



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

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TWENTY-NINTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Caracas, Venezuela, 24 to 28 April 2006

REPORT ON FAO ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION (2004-2005) WITH A FOCUS ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND ACTION TAKEN ON THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 28TH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

I. FAO and the Millennium Development Goals

1. The Heads of State and Government of FAO Member Nations meeting at the World Food Summit (WFS) of 1996 committed their countries to halving the level of hunger by 2015. Other international meetings in the 1990s established important targets and objectives to be achieved during the same period. All these converged into the Declaration approved at the UN Millennium Summit of September 2000, where the following eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were endorsed.

FAO contributions to the Millennium Development Goals

2. On account of its mandate and specialization, over half of FAO's activities contribute directly to MDG-1: to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; and about one-fifth are directed towards MDG-7: to ensure environmental sustainability.
3. Smaller percentages of its programmes are directed towards MDG-3: to promote gender equality and empower women; and towards MDG-8: to develop a global partnership for development, and in particular a fair and rule-based trading system.
4. Activities to combat hunger and malnutrition have a significant indirect impact on achieving universal primary education (MDG-2), reducing child mortality (MDG-4), improving maternal health (MDG-5) and combating diseases (MDG-6).

Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger (MDG-1)

5. Although extreme poverty and hunger are closely linked in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is important to note that they are not equivalent and that each condition needs to be dealt with from its own perspective. A lack of access to food is one of the most serious manifestations of extreme poverty and needs to be urgently eradicated. At the same time, inadequate food also affects wider social strata and groups living in specific zones or regions

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with permanent food insecurity. The need to treat both problems separately is justified by the fact that the Millennium Declaration sets separate targets for their reduction.

6. The first target of MDG-1, reducing by half, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day, is central to all the MDGs. According to 2004 estimates of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 96 million people, that is 18.6% of the total population of Latin America, were living in extreme poverty, with the number of poor (including those 96 million) estimated at 222 million people, equivalent to 42.9% of the Region's population. Some 52 million people in extreme poverty live in urban areas and almost 45 million in rural areas. The similarity between these two figures in a Region in which some 75% of the total population live in urban areas is explained by the greater incidence of extreme poverty in rural areas (37%) than in urban areas (13%).

7. The second target of MDG-1 is to reduce by half, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer hunger. This target, expressed in terms of number of people suffering hunger, had been adopted by the FAO member countries at the WFS of 1996 and was subsequently reaffirmed in the declaration of the WFS: *five years later* in 2002. According to the 2005 United Nations Report and the 2005 FAO Report on the State of Food Insecurity in the World, the proportion of people without adequate food fell from 13% to 10%, which in numerical terms represents a reduction from 59.5 million to 52.9 million people during the decade 1990-92 to 2000-02. An essential approach in dealing with the reduction of hunger is to use the right to food as the framework of reference and to include this right among the basic human rights enshrined in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which, together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, constitute a basic juridical instrument for realization of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

8. Hunger in Latin America is not so much from inadequate food supply as from the difficulties of large segments of the population in accessing it. There is a vicious circle in the relationship between extreme poverty and hunger, in which hunger is both a consequence and a cause of extreme poverty. Hunger lies at the recalcitrant core of extreme poverty, provoking drastic losses in productivity, frequent outbreaks of disease and high levels of child mortality, as well as poor performance of boys and girls at school. That is why the reduction of hunger calls for more than a general policy to combat poverty. Reducing and eradicating hunger is an act of justice that can be achieved even before making major inroads into unequal distribution of income over the long term.

9. FAO's activities focus on combating poverty and hunger in a number of ways: from international advocacy and major world and regional publications, through multilevel normative assistance to technical advice and interventions in the field. With regard to poverty, FAO's programmes in the Region aim to foster gains in agricultural, fishery and forestry productivity in order to directly increase agricultural and rural incomes and food security in households, as growth in these sectors boosts overall employment, whether rural or non-rural, and has a powerful impact on the reduction of poverty. As regards hunger, FAO's programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean seek to incorporate all the dimensions of food security: availability, access, stability and use of safe and nutritious food. Important recent initiatives include support activities for food security strategies and policies and for Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) projects in the subregions.

