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FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS

ORGANISATION
DES NATIONS
UNIES POUR
L'ALIMENTATION
ET L'AGRICULTURE

ORGANIZACION
DE LAS NACIONES
UNIDAS PARA
LA AGRICULTURA
Y LA ALIMENTACION

منظمة
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**FAO REGIONAL CONSULTATION
WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS
(NGOs/CSOs)**

Mérida, Mexico, April 10-11, 2000

FINAL REPORT

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Regional Consultation between FAO and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) was held in the city of Mérida, Mexico, on April 10 and 11, 2000, in conjunction with the twenty-sixth FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Objectives of the Consultation

2. Twenty-one NGOs and CSOs from 13 countries¹ (Antigua, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Granada, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Uruguay) took part in the Consultation, in order to share perspectives, develop recommendations and provide follow-up on food security and rural development in their respective countries, within the framework of FAO policy and strategy for cooperation with non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations.

Consultation

3. The Consultation was inaugurated by the FAO Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean and Mr. Luis Antonio Ramírez Pinera (Mexico), representative of the Consultation's organizing committee. The provisional agenda was unanimously approved by all of the participants.² Ms. Rosaura Rodríguez (Mexico) was elected Chair of the Consultation, and Mr. Luis Antonio Ramírez Pinera was elected Vice-Chair. The rapporteurs were Ms. Lidieth Madden (Costa Rica), Mr. Hector Villaverde (Uruguay) and Mr. Alvaro Fiallos (Nicaragua).

4. The discussions were based on three of the documents prepared for the twenty-sixth FAO Regional Conference: "Reform of Institutions in Rural Development," "Technical Obstacles and Non-Tariff Barriers to Agricultural Trade," and "Follow-up to the World Food Summit." These documents were supplemented by a presentation by Ms. Coulet on the follow-up to the World Food Summit.

5. In regard to FAO's cooperation with NGOs and CSOs, there was an examination of the document "FAO Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations (NGOs/CSOs)" and of the discussion paper on the subject.

¹ The list of participants can be found in Annex I of this report.

² The agenda can be found in Annex II.

II. RESULTS

1- Framework for Action

Reform of Institutions in Rural Development

6. The participants considered it important to examine problems affecting the institutions for rural development cited in the document presented.
7. They agreed that the paramount importance of macroeconomic policy, the predominance of the free action of the market over sectoral policy, and the globalization of food systems have significantly redefined the rules of the game to which agents in the rural sector had been accustomed.
8. They stressed that macroeconomic policy has essentially favored certain sectors and regions, negatively impacting the most vulnerable groups in rural and marginal urban areas. Furthermore, structural adjustment programs had entailed the dismantling of many of the functions that the public sector performed in the rural environment, and had weakened many institutions in the rural world.
9. They suggested that traditional rural development approaches are inadequate in the new context in which activity in the rural world is taking place, hence the advisability of adopting a new approach to the problem by focusing on the development of rural economies and looking beyond strictly agricultural activities.
10. They stated that the rebuilding of institutions appears to be a prerequisite for implementing the approach to the development of local economies, which involves reorganizing the public sector by decentralizing, modernizing and strengthening local management capacity.
11. They added that such reorganization would require policies to increase the awareness and knowledge of persons working in local government, in order to organize the local population, with an emphasis on education and the participation of women in local development, and to promote access to information technology by the full spectrum of players, in order to facilitate the flow of information and communication among all segments of the population. Emphasis was placed on the need to use all existing forms of support to successfully reach the various segments.
12. Finally, the participants pointed to a general lack of knowledge, on the part of governments, of the scope, functions and impact of the activities of NGOs and CSOs in development and food security, which suggests a need to institutionalize the participation of NGOs and CSOs in policy making.

Food Insecurity and Follow-up to the World Food Summit³

13. The participants emphasized the FAO objective of reducing the current number of people suffering from malnutrition by half by no later than the year 2015, acknowledging that this is a major challenge, considering that there are currently 800 million persons who are undernourished, or 20% of the world population.

14. They emphasized that the problem of undernourishment is still of great concern in Latin America and the Caribbean, given that in most of the countries between 5% and 19% of the total population is undernourished.

