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FUTURE TRENDS IN THE COFFEE ACTIVITIES OF THE
JOINT ECLA/FAO AGRICULTURE DIVISION

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At the request of the Economic Commission for Latin America at its fifth session (resolution 63 (V)), ECLA and FAO, through their joint Agriculture Division, initiated, in 1955, a series of studies on the economic problems of coffee farming. These studies were undertaken in co-operation with interested national and state Governments and had the financial assistance of the local coffee organizations. The first one was carried out in El Salvador, an important producer of mild types which, due to the high concentration of production units in relatively small areas, and good communications, afforded an opportunity for testing the methodology at small cost. A second study was carried out in Colombia and a third one in the State of São Paulo, Brazil.

The findings of these surveys have been published in printed form in three volumes which form part of a series entitled "Coffee in Latin America"^{1/}. In addition, two articles on the same subject have appeared in the Economic Bulletin for Latin America.^{2/} A document containing an appraisal of the coffee industry in Latin American producer countries has been submitted to the Commission for consideration at its ninth session.^{3/} That document represents an initial attempt to draw some tentative general conclusions from the country surveys already undertaken.

A great deal of new information on the characteristics and problems of coffee growing in the region has thus become available. This material is based on large-scale field surveys designed to obtain original data by means of statistically representative samples of all coffee farms in each producer area. Twelve thousand farms were visited in Colombia, 1,000 in El Salvador and 2,000 in the State of São Paulo.

1/ See Coffee in Latin America: Productivity problems and future prospects. I. Colombia and El Salvador. United Nations Publications, Sales No.: 58.II.G.4.; II. State of São Paulo, (1) The state and prospects of production, and (2) A. Case study of 33 coffee farms; B. Analysis of the functions of production, United Nations Publications, Sales No.: 60.II.G.6 (two vols).

2/ See "Coffee in Latin America: the producers' problem", Vol. IV, No. 1, March 1959, pp. 32 et seq., and "The coffee industry in São Paulo", Vol. V, No. 2, November 1960. An offprint of the last-named article with a Note by the secretariat has been distributed to the Commission at its ninth session (E/CN.12/578).

3/ E/CN.12/595.

Apart from the collection and analysis of information on the economic scales and characteristics of coffee growing on which little was hitherto known, the experience acquired through these surveys has resulted in the development of economic research methods adapted to the conditions prevailing in Latin America's coffee-producing areas. It is hoped that the initiative taken by ECLA and FAO in the last few years will be an incentive for similar studies to be undertaken in the remaining producer countries and in other areas of Brazil, particularly the State of Paraná. However, some observations should be made in this respect:

(a) It should be emphasized that the completion of agricultural censuses in countries which have not taken one in recent years would contribute greatly towards a better knowledge of the coffee situation and would provide the basis for more detailed studies of the type carried out by the Joint ECLA/FAO Agriculture Division. A high priority should therefore be accorded to the undertaking of agricultural censuses.

(b) The very limited resources at the disposal of ECLA and FAO have been strained to the utmost during the course of the large-scale coffee projects. As a result, other urgent work has suffered delays. The situation, therefore calls for a reappraisal of the role played by the Joint Agriculture Division.

Sufficient lead has already been given to enable producer countries to conduct similar studies themselves. For this reason, ECLA and FAO intend to take a less direct part in the execution of future coffee surveys, though they would, of course, remain available for preparatory consultations and for the evaluation of results.

On the basis of the above considerations, it appears that the experience acquired by the Joint ECLA/FAO Agriculture Division may be most usefully employed in connection with programmes designed to guide the development of coffee farming so as to obtain higher standards of productivity, and therefore higher incomes and improved living conditions in coffee-producing areas. Improvements in coffee farming are necessarily tied to improvements in the rest of agriculture, and the importance of coffee in the agricultural activities of at least 15 of the Latin American countries means that general

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agricultural growth might be greatly stimulated by the progress and diversification of farming enterprises in the coffee areas. Consequently, ECLA and FAO propose to use available resources primarily for advising Governments on the economic aspects of their coffee development and diversification programmes, when these exist, and otherwise to assist them in establishing such programmes. Activities of this type have already been initiated in Colombia at the request of the National Federation of Coffee Growers. Among other things, it is hoped that this procedure will lead to better planning and utilization of specialized technical assistance in coffee growing at the farm level.