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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN DROUGHT-AFFECTED AREAS  
IN AFRICA (OCTOBER 1974)

There has been considerable improvement in the situation in drought-affected areas in Africa. The rains have come in sufficient amount in most of the areas, and the worst aspects of drought seem to be over. More relief has been provided, and the experiences of the past year have helped to make relief operations more efficient. While the harvest in the affected areas promises to be good, plans are being made to continue the relief operations into 1975 in order to ensure that the affected farming population is properly rehabilitated, and progress is being made in the formulation and implementation of medium- and long-term programmes.

I. THE SITUATION IN THE SAHEL

A. Relief operations

By 24 August 1974 the bulk of the food supplies, both donations and commercial purchases, had arrived in the affected countries or in ports. Out of a total of 1.13 million tons of food grains made available from outside Africa for the period 1 November 1973 to 31 October 1974, 784,000 tons had already reached the affected countries as of 24 August 1974, with another 129,000 tons in ports and railheads.

Arrivals of large shipments called for special measures to evacuate the ports and expedite distribution within the countries themselves. These measures were further strengthened by setting up port committees in each main port to keep the situation under constant review and arrange for speedy evacuation. Movement by rail was pushed to the maximum but was still inadequate to meet the needs, and road transport had to be stepped up. In coastal countries port and railway authorities actively participated with the Office of Sahelian Relief Operations (OSRO) and with the donors and their forwarding agents in moving the supplies and arranging for road transportation.

Following an appeal by President Lamizana of Upper Volta to Heads of States, the recipient countries, agreed to favour the movement from ports of food grains and essential goods over that of consumer goods and to adopt a special waiver of agreements thereby permitting the use of trucks irrespective of country of origin. This stimulated evacuation as it established priority and permitted the use of large fleets of trucks from the coastal countries, which the Governments of these countries helped to arrange.

Other measures included the movement of supplies across the Sahara by truck from Algerian ports, a measure sponsored by the Government of the United States of America and OSRO; the establishment of a camel corps to move supplies in the remote areas of Niger and the trans-shipment by head-loads across breaches in the road caused by rains.

A meeting of donors was called in Rome in June 1974 followed by meetings with Governments and all interested parties at Cotonou and Dakar in early July, at which logistic problems were identified and measures taken to overcome them. Pre-planning for the future was also agreed upon.

The results of all these efforts were that supplies were moving from the ports by both rail and road at record rates which reached over 4,000 tons a day. Because road traffic was disrupted by heavy rains in some countries, some selective air-lifting was still needed to a few remote areas, but there was no massive airlift from the ports as there had been in 1973.

Five of the ten Red Cross medical teams to be established in Niger and to work in conjunction with WHO, UNICEF and the League of Red Cross Societies became operational and are now working in camps there. It was expected that the five remaining teams would be established shortly. There have been no major epidemics, and the health and nutritional programmes are progressing well. The number of pledges by donors to provide protective foods both bilaterally and through UNICEF has increased substantially.

It should be stated here that the drought has apparently also affected the Cape Verde Islands. A letter was received from the Secretary-General of PAIGC last August appealing for assistance for the drought-affected population of Cape Verde Islands. This information was communicated both to the United Nations Special Sahelian Office and to the Director-General of FAO with a suggestion that the Cape Verde Islands be included in the relief operations for the Sahelian zone. This proposal was taken up and was being discussed with the representative of PAIGC at United Nations Headquarters.

#### B. Rainfall

Under rain-fed conditions, the main sowing season for food crop cultivation in the Sahel comes in June and July. Average rainfall data collected at 70 stations in the affected countries indicated that the rainfall in May and June had amounted to only 64 and 67 per cent, respectively, of the long-range rainfall average registered in this area. This was not significantly higher than the rainfall in 1973 during the same period.

However, in July, for the first time since 1969, rainfall exceeded the long-range average by 7 per cent in all the countries affected with an increase of up to 26 per cent above normal in the eastern part of the Sudan-Sahel belt and in general relatively higher rainfall in the southern parts of the countries concerned. Distribution of rains are reported to have been fairly good during July.

Rainfall was widespread in August and so heavy that it caused floods in several countries. This presented some immediate problems. Floods in Niger and Mali rendered many people homeless in the towns, and road communications were disrupted.

However, the measures taken to move large food supplies into the Sahel countries and the special attention given to remote areas during the rainy season prevented any significant breakdown of distribution of relief supplies.

Because of abundant rains, the crops are generally in good conditions and it is expected that the harvest will be good. The rise in the levels of the Senegal and Niger Rivers has also been beneficial for flood recession crops in Mauritania, Senegal, Mali and Niger.

C. Plans for 1974/75

It was agreed at the donors meeting held in Rome and confirmed during CILSS/OSRO meetings in Cotonou and Dakar that, irrespective of this year's rainfall, the crops in the Sahelian region cannot be expected to meet the needs of the population. The reasons are first that it was not possible to plant all cultivable areas as many farmers had dispersed in search of food and were living in camps away from their relatives. Secondly, seeds in sufficient quantities were not readily available where needed; and thirdly, farmers and Governments have almost no stocks of any kind. Food aid will therefore have to be provided for the period November 1974 to October 1975, although the aim should be to phase out the operations as soon as conditions permit.

