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NINTH SESSION  
Santiago, Chile

AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

PROVISION SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND MEETING

Held at Santiago on Tuesday, 9 May 1961, at 10.50 a.m.

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/PRESENT:



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**PRESENT:**Chairman:

Mr. AQUINO El Salvador

Later:

Mr. VAILATI Argentina

Rapporteur:

Mr. MONROY BLOCK Bolivia

Members:

Mr. BATISTA PINHEIRO Brazil

Mr. MANARELLI Chile

Mr. PATINO ROSSELLI Colombia

Mr. DIAZ ASTORAIN Cuba

Mr. CIFUENTES Ecuador

Mr. DUBOIS France

Mr. MENDOZA Honduras

Mr. RADHAKISHUN Kingdom of the Netherlands

Mr. MONTERO Peru

Mr. SIMPSON United Kingdom of Great  
Britain and Northern  
Ireland

Mr. JOHNSON United States of America

Mr. STEWART VARGAS Uruguay

Mr. ACEVEDO Venezuela

Associate Member:

Mr. JAGAN British Guiana

**ALSO PRESENT:**Observers from States Members  
of the United Nations not  
members of the Commission:

Mr. BRUNNER Austria

Mr. TREMBLAY Canada

Representatives of specialized  
agenciesMrs. FIGUEROA International Labour  
OrganizationMr. SANTA CRUZ) Food and Agriculture  
Mr. SCHATAN ) OrganizationMr. KNAPP International Bank for  
Reconstruction and  
DevelopmentRepresentative of the  
International Atomic  
Energy Agency:

Mr. FREEMAN

/Representative of

Representative of an inter-  
governmental organization:

Mr. REY ALVAREZ

Inter-American Development  
Bank

Secretariat:

Mr. PREBISCH

Executive Secretary,  
Economic Commission for  
Latin America

Mr. ALCAZAR

Secretary of the Committee

AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS IN RELATION TO THE COMMON MARKET PROJECT: JOINT MEETING WITH THE TRADE COMMITTEE (E/CN.12/551)

The summary record of the discussion of the above item will be found in document E/CN.12/C.1/SR.15. The joint meeting was concluded at 10:30 a.m., and the Agriculture Committee reconvened separately at 10:50 a.m.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURE (IN CO-OPERATION WITH FAO) (E/CN.12/565/Add.1, part Two, chapter III; E/CN.12/592, E/CN.12/551, E/CN.12/595, E/CN.12/578, E/CN.12/596, E/CN.12/557-559 and E/CN.12/594) (continued)

Mr. PATIÑO ROSSELLI (Colombia) said that, as was natural at the present stage of Colombia's development, the share of the agricultural sector in the gross national product had decreased from 37.7 to 33.8 per cent in the 1950-1959 period. Although the production of certain agricultural crops had increased exceptionally and agricultural production as a whole had increased at a cumulative annual rate of 9 per cent, the total increase in the agricultural sector had exceeded the increase in population by only 0.5 per cent. Under the general economic development plan, an annual increase of 5 per cent was forecast for the agricultural sector, but agriculture was expected to constitute only 30 per cent of gross national product by 1964.

In Colombia the draft agrarian reform law, which had been drawn up by a committee representing the political parties, the Church, the Army and the trade unions and which was now before the Congress, appeared to have broad national support. The stated objectives of the law were: firstly, to eliminate the unjust concentration of land in large units or its fragmentation into inefficient small units; secondly, to encourage the proper use of uncultivated or insufficiently cultivated lands; thirdly, to increase the productivity of agriculture and stock-breeding; fourthly, to create conditions under which tenants and agricultural workers would have opportunities to acquire land; fifthly, to raise the level of living through the methods mentioned and such means

/as technical

as technical assistance, credit, housing etc.; sixthly, to conserve and improve natural resources. Those objectives were to be carried out through an Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria, which would open uncultivated State lands to colonization, take legal steps to remove from private ownership lands that had been uncultivated or deficiently cultivated, carry out a survey of the country with a view to the formulation of a development plan, build roads, promote and assist efforts to improve the land and forests, give land to groups or to private individuals seeking to cultivate the land, and consolidate small holdings.

The people of Colombia had placed their greatest hopes in the programme of land reform and in a future social order that would be not communist but free.

Mr. MONTERO (Peru) expressed his appreciation of the valuable assistance his country had received from ECLA and FAO. The draft Peruvian agrarian reform law would represent an important step towards social progress. The leaders of his country were aware of the need to satisfy the desires of the people for social justice. Employers and the upper classes must accept that view, either as a dictate of social conscience or simply in self-interest.

