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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN AFRICA :
PRESENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Introduction

1. This document is divided into three parts. The first part surveys the poor performance and gloomy prospects for agriculture in Africa, which can be improved only if every country in Africa undertakes heavy investment to increase food production, storage, processing and distribution and improve the over-all structure, institutions, research and training in the field of food and agriculture.
2. The second part gives a brief report on the institutional background and programme of work of the Joint ECA/FAO Agriculture Division.
3. The third and final part of the document reports on the \$US 1 billion International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and its relationship to the African Inter-Ministerial Committee for Food.

I. FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN AFRICA FROM 1970 TO THE PRESENT^{1/}

A. The state of food and agriculture in Africa

4. For the period 1970-1975, agricultural GDP in developing Africa, as calculated by ECA, increased only by 2.5 per cent a year, a figure below the 1971-1980 target. FAO arrived at a much lower growth rate of only 1.0 per cent a year.
5. According to FAO only 10 African countries out of 40 raised their per capita agricultural production between 1970 and 1975, while 90 per cent of Africans live in countries where per capita agricultural production has declined. Partly because of this poor performance of the agricultural sector, agriculture's contribution to GDP declined from 32.4 per cent in 1970 to 28.9 per cent in 1975, the largest share

^{1/} A fuller report for 1976 appears in the Survey of Economic and Social Conditions in Africa, 1976, Part I (E/CN.14/654/Part I), pp. 36-60.

being in Eastern Africa (39.8 per cent), followed by West Africa (37.2 per cent) and Central Africa (31.5 per cent). In North Africa agriculture plays a much smaller role, with only 19.4 per cent of GDP.

6. In the same period, the rural population increased at a slower pace than total population (2.3 per cent as against 2.8 per cent), and its share in the total population was reduced from 83.7 per cent in 1970 to 81.6 per cent in 1975. In spite of its slow progress, the rural population continues to increase its pressure on available land, while the agricultural sector still provides a living and employment for the more than four fifths of the African population.

7. Among the major food crops, cereal production decreased between 1970 and 1975, with the exception of rice, maize, millet and sorghum. But even for those apparently successful crops, the rate of increase in production was lower than the increase in population (except for maize). Production of roots and tubers fared better (+3.0 per cent per annum), but statistics in this sector are particularly suspect. Production of meat was affected by the Sahelian drought, and recovered its 1970 level only in 1975.

8. Among the major non-food crops, Africa's share in world output of coffee decreased from one third in 1970 to one quarter in 1975, and the continent is not in a position to take advantage of the high prices caused by the Brazilian frost. Production of cocoa beans has been decreasing after a peak in 1972, and production of tea has stagnated since 1973, after increasing sharply between 1970 and 1973. Production of cotton and sisal has declined rapidly since 1970. Africa's exports of bananas have also fallen. The only commodities for which increases in production have been recorded are tobacco (+6 per cent per annum) and natural rubber (+4.5 per cent per annum).

9. The output of forest products (industrial roundwood, sawnwood, sleepers and panels) increased slowly until 1973, but exports were severely hit by the world-wide economic crisis in 1974 and 1975. Nevertheless, the rate of forest exploitation in Africa is fast outpacing the reforestation programmes in many countries. If this trend continues, Africa may in the late 1980s find herself in the frustrating situation of being a net importer of some wood products.

10. Prices of all agricultural commodities imported or exported by Africa showed a rapid increase from 1971 or 1972 to 1974, followed by a partial fall in 1975. The prices of several commodities rose again in 1976 (wheat, coffee, cocoa beans and natural rubber). Although most prices are at a much higher level in 1976 than in 1970, their real value, when deflated on the basis of the United Nations index of prices of exported manufactured goods, is somewhat lower than during the sixties. The trade situation and terms of trade for agricultural producers are getting worse.

11. Agricultural imports increased in volume by 37 per cent between 1968 and 1974, with 75 per cent made up of food products, especially cereals, milk and sugar.

