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CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE
FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATION
IN LATIN AMERICA

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America)

CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION IN LATIN AMERICA

The Food and Agriculture Organization will initiate in Latin America during the current year a series of technical programmes. Several of these have their origin in the visit of the Director General to Latin America in the spring of 1947 and in the activities of FAO liaison officers who visited all Member countries in the region during the end of 1947 and the early part of 1948

FAO Technical Programmes: The following is a brief summary of the FAO technical programmes in effect or projected for Latin America during 1948.

FAO Conference on Infestation Control: An Expert Committee was formed by FAO in April 1946 to make a preliminary report on the significance of waste through the infestation of stored products. In August 1947, FAO convened in London an International Meeting on Infestation of Foodstuffs, attended by experts designated by twenty-seven Member Governments. The purpose of this Meeting for positive action by Governments were endorsed by the Third Annual Conference.

One of the recommendations of the London Meeting was that in view of the regional character of the infestation problem, FAO should arrange for regional collaboration of experts through such means as regional conferences.

The problem of infestation was accordingly examined by Governments at the FAO Rice Meeting in Baguio, the Philippines, in March 1948.

During the early autumn of the current year, FAO proposed to call a meeting of infestation in Latin America. The Government of Colombia is being approached to determine whether the conference might be held at the Palmira Experimental Station in view of the work that has already been done there on the development of new methods of grain preservation.

The meeting would be attended by experts designated by Governments and would review what needs to be done, the areas of priority, and the relative importance of the various aspects of the infestation problem. From such an appraisal, including that of requirements with respect to insecticides and equipment, it is hoped will emerge a concrete programme of national and international action.

FAO on Locust Control: On 9 February 1948 the Director-General received from the Government of Peru a request for the assistance of FAO in the control of locusts.

In view of the widespread nature of this problem FAO is preparing to hold, simultaneously with the meeting on Infestation Control, a Meeting on the Control of Locusts. Similar meetings on Locust Control will be held by FAO in Europe and Africa during the current year.

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This Meeting will likewise be one of experts designated by Governments, and will be concerned with assessing the nature of the problem in various parts of the region and endeavouring to determine the most practicable means of dealing with it on a national and international basis.

FAO Mission to Venezuela: A result of the interest stimulated by the visit of the Director-General of FAO to Venezuela and other Member Governments in Latin America in the spring of 1947 was the Venezuela Development Corporation, on behalf of the Government of Venezuela, requesting FAO to advise the Corporation on certain technical matters, one of which was "the production of edible oils from wild oil-bearing seeds." The Government of Venezuela agreed to pay the cost of this technical service.

In January 1948 members of the FAO Mission to that country arrived in Caracas to conduct the following investigations:

- (1) To study the wild oil-bearing plants of the whole country with a view toward their possible industrial utilization.
- (2) To recommend the cultivation of these oil-bearing plants which in the judgment of the Mission are best suited to the conditions of the country.
- (3) To visit the existing factories in order to make recommendations for improving methods at present in use and equipment available.

The Mission surveyed areas of wild oil-bearing palms including those of the Oronoco River from Delta Amacuro to Puerto Ayacucho, the entire Lago de Maracaibo area to the Colombian border, the area from Barquisimeto to Tucacas and Puerto Cabello, all coastal areas and the Llanos in several localities. The areas were studied by aerial reconnaissance supplemented by aerial photographs. Ground surveys were made by jeep and boat, and collections of the various oil-bearing palms were made and subsequently subjected to chemical analysis and exact botanical identification.

The second phase of the Mission, namely, an investigation as to whether the oil palms now cultivated were the most suitable varieties, began in February. The Mission further studied the methods and equipment used in processing oil seeds in existing factories in order to make recommendations on their possible improvement.

The Mission is currently preparing its Report for the Government of Venezuela.

FAO Nutrition Conference: FAO is convening a technical conference in Latin America of nutrition experts in accord with the recommendation of its Third Annual Conference. By courtesy of the Government of Uruguay, this meeting will be held in Montevideo from 18 to 28 July 1948.

The agenda of the Conference to be held in Montevideo corresponds closely with that of the Nutrition Conference in Baguio, the Philippines,

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in March of this current year. The Montevideo Conference will be concerned, as was the Baguio Conference, with an assessment of those immediate problems, peculiar to the region and its component parts, which present opportunity for speedy and practical action.

