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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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FAO World Seed Campaign

Report[1]
Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
Rapporteur: Mr Jean SOURBET, France

1. 1959 - 11th Session - Second part

A. 1. Draft Recommendation submitted by the Committee on Agriculture

The Assembly,

Considering the decision taken in 1957 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (F. A. O.), in its Resolution No. 15/57, to undertake a campaign aimed at world-wide promotion of the production and use of high-quality seeds;

Convinced that the general use of improved seed varieties carefully adapted to local soil and other natural conditions would help to increase agricultural productivity, thus combating malnutrition and raising standards of living;

Believing that a special effort must be made in this field for the benefit of countries particularly affected by hunger and poverty and with economies largely dependent on crop production;

Wishing to consider whether and by what methods concerted action should be taken by member countries of the Council of Europe within the framework of the FAO World Seed Year, possibly in conjunction with the Council's programme for the development of Africa,

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers should :

1. encourage Governments to support the FAO World Seed Campaign;

2. report to the Assembly before the third part of its eleventh Session on action taken in this matter by the Governments and national authorities concerned.

B. 2. Explanatory Memorandum by M. SOVRBET

1.

In view of the constant rise in world population figures, there can be no doubt of the need for a rapid increase and improvement in food production. The problem is particularly acute in the under-developed countries.

Improvements in agricultural production will not only affect food crops but also the production of industrial raw materials and forest products, which occupy so essential a place in the economies of many of the underdeveloped countries.

The problem is a different one in the economically more developed countries, where the prime concern is to consolidate the competitive position of agriculture, not only by raising yields in order to reduce costs, but also by improving quality.

One of the most effective means of increasing crop production is the use of highquality seed from improved varieties. It is, moreover, inexpensive in relation to results achieved and can be developed without disrupting local farming practice.

In many countries, the value of highquality seed has already been generally acknowledged and its use is fairly widespread. In many other countries, however, these problems have received insufficient attention, which is particularly serious in the case of countries where increased and improved crops provide a most valuable weapon, in the fight against malnutrition and want.

It was with the ultimate aim of raising living standards by increasing crop production that at its 9th Session held at Rome in November 1957 the FAO Conference launched a world seed campaign by adopting the following Resolution :

" RESOLUTION No. 15/57

International Seed Campaign

The Conference,

Considering that the extensive use of high-quality seed of improved varieties is one of the most generally and most economically applicable measures for increasing productivity and improving the quality of agricultural, horticultural and forest products,

Decides to launch an international seed campaign and to designate, at its next Session in 1959, the year 1960 or 1961 as the "International FAO Seed Year", and to this end :

Urges all Member Governments to intensify their programmes for the production and distribution of high-quality seeds through a suitable national authority, in close liaison with, where appropriate, National FAO Committees and other national organisations concerned, and to report to the next Conference Session on progress made;

Invites international, governmental and non-governmental organisations interested to join in this campaign;

Requests the Director-General to report to the next Sessions of the Council and the Conference on the progress made. "

In April 1958 the Director-General of F. A. 0., in accordance with this resolution, requested all member countries to consider what measures they could take, either individually or collectively.

It is intended to impress on all agricultural producers the value of high-yield varieties and high-quality seed and to induce them, by demonstration, instruction, publicity and every other means, to use high-quality seed of suitable varieties, in their own interest. At the same time, production and distribution should be encouraged to the greatest possible extent, for the necessary seed must be available in sufficient quantity and at reasonable prices. Secondary aims include promotion of selection operations, co-ordination of variety research, organisation of seed control, improvement of seed tests, extension of seed trade and the use of modern methods of seed treatment and preservation.

The F. A. O. proposes that each count r y should establish a National Seed Campaign Committee or put the Campaign into t he hands of an existing national body concerned with seed improvement or of the national FAO Committee. With regard to the preparation of national activities, F. A. 0. has also drawn up detailed suggestions for the membership of National Seed Campaign Committees and has outlined some of their functions, which may be classified under three main heads :

a. improvement of crops and tree varieties ;

b. production, certification [2] and distribution of seeds;

c. instruction, information, publicity.

Collaboration between Governments might best be directed to the following principal points :

1. Offering training facilities to countries lacking the necessary qualified staff in the field of crop improvement, seed production, certification, and distribution of agricultural, horticultural and forest crops, extension and education work in this matter.
2. Offering high-quality seed of improved varieties for breeding, testing or other experimental purposes.
3. Providing fertilisers, insecticides and other requisites, in relation to the use of highquality seed.
4. Offering special films, film strips, sets of coloured slides on the item under (para 1) for further distribution to interested countries.
5. Offering all kinds of publicity material in this field, such as brochures, pamphlets, folders, photographs, stressing the importance of the use of high-quality seed in one respect or another, in order to make a wider public more "seed conscious".
6. Preparing illustrated publications, if possible in different languages, on the following items :
    - *a.* objectives and procedures of a well-planned seed improvement programme;
    - *b.* equipment for seed testing laboratories and seed cleaning plants;
    - *c.* application of seed certification schemes and the scope of seed laws, rules and regulations;
    - *d.* description of approved and recommended varieties of agricultural and horticultural crops, their ecological adaptation, country of origin, countries of present cultivation, and other properties.
7. Compiling a list of films on crop and tree improvement, as well as on seed production, control and distribution.
8. Publishing a directory of all agricultural institutions, associations and specialists dealing with seeds and crop improvement.
9. Encouraging the organisation of agricultural shows and exhibits on a national or international level, with particular attention to seeds in the widest sense.

