

## CHAPTER V.

# FAO: THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

## INTRODUCTION TO FAO

In keeping with the tradition of presenting one “unique” simulation of a United Nations or affiliated organization each year, AMUN will simulate the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Participation will be voluntary and open to one Representative from any interested delegation attending AMUN. FAO will meet for all four days of the Conference. While the range of subject matter before FAO may seem daunting, significant work on the topics of discussion is nonetheless achievable with thoughtful preparation.

Before delving into the substantive issues which will be discussed, Representatives should understand why this committee is “special.” In the tradition of AMUN Special Committees, FAO will give participants a different, more challenging atmosphere in which to use their skills of diplomacy, research and analysis. The topics to be discussed are detailed, and will require careful preparation prior to conference. To most fully participate in the simulation, it will be imperative that Representatives have a working knowledge of the structure and mission of the FAO, the relevant policies of the state they represent, and an awareness of global food security and productivity issues.

### ABOUT FAO

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN was founded in 1945 as a specialized agency to address the issues relating to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and rural development. In the agency’s own words, one of its primary missions is “encouraging sustainable agriculture and rural development, a long term strategy for increasing food production while conserving and managing natural resources. The aim is to meet the needs of both present and future generations by promoting development that does not degrade the environment and is technically appropriate, economically viable, and socially acceptable.”

FAO employs a staff of approximately 10,000, and its 1995 program budget was funded at \$1.2 billion. The organization is governed by the FAO Conference, a body composed of its membership of 167 States, and one member organization. Meeting biennially, the conference is responsible for policymaking, goal and budget setting, and the election of the agency’s Director General and the chairperson of the FAO Council. Executive operations are overseen by the FAO Council. The council is composed of forty nine States chosen on regional representation scheme to three year terms. The council will typically meet at least three times between regularly scheduled conference meetings.

The agency reports that since the early 1970s, the proportion of hungry individuals in the developing world has declined from more than 20% to approximately 15%. Despite such dramatic and hard won victories, more than 800 million people, including 200 million children, go to bed hungry. Further, agency efforts following the 1996 World Food Summit to implement the Rome Declaration and Plan of Action are expected to fall short of the goal of halving the number of undernourished to 600 million people by 2015. FAO estimates that at the current rate of reducing the number of hungry by eight million per year, rather than the planned twenty million, the goal will instead be met in 2025, or fifteen years later than was initially intended.

Implementation of the Rome Declaration and Plan of Action is in jeopardy for multiple reasons. The FAO has been openly critical of developed and developing States for their lack of effective participation in enacting policies to support the plan, saying, “both developing and developed countries have failed to demonstrate their commitment to set aside the resources required to achieve the eradication of hunger.” Further the agency points to a post Cold War trend for States to support only short term relief operations, receiving extensive media coverage, rather than the comprehensive approach of prevention, preparedness, and long term sustainable development favored by FAO. In several recent emergencies, FAO reports that the funding for agricultural relief has amounted to approximately 10% of the value of emergency food aid, and a paltry \$1 billion of funds requested for that purpose by FAO.

For its part, the FAO has also received criticism for moving too slowly to reorganize itself and recognize the complementary linkage between relief and assistance efforts. Further, the agency finds itself in competition with other UN agencies for sponsor based funding.



It is against this background that the FAO Conference will host the World Food Summit + during its biennial meeting in November in an attempt to renew commitments made at the World Food Summit. The Summit + will focus specifically on issues and commitments related to the Rome Declaration and Plan of Action.

## THE SIMULATION

During the conference we will simulate the FAO Conference meeting and its hosting of the World Food Summit + . In the interests of providing a fulfilling experience that strikes a balance between the highly detailed and technical discussions likely to result at such a meeting, and the time constraints imposed by the AMUN Conference schedule, the simulation will debate three commitments of the Rome Declaration and Plan of Action, rather than all seven. In addition, to encourage Representatives to develop both breadth and depth of knowledge in some elements of the topic areas, they may have the opportunity to discuss two topics of smaller scope both within the body, and possibly in consultation with another simulated entity.