The provisional agenda of the Montevideo Nutrition Conference is as follows:

1. Nature and extent of problems of nutrition in Latin America.
Under this head special attention may be given to the following:
 - (a) Problems in particular areas in which under- and malnutrition are specially serious.
 - (b) Gaps in existing knowledge about dietary habits, state of nutrition and the prevalence of deficiency disease, the ways and means of filling such gaps: In this connection the training of personnel to undertake nutrition research may be considered.
 - (c) The nutritive value of foods consumed in Latin America. What further research is required in this field?
2. Practical measures for improving nutrition:
 - (a) The development and orientation of agriculture to provide better diets.
 - (b) School feeding programmes and the feeding of other vulnerable groups.
 - (c) Education of the public in nutrition.
 - (d) The improvement of nutrition in selected "demonstration areas" by programmes calling for the co-operation of experts in different fields, e.g. nutrition, agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, sociology, cultural anthropology and home management.
 - (e) Food conservation and preservation by which waste can be avoided, existing supplies of food extended and their nutritive value conserved.
 - (f) Personnel trained in nutrition needed for developing practical programmes.
3. The establishment of national nutrition organizations or committees and their programme and functions.
4. Consideration of the need for establishing a regional committee in Latin America, associated with international and inter-governmental organizations concerned with different aspects of the problem.

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Under Item (4) above, it is anticipated that the Conference will recommend periodic meetings of a regional nutrition committee for Latin America, parallel to the periodic nutrition meeting for South East Asia recommended by the Baguio Conference. The purpose of such a committee would be (a) to provide means for a discussion of problems of common interest to the various countries of the region so that information may be pooled and nutrition work in the region co-ordinated; (b) to review the development of national nutrition programmes and the programme of a regional FAO organization in this field, and (c) to advise the countries of the region on nutrition questions through a regional FAO organization.

Regional Fisheries Council: In accordance with the recommendations of its Third Annual Conference, FAO is organizing regional councils for the investigation, development and proper utilization of living aquatic resources in those regions of the world not now served by similar bodies. The Conference recommended that special consideration be given to certain regions, including Latin America.

In February a Fisheries Meeting was convened in Baguio, the Philippines, to consider the establishment of a Regional Fisheries Council. The Governments of Burma, China, France, India, the Netherlands, the Philippine Republic and the United States were represented at this meeting and recommended that an Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council be established. The recommendation was approved by the Council of FAO at its Second Session in April. The Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council will come into existence upon the acceptance by five nations of the Agreement drafted at Baguio. The Council will be serviced by the FAO Regional Office. The specific functions of the Indo-Pacific Council will be:

- (a) To formulate the oceanographical, biological and other technical aspects of the problems of development and proper utilization of living aquatic resources;
- (b) To encourage and co-ordinate research and the application of improved methods in every day practice.
- (c) To assemble, publish or otherwise disseminate oceanographical, biological and other technical information relating to living aquatic resources;
- (d) To recommend to member Governments such national or co-operative research and development projects as may appear necessary or desirable to fill gaps in such knowledge;
- (e) To undertake, where appropriate, co-operative research and development projects directed to this end;

/(f) To propose,

- (f) To propose, and where necessary to adopt, measures to bring about the standardization of scientific equipment, techniques and nomenclatures;
- (g) To extend its good offices in assisting member Governments to secure essential materials and equipment;
- (h) To report upon such questions relating to oceanographical, biological and other technical problems as may be recommended to it by member Governments or by the Food and Agriculture Organization or the United Nations and other international, national or private organizations, with related interests;
- (i) To report annually to the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations upon its activities, for the information of the Conference; and to make such other reports to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on matters falling within the competence of the Council as may seem to it necessary and desirable.

In accord with the express desire of Member Governments FAO is planning the early establishment of fisheries councils similar to the Indo-Pacific Council to serve in the Latin-American region.

Some Latin-American countries are only beginning to develop fisheries. It is believed that their resources are substantial. In recent years large investments have been made in shore installations and vessels both by indigenous and foreign capital, and there is every indication that there will be considerable further expansion in the near future.

The organization of regional councils for Latin America holds a high priority in FAO's projected activities, and is held to be particularly important and timely because of the recent developments of fisheries on a large scale. This would be an opportune time therefore for the Governments of the region to evaluate co-operatively their fisheries resources and to lay plans for their development and conservation.

