduced preparedness in recession periods in terms of negligence of infrastructures and activities required for desert locust surveys and control measures. In addition, deteriorated security situations in breeding areas in some affected Member Nations which inhibited implementation of survey and control measures difficulties in making accurate long-term forecasting, unreliability or scarcity of information updates and unavailability of environmentally-safe persistent pesticides contributed to the problem.

140. The Conference was also informed that the current strategies for the control of the Desert Locust were either preventive or curative. The former was based upon population monitoring in potential Desert Locust breeding areas and, when required, chemical pesticide control operations at strategic locations in the pest distribution areas. The latter involved emergency chemical control operations against locust invasions. Curative operations were not cost effective and increased the risk of adverse environmental impacts.

141. The Director-General's proposal for the establishment of an Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRESS) which was approved by the 106th Session of the FAO Council, was brought to the attention of the Conference. A major component of this new programme would be used to help implement a longer-term Strategy for Desert Locust preventive control in the Central Region. This would involve an integrated regional approach incorporating monitoring and early warning mechanisms, the availability of adequate control capability and effective Information Transfer System, and the flexibility and capacity for fast responses to circumstances which could change substantially within short periods. The proposed system would not substitute National Programmes, or Regional Organizations, but would rather augment their efforts.

142. The Conference welcomed the Director-General's proposal and requested potential donors and affected countries' support and cooperation to ensure successful implementation of the preventive Desert Locust Control Programme in the Central Region.

143. The Conference commended all efforts made to combat Desert Locust invasions and called on locust-affected Member Nations to maintain a regular monitoring programme of the Desert Locust during recession periods, develop and support adequate infrastructures for desert locust survey and control, prepare contingency plans that could be rapidly activated in emergencies, contribute actively to the activities of the Regional Commissions for the Desert Locust Control, and keep FAO properly informed on the Desert Locust situations in their respective countries. The Conference also commended FAO efforts in monitoring Desert Locust situations and in coordinating its management, and requested its further assistance in combatting the present Desert Locust upsurge.

CONCLUDING ITEMS

Any Other Business

144. It was recalled that, in order to monitor and assess progress in the follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, June 1992), a UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) had been established. In 1995, the CSD would review progress in the implementation of UNCED Agenda 21 tenets by Member Nations, the UN System and NGOs, inter alia in the fields of land use planning, forests, desertification, mountains, agriculture and rural development and biodiversity. Member Nations would be invited to prepare national reports on progress made in the above areas. Concurrently FAO, in its capacity as Task Manager to facilitate UN System cooperation in the fields of land use, forests, mountains and sustainable agriculture and rural development, would prepare a report on activities and future programmes of the UN System. These reports would be first considered by an inter-sessional working group of the CSD on sectoral issues in February 1995, and then by the CSD in April 1995, including a high-level session at the Ministerial level.

145. In view of the subject areas to be addressed by the CSD in 1995, the Conference considered it essential that the Ministries of Agriculture of the Region be involved in the preparation of the national reports, in the country delegations to the CSD working group meeting and in the CSD sessions themselves. It invited FAO to assist, on request and resources permitting, Member Nations in the preparation of their national reports on subjects related to areas of competence of the Organization. The Conference also invited the Director-General to draw the attention of the United Nations to the importance of ensuring that invitations to the CSD meetings be sent to Member Nations with a recommendation that Ministries of Agriculture be adequately represented in the country delegations.

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

146. The Conference welcomed the kind invitation extended by Morocco to host the Twenty-third FAO Regional Conference for the Near East. The Conference 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

147. The Conference adopted the report, as amended.

Closure of the Conference

148. Dr Jacques Diouf, the Director-General of FAO, expressed his gratitude to His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal, the Government and the people of Jordan for hosting the Conference, for their generous hospitality and for the excellent arrangements and facilities which greatly contributed to its success. He expressed his appreciation and thanks to His Excellency Tahir El Masri, Speaker of the Jordanian Lower House of Parliament, for inaugurating the Conference. He paid special tribute to the Chairman, His Excellency Mansour Bin Tarif, Minister for Agriculture of Jordan, as well as 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.

149. The Director-General expressed his satisfaction at having had the opportunity to share with delegates his views on the most important issues of food and agriculture in the Region. He praised the frankness of the debates and assured the Conference that the views expressed and guidance

provided during these debates would be taken into consideration in formulating FAO's programme of work for the Region.

150. In his closing statement, His Excellency Mansour Bin Tarif, Chairman of the Conference, reiterated his profound thanks and appreciation to the Director-General of FAO and to the Regional Representative for the Near East and his staff, 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 special tribute to all those who took part in preparing and servicing the Conference.

151. The Chairman declared the Conference closed at 10:00 hours on Wednesday, 6 July 1994.

APPENDIX A

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

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

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement by the Director-General
5. Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in the Region
6. Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1992-93
7. Outcome of the 106th Session of the Council and its Implications for the Present and Future Activities of FAO in the Region

III. SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

8. Strategy for Sustainable Dryland Development in the Near East
9. Impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Agricultural and Rural Development and Performance in the Near East Region:
Framework and Lessons of Experience
10. Preparation for the 1996 World Food Summit
11. Representation of the Region on the CGIAR
12. Report on the Follow-up to the International Conference on Nutrition
13. Review and Assessment of the Near East Cooperative Programme
14. Draft Declaration on Food and Agriculture
15. Desert Locust Control in the Region and Preparation for Future Campaigns

IV. CONCLUDING ITEMS

16. Any Other Business
17. Date and Place of the Twenty-third Regional Conference for the Near East
18. Adoption of the Report
19. Closure of the Conference

