

THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATION

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations has been conceived on the proposition that nations can unite together to raise and supply each other enough food and sufficient supply of all the products of agriculture, forestry and fisheries at prices which are fair to consumers and producers alike. It holds to the faith that these age-old ideas of mankind can be realized when the knowledge and tools at hand are used to full advantage.

In the light of what all men agree to be desirable and modern science has made possible FAO fashioned its declared purposes of—

Raising the levels of nutrition and the standards of living of the peoples of all countries;

Securing improvements in the efficiency of the production and distribution of all food and agricultural products;

Bettering the condition of rural population;

And thus contributing toward an expanding world economy.

TO AFFORD FREEDOM FROM WANT

This international organization grew out of a wartime conference to implement hope for a peace affording assurance that all men in all lands may live their lives in freedom from want.

Assembled for this purpose, representatives of the allied countries at war under the flags of the United Nations held a conference on Food and Agriculture at Hot Springs, Va., U.S.A., in May, 1943. The conference, convened at the initiative of President Roosevelt, agreed on these several points:

Two-thirds of the people in the world are ill-nourished.

Their health could be vastly improved if they were able to get enough of the right kind of food.

The farmers of the world, constituting two-thirds of its population, could produce enough if they employed methods known to modern science.

Through increased production and effective distribution, full-time work for all could be provided and a process put in motion to stamp out want. To attain these ends, the nations must act in concert.

HOW FAO WAS ORGANIZED

Before the Hot Springs Conference disbanded it recommended the creation of an Interim Commission to prepare for a permanent agency to carry through the design of its program.

The First Session of the FAO Conference met in Quebec, Canada, in October, 1945. Forty-two governments ratified the constitution and five were later added to these, so that at the start of its second year, FAO had 47 members.

PRACTICAL MEN GIVE EFFECT TO IDEALS

FAO is served by a working staff trained in dealing with the special problems which must be met in advancing toward the goals set by the nations when they established the Organization.

Standing advisory committees of leading experts from all parts of the world assist the staff in making studies, collecting information, and analyzing data.

Collecting information relating to food and agriculture is the first step in attaining the aims of FAO. The second step is facilitating the free and rapid exchange of the information throughout the world.

But the task involved in the advance toward FAO's objectives will require continued progress in education and research. One of the Organization's main functions therefore is to promote this progress.

FAO gives assistance to governments that ask for it. One form of this assistance is the sending of missions of experts to study the problems of these governments pertaining to food, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. The Organization is prepared to follow this

use with technical aid in working out the solution of these problems.

FAO OFFERS A WORLD PROGRAM

FAO follows a policy of recommending international action, based on existing information, to attack major objectives.

Everybody agrees that if men, women and children everywhere were fed as human beings should be fed there would be a market for all the food that could be produced in the foreseeable future. FAO offers a program to the world to make this possibility a reality.

By its program of international action FAO hopes to free agricultural procedures from the fear of overproduction; to free all men from fear of want; to free the world economy from mankind's fear of depression and scarcity, and from national policies fostering false security through national self-sufficiency leading down the road to war.

FAO's power of action is limited, but its power of suggestion is vast, for in its purposes it appeals to mankind's conscience and common sense, and in its information, based on science, it appeals to human intelligence.

HOW FAO IS GOVERNED

FAO is governed by a Conference in which each member nation has one vote. The Conference meets at least once in every year. Between sessions an Executive Committee exercises powers delegated to it by the Conference. A Director-General, who is appointed by the Conference, directs the work of the Organization with the aid of a staff selected by him. Sir John Boyd Orr is the first Director-General.

FAO AND THE UNITED NATIONS

FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations, with which it is associated by functional relationships with the Economic and Social Council.

Other specialized agencies with which FAO has or will have close ties, co-operating in the advancement of common purposes, include the International Labor Organization (ILO), the proposed International Trade Organization (ITO), the United Nations Edu-

cational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the proposed World Health Organization (WHO). FAO is absorbing the International Institute of Agriculture, founded at Rome in 1905.

HOW FAO WORKS

FAO received from the people of its member governments a mandate to proceed against the forces causing want, hunger, and starvation, and was given machinery with which to carry on its work:

Urgent Food Problems:

Facing up to the food crisis developing in the wake of the war, FAO called a Special Meeting on Urgent Food Problems in May, 1946. It placed before the meeting its first world Food Appraisal, a report which it now issues as a quarterly publication to inform all nations of the world about the food position.

Representatives of interested countries meeting in Washington agreed on recommendations which in June, 1946 resulted in the creation of the International Emergency Food Council. The principal function of this body, which by the beginning of 1947 had a membership of 31 governments, and is largely staffed by FAO, is to allocate short food supplies for the duration of the emergency.

World Food Survey:

Meanwhile a group of experts assembled by FAO was compiling a longer term World Food Survey. Published in July, 1946, the Survey shows the food supplies available before 1939 in 70 countries, with a total population of 90 per cent of the world's people.

About 5 out of every 10 people in the world were subsisting before the war at a food consumption level too low to maintain normal health. Not more than a third of the total population was above that level, while the intermediate fraction subsisted at a borderline level.

World Food Proposals:

In September, 1946, Sir John Boyd Orr, Director-General of FAO, submitted the World Food Survey together with proposals for dealing with the

world's long-term food problems to the FAO Conference at Copenhagen. The Conference accepted the objectives of these "proposals for a World Food Board," namely,

Developing and organizing production, distribution and utilization of the basic foods to provide diets on a health standard for peoples of all countries, and

Stabilizing agricultural prices at levels fair to producers and consumers alike.

Preparatory Commission Report:

A Preparatory Commission composed of the representatives of 17 countries was then set up. It met in Washington in October 1946 to develop concrete suggestions for an intergovernmental program to carry out the objectives of the Orr proposals. Viscount Bruce, former Prime Minister of Australia, was the independent chairman of the commission.

The Report of the Commission, published in February 1947, recommended:

Full agricultural production, to be stimulated by the expansion of consumption.

Industrial expansion in undeveloped countries to create purchasing power and expand trade.

Intergovernmental commodity arrangements and agreements to stabilize agricultural prices, create famine reserves, and where practicable dispose of surpluses under special arrangements to improve nutrition.

Annual review of national production and nutritional programs in connection with the FAO Conference.

A World Food Council of 18 member governments of FAO to carry out the functions of the annual review between the Conferences, with special attention to the food and agriculture aspects of proposed and existing international commodity arrangements.

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