## PREPARATION

As a foundation for subsequent research, Representatives are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Rome Declaration, associated Plan of Action, and supporting documentation. Careful review of the provided topic overviews and the related bibliographies will provide some assistance in this regard. It should be noted however that the topic overviews should not serve as the terminal point for research efforts but only as the beginning.

Additional information will follow in a separate mailing in October. This material will more fully address some of the topic areas, and discuss such issues as the work product of the body and rules of procedure.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

### REVIEW OF THE ROME DECLARATION AND PLAN OF ACTION

#### Commitment Two:

*We will implement policies aimed at eradicating poverty and inequality and improving physical and economic access by all, at all times, to sufficient, nutritionally adequate and safe food and its effective utilization.*

According to the World Food Summit, food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. In developing countries, approximately of the population, or million people, are malnourished.

According to FAO Special Program for Food Security SPFS , “Chronic under nutrition and food insecurity are principally caused by low productivity in agriculture, frequently caused in part by policy, institutional and technological constraints; high seasonal and year to year variability in food supplies, often the result of unreliable rainfall and insufficient water for crop and livestock production; and lack of off farm employment opportunities, contributing to low and uncertain incomes in urban and rural areas. The causes and consequences of food insecurity and poverty are inextricably linked.”

SPFS takes a two phase approach to improving food security for Low Income Food Deficit countries LIFDCs . Water control, intensification of sustainable plant production systems, diversification of production,

and analysis of socio economic constraints to food security with special attention given to gender and vulnerable groups are the four separate but interrelated components responding to the challenges facing small farmers addressed in the Pilot Phase. A Second Phase should replicate on a wider scale the innovative approaches identified during the Pilot Phase. It covers the assistance to governments to improve their food security and agricultural policy, to prepare agricultural investment programs to overcome the physical constraints, including infrastructure, and to develop feasibility studies of bankable projects, which would increase the flow of private and public financing of agricultural activities and services.

FAO and SPFS have had notable success in the pilot phase in Tanzania, China, Zambia, Nepal, Senegal and Cambodia. Tanzania in particular showed that income and production can be increased by addressing diversifying production and technology training.

Questions to consider from the perspective of your government on this issue include:

- What is the role of FAO, SPFS, WPD, IFAD, NGOs and private organizations in the development of policy where there has been local community success in increasing food security?
- Why have countries been reluctant to change policies related to food security while agreeing to the resolutions of the World Food Summit?
- What can be done for LFIDC’s that have not had success with Phase I?



- How do the other issues of women owning land, HIV/AIDS, natural disasters and military conflict impact on Phases I and II?

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- “FAO Signs Agreements with WFP and IFAD to Strengthen Cooperation in Support of World Food Security.” FAO Press Release, March , [www.fao.org/WAICENT/OIS/PRESS\\_NE/PRESSENG/ /pren .htm](http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/OIS/PRESS_NE/PRESSENG/ /pren .htm)
- “FAO Special Report Forecasts Continued Improvement in Food Outlook for Much of Sub Saharan Africa, but Warns War and Civil Strife Threaten Agricultural Production in Angola, Somalia, the Great Lakes Region, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau.” FAO Press Release, April , [www.fao.org/WAICENT/OIS/PRESS\\_NE/PRESSENG/ /pren .htm](http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/OIS/PRESS_NE/PRESSENG/ /pren .htm)
- “FAO Warns Kosovo Crisis Will Have Far Reaching Implications for the Region’s Future Food Security.” FAO Press Release, April .
- “Women Feed the World.” March . [www.fao.org/WAICENT/OIS/PRESS\\_NE/PRESSENG/ /pren .htm](http://www.fao.org/WAICENT/OIS/PRESS_NE/PRESSENG/ /pren .htm)

#### *Additional Web Resources:*

- Committee on World Food Security at [www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/ /Y E.htm](http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/ /Y E.htm)
- FAO Special Program for Food Security website at [www.fao.org/spfs/](http://www.fao.org/spfs/)
- FAO NGO website at [www.fao.org/tc/ngo/](http://www.fao.org/tc/ngo/)
- The International Fund for Agricultural Development IFAD website at [www.ifad.org/](http://www.ifad.org/)
- The World Food Program WFP web site at [www.wfp.org/index .html](http://www.wfp.org/index .html)