15. They also determined that governments had failed to fulfill the commitments of the World Food Summit, especially the second commitment,⁴ since policies have not been implemented to guarantee that the most vulnerable segments of the population have access to basic services and to healthy and sufficient nourishment. They therefore recommended addressing food security in conjunction with the issue of rural development, in the terms set forth in the previous discussion.

16. They indicated that though there is currently a rural-urban demographic balance, projections call for greater urban growth in the future; thus, there is a need to examine separately the problem of food security in the rural and urban worlds, implementing appropriate policies for each.

17. They also mentioned the relationship between international trade and food security, addressed in the fourth commitment of the Plan of Action,⁵ which indicates the need to look carefully at technical obstacles and non-tariff barriers to agricultural trade, ensuring that quality and food safety standards are duly implemented in the region's countries.

18. They stated their belief that the effects of natural disasters have been magnified by human damage to the environment, and that these effects have seriously affected food security for the most vulnerable segments,⁶ and they expressed their support for the priority given to dealing with natural disasters in the document on Follow-up to the World Food Summit.

³ **CFS:99/5:** Expanded Participation of Civil Society and Other Associates in the Committee's Work on World Food Security and **LARC/00/6:** Follow-up to the World Food Summit.

⁴ **Second commitment:** 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.

⁵ **Fourth commitment:** We will strive to ensure that food and agricultural trade policies, and trade policies in general, are conducive to fostering food security for all, through a fair and market-oriented world trade system.

⁶ **Fifth commitment:** 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. Further, in the document LARC/00/6, "Follow-up to the World Food Summit," preparation for dealing with natural disasters and coordinated support activities is presented as a guideline for food security policy in the region.

19. Finally, given the complexity of food security issues, the participants indicated the need for active participation by all of society's players in combating current food insecurity, with specific responsibilities allocated for the purpose.

Technical Obstacles and Non-Tariff Barriers to Agricultural Trade

20. In regard to the overall treatment of this issue covered in the presentations,⁷ the participants emphasized the fact that trade liberalization in the context of globalization calls for levels of competitiveness that go beyond current capacity and available technologies, which increase inequality in trade relations.

21. They pointed to restrictions and subsidies applied by developed countries to agricultural trade, unfairly impacting foreign trade for the countries of the region.

22. They emphasized that technological innovation involves both risks and opportunities for the region's foreign trade.

23. They indicated their concern regarding the dissemination and "standardization" of the use of transgenic products and their implications for small-scale rural production, at a time when the risks involved in such products have not yet been resolved.

24. They added that the dissemination of transgenic products can lead to the use of dependent technologies rather than appropriate technologies, that there is risk of genetic erosion and, finally, that there is a risk of bio-piracy. They therefore recommended that the use of these innovations on a mass scale be controlled, since the possible impact of the use of these products is unknown.

25. They insisted, therefore, on the need to further study and debate the issues involved in both biotechnology and transgenic products, given the current lack of information or misinformation.

2- Mechanisms for Action: FAO Cooperation with NGOs and CSOs

26. Given the preceding considerations, it is suggested that there be closer cooperation between FAO and NGOs and CSOs.⁸

27. It was suggested that this cooperation be organized through (1) analysis and exchange of information, (2) dialogue on policy, (3) field program and (4) mobilization of resources. Individual discussion groups were formed to discuss each of these.⁹ The main conclusions reached by these groups are given below.

⁷ **LARC/00/2:** "Impact of Technical Obstacles and Non-Tariff Barriers to Agricultural Trade in Latin America and the Caribbean." Presentation by Julio Paz Caferata and Nestor Osorio, former Ambassador from Colombia to the WTO.

⁸ "FAO Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations"

Analysis and Exchange of Information

28. The participants underscored the importance of defining a strategy for disseminating information and for communication in the struggle to combat food insecurity, including the various players in civil society,¹⁰ and facilitating their access to and ownership of communications media.

29. They proposed that thematic groups¹¹ be formed with representatives of FAO, NGOs, CSOs, academics, and public- and private-sector representatives, to work on classifying and preparing information as well as on identifying needs.