قائمة بأسماء المشترعين
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

هيئة مكتب المؤتمر
OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE

الرئيس:
Chairman: منصور بن طريف (الأردن)
Mansour BIN TARIF
(Jordan)

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

المقرر:
Rapporteur: عادل أبو النجا (مصر)
Adel ABOUL-NAGA
(Egypt)

الرئيس المستقل للمجلس
Independent Chairman of
the Council: José Ramón LOPEZ PORTILLO

الدول الاعضاء فى الاقليم
MEMBER NATIONS OF THE REGION

AFGHANISTAN

افغانستان

ALGERIA

الجزائر

Delegate

Nour El-Din BAHBOUH
Minister for Agriculture
Algiers

المندوب

نور الدين بحموق
وزير الزراعة
الجزائر العاصمة

Alternates

Rabah DEKHLI
Minister Counsellor
Ministry of Agriculture
Algiers

المناوبون

رباح دكحلى
مستشار الوزير
وزارة الزراعة
الجزائر العاصمة

Nasreddine RIMOUCHE
Permanent Representative to FAO
Rome

نصر الدين ريموش
الممثل الدائم للمناوب للجزائر لدى المنظمة
روما

Ramdane KELLOU
Director of Studies
Ministry of Agriculture
Algiers

رمضان كولو
مدير الدراسات
وزارة الزراعة
الجزائر العاصمة

Lahcene AMIROUCHE
Director, Training and Research
Ministry of Agriculture
Algiers

لاحسن عمبروش
مدير التدريب والابحاث
وزارة الزراعة
الجزائر العاصمة

BAHRAIN

البحرين

Delegate

Habib Ahmed KASSIM
Minister for Commerce and Agriculture
Manama

المندوب

حبيب احمد قاسم
وزير التجارة والزراعة
المنامة

Alternates

Siddiq AL-ALAWI
Assistant Under-Secretary for
Agriculture
Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture
Manama

المناوبون

مدنق العلوى
الوعيل المساعد للزراعة
وزارة التجارة والزراعة
المنامة

Hamad SHEHABI
Personal Secretary to the Minister
Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture
Manama

حمد على الشهاى
وزارة التجارة والزراعة
المنامة

Hassan M. ABDEL KARIM
Director, Agricultural Services
Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture
Bahrain

حسن محمد عبد الكريم
مدير ادارة خدمات المزارعين
المنامة

CYPRUS

قبرص

Delegate

Costas PETRIDES
Minister for Agriculture and Natural
Resources
Nicosia

Alternate

Harris ZANNETIS
Agricultural Officer
Ministry of Agriculture and Natural
Resources
Nicosia

DJIBOUTI

جيبوتي

EGYPT

مصر

Delegate

Abdul Azim EL GAZZAR
Supervisor, Foreign Agricultural
Relations
Ministry of Agriculture, Animal and
Fish Resources and Land
Reclamation
Cairo

المندوب

عبد العظيم الجزار
مسؤول العلاقات الزراعية الخارجية
وزارة الزراعة والثروة الحيوانية والسمكية
واستصلاح الاراضى
القاهرة

Alternates

Adel ABOUL-NAGA
Agricultural Counsellor
Alternate Permanent Representative
to FAO
Rome

المناوبان
عادل أبو الحا
مستشار زراعى
الممثل الدائم المناوب لمصر لدى المنظمة
روما

Mrs Naglaa EL ZAWAHRY
Second Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Cairo

نجلاء الطواهرى
سكرتير ثان
وزارة الخارجية
القاهرة

IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF

جمهورية ايران الاسلامة

Delegate

Issa KALANTARI
Minister for Agriculture
Teheran

Alternates

Ali AHOONMANESH
Deputy Minister and Director
of Agricultural Research, Training
and Extension Organizations
Ministry of Agriculture
Teheran

Seyed Mohammad Saeid NOORI-NAENI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative to FAO
Rome

Javad SHAHMIRI
Adviser
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Teheran

Seyed Ahmad ALAVI
Adviser to Minister for Agriculture and
Director of International Relations
Department
Ministry of Agriculture
Teheran

IRAQ

العراق

Delegate

Karim Hassan RIDA
Minister for Agriculture
Baghdad

المندوب

عريم حسن رضا
وزير الزراعة
بغداد

Alternates

Kadim ZOUIN
Agricultural Engineer
Ministry of Agriculture
Baghdad

المناوبون

عاطم زوين
مهندس زراعي
وزارة الزراعة
بغداد

Hussain MANSOUR
First Agricultural Engineer
Ministry of Agriculture
Baghdad

حسين منصور
مهندس زراعي اول
وزارة الزراعة
بغداد

Mahdi ZAIR
Ministry of Agriculture
Baghdad

مهدي زاير
وزارة الزراعة
بغداد

JORDAN

الأردن

Delegate

Mansour BIN TARIF
Minister for Agriculture
Amman

المندوب

منصور بن طريف
وزير الزراعة
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Alternates

Ghaleb ABOU ORABI
Secretari-General
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

المناوبون

غالب ابو عراسي
امين عام
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Hazem EL NASER
Representative of the Ministry of Water
and Irrigation
Amman

حازم الناصر
ممثل وزير المياه والرى
وزارة المياه والرى
عمان

Mohammed EL-MEBEIDHIN
Assistant Secretary-General
for Administration and Finance
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

محمد المبيثين
مساعد الامين العام للشؤون الادارية والعالية
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Mossa EL-ABBADI
Director, Zerqa River Project
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

موسى العبادى
مدير مشروع حوض نهر الزرقا،
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Mazen KHASAWNEH
Director, Plant Protection
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