### **Commitment Three:**

*We will pursue participatory and sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development policies and practices in high and low potential areas, which are essential to adequate and reliable food supplies at the household, national, regional and global levels, and combat pests, drought and desertification, considering the multifunctional character of agriculture.*

There is no other human activity that exemplifies the intricate link between human and nature than agricultural activities aimed at food production. In some areas of the

world, it is so important to coax food from the earth that farmers will resort to practices that slowly kill the land they are working. The problem is that many of these practices almost ensure that the supply or quality of food will diminish from year to year. Overgrazing, over watering, forest removal, ill use of pest and herbicides and over fishing are just some of the unsustainable practices that compromise future food security.

Sustainable agriculture is a natural resource management issue which is a key piece of overall sustainable development. The use of any natural resource has an impact on the use of other natural resources. The basic principles of ecology tell us that all parts of an ecosystem are connected. For example, land which is stripped of its trees has a detrimental impact on the water resources and agricultural production of an area. When trees are removed, the roots of the trees that act as a soil stabilizer are removed, so the soil is more susceptible to erosion. Soil can be stripped by wind or water erosion. Wind erosion causes soil to be stripped and particles to become airborne. These conditions can cause respiratory problems in local populations. Water erosion can cause streams and drainage systems to become clogged with sediment, with serious implications for potable water quality, but can also damage fishing beds. More alarmingly, the soil left after the effects of erosion is of poorer quality and must be treated with fertilizer and pesticides. These harmful chemicals run off into streams and groundwater supplies because of erosion and because of the lack of roots to stabilize the soil. And as the vicious circle compounds itself, the result is often desertification.

Commitment Three looks not merely to approach sustainable agriculture from a human or technological standpoint, but looks at an integrated approach. It was recognized that rural poverty is an impediment to sustainable agricultural development, including forestry and fisheries. It was acknowledged that many rural development problems could not be adequately addressed without the transfer of available technologies and the development of new technologies. The lack of strong or integrated policies on water and land use management was further acknowledged as an impediment to sustainable agriculture. Most importantly, the document specifically points to poverty and the massive impact of a lack of rural infrastructures as a root impediment to the successful implementation of sustainable practices.

The document calls mostly for cooperation. Many technologies such as drip irrigation systems and effective monitoring systems, including remote sensing and geographic information systems, already exist. It is through cooperative effort that these technologies can be utilized in regions that need assistance in resource management. In addition, the document also calls for comprehensive policy changes. These policy changes include the empowerment of women the majority of



agricultural workers worldwide as well as integrated land management and sound rural development policies.

However, as we look to the future, there are severe impediments to achieving the goals and objectives as outlined in Commitment Three. They are the impediments that have daunted both short and long range relief and development efforts, specifically, the lack of adequate funding and lack of political will on the part of developed and developing States. Despite the longevity of such impediments, solutions must be found.

Questions to consider from the perspective of your government on this issue include:

- What agricultural practices and technologies provide the best opportunities for developing countries?
- How can countries be better encouraged to develop realistic goals for food production?

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“UN Body Examines Sustainable Development Plans.” *UN Wire*, January .

“UN Commission Continues Discussions.” *UN Wire*, April .

“UN Reform Supports Sustainable Development Goals.” *UN Wire*, February .

### *Additional Web Resources:*

EARTH SUMMIT+ , Special Session of the General Assembly to Review and Appraise the Implemen

tation of Agenda website, [www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/](http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/)

RIO + Website, [www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csduprio/index.html](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csduprio/index.html)

UN Commission on Sustainable Development’s Web site, [www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd.htm)

### **Commitment Five:**

*We will endeavor to prevent and be prepared for natural disasters and man made emergencies and to meet transitory and emergency food requirements in ways that encourage recovery, rehabilitation, development and a capacity to satisfy future needs.*

Many of the countries that are struggling with poverty are also experiencing conflict political and military . Many of the world’s twenty poorest countries have experienced violent conflict in the past decades, according to the UNDP Emergency Response Division. In Africa alone, twenty nine of the forty five UNDP program countries are experiencing some form of political or civil crisis.

