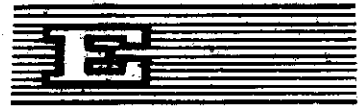


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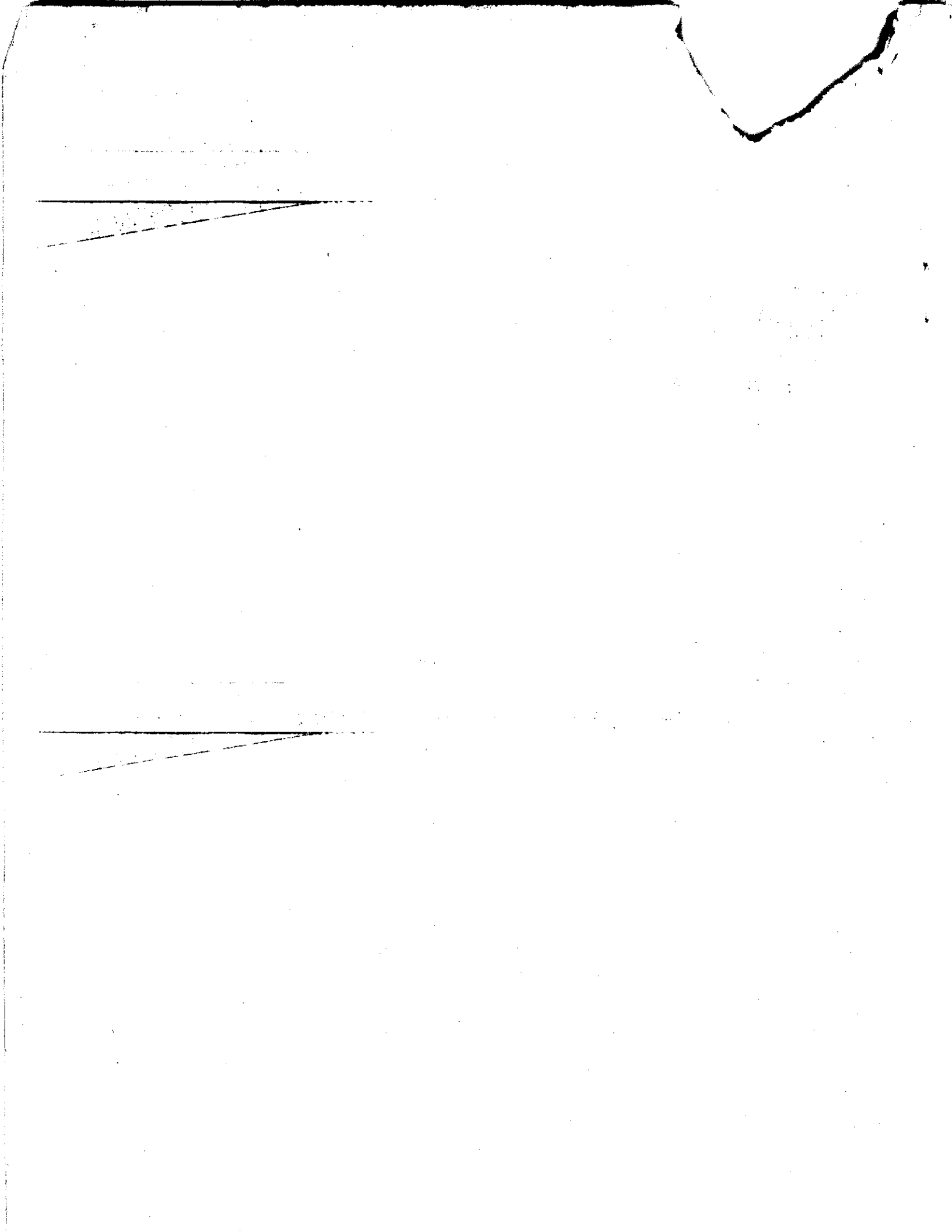
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**THE AFRICAN FOOD PLAN
AND
THE TENTH REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE :
REPORT**



THE AFRICAN FOOD PLAN
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REPORT