مارن حماونة
مدير وقاية المزروعات
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Jihad ABU MUSHREF
Director
Highland Development Project
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

جهاد ابو مشرف
مدير مشروع تطوير الاراضى المرتفعة
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Nameq EL-TELL
Director
El Hammad River Basin Project
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

نامق التل
مدير مشروع حوض نهر الحماد
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Salem EL-AKOUR
Director of Projects
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

سالم العكور
مدير المشاريع
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Mohammed Naguib EL-SHEIKH
Director of Plant Production
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

محمد نجيب الشيخ
مدير الانتاج النباتى
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Walid ABED-RABBOU
Director, Agricultural Economics
and Policy Department
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

وليد عبد ربه
مدير الاقتصاد والسياسة الزراعية
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Samih EL FANASH
Director, Construction and Agricultural
Equipment
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

سميح الفنش
مدير الانشاءات والالات الزراعية
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Ibrahim ABU ATILEH
Director of Livestock Services
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

ابراهيم ابو عتيله
مدير الثروة الحيوانية
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Lotfi EL HOUAIDI
Assistant Secretary-General for Plant
Production
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

لطفى الهويدى
مساعد الامين العام للانتاج النباتى
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Mohammed Fathy EL-KILANI
Director, Veterinary Services
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

محمد فتحى الكيلانى
مدير الخدمات البيطرية
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Mazen ABDEL-KADER
Director, Public Relations and
International Cooperation
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

مازن عبد القادر
مدير العلاقات العامة والتعاون الدولى
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Samy ABDEL-RAZEK
Director of Finance
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

سامى عبد الرازق
مدير الشؤون المالية
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Mahmoud DUWAYRI
Director
National Centre for Agricultural
Research and Technology Transfer
Amman

محمود الدويرى
مدير المرعز الوطنى للبحوث الزراعية
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

Khaïdoun EL SOBIHI
Director, Agricultural Extension
and Information
Ministry of Agriculture
Amman

خلدون الميحيى
مدير الارشاد والاعلام الزراعى
وزارة الزراعة
عمان

KUWAIT

الكويت

LEBANON

لبنان

Delegate
Adel CORTAS
Minister for Agriculture
Beirut

المندوب
عادل قرطاس
وزير الزراعة
وزارة الزراعة
بيروت

Alternate
Adel CHOUERY
General Director
Ministry of Agriculture
Beirut

المناوب
عادل الشويري
المدير العام
وزارة الزراعة
بيروت

LIBYA

ليبيا

MALTA

مالطة

Delegate
Francis MONTANARO MIFSUD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative to FAO
Rome

MAURITANIA

موريتانيا

Delegate
Al-Sghair Ould M'BAREK
Minister for Social Development
and the Environment
Nouakchott

المندوب
اصغير ولد امبارك
وزير التنمية الاجتماعية والبيئية
نواكشوط

Alternates
Melainine Ould MOCTAR NECHE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative to FAO
Rome

المناوبان
ماء العيين ولد مختار النح
السفير
الممثل الدائم لموريتانيا لدى المنظمة
روما

Ely Ould AHMEDOU
Director, Division of Research
and Training
Ministry of Rural Development
and the Environment
Nouakchott

اعلى ولد احمدو
مدير قسم الابحاث والتدريب
وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية والتنمية
نواكشوط

MOROCCO

المغرب

Delegate

Abdeladim L'HAFI
Secretary-General
Ministry of Agriculture
Rabat

المنسوب

عبد العظيم الحاني
الكاتب العام
وزارة الفلاحة
الرباط

Alternates

Mohamed Tahar BENNANI
Ambassador of Morocco
Amman

المتناوبون

محمد الطاهر بناني
سفير المملكة المغربية بالاردن
عمان

Mrs Zineb ISMAIL IDRISI
Minister Plenipotentiary
Embassy of Morocco
Amman

زينة الاسماعيل الادريسي
وزير مفوض
السفارة المغربية
عمان

Abdelaziz ARIFI
Director-General
National Institute for Agronomic
Research
Rabat

عبد العزيز عارفي
المدير العام للمعهد الوطني لبحوث
الهندسة الفلاحية
الرباط

Rachid LAKHDAR
Director of Plant Protection, Technical
Control and Suppression of Fraud
Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian
Reform
Rabat

رشيد الاخضر
مدرس رقاية النباتات والمكافحة الفنية وزجر الغن
الرباط

OMAN

عمان

Delegate

Mohammed Bin Abdalla AL-HINAI
Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries
Muscat

المنسوب

محمد بن عبد الله بن زاهر الهنائي
وزير الزراعة والثروة السمكية
مسقط

Alternates

M. HASSAN BIN SULEIMAN
Adviser for Planning Affairs
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Muscat

المتناوبون

محمد حسن رضا بن سليمان
مستشار
وزارة الزراعة والثروة السمكية
مسقط

Saud bin SALEM AL-HARTI
General Director of Irrigation
Department
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Muscat

سعود بن سالم الحارثي
مدير عام شؤون الري
وزارة الزراعة والثروة السمكية
مسقط

Ahmad Bin Mohammad AL-HINAI
Acting Director-General of Agricultural
and Animal Affairs
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Muscat

أحمد بن محمد بن زاهر الهنائي
مدير عام الشؤون الزراعية والحيوانية بالوكالة
مسقط

PAKISTAN

باكستان

Delegate
Mohammad HANIF
Commissioner, Minor Crops
Ministry of Food and Agriculture
Islamabad