Ongoing armed confrontations and internal conflicts around the world now result in large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. This in turn is resulting in food shortages, water shortages and health issues. FAO states that in , man made disasters contributed to only about of total emergencies. Now it is more than .

Another issue is communications between all of the organizations that assist with disaster relief. The Pan American Health Organization PAHO states that while disaster stricken countries appreciate external assistance, too much of the assistance is directed to non issues or myths. A common myth is that any kind of international assistance is needed immediately, while experience shows that a hasty response that is not based on familiarity with local conditions and meant to complement the national efforts only contributes to the chaos. Often, it is better to wait until genuine needs have been assessed.

Drought in several of the countries hardest hit by poverty is a natural disaster that is difficult to prevent. In many cases, the countries suffering from drought are facing larger food shortages than the previous years. In Ethiopia, large numbers of people are now depending solely on food assistance for survival because they have lost their livestock and livelihoods due to drought and in Burundi, insufficient and badly distributed rains have reduced yields of cereal and pulse crops.

The nutrition situation in Africa continues to worsen compared with the rest of the world as the number of malnourished and hungry people continues to grow. It is estimated that by , there will be million malnourished people in Africa, which occupy one third of the population on the continent. Drought and lack of



water are partly responsible for this situation but armed conflict is also very largely responsible.

The issues of civil unrest and conflict, as well as the issues of natural disasters and communication between the major players in disaster relief need to be addressed while looking at issues of poverty and hunger.

Questions to consider from the perspective of your government on this issue include:

- What can be done to enhance the communication between the various UN organizations, the church based organizations, and other organizations?
- How can drought be better forecast to allow for relief efforts and planning?
- How can human made disasters be prevented and what other organizations are needed to assist with the eradication of poverty?
- How does the continuation of human made and natural disaster impact the overall goal to reduce hunger by \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ ?

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## **THE URBAN POOR**

Most cities in developing countries face the prospect of increased malnutrition and health risks if they do not improve people’s access to adequate and safe food. The concentration and increasing number of poor people in cities in developing countries makes food insecurity an extremely pressing social and political issue. The number of unemployed people, poor women, the elderly and children living in cities is growing. This population is referred to as the urban poor.

At the World Food Summit in \_\_\_\_\_, it was decided that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights UNHCHR should better define the rights related to food and to propose ways to implement and realize these rights. In May \_\_\_\_\_, the Director General of FAO and the UNHCHR signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in this regard. The UNHCHR took the first major steps toward fulfilling the mandate given by the Summit in December \_\_\_\_\_, when consultations on the right to adequate food as a human right were held.

Many of the poorest countries with concentrations of the urban poor are engaged in conflicts which sap their resources and energy. Others have been beset with massive natural disasters. Others realized in the mid \_\_\_\_\_s the enormity of the social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS. Some have struggled to maintain fledgling democracies in the face of public discontent over austerity measures. Some countries struggle with corruption in government and infrastructure issues, such as the inability to handle population growth in cities and adequate food supplies and storage. As a result, most developing countries tend to make resource allocation decisions with the aims of cutting budget deficits and maximizing the rate of economic growth on the assumption that this would eventually contribute to a reduction in poverty even in the absence of measures for asset and income redistribution. The result has been that few countries, in spite of their pledges at the Summit, embarked on purposeful large scale programs for improving food security.

One initiative that FAO has been successful in implementing is the identification of the malnourished and the reasons for their lack of food or for their hunger. The belief is that if there is improved information, it will produce better results in reducing the number of undernourished. In addition to identifying the hungry and those at risk of becoming hungry, the systems also provide information on the causes of food insecurity and vulnerability. Ghana and Thailand are evidence of how this has been successful. In Thailand, the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems FIVIMS provided the national government with information on the malnourishment of infants and children, which traced back to the inadequate levels of



nutrition in pregnant women. This information allowed the government to assist community action to address these issues.

Despite all of these initiatives, it has been noted that around 50% of the urban populations in Africa live in poverty, in Latin America around 70% of all urban households are poor. The population living below the poverty level in Sao Paulo is estimated to be between 10% and 15% of the total population. In Calcutta, the proportion of urban poor is around 20%, and 30% in Karachi. FAO press release, June 2000.