10. In the Caribbean, 15 countries receive input from a regional programme for food security implemented by the Caribbean Forum-Caribbean Community (CARIFORUM/CARICOM) which aims to marshal some US\$25 million in the next years. A number of FAO technical cooperation projects are also being executed to improve the food security situation in this subregion through capacity building, market information and better agricultural practices.

11. In Central America, Special Programmes for Food Security have been in operation for several years in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua and this year in El Salvador, with methodologies and good practices for the promotion of food security disseminated at national level. These national programmes are reinforced by a subregional support programme financed

by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI). Mexico's Special Programme for Food Security has advanced from pilot phase to expansion phase, covering 33 rural development districts in 16 states, generating knowledge and instruments to combat hunger and improve food security in areas with high marginalization and extreme poverty.

12. With regard to the Andean countries, Venezuela is financing an important food security programme, with technical assistance from FAO, that envisages actions in various spheres of food security, including urban and periurban horticulture¹. Colombia is expanding its food security actions, with a significant increase in FAO activity.

13. In the Southern Cone, FAO has provided technical assistance from the very inception of Brazil's Zero Hunger Programme, particularly in refining programmes aimed at improving food access. It has also contributed towards the establishment of the National Food and Nutritional Security Council and the elaboration of national policy. Paraguay is initiating the formulation of a national programme for food security with strong political support and financing potential. In the remaining countries of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), technical cooperation programmes have been implemented for urban and periurban agriculture², food safety and plant and animal health, thus contributing towards better food security.

14. There has been financial support from donor governments (GCP) and from beneficiary governments themselves under unilateral trust fund (UTF) arrangements. Examples are support to the development of family farming, artisanal seed production programmes and monitoring of the Right to Food Programme (GCO/BRA/063/GER) and to the water control component of the Dois Irmaos Project in Brazil as a contribution to the Zero Hunger Project. These projects have mobilized national and FAO experts and have forged links with several national and international organizations.

15. Traditional small-scale irrigation practices have shown their worth in generating additional income for the small farmers of the Region, particularly in Central America, simply from the good management of natural resources and water, with significant gains in production efficiency in the dry seasons. FAO has shown that small farmers can substantially increase their incomes if there is appropriate technical assistance in traditional irrigation practices and if management of production systems includes decision-making at local level.³

16. From 2002, the Anti-Hunger Programme outlined a twin-track approach for reducing hunger and poverty, whereby measures to increase the productivity of resource-poor farmers and landless labourers are aligned with measures to broaden the direct access of the most needy to food. At country level, this twin-track approach is replicated in Argentina's Most Urgent Hunger Programme, Brazil's Zero Hunger Programme, Guatemala's Campaign Against Hunger and Uruguay's National Social Emergency Attention Plan.

17. In February 2006, Latin American food security experts launched the Latin America Without Hunger 2020 (ALSH-2020) initiative which has five thrusts: strengthening the institutional organization of food security in each country; South-South cooperation between countries of America and other continents; building human capital through technical training; support to governments for the linkage of national initiatives to reduce hunger and poverty; and research applied to food security.

¹ UTF/VEN/008/VEN: Food security and rural development.

² TCP/ARG/2905: Strengthening urban and periurban agriculture and food security in the province of Buenos Aires; and GCP/BOL/035/BEL: Urban and periurban micro-market gardens in the Bolivian Altiplano.

³ TCP/ARG/0168 Institutional and technical development of small-hold irrigation user associations in Quebrada de Humahuaca, Province of Jujuy.

Achieving universal primary education (MDG-2)

18. At the regional level, direct support was given to the Education for the Rural Population Programme, implemented in collaboration with UNESCO, through the organization of a regional workshop on safe food and education for the rural population, with the participation of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the World Bank and Italian Cooperation for Development. A project was conducted in Chile to promote food and nutrition education in primary schools by developing educational strategies and materials. Projects are being developed in Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador and Honduras to strengthen the teaching of food and nutrition in primary education, to produce effective teaching materials, to use school vegetable gardens to teach nutrition and other disciplines, to improve the children's diet and to promote community participation. TeleFood projects that have supported school vegetable gardens have attracted further donor funding for replication of such actions elsewhere.