QATAR

قطر

Delegate
Nassir AL-NASSER
Ambassador
Embassy of Qatar
Amman

المندوب
ناصر الناصر
سفير دولة قطر لدى الاردن
سفارة دولة قطر
عمان

Alternate
Saud ALTHANI
Consul
Embassy of Qatar
Amman

المناوب
سعود آل ثاني
قنصل دولة قطر لدى الاردن
سفارة دولة قطر
عمان

SAUDI ARABIA, KINGDOM OF

المملكة العربية السعودية

Delegate
Abdullah AL-MUSAED
Under-Secretary for Agriculture
and Water
Ministry of Agriculture and Water
Riyadh

المندوب
عبد الله المساعد
ومحيط وزارة الزراعة والمياه
وزارة الزراعة والمياه
الرياض

Alternates

Mohammed ALSHIHA
Director-General
Agricultural Development Department
Ministry of Agriculture and Water
Riyadh

المتعاونون
محمد الشبحة
مدير عام ادارة التنمية الزراعية
وزارة الزراعة والمياه
الرياض

Saleh AL-SHIEKH
Assistant Director of Foreign Relations
Ministry of Agriculture and Water
Riyadh

صالح آل الشيخ
مساعد مدير العلاقات الخارجية
وزارة الزراعة والمياه
الرياض

Waleed ELKHEREJI
Permanent Representative to FAO
Rome

وليد الخربجي
الممثل الدائم للمملكة لدى المنظمة
روما

SOMALIA

الصومال

SUDAN

السودان

Delegate

Ali Abed Al-Rehman NIMIERY
Ambassador
Embassy of Sudan
Amman

المندوب
علي عبد الرحمن النميمري
سفير السودان لدى الاردن
سفارة السودان
عمان

Alternate

Gamal Mohmed AHMED
Permanent Representative to FAO
Rome

المتعاون
جمال محمد أحمد
الممثل الدائم للسودان لدى المنظمة
روما

SYRIA

سوريا

Delegate

Erfan ALLOUSH
Director of Planning and Statistics
Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian
Reform
Damascus

المندوب
عرفان علوش
مدير الاحماء والتخطيط
وزارة الزراعة والاملاخ الزراعي
دمشق

Alternates

Nahi EL-SHIBANI
Director of Agricultural Economics
Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian
Reform
Damascus

المناوبان
ناهي الشيباني
مدير الاقتصاد الزراعي
وزارة الزراعة والاصلاح الزراعي
دمشق

Mohammad Soliman KARBOUI
Deputy-Director of International
Relations
Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian
Reform
Damascus

محمد سليمان عربوج
معاون مدير العلاقات الدولية
وزارة الزراعة والاصلاح الزراعي
دمشق

TUNISIA

تونس

Delegate

Habib ESSID
Chief of Minister's Office
Ministry of Agriculture
Tunis

المندوب
الحبيب المييد
مدير ديوان وزير الفلاحة
وزارة الفلاحة
تونس العاصمة

Alternates

Mounir HEDRY
Director of Research
Institute for Higher Agricultural
Research and Education
Tunis

المناوبان
منير الهدري
مدير البحوث
مؤسسة البحث والتعليم العالي
تونس العاصمة

Mohamed LASSOUED
Principal Engineer in charge of
International Cooperation
Ministry of Agriculture
Tunis

محمد الأسود
مهندس اول مكلف بالتعاون الدولي
وزارة الفلاحة
تونس العاصمة

TURKEY

تركييا

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

الامارات العربية المتحدة

Delegate

Hamad Abdallah SALMAN
Under-Secretary
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Abu Dhabi

المندوب
حمد عبد الله سلمان
وعمل وزارة الزراعة والثروة السمكية
أبو ظبي

Alternates

Abdalla Khalfan AL-SHARIQI
Director
Northern Agricultural Zone
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Abu Dhabi

Mohammed Saqr AL-A'SAM
Director, Soil and Water Department
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Abu Dhabi

المناوبان

عبد الله خلفان الشريقي
مدير عام المنطقة الزراعية الشمالية
وزارة الزراعة والثروة السمكية
أبو ظبي

محمد صقر الأسم
مدير إدارة المياه والتربة
وزارة الزراعة والثروة السمكية
أبو ظبي

YEMEN

اليمن

مراقبون من دول أعضاء من خارج الاقليم

OBSERVERS FROM MEMBER NATIONS NOT IN THE REGION

CANADA

David Henry SHERWOOD
Senior Adviser
International Organizations
Ministry of Agriculture
Ottawa

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Francis J. VACCA
Alternate Permanent Representative
to FAO
United States Mission to UN Agencies
Rome

مراقبون من الدول الاعضاء في الامم المتحدة

OBSERVERS FROM UNITED NATIONS MEMBER STATES

دولة الفاتيكان

HOLY SEE

Most Rev. Alois WAGNER
Permanent Observer of the Holy See
to FAO
Vatican City

حركات التحرير

LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

THE PALESTINIAN ECONOMIC COUNCIL

Sufyan SULTAN
Den, Faculty of Agriculture
Palestine

Yunis JADDU
Manager, Economic and Planning Section
Palestine

ممثلو الأمم المتحدة ووكالاتها المتخصصة

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME (UNDP)

Firas GHARAIBEH
Senior Programme Assistant
Amman

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND
(UNFPA)

Hussein A.A. SAYED
Regional Adviser CST/UNFPA
Amman

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA
(ESCWA)

Sami J. SUNNA
Director
ESCWA/FAO Agriculture Division
Amman

Antoine HADDAD
Chief, Human Settlement Sector
Social Development Division
Amman

Mrs Seema HAFEEZ
Economic Affairs Officer
Sustainable Development Division
Amman

Mahmood AHMAD
Resources Economist
Agriculture Division
Amman

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)