Latin-American Forestry and Forest Products Conference: The first Latin-American Forestry and Forest Products Conference was held in Teresopolis in the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 19 to 30 April 1948. The Brazilian Government acted as host to representatives of the Latin-American Republics and to representatives of those countries who had either commercial or territorial interests in Latin America.

The Conference arrived at decisions on four main questions, namely, the preparation by Member Governments of national plans for forestry development; the establishment of national forestry services with an emphasis on means of overcoming the lack of skilled technicians; certain technical questions such as methods of developing national wood working industries; and the

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organizational means best suited to assist Member Governments in achieving these objectives.

The Conference recognized that basic to forestry development was the preparation by Governments of plans for such development. The Conference agreed that following the preparation of such plans by Member Governments, a second Forestry and Forest Products Conference be held in Latin America in 1950 to consider these plans and methods of their implementation. The Conference recommended that FAO call this conference.

With respect to the problem of the establishment by Governments of forestry services, and in particular having regard to the principal obstacle thereto, namely shortage of trained technical personnel, the Conference made a number of recommendations. One of these requests that FAO advise the competent agencies of its Member Governments on measures for securing technical personnel who might include qualified professional and specialized workers from the ranks of displaced persons wishing to establish themselves permanently in Latin America.

The Conference in its consideration of certain technical problems involved in the development of forest industries gave particular attention to means of initiating better industrial practices; newer methods such as the integration of forest industries; and the implications of such activities, i.e. those of high price levels and finance.

The Conference in recognizing the need for continued and increased assistance from international technical organizations, and in particular FAO, recommended that a Latin-American Forestry and Forest Products Working Group, composed of technical officers, be established to assist Member Governments in carrying out national plans of development. In order to assist the working group and to insure that its work is made available to and implemented by Governments, the Conference further recommended that an advisory body consisting of technical delegates of all Latin-American countries meeting at regular intervals should be created as the Latin American Forestry and Forest Products Commission.

The Latin-American Conference on Forestry and Forest Products followed a pattern previously established in other regions. Following extensive preparatory work in the region by FAO staff members, the Conference laid the groundwork for future regional activities and recommended the establishment of the type of organization best suited to assist member Governments in carrying out the recommendations of the regional Conference.

Annual FAO Programme Review: The Preparatory Commission on World Food Problems which met in Washington (October 1946-January 1947) recommended that the Conference of FAO be the principal forum for a review by all the Member

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Nations of FAO to consider the reports of the Director-General and the World Food Council. The proposals of the Preparatory Commission were formally accepted by the FAO Conference at Geneva in 1947 and since then the Council of FAO and its Policy Committee on Production and Distribution have endeavoured to examine in detail how to conduct the review of the world food and agriculture situation. This review would be of great interest to the countries taken individually and also to the regions. It will be of particular interest to Latin America, for in the field of food and agriculture Latin America is one of the regions of the world which has the greatest possibilities of increasing output of food as well as of forest products and fish. As a consequence of the war great changes have taken place in the production, foreign trade and consumption of agricultural products and it seems essential at this stage that the countries of Latin America who have undergone such serious changes should be cognizant of the trends of production and distribution in their regions and in the world.

So as to make that picture and acting on the directives set up in the reports of the Council of FAO and its Policy Committee on Production and Distribution, the staff of the Organization is working on a series of projects through gathering information from Member Countries and analyzing individual country plans by regions. A synthesis of regional analyses will be made, the purpose of which will be mainly:

- (1) To make a comprehensive review of the plans of the governments and their implementation so that the Member Countries may profit from each other's experience.
- (2) To determine the relationship between the plans and programmes of different countries within a region so as to enable governments to reconsider their policies in the light of the determined relationship.
- (3) To highlight the problems that necessitate collective action on a regional and on a world basis so that the Conference may make the necessary recommendations.

The gathering of comprehensive economic data is, of course, a prerequisite to this work. It is a difficult task but one of particular importance for Latin-American countries. As has been pointed out by the ad hoc Committee on the Establishment of an Economic Commission for Latin America, comprehensive statistics and economic data are scarce in the region. Every effort is being made to obtain all available information, and upon request of Member Countries the Organization has been able to supply limited technical assistance to the countries to help them in collecting economic and statistical data and to advise them on the organization of their statistical services.