Promoting gender equality and empowerment of women (MDG-3)

19. The critical importance of women as producers in countries where agriculture is predominantly for subsistence has been clearly documented. Help towards eliminating discriminatory policies against women, strengthening their capacity and technical knowledge, improving their access to financial services, land ownership and agricultural inputs, and promoting labour-saving technologies are all factors that help increase their autonomy and equality and improve their and their family's living conditions. FAO has identified gender as a priority area for interdisciplinary action, promoting gender equality and improving the condition of women in the work of all of its divisions, including agriculture, fisheries, forestry, nutrition and statistics. Chile is conducting activities focused on strengthening national and regional capacities to integrate the gender approach into public agriculture and forestry policies and in support of food security; in the Dominican Republic, a project is being implemented for the rehabilitation of cassava production and utilization with rural women's organizations in support of food security in the Cibao Central and Southwest regions.

Reducing child mortality (MDG-4)

20. Five million children are estimated to die each year from hunger and malnutrition in Latin America. Programmes to increase food security and nutritional information in the home raise the chances of children reaching adulthood. FAO's nutrition and food security programmes thus contribute towards this goal, especially its Special Programme for Food Security and its nutritional education projects. Mexico has a project of food, nutrition and health education for beneficiary families of its Food Support Programme. A regional project is under way in Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent to produce nutrition guides for healthy diets and lifestyles. Projects to improve food safety help reduce morbidity and mortality among populations, such as the regional projects for South America and Central America on the accreditation of food testing laboratories.

Improving maternal health (MDG-5)

21. Enhancing women's knowledge of nutrition, especially in rural areas, ensuring greater household food security and introducing labour-saving technologies all help improve maternal health. FAO's major contribution to this goal is therefore from its nutrition and food security programmes.

Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG-6)

22. Improving nutrition is important for the fight against disease. FAO's programme on HIV/AIDS which promotes nutrition, its labour-saving technologies for affected families, the transfer of know-how, the building of capacity and policy analysis are some of the elements of its work to deal with the impact of this epidemic and other diseases on food security and rural poverty.

Ensuring environmental sustainability (MDG-7)

23. Efforts for social and economic development will fail without environmental sustainability. The host of goods and services provided by ecosystems – food and livelihoods, drinking water, fertile soil, biodiversity and carbon sequestration, to name a few – need to be properly managed for the support of human populations, so that they can meet food requirements but also attend to other environmental, social and economic needs.

24. A number of forestry activities and projects relating to this goal are under way in the Region. Important are the activities of FAO-supported national forest programmes that seek to develop and strengthen forestry and environmental institutions. FAO has also signed agreements with regional institutions and is developing projects to promote sustainable forest management. The conservation and protection of biodiversity is a regional priority that has led FAO and Spain's Autonomous National Parks Authority to develop a broad regional programme to bolster the sustainable management of natural resources in protected areas. Payment for environmental services (PES) based on the valuation of goods and services provided by forests is another mechanism that explored by FAO for financing sustainable forest management. Finally, FAO is implementing projects to protect forest resources, especially against forest fires, pests and diseases, and is carrying out studies to promote forest education at different levels.

25. Other programmes and projects in Latin America and the Caribbean promote the integrated management of land and water, fisheries, genetic resources, especially through conservation agriculture, integrated pest management, the conservation of water, the protection of biodiversity and the responsible use of biotechnology. FAO is promoting Good Agricultural Practices as a mechanism to facilitate small farmer access to markets, the maintenance of food safety (protection of local and international consumers), conservation of the agricultural environment (soil, water and biodiversity) and the improved health and working conditions of rural workers and their families. Its principal actions further institutional strengthening, the production of technical guides, the training of smallhold farmers and the exchange of experiences in the Region.⁴ Other activities target the sustainable development of vulnerable environments and seek to help those living in marginal areas through livelihood support programmes that are based on the principles of ecosystem management.

26. FAO attaches particular importance to the role of water in achieving MDG-7. Water is the source of human activity and underpins natural resources. The rapid consumption of water for agriculture, urbanization and industry in the last 50 years has degraded the environment and fuelled competition for water between sectors and regions, in some areas generating unsustainable consumption patterns. FAO's programmes in this area seek above all to increase agricultural productivity through more efficient water use and thus to reduce the pressure on the environment. They adopt a comprehensive approach to the management of water resources that takes into account basic water, sanitation and food requirements.

