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IMPLICATIONS OF THE WORLD POPULATION CONFERENCE,
BUCHAREST, ROMANIA, 19-30 AUGUST 1974 ON THE POPULATION PROGRAMME OF THE
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO)

I. FAO's Mandate for Work in the Population Field

FAO's mandate for work in the population field derives from its basic responsibility for raising rural living levels as laid down in its Constitution and from the discussions on the subject at the 14th Session of the FAO Conference, held in 1967, which recommended that "... the Director-General increasingly involve the Organization in a study of the food/population dilemma". The Conference also "recognized the need to help families achieve, through appropriate policies and programmes, conditions that would increase well-being and would contribute to national development" and "... that home economics and agriculture, through their established extension programmes, specialized programmes for women and youth and applied nutrition programmes, provided excellent channels through which to reach the family". The Conference accordingly approved a "Planning for Better Family Living Programme" which is an integrated approach to reaching families through existing national programmes with information about the relationship between family resources, needs, goals and size.

Keeping in mind the above mandate the 17th Session of the FAO Conference in 1973 approved an expanded programme of population activities with the objective of strengthening national development policies and programmes by integrating population aspects into existing food and agricultural policies and programmes, it authorized the examination of population implications of all FAO programmes.

II. The Recommendations of the World Population Conference

The World Population Plan of Action and the substantive resolutions adopted by the World Population Conference pay considerable attention to food and agricultural problems and the rural sector as a whole. It is evident that many aspect of FAO's work gain added significance from the recommendations of the Conference.

The FAO Council agreed in November 1974 that the Director-General of FAO in preparing his proposals for the 1976-77 Programme of Work and Budget as well as FAO's related field programme should take into account as far as possible the relevant aspects of the recommendations of the World Population Conference keeping in mind that the specific task of FAO was to achieve development, increase and improve agricultural production, and that in so doing, besides population factors, other socio-economic considerations should be given due attention.

III. Main Areas of Activities

The main areas of activities covered will be as follows:

(a) Research, advisory services and training in population aspects of agricultural development planning

(i) Research

Methodological research and country case studies on the effects of different rates of population growth on food and agricultural development were initiated in 1973 as part of a programme of country studies introduced in 1972 as a basis for regional, global and tropical studies under FAO Perspective Study for World Agricultural Development. These country studies also will serve as a basis for policy dialogue with FAO member countries and for the formulation of FAO's regular and field programme. The initial phase of these activities will continue until 1976. This work is proposed to be extended to a world and regional analysis of different rates of population growth on

food and agricultural development in the fourth round of FAO's agricultural commodities projections to be prepared in 1976 looking to periods up to 1976 and in a global perspective study foreseen for 1976-78 under FAO's Perspective Study of World Agricultural Development to identify objectives, set targets and analyse strategies and alternative policies for agricultural development for the Third United Nations Development Decade. An expansion of the above work to country sector analysis and related provision of technical assistance to countries is expected to be initiated in 1975.

(ii) Advisory Services

The network of FAO field staff advising countries on their development plans and programmes and on the programming of multi-lateral assistance activities could provide a very efficient channel for promoting the consideration of alternative population policies in the formulation of national agricultural development strategies and plans. It will be necessary for this purpose to organize appropriate orientation courses for FAO field staff engaged in advisory work on agricultural planning which were initiated in 1974 and are planned to be continued in order to develop adequate briefing material based on the results of related country studies and headquarters analysis on food/population development questions, work on which was initiated in 1973.

FAO field staff in population education programmes has also assisted Governments in the formulation of national population policies and programmes.

Another means of promoting the consideration of population policies against the background of rural development is a series of regional Seminars on Population Problems as related to Food and Agricultural Development. Such seminars were held in 1972 for the Near East Region and in December 1974 for Asia and the Far East. Similar seminars for Africa and Latin America are planned for 1975-76.

(iii) Training

FAO has initiated the inclusion of food/population matters in its training courses for agricultural planners and other related training activities. Adequate curricula and training materials are being developed on the basis of the results of the research activities outlined above.

A fellowship programme to provide agricultural planners with knowledge in demography was also started and a course on demographic aspects of agricultural sector planning and programming is being developed. A series of seminars on population analysis in agricultural development planning is contemplated.

(b) Promotion of the collection of population related statistics through the 1980 World Census of Agriculture and food consumption and related household surveys

In its decennial World Censuses of Agriculture, FAO promotes the collection of data on farm population and employment. Increased emphasis will be given to these aspects in the Programme for the 1980 World Census of Agriculture and a study of the related concepts is planned for the near future to ensure that the recommendations made keep in mind the relation of the above concepts with those of agricultural and rural population and labour force included in the Population Census Programme. Related activities follow the same lines as those of the United Nations in promoting demographic statistics.

FAO also promotes the collection of data on food consumption, population and agricultural dynamics through appropriate surveys to study the inter-relationships between these variables.

(c) Projections of agricultural population and labour force

Work on estimates and projections of population economically active in agriculture and of population dependent on agriculture is a continuous activity under FAO's Regular Programme and is being carried out within the framework of inter-agency work on demographic projections co-ordinated by the ACC Sub-Committee on Population. It has so far, however, not been possible to attempt estimates and projections of relevant breakdowns of these population segments, such as by sex and age, by status and so forth, nor are separate projections available for agriculture, fisheries and forestry. More attention will need to be given to specific country situations.

(d) Formulation of an approach to integrated rural development that includes relevant population aspects

FAO, using its own regular programme funds and with considerable extra budgetary assistance from bilateral sources, has mounted a major effort to promote the adoption of national Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRD) on a world-wide scale. IRD was a major topic on the agenda of four FAO Regional Conferences in the fall of 1974. One international seminar on the subject has already been held in Rome and several more are scheduled for the FAO regions in 1975 through 1977. Several national seminars have already been held and many more will be held before the World Conference on Population Aspects of Integrated Rural Development planned for 1978.

It happens that the strategy for Integrated Rural Development creates national conditions that are also favourable for the promotion of a lower population growth rate and more rational population distribution. Furthermore, the audience that will be reached by the IRD seminars and other promotional work is also an audience that is in a policy position to assist with promoting national population programmes. The bottleneck preventing the reaching of this audience with the population message, however, is that no materials have been developed or are likely to be developed using FAO's present resources to present the population argument. It is planned to prepare in 1975 population component material which would be inserted into the mainstream of the existing FAO promotional programme on IRD. Similarly, the linking of population programmes with programmes for rural women and youth, nutrition, agrarian reform, and other relevant agricultural/rural development programmes will be systematically explored.

(e) Inclusion of population education and communication and related research activities in agricultural education, training and extension activities and related agricultural programmes

A major problem in developing countries is to reach the families in the numerous and scattered villages in the rural areas where most people live and to motivate them, through educational measures, to make rational decisions on family size in the context of every day living conditions. The existing agricultural programmes of FAO and its institutions and services provide excellent channels of communication with farmers and their families through measures for extension, home economics, agrarian reform, social security, agricultural credit, co-operatives, improved nutrition, programmes for rural women and youth and general improvement in rural life. There is therefore considerable opportunity for including population education and motivation activities within the overall scope of FAO's activities for rural development. Work in this area was initiated under FAO's Planning for Better Family Living Programme (PBFL), approved by the FAO Conference in 1967. Field activities are now also being supported in an increasing number of countries.

(f) Field programme

The systematic inclusion of population aspects in FAO's programme will be pursued within the UNDP programming cycle 1976-81.