Majed FASSIH
WFP Country Director
Amman

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL
ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

Suleiman SULEIMAN
Programme Specialist in Technical and
Vocational Education
Unesco Regional Office for Education in
the Arab States (UNEDBAS)
Amman

INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
(IFAD)

Samir ASMAR
Director, Near East and North Africa
Division
Rome

مراقبون من منظمات حكومية دولية

OBSERVERS FROM INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

ARAB ORGANIZATION FOR
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
(AOAD)

Yahia BAKOUR
General Director
Khartoum

Abdel Hamid AL-KAYED
Director
Amman

REGIONAL CENTRE ON AGRARIAN
REFORM AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT FOR THE NEAR EAST
(CARDNE)

Mrs Amal SABBAGH
Director
Amman

مراقبون من منظمات دولية غير حكومية

OBSERVERS FROM INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH IN THE
DRY AREAS (ICARDA)

Nasri HADDAD
Regional Coordinator
West Asia Regional Programme
Amman

INTERNATIONAL LIFE SCIENCES
INSTITUTE (ILSI)

Ahmed GABALLA
Representative
Cairo

NEAR EAST-NORTH AFRICA
REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL CREDIT
ASSOCIATION (NENARACA)

Moh'd R. MUSTAFA
Secretary General
Amman

موظفو المنظمة

FAO STAFF

Jacques Diouf	Director-General
A.Y. Bukhari	ADG/Regional Representative, RNEA
P.J. Mahler	Special Adviser to the Director-General/ADG on Environment and Sustainable Development
R. Lydiker	Director, GII
M. Taher	Regional Plant Protection Officer, RNEA
N.E. Gaddes	Regional Range Management and Fodder Production Officer, RNEA
Z.V. Malek	Senior Officer, ESND

امانة المؤتمر

CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT

Conference Secretary:	D. Abdou, RNEA
Conference Affairs Officer:	B. Linley, GIC
Reports Officer:	S.E.M. Ahmed, RNEA
Information Officer:	M.Y. Sultan, RNEA

APPENDIX C

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

NERC/94/1	Annotated Agenda
NERC/94/2	Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1992-93
NERC/94/3	Strategy for Sustainable Dryland Development in the Near East Region
NERC/94/4	Impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Agricultural Development and Performance in the Near East Region: Framework and Lessons of Experience
NERC/94/5	Representation of the Region on the CGIAR
<u>NERC/94/INF/SERIES</u>	
NERC/94/INF/1	Information Note
NERC/94/INF/2	Timetable
NERC/94/INF/3-Rev. 1	List of Documents
NERC/94/INF/4	Action Taken on the Main Recommendations of the Twenty-first Regional Conference for the Near East
NERC/94/INF/5	Report on the Follow-up to the International Conference on Nutrition
NERC/94/INF/6	Review and Assessment of the Near East Cooperative Programme
NERC/94/INF/7	Director-General's Statement
NERC/94/INF/8	Draft Declaration on Food and Agriculture
NERC/94/INF/9	Desert Locust Control in the Region and Preparation for Future Campaigns
NERC/94/INF/10	Outcome of the 106th Session of the Council and its Implications for Present and Future Activities of FAO in the Region
NERC/94/INF/11	Preparations for the 1996 World Food Summit

APPENDIX D

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

INTRODUCTION

Please allow me first to express my thanks to His Majesty King Hussein for the warm welcome I enjoyed together with the FAO staff and the delegations of the Near East Region, since arriving in Amman. Such a friendly and generous attitude is not surprising in this country with an old history, representing confluence of several civilizations. But the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has not been successful only in preserving the values of a great civilization, it has also under an enlightened and inspiring stewardship been making significant strides in all spheres of economic activity and particularly in agriculture/development and natural resources conservation.

I should also like to congratulate His Excellency Mansour Bin Tarif, Minister for Agriculture, for his election to the post of Chairman of the Conference. Under his able and experienced guidance the conduct of the deliberations of this important gathering will certainly be most successful. I wish also to extend my greetings to the Ministers and Heads of Delegations attending the Conference; their presence is a clear indication of the importance the countries attach to this two-yearly high-level regional gathering on agricultural issues.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Many countries in the Region are going through profound policy changes, initiated in the 1980s, to deal with the economic crises reflected in large current and fiscal account deficits, mounting foreign debt, inflation and high unemployment. The policy changes are showing positive results in many countries, while others are still grappling with the agonizing problems of structural adjustment programmes. The impact of these macro-economic policies on the agricultural sector has to be carefully monitored, adjusted and fine-tuned.

Although the Region has the highest per capita cereal use among all developing countries, the annual growth in production of major food commodities in the Region as a whole slowed down from 3.3 percent during the 1970s to 2.2 percent during the 1980s. This is in addition to the fact that, due to climatic factors, year to year variability in crop production is higher in this Region than in all other developing regions. Cereal imports in the Region have increased from 8 million tons in the late 60s to 44 million tons in the late 80s and are projected to reach over 78 million tons by the year 2010. The point to ponder is that this figure will represent about half of the total cereal deficit of all the developing countries in 2010.

In the Region as a whole the incidence of chronic undernutrition is among the lowest in developing countries, but this should not mask the fact that its seven low-income countries have an average food consumption level which is well below the average of the developing countries as a whole: out of the 60 million undernourished people in the Region, 48 million exist in these countries.

FAO, in a study prepared for the Committee on World Food Security, found that food security had deteriorated by more than 2 percent in six countries of the Near East Region in 1991-93.