27. When advising on practical measures for MDG-7, FAO also acts as the depositary of various international instruments, including the agreement to promote application of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Its support to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and its activities on animal genetic resources also contribute significantly to this goal. At present, twelve countries⁵ of the Region have ratified or acceded to the international treaty and will form part of the Governing Body of the Treaty that will hold its first Conference of the Parties in Madrid in June 2006.

⁴ TCP/COL/3101: "Building Good Agricultural Practices and community organization to advance food security in the department of Antioquia in support of UTF/COL/027/COL". Two regional GAP projects are also being promoted for the countries of MERCOSUR and Central America.

⁵ Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.

28. Forests play a strong role in maintaining environmental balances, as they mitigate climate change, conserve biodiversity, keep water resources clean and reliable, support and increase productivity of the soil, protect coastal and marine resources and provide renewable low-cost energy. Forestry and fisheries programmes centre largely on activities that promote achievement of MDG-7.

Developing a global partnership for development (MDG-8)

29. In collaboration with its Member Nations and the WTO, FAO is actively involved in efforts to create an open, fair and rule-based multilateral trading system, in particular through its support to policies relating to food, agricultural trade and trade in general that foster food security. Its major contributions towards this goal in the Region stem from its work on commodity and trade policy, the building of capacity for multilateral trade negotiation, especially access to markets and competitiveness, in Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica and Chile⁶ and the application of regulatory frameworks, in particular the Codex Alimentarius, the International Plant Protection Convention and the International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides (Rotterdam Convention) in the context of trade⁷. In prioritizing food security on the world agenda, it collaborates with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), other United Nations partners, governments, civil society and the private sector in promoting the International Alliance Against Hunger which was created in 2002 by the World Food Summit: *five years later*.

II. Action taken by the Organization on the main conclusions and recommendations of the Twenty-eighth Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

General debate on trends and challenges in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and food security in Latin America and the Caribbean, and FAO actions in the Region

Studies to assess the negative impact of the geographical condition of landlocked developing countries on their food security (*Recommendation 6*).

30. The Regional Office conducted a study on poverty and food insecurity in the landlocked countries of Bolivia and Paraguay. The analysis was based on empirical evidence and estimates in the literature on the interplay of geography, policies and institutions, economic growth, inequality, poverty and food insecurity. It was found that, while being landlocked restricts development, much more important is the implementation of good policies and institutional reform.

Adopting systematic consideration of emerging issues for technical cooperation in the Region (*Recommendation 7*).

31. FAO has promoted the incorporation of a territorial development approach and decentralized natural resource management and decision-making in programmes of land access and service provision to family farming. A study is being carried out on rural development

⁶ TCP/ARG/3002: Strengthening structural analysis and policy-making capacity in food and agriculture; TCP/COL/3001: Strengthening capacity for trade and development policy formulation, negotiation and management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; TCP/COS/3001: Developing technical capacity for evaluation of the competitiveness of agricultural products and the economic impacts of trade liberalization; and TCP/CHI/3001: Preparation of an agricultural development programme in the framework of the free trade treaties.

⁷ TCP/ECU/2903: Support to the application of the provisions of the International Code of Conduct in the registration and control of pesticides; TCP/MEX/3003: Collaboration agreement for review of Mexican fishery regulations by the Government of the United Mexican States and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); and TCP/PAR/3002: Assistance for the removal and elimination of obsolete pesticides and strategies for the prevention of further stockpiles.

initiatives using the territorial and local approach in Brazil, Chile and Mexico to support regional and municipal governments in adopting strategies that will facilitate the strengthening of linkages between actors, the generation of capacities and the promotion of territorial projects. In Bolivia, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Grenada, FAO has implemented or is implementing projects ⁸ for the development of national biotechnology and biosecurity capacity that can serve as experiences of benefit to other countries of the Region.