1. Since they were deeply concerned about the steady deterioration of the food situation in the region and had voiced that concern way back in 1974 of the World Food Conference, at the eight FAO Regional Conference in 1976, the African countries adopted the Freetown Declaration which expressed their determination to improve food production and supply and, thus to move towards individual and collective self-reliance in food.
2. Such a decision was long overdue. Food production in the seventies had lagged behind the population growth rate and had failed to meet the accelerating increase in demand. The situation was made even worse by drought, especially in the Sahel; by wars and by political upheavals, which showed how delicate was the balance between supply and demand.
3. In pursuance of the resolutions adopted by the World Food Conference, OAU set up an African inter-ministerial committee for food, which is provided with technical assistance by ECA and FAO. Among other things this committee was assigned the crucial task of mobilizing the support of African States in the implementation of measures necessary to enable the region to meet its own food needs by the end of this century. The OAU committee was inaugurated in February 1976 but has not reconvened since. Thus it is not only ineffective but very nearly moribund. However, this ineffectiveness may well have been offset by the Freetown Declaration in which FAO and other relevant international organizations were asked to co-operate with the member States of OAU and ECA in drawing up a Regional Food Plan. Such a plan was prepared jointly by OAU and FAO and was discussed at the tenth Regional Conference of African Ministers of Agriculture held in Arusha in September 1978 under the joint sponsorship of ECA and FAO. In reviewing the plan which is entitled "Regional Food Plan for Africa" and is attached to this report the Minister commended the analysis of the outlook for self-reliance in food contained in the document and adopted a resolution in which they recognized the need for designing and implementing country strategies with a balanced preparation of short, medium and long-term measures. They agreed that the preparation of country plans and the identification of investment programmes and projects relating to food production were the responsibility of individual member States. National plans would in fact serve as a foundation on which subregional and regional plans could subsequently be built. The Ministers also expressed the view that small farms, subsistence farming, faulty physical structure, natural and biological hazards, failure to introduce crop improvements, a shortage of skilled manpower, weak government services and inadequate investments and external financial assistance, were important constraints to increased food production in Africa.

4. With a view to solving these problems, it was proposed that top priority should be given to the development of traditional sector to enable it to play a basic role in food production. It was felt that that sector might be developed by implementing policy measures aimed at improved markets and the establishment of an effective price policy; the effective distribution of carefully selected inputs; the adoption of production subsidies, tax incentives and rational fiscal policies; the initiation of package schemes to provide farmers with improved seeds, fertilizers, chemicals and other inputs; the elimination of post-harvest losses; the construction of larger and better storage facilities; the development of range lands for livestock production and the implementation of irrigation and land reclamation programmes in swampy and tsetse-infested areas.
5. The Ministers were of the view that the achievement by African countries of greater self-reliance in the production and supply of food would require much larger investments in the food and agriculture sector. They therefore recommended increasing the financial and other resources, allocated to this sector in national budgets.
6. Consideration was also given to regional co-operation in agriculture. It was pointed out that many African countries found it difficult to foster intra-African trade and co-operation because of fiscal and other infrastructural inadequacies. It was stressed that much could be achieved in the struggle for self-reliance in food and in the development process in general through better co-operation in relation to agriculture.
7. The Ministers stressed the role that the Multinational Programme and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) could play close co-operation with FAO in the identification and formulation of inter-country programmes for development of food production and trade. They further recommended that FAO, in consultation with National Governments and intergovernmental and other international organisations should explore the possibility of establishing subregional food technology centres for the purpose of conducting surveys and research programmes with a view to reducing pre-and post-harvest food losses improving the nutritional value of local foods and developing suitable techniques for processing and preserving these foods. The Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania and his Government would be glad to host such a centre, an offer which was gratefully accepted by the other Ministers.
8. ECA's role in helping African Governments to implement some of the recommendations mentioned above is obvious. However the Governments themselves can also act effectively provided that they are motivated by a deep concern for the food situation on the continent and have the political will to make the financial, political, administrative and institutional adjustments and sacrifices needed to achieve, the target of self-reliance in food and to expand trade in food commodities within the Africa region in the near future.
9. In accordance with its new operational approach in which it was leading its efforts to solving problems at the grassroot levels, the ECA secretariat was committed to providing assistance upon request, through the MULPOCs, and other subregional groupings and intergovernmental organizations. Consultants were in fact already engaged in discussions with the leaders of the MULPOCs and other subregional groups as to ways and means of gearing their plans, programmes and activities to increased food production and trade in the region.

10. ECA and EAO are jointly organizing an Expert Consultation in Addis Ababa in 1979 to discuss the findings and recommendations of the report prepared by these consultants, which will be used as a background document by the meeting and will serve as a basis for advising member States on follow-up action. It is hoped that by then member States will be ready with their proposals for the implementation of their part of the Regional Food Plan. In particular, the Expert Consultation should afford member States the opportunity to identify bottlenecks and priorities with a view to determining those areas in which assistance is needed both individually and collectively. An opportunity of this nature cannot be missed, and international assistance can be effective only after this phase of the Regional Food Plan is given the full support of all Member States.