30. As possible areas for cooperation with FAO, they suggested: disseminating digitally-generated information via a digital network and through other communications media, according to the needs of potential beneficiaries; creating opportunities for dialogue between NGOs and CSOs and governments regarding communication and information issues; conducting food security campaigns; and producing and exchanging printed materials.

Dialogue on Policy

31. The members of the group consider this FAO Consultation with the region's NGOs and CSOs to be the first step in a partnership, the long-range goal of which is to work together on designing and implementing policies and programs for rural development and food security.

32. They proposed creating a regional network of NGOs and CSOs for Latin America and the Caribbean, the working modalities of which are described below.

Field Program

33. The participants emphasized that there have been partnerships between the FAO and NGOs and CSOs, with differing degrees of success. Some of the problems that were highlighted were due to lack of follow-up and continuity in projects, while positive features of these collaborations included participation in meetings, exchanges of information, and dissemination of knowledge on successful projects or experiments that could be applied in other countries.

⁹ Details on the formation of discussion groups can be found in Annex III of this report.

¹⁰ The following, among others, were mentioned: agricultural producer organizations, the Church, academia, indigenous *campesino* organizations, consumer associations, NGO networks (development, human rights, environment, protection of children, gender, etc.), local governments, communications media, interlocutors (Ministries of Agriculture, Education, Economy, etc., and of External Affairs, and FAO food security agencies)

¹¹ The central issues indicated are: Agrobiodiversity, production, processing, preservation and marketing, job creation, citizen participation, safe food and healthy diet, consumer/producer relations, alternative markets and fair prices, land rights, protection of cultural values, local collaboration, sustainable consumption and development, political pressure.

34. They emphasized the richness of the experience and concrete knowledge of NGOs and CSOs, for example, in directly supporting grassroots groups (both women's and mixed groups), and they recommended that international cooperation organizations such as FAO, as well as governments, take advantage of these assets.

35. They suggested that the cooperative work that FAO carries out with NGOs and CSOs for the field program be based on sustainable economic development and on strengthening the participation of social players in decision making. They added that projects should be sustainable and should emphasize gender and the environment.

36. They suggested a number of specific mechanisms for cooperation between FAO and NGOs and CSOs, including writing and disseminating a guide to successful development and food security projects, as well as creating opportunities for dialogue and coordination among the various players involved, in order to help them in creating, implementing and disseminating information on projects.

Mobilization of Resources

37. Group members emphasized that one of the main objectives of cooperation is the implementation of programs for the formation of social capital in rural areas. To this end, they proposed channeling funds through NGOs and CSOs for activities to encourage the organization of production, to conduct training and to provide technical assistance.

38. They recommended formalizing an alliance between FAO and NGOs and CSOs to work together to encourage the participation of public and private sectors in funding and carrying out development programs in rural areas.

39. Finally, the conference participants made some specific recommendation (1) for cooperation between FAO and NGOs and CSOs, and (2) for governments to better manage issues of rural development and food security.

3- Recommendations

Recommendations to NGOs and CSOs Present at the Conference

40. The NGOs and CSOs present at the Consultation proposed forming a follow-up committee to create a regional NGO/CSO network for Latin America and the Caribbean.

41. This network would focus on rural development and food security, with an emphasis on gender equity and equality; its objectives would be as follows:

- To contribute to meeting the national goals undertaken by governments in international agreements, by working on dissemination, organization, participation and training for groups in civil society;
- To share and transfer food security experiences via appropriate communications and information media.

42. Immediate tasks proposed are:

- To create a civil society food security forum;
- To establish a system for coordination and communication (between FAO and NGOs/CSOs) at the national and regional levels to facilitate sharing of information on successful experiences in combating poverty and food insecurity;
- To disseminate the results of research and technology transfer so that they can be used by NGOs and CSOs;
- To create NGO/CSO databases;
- To hold preparatory meetings for regional consultations;
- To hold multilateral meetings at various levels (international, regional, national) to design strategies for food security and rural development.

Recommendations to FAO

43. To facilitate the above-mentioned activities, the cooperation of the FAO was requested specifically:

- To provide a focal support and coordinating point for NGOs and CSOs at the regional level;
- To obtain funds to successfully manage the network;
- To monitor and provide information on progress in fulfilling agreements of the World Food Summit under the responsibility of the Committee on World Food Security;
- To facilitate the participation of NGOs/CSOs at meetings of technical committees and in FAO NGO/SCO thematic groups.