32. The Organization has provided support to national forest programmes through a regional project on financial strategies for forest development. It has prepared a study on trends and outlook for the sector in the next 20 years and held an electronic conference on payment for environmental services with 600 professionals and over 100 organizations.

33. It has also continued to support countries through analytical studies, human and institutional resources, the strengthening of trade negotiation capacities and databases to enable them to adjust to, adhere to and benefit from new international trade agreements and existing practices, including evaluation of the impact of policies, programmes and projects.

34. With regard to animal production and health, FAO and OIE have implemented the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs).

Explore ways of increasing technical cooperation in the Region (*Recommendation 8*).

35. A support mechanism was set up for the formulation and implementation of national forest programmes and more than 60 letters of agreement were approved for nine countries and two regional projects in Central America. A regional project on sustainable forest management is being implemented with support from the Government of the Netherlands, building upon a pilot experiment in innovatory financing methods carried out in the Southern Cone.

36. A technical assistance programme for the formulation of National Plans of Action⁹ of the countries of Central America is being implemented with the Central American Integration System – Central American Organization of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector (SICA/OSPESCA) and there is the FAO/OSPESCA and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) project "Strengthening Interdisciplinary Research for the Responsible Fisheries of the Central American Countries (FIINPESCA)". Technical assistance programmes have been implemented for the formulation of the NPOA-Sharks and NPOA-IUU with the Latin American Organization for Fisheries Development (OLDEPESCA) and the Permanent South Pacific Commission (CPPS), respectively.

37. A campaign of education for the rural populations of Latin America was started under the Universal Education for Rural Populations Initiative implemented in collaboration with UNESCO, with a regional workshop on food safety and education for the rural population and the participation of IICA, the World Bank and Italian Cooperation for Development.

38. In collaboration with IICA and Chile's Department of Agriculture and Livestock Production, FAO organized the first international meeting on security at borders with the participation of experts from 15 developed and developing countries interested in establishing cooperation mechanisms to reduce the transfer of transboundary diseases.

39. Together with the UN agencies represented in the Region, FAO was contributed to the document "The Millennium Development Goals in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean". The Regional Office continues to participate in and provide the Secretariat for the

⁸ TCP/BOL/2902: Institutional strengthening for the management of biotechnology security; TCP/NIC/3101: Assistance for the elaboration of a national strategic framework for the strengthening of agricultural biotechnology in Nicaragua; and TCP/PAR/3001: Support for the formulation of a national biotechnology policy.

⁹ National Plans of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity (NPOA-Capacity); National Plans of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (NPOA-Sharks); National Plans of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (NPOA-Seabirds); and National Plans of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Undeclared and Unregulated Fishing (NPOA-IUU).

Inter-Agency Working Group for Rural Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, an initiative involving ECLAC, IFAD, IDB, World Bank and GTZ.

Need to apply differential treatment for the least developed countries and the island states
(*Recommendation 9*).

40. FAO continues to support the SPFS-CARIFORUM Programme, providing assistance to production, food policy and international trade negotiations, with strategic support from the Technical Cooperation Programme and the South-South Cooperation Programme. The Subregional Office is coordinating a regional technical assistance programme on policy advice, land and water management, nutrition, plant protection, forestry and fisheries.

Further strengthening the international negotiating capacity of the countries of the Region
(*Recommendation 10*).

41. FAO has been encouraging member countries to participate in the development, discussion, review and implementation of international standards. Rules for the use of timber as packing material have received special attention during the biennium. The process of ratification of the International Plant Protection Convention continues.

42. Projects for strengthening international negotiating capacity and countering the effects of free trade agreements on agriculture have been implemented in Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Costa Rica. The competitiveness of Costa Rica's leading products was examined to identify the advantages of trade liberalization to small producers.

43. FAO is implementing two regional technical cooperation projects to promote the accreditation of central food testing laboratories to ensure the safety of food products and thus their access to international markets. National capacities relating to Codex Alimentarius have been strengthened in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay and Venezuela, with national projects on the prevention and control of mycotoxins in Ecuador and Uruguay. Subregional workshops and courses have been organized on risk analysis, modern food control systems and safety of fresh fruits and vegetables, and instruments have been developed to support training.