Despite natural resource constraints and often adverse climatic conditions, there is still considerable potential for increasing yields in the Region. This potential must be tapped urgently through appropriate policies and vigorously and consistently pursued measures.

NEW INITIATIVES IN PURSUANCE OF CONFERENCE RESOLUTION 10/93

This regional Conference is taking place at an important juncture. You will recall that the FAO Conference Resolution 10/93 authorized me to undertake a review of the programmes, structures and policies of the Organization. In spite of a tight calendar, wide-ranging consultations have been carried out. These consultations resulted in proposals for a reinvigorated FAO which were unanimously endorsed by the recently-concluded 106th Session of the Council.

I am pleased to say that the Council welcomed my proposals for sharpening FAO's focus in key areas of support for increased food production to low-income food-deficit countries and for more energetic action against pests and animal diseases. The Council also supported my proposals for restructuring the Secretariat and decentralization.

Let me emphasize again that, if an additional one billion mouths are to be fed in the next five years, in the year 2000, and an additional four billion in another generation in the year 2030, if the pang of hunger of the 800 million without adequate access to food is to be satisfied, if the 192 million children below the age of five years suffering from acute or chronic protein energy deficiency are to be made to realize their genetic potential, a new agricultural revolution is needed here and now. The new agricultural revolution should be:

- productive, making effective use of scientific and technical progress;
- sustainable, safeguarding and preserving humanity's natural resources;
- equitable, assuring a fair social division of fruits of growth.

The cereal deficit of developing countries is estimated to rise to over 162 million tons by the year 2010. Unless immediate action is taken to reverse the current trends, LIFDCs will become increasingly dependent on imports to meet minimum food needs without having adequate means to finance them. For LIFDCs as a whole, total staple food production will barely keep pace with growth in population. In 1993, cereal food aid deliveries to LIFDCs have fallen to the lowest level since the early eighties. To reduce the number of undernourished people in these countries, it is imperative to spearhead a sharply focused food security programme.

The food security problems in LIFDCs cannot be addressed without expanding both productivity and total staple food production.

I should like to reiterate that FAO is fully committed to the broadened concept of food security adopted by the Conference in 1983 encompassing availability of adequate food supplies, the stability of these supplies and physical and economic access of all people at all times to food they need for a healthy and active life. Application of methodologies evolved by FAO for drawing up comprehensive food security programmes in approximately sixteen countries and four subregions has yielded valuable lessons. An important conclusion is that the problem of food insecurity for rural households, especially in LIFDCs, is largely related to low labour productivity in agriculture. Therefore, a technology-driven new Green Revolution in well-endowed areas with maximum pay-offs in an equitable and sustainable manner is the need of the hour.

The special programme will be launched in LIFDCs where there are tangible indications of a political will from both the government and the donor community to give priority to food security in a sustained manner. The projects will be identified in consultation with governments and farmers, but also in cooperation with other partners in development. Reinforced teams in the Region and in the new subregional office would provide advisory services, facilitate national actions, promote "repeater" projects and mobilize government and donor support as well as other complementary actions related to policy, capacity building, trade and investment.

Now that the proposal has been endorsed by the Council, I intend to initiate action without further delay. Work is already under way on the criteria to be employed in selecting the first group of countries to launch the programmes. The incremental costs implied in launching the programme would be met by FAO; in several cases, existing FAO projects could also be adapted appropriately. Throughout, the participation of other multilateral and bilateral institutions, both financial and technical, will be sought, together with cooperation by NGOs. For mobilizing support and resources, round table and consultative groups are envisaged to enable the expansion of programmes based on the demonstrated success of pilot projects.

Turning to the proposed emergency prevention programme, FAO has played a leading role in handling a number of successful transboundary disease and pest eradication or control programmes, eminent examples being locust and screw-worm campaigns. Over the years, the Organization has developed alert mechanisms, methodologies and techniques and has experience in providing logistical support to such inter-country programmes. It has played a leading role in mobilization of donor contributions to cope with them. FAO must, however, be better equipped to undertake such tasks, especially in terms of its own prevention system and an improved response capacity when emergencies arise. Experience shows that it usually takes several months to start effective action after the outbreak of pests or diseases, by which time considerable damage has already been done. Thus, the present arrangements to deal with emergencies need to be supplemented by budgetary provisions to permit more flexible and immediate responses through the establishment of an Emergency Prevention System. The initial thrust of the programme will be on combating locust and rinderpest. An effective locust prevention and control programme will be attempted in the Red Sea area. For rinderpest, a Global Rinderpest Eradication Secretariat will be established in FAO to link with regional campaigns in Africa, West Asia and South Asia, with the ultimate objective of eradicating rinderpest globally by the year 2005.

While I am on the subject of sharpening of FAO programmes and thrusts, let me very briefly touch on two other items concerning forestry and fisheries. The role of forests in environment conservation and sustainable development can hardly be overstressed. As the Organization accorded a global mandate in forestry, FAO's special responsibility has now assumed greater importance and urgency. FAO must continue to build on its strengths and comparative advantage, particularly with respect to forest resource assessment, national capacity building in planning and sustainable management of forest resources, and must prepare the technical basis for a consensus of an international agreement on forests. As forest conservation and development cannot be achieved in isolation from other forms of land use, the organizations will continue to promote and strengthen interaction among forestry, agriculture and issues dealing with poverty and people's participation concerns. In my review of the current budget of the Organization, despite extremely limited scope of manoeuvre, I have increased resources for forestry. As emphasized by the Conference, FAO will play an enhanced role in the preparatory process leading to the 1995 session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) when forestry matters will be discussed. Prior to that, I propose to invite ministers responsible for forestry to the March 1995 session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO). This will be the first occasion FAO will organize a Ministerial Meeting exclusively dedicated to forestry, and I am hoping for a good response from you.