Recommendations to Governments:

44. To make effective or redesign social and economic policy relating to food security, so as to benefit the most vulnerable segments in rural and marginal urban areas, ensuring that the policies are carried out by implementing systems for evaluation, monitoring and follow-up;
45. To continue and progress further with decentralization, in order to improve management of government institutions and recognize the importance of NGOs and CSOs in local development;
46. To design and implement prevention systems and effective plans of action to mitigate the effects of natural disasters on food security;
47. To recognize the Consultation's follow-up committee as the body responsible for implementing the agreements made at this Consultation;
48. To consider NGOs and CSOs as co-participants in formulating, designing and implementing food security and rural development policy.

ANNEX I – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX II – CONSULTATION AGENDA

Day 1 - Monday 10 April 2000

	<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
9:00 hours	-	Registration of the participants
10:00 hours	1	Opening of the Consultation : welcome statement from the organising committee.
	2	Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Raporteurs of the Regional Consultation.
	3	Approval of the Agenda of the Regional Consultation.
10:30 hours	-	Coffee break
11:00 hours	4	Opening statement by Mr. Gustavo Gordillo de Anda, Assistant Director General, Regional Representative of FAO for Latin America and the Caribbean.
11:30 hours	5	Plenary session , Item 1: Reforms in the Institutions for Rural Development (document LARC/2000/5)
13:00 hours	-	Lunch
14:30 horas	7	Plenary session, Item 2: Follow up of the World Food Summit (document LARC/2000/6 and CFS:99/5)
16:00 hours	8	Plenary session Item 3: Impact of the Technical Obstacles and Non-Trade Barriers on Agricultural Trade in Latin America and the Caribbean (document LARC/2000/2)
17:30 hours	-	Coffee brake
18:00 hours	9	Plenary session : Conclusion of the debates presented by the rapporteurs.

Day 2 - Tuesday 11 April 2000

	<i>Item No</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
9:00 hours	1	Plenary session: Presentation of the working document on FAO Policies and Working Strategies, at Regional Level, for Co-operation with NGOs and CSOs
9:30 hours	2	Debate Implementation of discussion groups
10:30 hours	-	Coffee brake
11:00 hours	3	Discussion Groups
13:00 hours	-	Lunch
14:30 hours	4	Discussion Groups
15:45 hours	-	Coffee brake
16:00 hours	5	Plenary session : Presentation of the conclusions of the discussion groups.
16:30 hours	6	Final Report of the NGOs/CSOs
17:00 hours	7	Modalities of participation in the Plenary Session of the Regional Conference
17:30 hours	8	Other matters
18:00 hours	9	Closing session of the Regional Consultation.

ANNEX III- FORMATION OF WORKING GROUPS

ANALYSIS AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

1. Vicente Martinez, ALER, Ecuador
2. Héctor Villaverde, CEADU, Uruguay
3. Helder Solis, SENDAS, Ecuador
4. Victor M. Galicia Avila, CNC, Mexico

DIALOGUE ON RURAL POLICY

1. Alvaro Fiallos, UNAG, Nicaragua
2. Cristina Rizo Patrón, Asociación de Empresarios del Perú, Peru
3. Javier Rodriguez, MNOFP, Argentina,
4. Francis A. Robertson, ART, Grenada
5. Gilberto Torres Jimenez, UNORCA, Mexico

FIELD PROGRAM

1. José Miguel Torrico, CODEFF, Chile
2. Leoncio Martinez García, Unión estatal de Productoras de Guerrero, Mexico
3. Luis Rodriguez Gomez, CICAFOC, Ecuador
4. Lidieth Madden, ANDAR, Costa Rica
5. Roberta Williams, GARDC, Antigua,
6. Carmen López, Unión estatal de Productoras de Guerrero, Mexico

MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

1. Eugenio León, MUCECH, Chile
2. José Gerónimo Brumatti, CONTAG, Brazil
3. Froilan Beltrán Condori, Cooperativa El Ceibo, Bolivia
4. María Martha Trejo, FELTRA, Honduras
5. Germán Perez Bravo, Almacenadora y Comercializadora Agropecuaria Campesinos de Jalisco, Mexico
6. Jesus Martinez Salazar, Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de café del Estado de Oaxaca, Mexico
7. Jazmin Guanto, Unión Estatal de Organizaciones Económicas y Mujeres Productoras de Guerrero, Mexico

**ANNEX IV- NGOs/CSOs PRESENTATION TO THE 26a FAO REGIONAL
CONFERENCE**

FAO REGIONAL CONSULTATION WITH NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (ONG/OSC)¹²

<i>Mérida, Mexico from 10 to 11 April 2000</i>
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PRESENTATION

The Organizations that participated in the first consultation of FAO with NGO/CSOs in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mérida, México, the 10th and 11th of April, 2000, in parallel to the 26th FAO Regional Conference

Consider that:

1. In the context of globalization and trade liberalization, inequality in trade relations is incremented by competitiveness levels that surpass the available capacities and technologies at the disposal of developed countries.
2. The existence of restrictions and subsidies in agricultural trade unjustly affects in the development of poor country's foreign trade.
3. Macroeconomic policies have benefited only some regions and some producers, but have had negative impacts for the most vulnerable and marginalized in rural and urban areas.
4. The substantial reduction of public services, particularly in education and health is one of the known effects of the structural adjustment programs.
5. There is a slow progress in the implementation of the World Food Summit goal to reduce by half the number of the world's undernourished by no later than the year 2015.
6. The depredation of the environment by men has magnified the negative effects of natural disasters, seriously compromising the food security of the most vulnerable.
7. The concrete action and coordination of international cooperation agencies and organizations is not enough to tackle the poverty problem in the region.

¹² This event will be held simultaneously with the 26th. FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean.

8. There is still insufficient knowledge by governments about the roles, functions, and reach of NGOs/CSOs in rural development and food security
9. The complex nature of food security issues requires an effective participation of all actors in society with the assignment of specific responsibilities
10. The right of NGOs/CSOs to participate in the decision-making processes is not established.

AND THEREFORE INFORM

To the participating governments at the FAO Regional Conference of their decision to establish a Follow up Committee of the Consultation, with the intention to create a regional network of NGOs/CSOs for Latin America and the Caribbean.

This network will be oriented towards rural development and food security issues, with emphasis on equality and equity of gender.

The goals of the network are the following:

- To contribute to the fulfillment of national goals contracted by governments in international agreements by way of diffusion, organization, participation and training of civil society groups;
- To share and disseminate experiences of rural development and food security through adequate information and communication platforms.

As immediate tasks we propose to:

- Create a civil society food security forum;
- Establish a coordination and communication system between FAO and NGOs/CSOs, at a national and regional level, that allows the sharing of information on successful experiences in the fight against poverty and food insecurity;
- Disseminate research results and technological transfer techniques;
- Create databanks of NGOs/CSOs;
- Organize preparatory meetings for the regional consultations;
- Set up multilateral meetings at the different levels (international, regional, national) for the design of rural development and food security strategies.

In order to facilitate the realization of these activities, to the FAO we ask:

- To establish a focal point at the regional level to support and coordinate activities with NGOs/CSOs;
- To Follow up and update on the fulfillment of the World Food Summit agreements under the responsibility of the Committee of World Food Security;
- To facilitate the participation of NGOS/CSO in FAO's technical committee meetings and in technical groups of NGOs/CSOs organized by FAO.

TO THE GOVERNMENTS, WE DEMAND

- To implement or reformulate social and economic policies of food security, to target the most vulnerable and marginal groups in rural and urban areas, and ensure its adequate fulfillment through evaluation, control and follow up mechanisms;
- To continue and strengthen decentralizations process and the efficient management of institutions, and recognize the important role of NGOs/CSOs in local development;
- To design and establish early warning systems and effective plans of action to mitigate the effects of natural disasters in the food security of the most vulnerable groups;
- To recognize the Follow up Committee of the Conference as the responsible organ for the implementation of the agreements of the Consultation;
- To consider NGOs/CSOs as partners in the formulation, design and implementation of food security and rural development policies.