It has been proposed that, as was done in the period 1973-1974, the requirements of the affected countries for 1974-1975 in respect of food, including protective foods; transport; storage; seeds; logistical support and technical assistance should be assessed by a high level multi-donor mission, with which CILSS and the donors should be fully associated. So that the needs may be realistically assessed, the mission should not become operative until November 1974 when information about the actual harvest in different countries will be known. The mission is being preceded by a technical evaluation team which should evaluate the 1973-1974 relief operation, assess the harvest prospects, the special needs of remote areas and internal transport difficulties and collect other information which could be of value to the high-level multi-donor mission in its task.

Considering that donors will not be in a position to act on the recommendations of the mission until December at the earliest, it is considered necessary that a contingency programme be adopted to ensure a continuous supply of commodities between the end of the 1973-1974 relief operations (31 October 1974) and the time when practical implementation of the 1974-1975 programme begins. This would involve making advance allocations of food supplies which could subsequently be absorbed into pledges for the 1974-1975 programme as a whole.

The Director-General of FAO has accordingly appealed to the principal donors to participate in the technical evaluation and multi-donor missions, which will be visiting all countries in the Sahel in October and November, and to make advance allocations of cereals to ensure a smooth flow of supplies between November 1974 and March 1975. An advance allocation of 275,000 tons has been suggested. This figure was suggested in consideration of port capacities, evacuation rates and internal distribution facilities in an attempt to avoid congestion at the ports and to make it possible to transport the grain allocated to the interior without recourse to costly innovations. Of this amount, there are approximately 110,000 tons available, which were left over from the 1973-1974 programme. Thus, new interim pledges for advance allocations of 165,000 tons are sought. Of that amount 50,000 tons have already been pledged by USAID.

Pending the recommendations of the proposed multi-donor mission, additional pledges in the amount of 6 million dollars are needed immediately so that orders can be placed for the purchase of 150 to 200 urgently needed heavy-duty trucks and their running costs for the 1974-1975 programme can be covered.

## II. SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, the Government has received pledges for 140,200 of the 164,000 metric tons of grain required for 1974. As of September 1974, some 117,200 tons had actually been received in the country. Of the 28,800 tons of food required for rehabilitation, some 10,910 tons have so far been committed, but only about 7,900 tons have actually arrived. In order to reactivate the affected farm population, 15,000 tons of seeds and about 33,000 oxen were distributed.

Transportation has been one of the major problems faced in relief operations. Some areas are almost inaccessible. Moreover, only half of the vehicles required have been supplied. In the less accessible areas, helicopters and small aircraft have been utilized in carrying out relief activities.

An inter-agency mission, with the participation of FAO, IBRD, WFP and ECA, was undertaken in April/May 1974 in Ethiopia to study and recommend appropriate food security policy and suggest areas in which international assistance might help the Ethiopian Government to implement the policy. This pilot food security mission, which was undertaken within the framework of FAO's world food security programme, reviewed the likelihood of the recurrence of drought in Ethiopia and the measures to be taken to lessen the incidence of droughts. The mission recommended the following measures:

- (a) A nation-wide system of crop reporting to provide early warning of expected crop failure;
- (b) A plan and organizational framework for dealing with a drought crisis; and
- (c) Adequate emergency reserve stocks under Government control.

In addition the mission strongly emphasized the importance for Ethiopia of establishing an efficient marketing system aimed at improving national food security.

Relief and Rehabilitation Commission established in February 1974 was further strengthened and constituted as an autonomous body with powers, not only to undertake relief and rehabilitation activities but also to study the cause of natural disasters and to take short-, medium- and long-term measures to prevent their occurrence. The Commission has been able to mobilize some domestic resources to supplement external assistance.

Most of the highland areas and the Wollo Province have had good rains this year. There was, however, an attack of army worms as well as some attacks of grasshoppers and locusts, which destroyed the initial plantings. There were also floods in some areas. About 0.5 million Ethiopian dollars was spent in the fight against the army worms as a result of which some farmers were able to replant their farms.

The effects of the drought are still felt in some areas, particularly in the south-eastern provinces. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission is planning to establish a national emergency stockpile of 60,000 tons of grain, which will be used to support emergency feeding and food-for-work programmes and a price stabilization scheme. The Commission is also taking measures for relief operations in 1975 and has already launched an appeal for 90,000 tons of food for 1975. Arrangements are also being made to purchase food from surplus areas to supply the deficit areas.

### III. MEDIUM- AND LONG-TERM PROGRAMMES

In order to facilitate the functions of the United Nations in co-ordinating activities in the Sahelian zone, the Special Sahelian Office has been transferred to Ouagadougou as previously recommended by the Executive Committee. A member of the ECA secretariat has been posted to Ouagadougou to provide a liaison with the Special Sahelian Office and with the FAO Office for the Sahel.

As part of the medium- and long-term programmes, a Japanese agency is sponsoring a mission to the Sahel to investigate the transportation system, including feeder roads, with a view to preparing an investment plan. The United Nations and the ECA secretariat are participating in this mission. The secretariat is also making arrangements for undertaking a study on the economic impact of the drought both in the Sahel and in Ethiopia. The objective of this study is to assess the effects of drought on the economic activities of the population with a view to quantifying the losses and the disruptions caused. The findings will serve as a guide in providing assistance for future rehabilitation and planning operations.