Closely related is the issue of desertification control. Besides climatic and a set of other complex factors, human activities have a decisive influence in triggering the desertification process, which globally affects nearly a billion people. Large areas in the Near East Region are in the throes of this life system extinguishing phenomenon, due to cultivation of fragile soils, reduction in fallow periods, overgrazing, overexploitation of woody resources, and above all, due to the vicious circle of poverty and natural resource degradation. FAO believes that human beings are at the heart of the problem, either as actors or victims. Tackling of this scourge requires a multi-disciplinary and integrative approach, with people's participation and long-term government and donor

commitments in the form of technical and financial assistance. The accumulated information and experience of FAO through its normative, as well as operational, activities is at your disposal. Together with other partners, the Organization will be only too willing to assist the countries of the Region on request in formulating their overall desertification control strategies and their implementation. I am also pleased to say that FAO is actively engaged in providing its legal and technical contribution to the ongoing process as regards the Convention on Desertification, the completion of which will hopefully create new possibilities for effective national and international action on this item of Agenda 21.

The fisheries sector is important to a large number of developing countries as a source of nutritious food, employment and income generation and foreign exchange, and yet the kind of emphasis that it should receive is lacking. Many fish stocks, which are either being exploited to the maximum or overexploited, need urgent management and conservation measures. Without such steps, both the future sustainability and present profitability will suffer. To obtain additional or sustained fish supplies, much more emphasis on aquaculture and much more urgent attention to rational utilization of presently exploited stocks is required. In the review of 1994-95 budget, I have increased, though modestly due to overall budget constraints, fisheries resources especially as they affect aquaculture production programmes and the preparation of the International Code of Conduct on Responsible Fishing. The code will be submitted for endorsement to the next session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in March 1995. For this session, I propose to invite Ministers of Fisheries to take stock of developments since they last met ten years ago during the FAO World Conference on Fisheries and to provide guidance for new directions of our work in this important sector.

My review of the structure of the Organization has been undertaken with the conviction that while FAO should remain and be strengthened as an international centre of excellence, its inner coherence should be improved and its relevance to Member Nations enhanced.

Through a rearrangement of a number of existing units, the creation of the Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) is intended to provide a more integrated approach to cross-cutting issues related to social, economic, technical and environmental aspects of sustainable development. It will play a leading role in formulating policies and strategies related to research and technology development, education and extension, rural development, agrarian reforms, gender issues, people's participation, integrated national resources management, environmental protection and other aspects of sustainable development. To ensure a holistic approach, the Department will work closely with all technical departments of the Organization. It will address many of the areas of concern for the UN system as a whole, particularly in connection to follow-up activities to UNCED and its Agenda 21 in areas in which FAO is the task manager or is a major contributor.

With a view to provide more integrated operational service to Member Nations, the present Development Department will be reorganized into a Technical Cooperation Department (TCD) which will be the hub of operational activities, covering policy advice to Member Nations, investment and implementation of field activities. This department will work closely with other units at Headquarters, as well as in the field.

This Conference, I am sure, will be particularly interested in the decentralization measures approved by the Council. FAO Headquarters is too far removed from where the action is taking place. The Organization must act in proximity to problems at the field level. The Regional Offices will therefore be strengthened by positioning in each office a complete multidisciplinary team, and these offices will be the primary source of support to FAO country offices. It is proposed to establish a number of subregional offices, consisting of a small team of technical officers qualified and trained to deal with the specific requirements of the subregion. For your Region, consultations are being undertaken to establish the subregional office for North Africa.

At the national level, the established network of FAO Representatives will encompass more countries through the mechanism of multiple accreditation. It is also my intention to replace or complement expatriate Professional staff in country offices, other than FAO Representatives, with experienced and qualified National Programme Officers (NPOs), which will not only strengthen national capacities but will also contribute to cost reductions.

BIODIVERSITY AND PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

While urging immediate action to improve food security, I am fully conscious of the need for not neglecting the very basis of agricultural development. The immediate should by no means deflect our attention from the important. For several years, FAO has been developing a Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for food and agriculture, with the triple objective of conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. The Convention on Biological Diversity signed at UNCED represents a major global initiative, and Agenda 21 specifically calls for strengthening FAO's Global System to this effect. I am pleased to say that preparations are under way for this fourth International Technical Conference for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources in 1996 in Germany, which will consider a first State of the World Report and a costed Global Plan of Action. The Conference will be prepared through a participatory country-driven process guided by the FAO intergovernmental Commission on Plant Genetic Resources. It is my earnest hope that the Member Nations of this Region, which house many important crops, will actively participate in the preparatory process leading to this important Conference, and in the Conference itself.

WORLD FOOD SUMMIT

Many of you may recall that some twenty years ago, the world community assembled in Rome made a promise to itself: that by the year 2000 no child would go to bed hungry. Since then, the world as a whole has made much progress towards improved food security. Several developing countries have moved from being basket cases to achieving near or full self-sufficiency. On the aggregate, there is enough to feed the world. And yet, as I just mentioned, 800 million people on this earth suffer from chronic malnutrition. It is high time that we seriously examine the reasons for this disequilibrium and seek the necessary solutions together. I therefore intend to convene a World Food Summit in Rome in early 1996 to raise awareness on world food issues at the highest level, and to obtain a political commitment for subsequent action geared towards world food security attainment for present and future generations. The event will be preceded by the Ministerial Meeting which will be held on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the founding of FAO in Quebec. You have before you a document on this subject and your views will provide guidance to the FAO Secretariat in organizing the World Food Summit.

