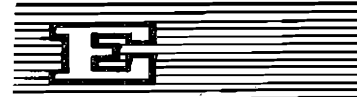




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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN AFRICAN
COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY THE DROUGHT (FEBRUARY 1975)

I. THE SITUATION IN THE SAHEL

1. Crop prospects in the countries of the Sahel have vastly improved as a result of rains. As a whole, rainfall was considerably higher and more widespread than in the two previous years. The rain started late but in July the situation changed dramatically. Though less heavy in August and September, the rains fortunately continued into October in most of the zone.
2. However, precipitation in the lower-rainfall areas, comprising large parts of most Sahelian countries, barely reached 80 per cent of normal levels. In that particular climatic zone, including parts of the 500-700 mm main mean rainfall zone, there are regions - especially in Mali, Mauritania and Senegal - where there was a greater reduction in rainfall than the overall average suggests.
3. Encouraging output is expected from the flood plain cultivation of the Senegal and Niger rivers in Senegal, Mauritania and Mali since the flooded area has reached its highest level since 1951. The flooding appears to have lasted long enough to provide sufficient moisture for the crop cultivation of rice, sorghum and maize. In October sowing was still being carried out, and the results of the crop output will not be available before February or March 1975.
4. Despite these generally favourable circumstances, the crops in the Sahelian countries cannot be expected to meet the needs of the population as all cultivable areas were not planted and stocks with farmers and Governments hardly exist.
5. Despite the efforts of local plant protection services (financially supported by FAO) and OCLALAV (Organization Commune de lutte antiacridienne et de lutte antiaviaire), Mauritania, Senegal, Mali and particularly Niger reported crop losses of ten per cent on average due to infestation of parasites such as grasshoppers and caterpillars.
6. Initial non-official estimates for Niger indicate production of about 900,000 metric tons, a figure which should be reduced by 10 per cent to take account of insect infestation and over-abundant rains in some areas. Mauritania reported food crop conditions above average primarily based on the expanded area of flood plain cultivation available. Cereal crops of early maturing varieties were estimated to

be good in Senegal. In Upper Volta, crop output was good to excellent following abundant rain in September, continuing throughout the first week of October. Sorghum, millet and rice crop conditions were reported to be good in the Gambia although approximately 67,000 persons are still affected by food shortages. Latest reports from Mali indicate that the harvest was lower than expected in the Sahelian regions because of insect infestation but satisfactory in the southern part of the country.

A. Emergency Assistance Operations

7. The period running from 1 September to 31 October 1974 marked the end of the emergency assistance operations carried out by the United Nations System for the agricultural year (November 1973 to October 1974) in the seven drought-affected countries in the Sahelian zone. On 31 October 1974, out of a total of 1,137 million tons of food grains available, 1,002 million tons had already reached the affected countries concerned with another 83,000 tons in ports and railheads. These figures compare with 471,000 tons delivered in 1972-1973.

8. It should be reiterated that this result was obtained through the active participation of the Permanent Inter-State Committee (CILSS), the recipient countries, the coastal countries, the donors, port and railway authorities, and their close co-operation with the United Nations System, represented by FAO.

9. Pledges for the period November 1974 - March 1975 have reached 138,000 tons, thus giving a total, when taken together with the 110,000 tons already ready for delivery, of 248,000 tons available. The prompt response of donors has been most encouraging and should ensure a smooth flow of supplies in the early months of the 1974-1975 programme. By 31 October 1974, pledges worth US\$ 10.6 million had been received in response to the appeal of the United Nations Secretary-General and the Director-General of FAO.

10. The provision of essential foods through UNICEF has been improved, and sufficient pledges have been received to meet needs during the period November 1974 - March 1975. Proposals for improving the distribution arrangements have been discussed with the Governments.

11. The medico-nutritional teams established in Niger by the League of Red Cross Societies in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF and FAO have continued to work in the camps. The Niger Government Minister of Health has expressed the wish that the teams' work should continue after the closure of the camps, until the end of the year, as planned, but that priority should be given to elementary medical needs, the education of the population in hygiene matters and teaching nutritional habits, which will persist.

12. Special features of the period were the continuance of the movement of supplies by lorry across the Sahara from Algerian ports, sponsored by the United States and FAO (OSRO); the good work done by camel corps in the movement of supplies in the remote areas of Niger and the trans-shipment by head-loads across breaches in the roads caused by rains.

B. Medium-term and Long-term Programmes

13. The involvement of the United Nations system in the recovery and rehabilitation programme is based, firstly, on the principle that the programme and projects must be requested and articulated by the Governments concerned or by CILSS. While the United Nations may assist in the identification of such a programme and projects, they must originate from the countries themselves and fully reflect their needs. Secondly, the actions that form integral parts of the involvement must be in harmony with the recovery and rehabilitation objectives of CILSS and its member States. Lastly, the involvement must be within the special competence and capacity of the specialized agencies, organizations and programmes of the United Nations System.

14. ECA has already decided to devote the basic part of the resources of the Niamey UNDAT to projects relating to the development of the Sahel, and at the most recent meeting of the Programme Committee in Niamey in September 1974, the coherence of the projects was based on the agro-pastoral sector, the transport sector, the water resources sector and the human resources sector, which are strategic sectors in the development of the Sahel.

15. From October to December an ECA expert and an expert from the Niamey UNDAT assisted the Chief of the Sahelian Office (UNSSO), which had just been transferred to Ouagadougou. The ECA expert was again made available to UNSSO at its request for one year from January 1975, and will help in preparing programmes.

16. A Secretariat mission composed of three experts visited the Sahelian zone in October and November 1974 and studied the possibility of organizing assistance for the improvement and maintenance of secondary roads. It also analysed a road programme for each of the three countries visited (Upper Volta, Niger and Mali), which will be submitted to sources of financing, and assessed the operations and costs of such programmes.

17. The Secretariat also rendered assistance to the River Niger Commission in the formulation of industrial development projects. The Liptako-Gourma Authority is in the process of preparing to include specific drought-related projects in its programme of activities. For the second phase of its Integrated Development Project, the transport sector has obtained financing for initiation of the project for the opening up of the Liptako-Gourma area and the improvement of secondary roads.

II. THE SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA

18. At the end of 1974, total pledges received by the Ethiopian Government amounted to 141,300 tons of cereals. By mid-January 10,000 tons of cereals had arrived at the port of Djibouti, and 5,000 tons were en route to the port by boat. The World Food Programme also agreed to the purchase of 5,000 tons of cereals on the local market, to be sent to the affected areas of the country.

19. For 1975, aid requirements are estimated at between 70,000 and 100,000 tons of cereals. Pledges already received total 59,000 tons. This should be supplemented by a few thousand tons which were available before the harvest, which was very good and occurred from November to January for the main high-altitude area.

20. In some parts of the country, however (Eritrea, East and South Regions), the situation is unsatisfactory, particularly for nomadic peoples. In other regions, such as Wollo and Tigre, a recovery has been observed, due notably to a reduction in population density. Most of all it was the South-East which suffered from the drought in 1974.