44. The FAO/WHO Regional Conference on Food Safety for the Americas and the Caribbean was held in San José in December 2005. This conference was part of a series of regional conferences on food safety that FAO and WHO have been organizing in response to requests from Member Nations for advice on policies and actions to strengthen capacity in this area.

Examination of the development of an export-oriented processing industry for raw materials
(*Recommendation 11*).

45. Studies were carried out on the competitiveness of the oilseed and fat, beef and cotton agroindustrial chains in MERCOSUR. Six studies were designed to assess the impact of differing scenarios of liberalization of international agricultural trade. Studies and workshops were conducted on agroindustrial concentration and on the role of large enterprises in the agricultural sector and rural areas.

Follow-up to the World Food Summit and the World Food Summit: five years later.
Regional Dimensions

Analysis of emerging trends and issues, with greater involvement of the countries
(*Recommendation 19*).

46. Work continued on updating the database and preparing the study "Trends and challenges in agriculture, forestry and fisheries in Latin America and the Caribbean 2004", which was published in August 2005.

47. FAO continued its studies on public expenditure in rural areas in six countries. It now has a database on public expenditure in rural areas between 1985 and 2001 in 20 countries of the Region. With support from IDB, it is continuing to promote the territorial approach to rural

development initiative in Brazil, Chile and Mexico. In collaboration with the respective governments, FAO is conducting a comprehensive study on the "Future expansion of the soybean: implications for food security, rural development and agricultural policy in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay" to examine the economic and social implications of the expected growth of the soybean sector in South America. The study seeks to identify the new challenges for food security and rural development and to formulate policy recommendations.

48. As 2006 is the tenth anniversary of the World Food Summit, the Committee on World Food Security will be holding a special session in September to assess progress of the WFS Plan of Action and to carry out a mid-term review of the goal of halving the number of people suffering hunger by 2015 (MDG-1 Target 2). See background, context, documentation and thematic topics for this special session in LARC/06/INF/5 Sup.1. FAO, the Organization of American States – Conference of Governmental Statisticians of the Americas and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) jointly supported the organization of the 23rd Meeting of the Working Group on Agricultural Statistics (Buenos Aires, November 2005). The main issues discussed were food security statistics related to the monitoring of progress towards reducing the number of undernourished people (MDG-1 Target 2) and the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2010, which recommends the compilation of data to support the monitoring of the MDGs.

Initiative to review and update national agricultural rural development and food security policies and strategies

Reinforcing and broadening large-scale training mechanisms for rural development and food security*(Recommendation 23).*

49. FAO organized workshops on trade negotiations and rural development in developing countries, focusing on preferential treatment and special, tropical and sensitive products. In 2005, it organized a workshop in Chile for the countries of South and Central America and another in Barbados for the Caribbean countries.

50. In the last five years, project GCP/RLA/138/SPA "Regional Technical Cooperation Project for Training in Economic and Agricultural Policies for Rural Development in Latin America" (FODEPAL) has trained some 2 900 Latin American policymakers through 50 distance-learning courses. FODEPAL has consolidated its position as a leading "e-learning" centre in Latin America. The Spanish Government has confirmed its support and funding for a second phase of FODEPAL, lasting until the end of 2007. Also ongoing is project GCP/RLA/151/EC "Improving information systems on food security and vulnerability in four countries of Central America", financed by the European Community.

Conduct of studies on the process of rural outmigration towards developed countries to identify investment programmes based on remittances*(Recommendation 24).*

51. Studies in almost all the countries of the Region were carried out on the status of rural women and especially on the impact of rural-to-urban and international migration.

Food security as rural development strategy

Carry out immediate and short-term actions; define mechanisms to monitor these actions and assess their impact and replicability; and develop new initiatives using multisectoral approaches, with the participation of the government, private sector and civil society*(Recommendation 31).*

52. The first meeting of the SPFS projects in Latin America was held in Guatemala to discuss the country-level expansion of initiatives against hunger in the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. The meeting provided a rich exchange of experiences and highlighted the importance of establishing criteria and mechanisms for evaluating the impact of national programmes.

53. The FODEPAL project held a meeting to identify common training contents and to determine a plan of work and a co-financing modality to hold a distance-learning course in the first half of 2006 for the SPFSs of the Region.