B. Causes of poor performance

12. The causes of the poor performance of African agriculture illustrated above are many. The Sahelian and Ethiopian droughts are only a part of the picture, and can be counted as a consequence of previous mismanagement of the agricultural sector rather than as a primary cause of stagnation. Another reason can be found in the increase in prices of agricultural inputs, but these prices have decreased since their 1974 peak and the consumption of inputs is still so small that this factor can barely account for the poor progress. The world economic crisis can explain the decrease in production and exports of cash crops, but it is not sufficient to explain why Africa's share in world agricultural exports has decreased, nor why the continent is not able to respond to increasing demand and rising prices when they occur. It cannot explain either why production of food crops for internal consumption is faring so badly.

13. The real explanation should therefore be sought in the economic and agricultural policies of governments. African agriculture in recent years has been paying for the neglect in which it was held during the sixties. Too much emphasis was given to industrialization, urbanization and urban infrastructure by governments and foreign assistance agencies. Within the agricultural sector itself attention was focused on export crops: too many large-scale agricultural projects were launched without sufficient preparation and poorly executed; while the small farmers, who constitute 93 per cent of producers producing over 95 per cent of total African agricultural output, and the food crops subsector, were particularly neglected.

14. The Freetown Declaration (E/CN.14/653, annex), among other pieces of evidence, shows that African governments are now aware of these failures. Development plans are allocating more funds to the agricultural sector, and international financial institutions are following the same trend, but agricultural development is very slow, and so many mistakes have been made that it will still take some time before agriculture starts to respond to this as yet inadequate investment.

C. Recommendations

15. Governments should continue to direct the bulk of their efforts to improving the effectiveness and the living standards of small farming families, who constitute four fifths of their populations.

16. Agricultural research should cease to specialize only in various export crops, and should in the immediate future concentrate more on the food crops subsector, especially on all aspects of the problems of small-scale producers: reduction of fallow, crop rotation, introduction of animal-drawn cultivation, association between crop cultivation and animal rearing, and so on.

17. Technology and improved inputs that are adaptable, economic and effective have to be developed as rapidly as possible to meet the growing problems of increasing farm production. Where such inputs call for a restructuring of the total farm organization, this should not be neglected either.

18. The number of rural extension workers should be greatly increased; they should be better trained, better supervised, more adequately remunerated, and the rural extension network should be completely reorganized in order to arrive at an integrated

and global approach within the geographical boundaries of small regions instead of specializations, such as livestock, rice, maize or forestry, as at present.

19. Efforts should be directed to improving the marketing of food crops through improvements in storage, packaging, transport, the building of feeder roads and the establishment of new marketing institutions where necessary. For export crops, an increase in producer prices and a new appraisal of the role to be played by marketing boards or stabilization funds are urgently necessary.

20. Land policy should be designed essentially to eliminate the status of land ownership that slows down development of agricultural production. In countries where large and generally underexploited holdings exist, a progressive land reform is probably the pre-condition for progress. In most African countries south of the Sahara, where collective ownership prevents farmers from making long-term investment to increase the productivity of the land (establishment of plantations, irrigation, and so on), the law should allow enterprising cultivators to benefit from a long-term usufruct right over the land they have improved.

D. Areas for concentration of activities

21. The general idea is to refrain from making many more studies, except as a basis for action, and to devote much more time and efforts to action programmes. However, in the field of agriculture the ECA secretariat is not an operational agency, and it is only through governments that it can implement programmes.

22. In view of the above considerations and the shortages of funds and staff, the Joint ECA/FAO Agriculture Division has selected the following items on which to concentrate its efforts.

23. In the field of agricultural planning, which is essential to ensure sound development policies and priorities, the Division will assist with analysis and formulation of policies and programmes for agricultural development, with particular concentration on food plans.

24. In the field of food production and marketing, a study will be made on food policies and constraints to increasing food availability, in West Africa as a first phase. An African regional food plan will be prepared in co-operation with FAO, assistance will be given to the OAU Inter-Ministerial Committee for Food, studies will be made on prospects for exports of meat from Eastern Africa to the Near East, and from Sahelian countries to West African coastal countries. Projects will also be prepared for livestock, dairy and mixed farming development.