At the 29th Session of the FAO Council (Rome, 27th October - 6th November 1958), the representatives of 19 countries assured the Director-General of their Governments' full support for this initiative and emphasised its great practical value in speeding the development of their agricultural and forest production.

The Council formally recommended the FAO Conference, at its next Session, in the autumn of 1959, to designate 1961 as "World Seed Year".

Although it is the primary responsibility of the countries concerned to conduct the World Seed Campaign, -with the backing of F. A. O . , it was nevertheless the view of the FAO Conference that international organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, could give valuable support. The relevant Resolution therefore invites these organisations to participate in the Campaign. Mr. J. J. de Jong, FAO Co-ordinator for the World Campaign, spoke to the Committee on Agriculture of the Council of Europe at its meeting of 20th January 1959 regarding the aims and methods of the Campaign[3].

The Committee suggests that , in considering ways and means by which the Council of Europe might give effective support to the Campaign, the Assembly should in the first phase bear in mind the following points :

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2. At its 408th meeting (30th May 1958, Paris) the Council of O. E. E. C. adopted a system of certification for grass seed in international trading operations. The regulations and directives issued represent the fruition of a project of the European Productivity Agency (E. P. A.). F. A. O . intends, within the framework of the World Seed Campaign, to undertake similar work in connection with the terminology and certification of other crops in other parts of the world.
3. M. J. J. de Jong's statement is reproduced in the Appendix below.

The World Seed Campaign is a longt e rm project, and the world year will be no more than its culminating point, if the FAO Conference's proposal is adopted. The outlines of the Campaign are only just beginning to take shape. It is therefore too early at the present stage to advance specific proposals for action by the Council of Europe within the framework of the World Campaign; moreover, the Assembly will probably wish to have a continuous picture of the activities of its member countries in the Campaign. An Assembly debate will in itself be of great value to the Campaign, since it will publicise the question and will familiarise members of the Assembly with the problems involved.

There is, however, no reason why the Assembly should not take limited measures at the present stage. The World Seed Campaign is indisputably a useful, not to say an urgent, undertaking. The Committee of Ministers should accordingly be requested to encourage Member Governments of the Council to support it. Also, it is already quite obvious that there is every reason to follow the example of F. A. O. in giving due prominence from the beginning to the assistance that the economically more developed countries are in a position to give to the under-developed countries, for whom improvement of crop-yields is of overriding importance.

In order that the Assembly may be able to judge whether it would be useful and desirable for member countries of the Council of Europe to undertake concerted action in this field and whether such action should be treated as part of the economic co-operation between European and African countries advocated by the Assembly, it is suggested that the Committee of Ministers be requested to report to the Assembly on the activities of Governments and national bodies in the Campaign.

Appendix APPENDIX

Statement made by M. J.-J. de JONG, Co-ordinator to the Committee on Agriculture of the Council of Europe at its meeting on 20th January, 1959

In the fight against hunger and poverty there can be no question but that crop production should be increased and improved as much and as quickly as possible. In various countries this is very urgent?in some cases even a matter of life and death.

One of the most promising measures by which crop production can be increased and the quality of agricultural and forest products can be improved throughout the world, is the widespread use of high-quality seed of superior and well adapted crop and tree varieties. Numerous examples illustrating the role of first-class seed in agricultural development of many countries over the last fifty years could be cited. Moreover, better seed can be used without considerable capital investment and without changes of local production patterns.

It was for these reasons that the Ninth Session of the FAO Conference in 1957 resolved to launch a World Seed Campaign, urging all Member Governments to intensify their programmes or to initiate new plans for the introduction and breeding of improved varieties, as well as for the production, certification and distribution of high quality seed. The Conference stressed the importance of this Campaign, deciding to designate at its next Session in 1959, as a culmination of all efforts, the year 1960 or 1961 as the " World Seed Year". The Delegates of all Member Governments approved the Resolution concerned, and agreed that they would report to the next Conference on the preparation made and the progress achieved at that time.

In accordance with the Conference Resolution, the Director-General in his Note Verbale dated 3rd April 1958, has invited all member countries to consider what action they might take, individually or collectively. It is suggested that each country should establish a National Seed Campaign Committee, or entrust the Campaign to an existing national body concerned with seed improvement, or to the national FAO Committee. The Note Verbale was accompanied by a Guide for Planning National Activities giving detailed suggestions regarding the possible membership of the national seed campaign committees and an outline of some of its tasks.