54. FAO has developed a project proposal to support the process of integrating small farmers and enhancing their competitiveness through the development of strategic partnerships in agricultural production chains. It has also supported the Organization's strategy to bolster the growth and development of small and medium enterprises.

Preparation of a study on the potential and means of broadening the trade of products from family farming (*Recommendation 32*).

55. FAO has developed a project proposal to support the process of integration of the small-farm sector and to enhance its competitiveness through the development of strategic partnerships in agricultural production chains, for which financing is being sought.

56. With IDB support, a study is being prepared on the impact of trade liberalization on family farming in selected countries of the Region.

Economic and social development as the basis for FAO actions in Latin America and the Caribbean

Establishment of criteria and mechanisms to assess the impact of the SPFSs (*Recommendation 36*).

57. The first meeting of SPFS projects in Latin America (Guatemala, June 2005) centred on expanding projects to have food security play an important role in the national strategies against poverty employed by countries to achieve the MDGs. The meeting provided a rich exchange of experiences and highlighted the importance of establishing criteria and mechanisms for evaluating the impact of national programmes.

58. In August 2005, representatives of the programmes met with FODEPAL to review training requirements and identify priority areas for training of national project managers, which included monitoring and evaluation.

59. A project proposal was prepared for the Monitoring and Evaluation System of the National Food Security Plan of the Ministry of Social Development, to be funded by the Government of Argentina through a unilateral trust fund.

Optimizing the efficiency of technical cooperation resources and creating mechanisms of support and evaluation of FAO cooperation in the Region (*Recommendation 37*).

60. The territorial and participatory strategic planning model is being developed in Guatemala with three subsystems and a pilot study: information for the network of users, planning and validation methodology, and monitoring and evaluation; and identification of engines of economic growth to complement development investment criteria.

Recruitment of national experts given their understanding of local reality and lower cost (*Recommendation 38*).

61. Most FAO projects in the Region rely mainly on the participation of national consultants.

Review of the organization of technical cooperation missions to individual countries to safeguard against duplication and lack of coordination (*Recommendation 39*).

62. The fielding of FAO technical cooperation missions to countries is discussed in several bodies of the Regional Office, including the Subregional Multidisciplinary Groups and the Regional Committee for the Promotion of the Programme of Direct Support to the Rural Sector, which also assures the integration of country programmes and projects to identify synergies and shared objectives.

63. The mission of the independent evaluation of FAO's decentralization to the Region in 2004 reached the conclusion that it was important for FAO to clarify its priorities in each country and

recommended that this be done in the form of national priority frameworks to be established under the responsibility of the FAO representatives, in close consultation with the governments concerned and with the support of the Regional Office staff. A seminar with the ministerial officials of the recently elected Government of the Dominican Republic was held in 2005, in Santiago, to define the priorities of collaboration.

Establishing a standing working group open to all the countries of the Region to monitor the evolution of FAO technical cooperation in the Region (*Recommendation 40*).

64. The FAO/RLC External Advisory Group, made up of 21 experts from 12 countries of the Region, held two meetings to discuss mechanisms and strategies related to the International Alliance Against Hunger, with an emphasis on the pooled activity of governments, the private sector and social organizations. An electronic meeting was held in September 2005.

FAO strategic framework for bridging the rural digital divide

Presenting an assessment of implemented programmes and activities to coordinate and unify national efforts to reduce the rural digital divide (*Recommendation 43*).

65. Capacity-building projects to bridge the rural divide are being implemented in Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica and El Salvador. Low-income countries have benefited from the dissemination and exchange of information with key actors in the Region, with free access to important research resources through AGORA (Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture). Its publisher partners agreed to embark on Phase II of AGORA and it was hoped that more countries would join in early 2006. Project TCP/RLA/3016 "Food security in CARIFORUM - Market information and institution development strengthening" (Phase II of TCP/RLA/2907), which covers market information and the strengthening of institutional development in the Caribbean, is directed towards eliminating the digital divide.

Maintaining the Consultation on Agricultural Information Management (COAIM) and preparing a meeting in 2005 (*Recommendation 46*).

66. A technical consultation on agricultural information management will be held during the 2006-2007 biennium.