The 1950 World Census of Agriculture: Basic to planning by Governments to increase agricultural production is the evaluation of current resources. In order to assist Member Governments in obtaining the basic data for such an evaluation, the delegates to the First Annual Conference of FAO in 1945 instructed the Director-General to study the problems involved in promoting a World Census of Agriculture in 1950 and to report at the subsequent Conference. At the Second Annual FAO Conference in Copenhagen in 1946, it was agreed that the work of the 1950 World Census of Agriculture should become one of the early activities of the Organization.

In consequence of this recommendation an ad hoc working party of international experts met in Washington to advise on a minimum census programme for consideration by all governments. This programme, which was transmitted to governments in January 1947, was in agreement with a resolution of the Third Inter-American Conference on Agriculture held in Caracas, Venezuela in July and August 1945, which recommended to the American Nations a regular census of agriculture and livestock. The 1950 Programme, from its inception, has further been developed in close co-operation with the Inter-American Statistical Institute.

The census programme, in addition to being submitted to governments for their criticism, was also submitted for the same purpose to statisticians and technicians in all parts of the world. In March 1947, European governments were invited to send their representatives to Rome to consider the census programme in detail. In September 1947 a similar meeting of the Governments of the Americas was held in Washington in conjunction with the meetings called by the Inter-American Statistical Institute to consider the proposed 1950 Census of the Americas. Further, a Conference of representatives of Governments administering non-self-governing areas was called in London late in 1947.

Three technical officers, one for Latin America, one for the Far East and one for Europe have consulted with governments and assisted in furthering the programme for a 1950 Census of Agriculture. In some instances, this has meant assistance in developing legislation, budgets, and plans for staff organization to carry out a census, and in all cases has involved consultation on schedules and tabulation plans in order to ensure comparability. The technical officers will also advise Governments on request on the improvement of their methods of collecting and organizing their agriculture statistics.

It is proposed in Latin America to take the agricultural and the population censuses simultaneously. Up to the present, sixteen Governments in Latin America have indicated that they expect to participate in the 1950 Census of Agriculture.

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Adequately trained personnel is vital to the successful conduct of any census programme. The need was recognized by the Third Session of the Annual Conference. Accordingly, in response to a request from Member Governments in the Near East, a Training School for Agricultural Statistics was established in February in Baghdad, to provide a three months course. A total of forty trainees were sent by the Member Governments of the region to the school.

The Training Centre for Agricultural Statistics: Mexico City.

Preliminary discussions have been held with representatives of the Government of Mexico looking toward the establishment of the first Training Centre for Statistics in Latin America. The training courses, which will be available to trainees sent by the Member Governments of the region, will be conducted in Spanish and will extend over a minimum period of four months. The work will cover preparation for the 1950 census of agriculture, current agriculture statistics and general census administration. It is hoped that the Centre will open in early summer of this current year.

International Institute of the Hylean Amazon: FAO was represented at the Conference of the International Institute of the Hylean Amazon, called by UNESCO and the Brazilian Government in August of 1947, at which a preliminary programme of work for the Institute was prepared. FAO was also represented at the Second Conference of UNESCO in Mexico in November, when UNESCO resolved to help support the Institute during its first year, and FAO has contributed to the Constitutive Conference of the Institute, held at Iquitos, Peru, in May 1948, a statement on the assistance which FAO might make available on agricultural research designed to discover proper techniques for permanent utilization of forest soils in the Amazon Basin.

Technical Publications: Closely associated with the direct provision of technical assistance to Member Governments is the assembly of basic information. FAO has recently published three technical studies which may be of particular interest to its Member Countries in Latin America, namely, Breeding Livestocks Adapted to Unfavourable Environments; Preservation of Grains in Storage; and Soil Conservation: an International Study. These publications are currently being translated into Spanish.

Conclusion: FAO activities listed in the preceding pages of this report cannot be regarded as all inclusive. At its Second Session in April, the Council of FAO, having regard to the potential importance of agricultural production in Latin America to the world food economy, approved the establishment of an ad hoc committee, comprising the representatives of Brazil, Chile, Cuba and Mexico to assist the Director-General in framing the programme of FAO in Latin America. In particular,

particular, this ad hoc committee, in consultation with representatives of the Member Countries of Latin America, will advise the Director-General on the advisability of calling a Regional Conference on problems of agricultural production and distribution.

An FAO programme to increase agricultural production, as well as its programmes of specific technical activity designed to serve that end, are now being evolved. The manner of that evolution will, of course, bear relation to the programme developed by the Economic Commission for Latin America.