25. In the field of agricultural marketing, the Division will establish closer links with member countries, and concentrate on two or three countries in Eastern Africa in order to identify food crop marketing problems, study the distribution of imported inputs and identify areas of interregional co-operation in food storage and distribution, as well as input production, transit and distribution.

26. In the field of livestock, the Division will try to concentrate on improving the food situation through better policies and marketing institutions, with particular emphasis on meat, dairy products, eggs and livestock feeds.

II. THE JOINT ECA/FAO AGRICULTURE DIVISION: A NEW COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT UNDER WAY

27. In an attempt to co-ordinate the efforts of FAO and ECA in the improvement and development of African agriculture, the Joint ECA/FAO Agriculture Division was created within the ECA secretariat.

28. The Joint Division was established by a memorandum of understanding signed by the Director-General of FAO and the Executive Secretary of ECA on 7 April 1959. Between then and now, the manning table of the division has been expanded to 19 professional posts (10 filled by ECA and 9 by FAO) in various economic and social aspects of agriculture in Africa. FAO is still solely responsible for all primarily technical matters.

29. The programme of work is focused primarily on the provision of advice and assistance to governments in modifying and improving agricultural organization and economic services to agriculture so that this sector may make a greater contribution to economic growth in accordance with national development plans. It has been implemented in a variety of ways, including: (a) the preparation and distribution of documents by the staff, by consultants or by FAO, the World Food Programme and the World Food Council, OAU and other individuals and bodies; (b) the assembly and analysis of information for documentation, and for briefing of missions and experts; (c) the organization and servicing of specialized meetings of government officials and experts, and participation in meetings of other agencies, with a view to imparting information and principles conducive to agricultural development; (d) direct co-operation with and advice to government officials through missions, visits of staff members or consultants in specific fields, either individually or as part of more general missions; and (e) assisting government officials in preparing programmes for technical assistance and requesting experts, fellowships, study tours and other forms of assistance from FAO and other relevant bodies.

30. For several reasons which will not be enlarged upon here, the Joint Division was not particularly effective. For years the Division had no head, and the operation of the previous memorandum of understanding was not very smooth.

31. On 7 September 1966, a revised memorandum of understanding was signed between the Director-General of FAO and the Executive Secretary of ECA. This is the substantive basis of agreement on which the Joint Division is at present operating, even if still ineffectively.

32. After three years during which the Joint Division had no Director, FAO dispatched a mission to review the problems confronting the Joint Division; this finally led to the appointment of a new Director of the Division, who took office in January 1976.

33. In the light of past experience with the working of the Joint Division, new terms of agreement are being prepared for final agreement between the new FAO Director-General (Mr. Edouard Saouma) and the new Executive Secretary of ECA (Mr. Adebayo Adedeji) as soon as possible.

34. The importance of agriculture in the economic development of Africa cannot be overestimated. Neither can we overstate the vital role of the Joint Division in pursuing this objective. It is imperative for the Joint Division to be strengthened and for its operational activities to be closely linked with FAO and ECA.

III. THE INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (IFAD)

35. During the United Nations World Food Conference, held in Rome from 5 to 16 November 1974, the African group called for the establishment of an Agricultural Development Fund to accelerate the rate of agricultural development to meet the rapidly growing demand for food.

36. The Conference adopted a resolution recognizing the need for a substantial increase in investment for increasing food and agricultural production in developing countries, and resolved that an International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) should be established immediately. It was proposed that the Fund should be administered by a governing body consisting of representatives of contributing developed countries, contributing developing countries and potential recipient countries, and that disbursements from the Fund should be carried out through existing international and/or regional institutions. It was also proposed that the Fund should have the status of a department of FAO and should be headed by an Executive Director appointed by the FAO Council.

37. The Draft Agreement establishing the Fund was completed, and approved, at the Third Meeting of Interested Countries on the Establishment of the International Development Fund, held in Rome from 28 January to 6 February 1976. A target figure of \$US 1 billion in convertible currencies was set, and it was generally agreed that roughly equivalent contributions would be made by OECD countries and OPEC, the latter contribution being drawn from the already established OPEC Special Fund. The Draft Agreement was accepted by the United Nations World Food Council, meeting in Rome from 14 to 17 June 1976, where it was stated that pledges to the Fund had reached \$US 936 million in convertible currencies, plus several million in other currencies. It was further reported that as soon as the target had been reached, and as soon as \$US 750 million worth of pledges had been ratified, IFAD would enter into operation.