May I also draw to your attention the draft FAO Fiftieth Anniversary Declaration, which represents a summation of the achievements and aspirations of the world community regarding food and agriculture. After consideration by the Regional Conferences, the document will be considered by the June 1995 Council and, subsequently, by the Ministerial Meeting in Quebec in October 1995. It will then be submitted for adoption by the FAO November 1995 Conference.

I should now like to turn to some selected issues on your agenda.

SPECIFIC ISSUES BEFORE THE NEAR EAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE

a) Impact of structural adjustment programmes on agricultural development

As I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, structural adjustment programmes were adopted in many Member Nations of the Region to address problems of external debt, food

insecurity, rural poverty and unemployment. These programmes are economy-wide in nature; but structural adjustment has a significant impact on agricultural development and, in turn, its success depends largely on agricultural production and productivity. To examine these interrelationships, FAO's work in the Region, as shown in the paper before the Conference, offers important experience-related lessons. Our studies show that structural adjustment is a necessary, but not sufficient, prerequisite for agricultural development and for meeting the challenges of food security and employment creation. Complementary policies are required if full benefits of structural adjustment are to be derived.

The Conference document offers a number of recommendations for your consideration. These recommendations include: creating an appropriate macro-economic environment for agriculture, adopting agriculture pricing systems that encourage farmers to increase production adopting highly productive technology and introducing realistic interest rates to stimulate enhanced savings levels. Steps to ensure rational management of natural resource bases and environmental protection are very important and mechanisms must be devised to ensure that the interests of farmers and rural populations are well represented in the policy formulation process. It is also important to implement appropriate investment and social safety net programmes to avoid the short-run negative impacts of structural adjustment measures.

Implementing these recommendations is a fundamental challenge facing Member Nations of the Region in their drive towards agricultural development. To assist you in meeting this challenge, FAO will increase its capacity to provide policy assistance and advice in the design and implementation of agricultural development strategies geared to achieving the goals of food security, sustainable agricultural and rural development and to reducing the adverse social impacts on vulnerable population groups.

b) **Strategies for dryland development**

Sustainable development of dryland areas is of greater importance to this than to any other Region. Over one third of the population is dependent on these areas, which have witnessed increased misuse and degradation of resources in recent years due to population pressures. Comprehensive strategies and programmes have also been lacking. Constraints are many and well known. Increasing encroachment on rangelands, withering away of traditional agro-pastoral systems, absence of effective legislation, lack of adapted cultivars, inappropriate pricing policies for correcting animal feed deficit are all contributing to the present plight of dryland areas. But substantial potential exists for improving both crop and animal production in these areas which must be exploited both for food security and for those environmental considerations spelled out in Agenda 21. The Secretariat paper outlines elements of national and subregional strategies and is submitted for further enrichment by your deliberations. FAO stands ready to assist you in elaborating the country-specific strategies and in implementing them by providing policy advice, facilitating exchange of genetic resources and promoting farming systems approach training and exchanges of experience.

c) **Near East Cooperation Programme (NECP)**

NECP which started in the mid-seventies is a fine and pioneering example of South-South solidarity and regional cooperation. To assist needy countries in the Region, some of its oil-producing countries, in addition to providing considerable direct bilateral assistance, channelled US\$28 million through a special FAO Trust Fund to promote agricultural and food production in the Region, but especially in its least-developed countries. The amount was applied to 35 country projects and nine regional projects, and full technical and operational support was furnished by the Regional Office for the Near East and FAO Headquarters. NECP has built a base for strengthened regional technical cooperation, and has acted as a catalytic agent for strengthening cooperation among national institutions in

many important fields such as animal production, health and land and water use, and in generating several investment follow-up activities.

The need for continuing a programme like NECP is more pressing than ever as the economic crisis in the Region is greater than it was when NECP was established. FAO stands ready to provide its promotional support, experience and technical expertise for a second phase of the Programme. I recommend for your consideration the designation of a high-level committee to initiate the consultative process, for which I offer the services of FAO personnel to provide a Secretariat.

In conclusion, let me underline an important theme which was the subject of discussion at the last Regional Conference. I am referring to the efficient use and conservation of water resources. Water is an increasingly scarce resource - much more so in the Near East Region - and yet its misuse is common. Despite huge investments, accounting for a major share of the total public spending on the agricultural sector, irrigation performance indicators are falling short of expected returns. Actions should be initiated now to confront the problem of producing more food with less water, which will pose a great challenge for the future.

It is my earnest hope that the follow-up of the comprehensive recommendations of the last Regional Conference will be constantly kept under review - both by the Member Governments and ourselves. I also hope that this year's theme of World Food Day, "Water for Life", will further promote public awareness and reinvigorate our endeavours towards more productive and sustainable planning, investment and utilization of water resources.

Despite inherent constraints of natural resources and climatic aberrations, many Member Nations in the Region have made big strides in increasing irrigation, in widely disseminating inputs and improved technologies, and in implementing crop diversification, policy adjustments and reforms. The Region, as a whole, has thus made considerable progress in gearing up its agricultural production, as well as in improving its food security.

We have travelled a long way in the last decades. But challenges of the coming years require more sustained and determined efforts. I am confident that, by keeping agricultural development and food security at the centre stage, much more is achievable.

In the end, I should like to assure you that FAO, within its competence and resources, will not be found lacking in assisting your endeavours to build a better, brighter and more food-secure future for your people.