It was paradoxical that the peoples of the Latin American continent suffered from an inadequate diet and that Governments were compelled to import ever increasing quantities of food, although many Latin American countries were capable of producing sufficient foodstuffs to satisfy their needs. The reason for that paradox was the long-established dietary habits of the people. In Peru, for instance, fish was abundant and cheap and it could be preserved by the use of freezer plants; but if that national resource was to be put to use, the people would have to be taught to eat frozen fish instead of the fresh meat they customarily consumed. Efforts had been made in that direction, with virtually no success. Similarly, local products of higher nutritional value could be substituted for flour, if only the people could

/be persuaded

be persuaded to use them. Only an intensive educational campaign would change long-established dietary habits.

Another factor restricting the production of foodstuffs and raising their price was the imbalance between crops produced for export and those cultivated for internal use. In his opening statement to the Commission, President Alessandri of Chile had referred to the vested interests of various groups which brought pressure to bear in their own defence. At the urging of such groups some Governments had favoured the cultivation of export crops as a means of securing the foreign exchange with which to import essential foodstuffs. In his personal opinion, the arguments in favour of that policy would not hold water. Against exports of single crops had to be balanced imports of machinery, fertilizers and other materials needed to produce such crops, as well as imports of essential foodstuffs. The negative effect of the system was most clearly shown in the decreased productivity of agriculture in Latin America.

In short, he suggested that an intensive educational campaign should be undertaken to adapt the diet of the people to the foodstuffs that each country could produce and that Governments should not favour the production of primary products for export by subsidies, favourable interest rates, the provision of storage facilities and similar devices but should promote the increase of the production of foodstuffs to the maximum.

Mr. Vailati (Vice-Chairman) took the Chair.

Mr. RADHAKISHUN (Kingdom of the Netherlands) described an irrigation project on the island of Aruba which had produced excellent results.

By attending the ECLA sessions since 1951, his Government had learned a great deal and had been helped to avoid the mistakes made by some Latin American Governments.

In Surinam, 60 to 70 per cent of the inhabitants depended upon agriculture for their livelihood and consequently some 35 per cent of

/the funds

the funds provided for the ten-year plan would be spent on agricultural projects. There were three forms of land tenure: land rented from the Government, leased for a long term and private ownership. In order to prevent land speculation, farmers were not permitted to obtain long-term leases unless they had proved that they could work the land. Farms averaging two and one-half hectares were being replaced by more economic units of six to eight hectares. The weak point of the economy was the concentration on a single crop, rice, which created seasonal unemployment. The Surinam Government was devoting substantial sums to research with a view to diversification of crops.

In conclusion, he suggested that the reports of the meeting of the FAO Consultative Committee on Rice at New Delhi should be made available to the members of ECLA.

Mr. DUBOIS (France) read out to the Committee a statement prepared by Mr. Paul Vignier, an expert in agricultural development.

Mr. Vignier said that it was apparent from the reports submitted to the Committee by ECLA and FAO that the planners of economic development programmes were deeply concerned about the problem of agricultural employment and that the problem was directly related to the modernization of agriculture. The main objectives outlined in the ECLA/FAO document on agricultural policy (E/CN.12/592) were to provide full employment for all rural workers and at the same time to promote agricultural development. Another problem to which some speakers had referred was the organization of production. On the basis of the experience of the advanced countries, it would seem that one of the aims of rural development should be to prepare farmers to work together in groups. For that purpose a special organization would be required, because very close contact must be established with the farmers whose action would determine the success or failure of the operation and the farmers must be convinced that they were working for their own benefit if they were to take the initiative required of them. If wide-spread modernization was to be achieved, the farmers of each region must associate in a group, to receive assistance and guidance.

/The organization

The organization should be based on the following three principles: firstly, modernization must go hand in hand with a general evolution, both intellectual and physical, of the whole community; secondly, the modernization programme should focus on particular areas in which conditions were particularly suited to the creation of "islands of prosperity", for which modernization could spread to the adjacent areas; thirdly, the modernization programme should be carried out in units enjoying the greatest possible degree of autonomy and possessing their own governing boards. Experience indicated that the co-operative, or semi-co-operative, was the form of organization best suited to the execution of rural modernization programmes. Nevertheless, while modernization programmes might well be started on the basis of such organizations, the co-operative should not be a compulsory part of the scheme; the farmers themselves should select their own form of union and should determine its geographical area. Finally, the form of organization adopted as the basis of a modernization programme would necessarily depend upon the personnel available to man it.

The basic unit in the organization was the rural community. In determining the size of that unit, the intellectual, technical, and at times the physical, capacity of the rural adviser should be taken into account. In intensively cultivated areas, a rural adviser could take care of from 50 to 150 farmers, while in areas of non-intensive cultivation he could deal with 200 to 500 workers. The rural adviser must know each farmer within his area, must visit him several times a year and must be available at all times should the farmer require advice or assistance. He should reside in the area he serves, he should be a farmer whom the workers would trust and he should believe in the importance of work well done.

