Chapter III

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued to work towards achieving sustainable global food security by raising nutrition levels and living standards, improving agricultural productivity and advancing the condition of rural populations.

At its one hundred and twenty-fourth session (Rome, Italy; 23-28 June), the FAO Council reconfirmed the crucial importance of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and its related International Plans of Action in promoting long-term sustainable development in fisheries and aquaculture. The FAO Council, in November, endorsed the recommendations of the Joint Meeting of the Programme Committee and the Finance Committee, aimed at strengthening the independent role of the Evaluations Service.

As part of the follow-up to the World Food Summits, held in 1996 [YUN 1996, p. 1129] and 2002 [YUN 2002, p. 1225], FAO helped its members in meeting the goal of halving the number of hungry by 2015 and in the preparation of food security and agricultural development programmes. With the collaboration of financial institutions, FAO also helped to formulate projects that would hasten a reversal of declining resources to agriculture.

In 2003, FAO membership increased to 187 countries and the European Community.

World food situation

World cereal production for 2003 was estimated at 1,874 million tonnes (including rice in milled equivalent), 6 million tonnes lower than the previous year’s level, the result of a deliberate national policy to downsize cereal inventories by increasing exports. World livestock production was estimated at 249.1 million tonnes of meat and 599.1 million tonnes of dairy products. World fish output stood at 130 million tonnes, of which about 30 per cent was from aquaculture, a subsector under continuous expansion.

FAO’s Global Information and Early Warning System, in cooperation with the World Food Programme, continued to alert the international community to impending emergency situations and fielded crop and food supply to affected countries.

The FAO Trust Fund for Food Security and Food Safety continued through its regional programmes to initiate projects aimed at sustainable increased food availability and to finance projects to combat animal and plant diseases that threatened food security.

Activities

FAO’s Emergency Operation and Rehabilitation Division continued to provide emergency assistance in the agricultural, livestock and fisheries sectors to developing countries affected by exceptional natural or man-made calamities. In 2003, FAO’s emergency assistance programme received over $73 million to fund 160 projects in more than 50 countries, and $114 million for the execution of the agricultural component of the oil-for-food programme in Iraq.

Through its field programmes, FAO provided technical assistance in food and agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development, totalling $405.1 million. FAO’s Investment Centre assisted developing and transition countries to identify and assess investment opportunities, and formulated 157 investment projects worth over $5 billion. The Special Programme for Food Security assisted developing countries, particularly low-income food-deficit countries, to improve national and household food security on an economically and environmentally sustainable basis. By the end of 2003, 89 countries were participating in the programme.

In 2003, FAO continued to participate in activities related to plant biological diversity, crop management and diversification, seed production and improvement, crop protection, agricultural engineering, the prevention of food losses, and food and agricultural industries. It also contributed to the development of animal production and health programmes. The Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme continued its work to eliminate the fatal livestock virus by 2010. The 1998 Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade [YUN 1998, p. 997], which served to protect people and the environment from hazardous
chemicals, including pesticides, was ratified in 2003 and would enter into force in 2004.

The FAO Forestry Department continued its work in forest resource management, policy and planning, and forest products. The first International Mountain Day was celebrated on 11 December 2003, as an outgrowth of the International Year of Mountains in 2002.

The FAO Fisheries Department promoted sustainable development of responsible fisheries and contributed to food security through activities in fishery resources, policy, industries and information. The Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas, an integral part of FAO’s Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, came into force in 2003.

In 2003, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, responsible for implementing the joint FAO/World Health Organization Food Standards Programme, adopted new assessment guidelines for risks associated with foods derived from biotechnology.

Secretariat

As at 31 December 2003, FAO staff numbered 3,897, of whom 1,610 were in the Professional or higher categories and 2,287 were in the General Service category.

Budget

The regular programme budget for the 2002-2003 biennium was $651.8 million.