38. The target was reached in December 1976, when it was announced by the 18-member preparatory commission for IFAD that total pledges to the Fund stood at approximately \$US 1,022 million in convertible currencies. This was made up of \$567 million from OECD countries, \$435.5 million from OPEC and \$19.1 million dollars from recipient developing countries.

39. The Draft Agreement lays down the objective of the Fund as being to mobilize additional resources on concessional terms for agricultural development in developing member States. In fulfilling this objective the Fund is to provide financing primarily for projects and programmes specifically designed to introduce, expand and improve food production systems and to strengthen related policies and institutions within the framework of national priorities and strategies, taking into consideration: the need to increase food production in the poorest food-deficit countries; the potential for increasing food production in other developing countries; and the importance of improving the nutritional level of the poorest populations in developing countries and the conditions of their lives.

40. Membership of the Fund is open to any State Member of the United Nations, and each member shall appoint one Governor and an alternate to sit on the Governing Council. The total number of votes in the Governing Council is to be 1,800, distributed equally as between the OECD group of countries, OPEC and the recipient developing countries. Decisions made by the Governing Council are to be taken by

a simple majority of the total number of votes. The Governing Council elects an Executive Board, composed of 18 members of the Fund, which is responsible for the general operation of the Fund.

41. Financing by the Fund takes the form of loans or grants, depending on the economic situation and prospects of the recipient member and the nature of approved projects and programmes submitted to the Executive Board. Appraisal of projects and programmes presented to the Fund for financing is to be carried out by international institutions, or by competent agencies specializing in this field, selected by the Executive Board. The Fund shall entrust the administration of the loans and supervision of the implementation of projects and programmes to competent international institutions.

African Inter-Ministerial Committee for Food

42. The World Food Conference in 1974 mandated African member countries to establish an African Inter-Ministerial Committee for Food. Accordingly, the OAU Scientific and Cultural Department convened a meeting of African Ministers of Agriculture from 19 to 22 January 1976 in Addis Ababa. The meeting adopted the following resolution:

"The African Inter-Ministerial Committee for Food meeting in its first session in Addis Ababa from 19 to 22 January 1976,

"Recalling resolution XXII of the World Food Conference on the creation of the United Nations World Food Council and its relations with regional bodies,

"Recalling further paragraph 4(f) of resolution XXII of the World Food Conference on the full co-operation which should exist between the World Food Council and regional bodies to formulate and follow up policies approved by the Council and that these bodies be serviced by existing United Nations or FAO bodies in the region concerned,

"Pursuant to resolution CM/Pes. 413(XVIV) of the OAU Council of Ministers on the establishment of the African Inter-Ministerial Committee for Food,

"Considering the report of the OAU Working Party on the functions and operation of the African Inter-Ministerial Committee for Food,

"Recognizing that the African Inter-Ministerial Committee for Food is the regional operational arm of the World Food Council and that its functions and mandate are in line with the World Food Council,

"Recommends to the OAU Council of Ministers to request the ECOSOC during its forthcoming summer sessions,

- "1. To invite all the relevant United Nations bodies and its specialized agencies working in the field of agriculture, food, nutrition, trade, financial matters and other related questions in Africa, particularly ECA, FAO, UNDP, WFP, WHO, ILO, UNICEF, UNCTAD and IRPD to submit their relevant reports to the African Inter-Ministerial Committee for Food before their final submission to the World Food Council:

- "2. To request all the relevant United Nations bodies and its specialized agencies working in Africa to service and finance, under the auspices of the OAU, the meetings of the African Inter-Ministerial Committee for Food and the three Experts Committees, namely the food security and programmes, the economic and finance Committees;
- "3. To request the relevant United Nations bodies and its specialized agencies working in Africa to obtain the necessary mandate from their respective bodies to enable them to finance the projects, to undertake the studies and to make available their expertise as requested by the African Inter-Ministerial Committee for Food."