The second unit in the organization was the regional agricultural association; its task was to provide technical assistance and loans, to

/see to



see to the preparation, processing and marketing of agricultural products and to assist in supplying materials and products needed by the farmers. The regional association should serve as an intermediary between the farmers and the agencies providing subsidies or loans.

The training of farmers and officials could take two forms: the normal training of farmers and officials who would be able to respond to the growing needs of the country in the field of rural development; and accelerated training in order to provide officials as rapidly as possible to meet the immediate needs of the country. Countries which sought a rapid development of agricultural production must give priority to accelerated training.

French technicians and agencies had had wide experience in establishing such organizations for rural modernization in many different areas and they had obtained excellent results in increased production and modernization. They were prepared to offer their services to Governments and to the technical assistance organizations concerned with those matters. They were experienced not only in the formulation of accelerated training programmes but also in training nationals of the countries concerned to become teachers.

Mr. MONROY BLOK (Bolivia) said that the key problem facing the Bolivian Government was that of land reform and it was taking energetic steps to solve it. In 1954 the Bolivian Government had adopted an agrarian reform law designed to secure a better distribution of land. As a result some 50 per cent of the Bolivian peasants had now been incorporated within the economy. At the same time the Government was making strenuous efforts to attain self-sufficiency in essential foodstuffs, particularly rice and sugar.

In the past, Bolivia had depended to an alarming extent on its mineral production, which represented 85 per cent of its total output. The Government was now striving to diversify the economy as far as possible. After being an importer of petroleum it now produced sufficient for its own needs and even had an export surplus. With the advice of FAO, Bolivia was seeking to modernize its agriculture and it supported the recommendations made by ECLA and FAO in the documents before the Committee. By improving  
/its agriculture

its agriculture Bolivia was seeking to raise the level of living of its people and thus to contribute to the political stability of the country.

His delegation had submitted a draft resolution endorsing the recommendations of ECLA and FAO on the subject of land reform.

Mr. SANTA CRUZ (Food and Agriculture Organization) agreed with the remarks made by the Peruvian representative on the subject of nutrition. Nutrition was of particular concern to FAO and was regularly discussed at special conferences held in various cities of the region. The fifth such conference would be held in Rio de Janeiro in 1962, in collaboration with the World Health Organization. FAO was also working together with UNICEF on a nutritional programme for Bolivia and Peru. Nutritional research was being conducted by FAO as part of its Freedom from Hunger Campaign. An FAO expert had already made a study of the Peruvian food industry and another expert was shortly to be sent to that country to advise the Government on food technology. Negotiations were in progress for the establishment in Lima of a food technology institute with the help of the Special Fund and with the FAO as the executing agency.

Mr. DIAZ ASTORAIN (Cuba) said that land reform was the principal concern of the Cuban Revolutionary Government. One of its first acts had been to adopt the agrarian reform law. It was generally recognized that one of the main difficulties facing the under-developed countries was the persistence of a feudal or semi-feudal land tenure system. An even greater obstacle, however, was the imperialistic domination of foreign monopolies. In order to achieve real progress in land reform both feudal and imperialistic elements must be eliminated.

It was not enough merely to redistribute the land; farmers must be given financial and technical assistance by the States. At the same time, the most modern methods of farming must be introduced and agricultural production organized on a large scale in close relationship with the processing industries. On the basis of those principles, the Revolutionary Government had made extraordinary progress in agricultural production and far outstripped the targets achieved by the former régime. He quoted figures to show that substantial increases had been attained in the

/production of

production of sugar, rice, maize, beans, cotton and livestock. Many experts had been astounded that Cuba had been able to increase the purchasing power of the people and at the same time secure price stability.

The enormous increase in Cuban agricultural production was attributable to the fact that it had shaken off imperialistic domination, which had prevented the optimum utilization of resources, and had taken the key decision to institute land reform. No concessions had been made to the big land owners but the redistribution of land had been carried out without violence. Cuban small farmers had been given title to their holdings and now owned more than half the land. At the same time, the Government had encouraged the establishment of agricultural co-operatives which facilitated large-scale production, the introduction of modern techniques and the integration of crop farming with the processing industries. The bulk of Cuba's sugar and rice output was handled in such co-operatives. Finally, the Government had encouraged the establishment of people's farms, varying in size between 20 and 40,000 hectares. They had achieved a high degree of mechanization and had led to a better distribution of the national income. They were a means of combating privilege and of conferring benefits upon the people themselves. They also required less personnel to administer them. The people's farms had made an important contribution to the increase in the supply of pork and poultry.

The Cuban experience in the field of land reform should be of great value to other countries in their efforts to improve the welfare of their agrarian population.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