The Director-General requested Governments to inform him of the establishment of such committees and their membership, together with the names and addresses of the officers who will act as liaison with F. A. O. From replies received so far, 21 Governments have nominated national seed campaign committees or have appointed liaison officers. Fifteen other countries have indicated that they will give the matter immediate attention and consideration. It is hoped that the remaining Governments will do the same in. the very near future.

The Director-General stressed that the World Seed Campaign is primarily a matter for individual Governments to organise and conduct according to their own requirements and facilities. It was suggested that the national committees should include representatives of all national groups, directly or indirectly concerned with seed improvement in its widest sense and, if possible, also international and bilateral organisations working in this field, as well as agencies which may support the campaign through their educational work or publicity programme.

The tasks of the Committee might include a study of the national seed improvement policy, the organisation of a general campaign for extending the use of improved seed, and the encouragement of research and other activities relating to the production, certification and distribution of high-quality seed as well as to crop and tree improvement. Priorities and sequence of successive steps largely depend on the conditions in each country. Governments are invited, however, to provide early information concerning the planning and progress of national activities.

F. A. O.'s role in the Campaign is to stimulate national efforts, to maintain liaison between interested groups, to distribute information, to give technical advice on specific aspects and to provide background material for further publicity.

In order to disseminate information concerning the Campaign, a periodical in the three official languages will be published at regular intervals, probably bi-monthly. This World Seed Campaign News, of which a copy of the first issue has been distributed, will include brief articles on specific problems relating to seed production and improvement, information on the progress made by Member Governments and news and notes on current technical developments throughout the world.

In addition to this bulletin, special publications concerning major problems involved in seed production and improvement will be prepared. Of course, many of F. A. O.'s previous publications have also dealt with related subjects and should be useful in connection with this Campaign.

Within the scope of F. A. O., the Campaign has been discussed at the Tenth Session of the European Commission on Agriculture, Rome, 19-23 May 1958, at the Sixth Session of the International Rice Commission, held in Tokyo, 3-4 October 1958, and at three FAO Regional Conferences : for Asia and the Far East (Tokyo 6-16 October 1958), for Latin America (Costa Rica 12-22 November 1958) and for the Near East (Damascus 10-20 December 1958). All these meetings fully supported the Campaign, giving valuable recommendations for the further implementation of specific items of special interest to the countries in the various regions.

During the 29lh Session of the FAO Council, held in Rome, 27th October-6th November 1958, delegates of 19 different countries assured the Director-General of the full support of their Governments for this project, stressing its great importance for the practical development and improvement of agriculture and forestry in their own countries.

As to the year in which all efforts should culminate, opinions were originally divided, but in the end the FAO Council formally recommended to the FAO Conference that, at its next session in 1959, the year 1961 be designated as the "World Seed Year". It was stressed, however, that activetities related to seed improvement should continue beyond the actual year designated; and that in many cases substantial technical accomplishments may be achieved mainly after the World Seed Year itself.

Collaboration with other international organisations

In its Resolution No. 15/57, the FAO Conference in 1957 invited both governmental and non-governmental international organisations to join this Campaign. There is no doubt that the support and assistance of international organisations, even when they are not directly concerned with the very specialised topics involved, can be of great help to Governments in their efforts to begin the Campaign at a national level.

To secure full co-operation of international organisations, this matter has already been presented at various international meetings and it is encouraging to note that a number of organisations have not only given their approval to the project, but have also offered F. A. O. their assistance in the provision of material and gathering of information. It is hoped, however, that other organisations and agencies will also associate themselves with the aims of the Campaign. In order to give a broad indication as to what kind of particular activities and special contributions could be undertaken by Governments of countries well developed in this field and appropriate organisations to assist interested national seed campaign committees in less developed countries or groups of countries, the following suggestions are respectfully submitted to the Conference.

1. Offering training facilities to countries lacking the necessary qualified staff in the field of crop improvement, seed production, certification, and distribution of agricultural, horticultural and forest crops, extension and education work in this matter.

2. Offering high-quality seed of improved varieties for breeding, testing or other experimental purposes.

3. Providing fertilizers, insecticides and other requisites, in relation to the use of high-quality seed.

4. Offering special films, film strips, sets of coloured slides on the items under (para. 1) for further distribution to interested countries.

5. Offering all kinds of publicity material in this field, such as brochures, pamphlets, folders, photographs, stressing the importance of the use of high-quality seed in one respect or another, in order to make a wider public more "seed conscious".

6. Preparing illustrated publications, if possible in different languages, on the following items :

a. objectives and procedures of a wellplanned seed improvement programme;

b. equipment for seed testing laboratories and seed cleaning plants;

c. application of seed certification schemes and the scope of seed laws, rules and regulations;

d. description of approved and recommended varieties of agricultural and horticultural crops, their ecological adaptation, country of origin, countries of present cultivation, and other properties.

7. Compiling a list of films on crop and tree improvement, as well as on seed production, control and distribution.

8. Publishing a directory of all agricultural institutions, associations and specialists dealing with seeds and crop improvement.

9. Encouraging the organisation of agricultural shows and exhibits on a national or international level, with particular attention to seeds in the widest sense.