One issue that the FAO has not been able to address on a large scale is the issue of urban dwellers' purchasing most of their food. This is different from the rural poor because even those who do not live on farms grow at least some of their food. Consumer food prices and the ability to earn a cash income are, therefore, much more important in cities. The urban poor typically work in low paying jobs where they earn and spend wages daily; they often can only afford to buy small quantities of food at a time, which means they generally pay higher per unit prices than if they could buy in bulk.

Another example of an issue that has not been resolved and addressed is HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS in developing countries has a two fold effect on the urban poor. Those living with HIV/AIDS and their families in the rural areas are not able to grow food as a result of the illness and the need for family to take care of them. The lack of food production in rural areas means less food in the urban area for consumption. This causes higher prices and means that the urban poor are able to purchase less food. In addition, the urban poor with HIV/AIDS are unable to work and therefore their ability to purchase food is diminished. Neither of these populations is able to receive adequate health care.

Many countries have not included the right to adequate food as a human right in their constitutions. The countries that have incorporated this in their constitutions have not allocated the resources to address the issue.

Questions to consider from the perspective of your government on this issue include:

- What are the local conditions that impact on the urban poor?
- What are various governments doing to eliminate food embargos on developing nations?
- What collaboration between institutions and organizations is needed to impact on this issue?

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## DESERTIFICATION

Desertification is a global problem that affects more than 100 countries and more than one sixth of the world's population. Some of the major countries affected by desertification are Africa, China, Turkey, Chile, Cuba, Lebanon, Cambodia, Mexico and Yemen. More than 2 billion of the populations of Africa, Asia and South America live in the susceptible dry lands and 1 billion hectares of dry lands used for agriculture are already degraded.

While the UN estimates that desertification costs 100 billion US per year, the human cost is probably higher but cannot be directly measured. The human costs can include increased hunger, poverty, political instability, drought, population migration, increased illness and a drain on economic resources. Desertification also has an impact on more than the immediate area. Flooding, reduced water quality, reduction of food supplies, sedimentation in rivers and lakes, damage to equipment and respiratory health problems resulting from dust storms and poor air quality are a few examples of the impact on the non immediate areas.



In 1977, the United Nations Conference on Desertification UNCOD adopted a Plan of Action to Combat Desertification PACD. The question of how to deal with desertification was still a major concern at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development UNCED. As a result, the UN General Assembly was called upon to establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee INCD to prepare, by June 1984, a Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. In December 1994, the General Assembly agreed by adopting Resolution / .

The first conference was held in October 1994. The fourth conference was held in December 2006. National Action Programs NAP are one of the key instruments in the implementation of the Convention. They are strengthened by Action Programs on Sub Regional SRAP and Regional RAP levels. National Action Programs are developed in the framework of a participative approach involving the local communities and they spell out the practical steps and measures to be taken to combat desertification in specific ecosystems.

Despite the development of an inclusive process focusing on national, sub regional, and regional concerns and involvement, the local structures are weak in terms of their ability to represent the population. Their authority for example for organizing land use policy, and their resources the size of the municipal budget, constitute a major obstacle to controlling desertification. In addition, many of the RAPs have not been developed. The participatory approach needs the existence of a balanced relationship of forces between the national, regional and local structures with the government facilitating the process. The development of balanced social structure is a long term activity and desertification needs immediate action.

Questions to consider from the perspective of your government on this issue include:

- What can be done to strengthen the resolve of local structures to participate in the process?
- How are the global issues not being addressed in the framework established by UNCOD?
- How can the conflict of long term development of social structures be balanced with the immediate needs of desertification?

- What can be done to encourage countries to implement their NAPs?

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### Additional Web Resources:

- Desertification International Development Research Center in Canada [www.idrc.ca/Media/Desertification\\_e.html](http://www.idrc.ca/Media/Desertification_e.html)
- FAO’s Desertification and drought extent and consequences proposal for a participatory approach to combat desertification [www.fao.org/docrep/X E/ X E .htm](http://www.fao.org/docrep/X E/ X E .htm)
- United Nations Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification Website [www.unccd.int/main.php](http://www.unccd.int/main.php)

