

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(75) 269 final

Brussels, 4 June 1975

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL
CONCERNING THE PREPARATION OF THE FIRST WORLD FOOD COUNCIL

Rome (23 – 27 June 1975)

COM(75) 269 final

INTRODUCTION

In its communication of 9 December 1974, the Commission reported to the Council on the results of the World Food Conference held in Rome in November 1974 and outlined the main implications arising for the Community from the conclusions of the Conference.

Since then certain decisions have been taken with a view to setting up the institutions recommended by the Conference and work has been carried out by various bodies to prepare the first concrete decisions called for by the Conference resolutions.

A World Food Council has been set up to serve "as a coordinating organ for the general, integrated and continuing study of the coordination and effective pursuit, for all Institutions of the United Nations System, of policies concerning food production, nutrition, food security, trade in food products, food aid and other associated questions" (Resolution 3348 (XXIX) of the General Assembly of the United Nations).

The first meeting of the World Food Council will be held in Rome from 23 to 27 June 1975. On 25, 26 and 27 June the meetings will be at ministerial level.

The main problems on the agenda drawn up by the Secretariat of the World Food Council are:

- adoption of rules of procedure;
- interim report on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the World Food Conference, and in particular on Resolutions XIX and XXII of the Conference;
- study of the world food situation and the serious problems which the Council should examine.

The aim of this communication is to prepare the first session of the World Food Council.

For this purpose, while reviewing the work undertaken since the 1974 Rome Conference, the Council of Ministers should take up a position on the problem of increasing food aid and if necessary on the International Fund for Agricultural Development. The main problem on which the Council of Ministers of the EEC must reach a decision is the future status of the Community in the World Food Council.

This latter is a new body concerned with economic matters and called on to deal with many subjects which fall basically within the competence of the Community. It is vital that means should be found to enable the Community to express itself without restriction in the Council and present proposals in fields within its competence.

Such a solution would mean that the draft rules of procedure drawn up by the Secretariat for discussion and adoption must of necessity be modified.

I. State of the various projects and actions undertaken following the World Food Conference

1. Food supply situation in the worst affected countries

In recent months there has been some improvement in the world supply situation and an increase in food aid which has certainly helped to relieve the most serious difficulties. However, this trend towards world-wide equilibrium can always change and serious want still exists in some parts of the world, in particular in the poorest developing countries.

The international community cannot therefore relax its efforts to obtain fuller control of a still precarious situation.

2. Achievement of the objective approved by the Conference fixing the minimum volume of food aid at 10 million metric tons per year

A study of the data recently distributed by the Executive Secretariat of the World Food Council reveals that the main world donors have henceforth decided to make their contribution towards achieving the objective laid down in this sphere by the World Food Council by increasing their food aid contribution, sometimes to a considerable extent. Together, the decisions taken so far will make available a total volume of 8.9 million metric tons of food for the period 1975/76, compared with 5.4 million tons in 1973/74 and 8.6 million tons in 1974/75.

It now falls to the Commission to state whether it intends to make an additional contribution towards achieving the objective of 10 million tons of food aid.

The Commission, therefore, urges the Council to take a decision on this matter, on the basis of proposals made in the Commission Memorandum of March 1974 on the food aid policy of the EEC¹.

These proposals included the following measures:

- an increase of 356 500 tons for 1975 in Community cereal aid (thereby increasing the total from 643 500 tons to 1 million tons). If the aid operations carried out by Member States are added to this figure, the total volume of food aid in cereals from the Community and its Member States would be 1 643 500 tons for 1975.
- an increase of 15 000 tons in the Community contributions of powdered milk for the same year, to achieve a figure of 70 000 tons, regarded as a minimum aim².

¹ Appearing in the Commission Working Paper on the increase in food aid by the Community (Document R 473/75 COMER, 81).

² The additional cost (at world prices) of the increase in cereal aid would be about 41 million u.a. and that of the increase in the powdered milk contribution about 10.5 million u.a.

It is eminently desirable that a statement on this subject should be made on behalf of the Community, so that the latter will not appear backward compared with other donors at the first meeting of the World Food Council.

3. Implementation of the International Undertaking on world food security

The Community and its Member States have already accepted the International Undertaking on world food security.

The ad hoc Consultations on world food security acknowledged that the Undertaking could be implemented simultaneously at national or regional and international level.

At national level it would involve drawing up appropriate policies and programmes for production and storage. Many developing countries made it known that they also attach great importance to storage operations at regional level.

The ad hoc Consultations reaffirmed the need to negotiate an international agreement on cereals through the competent bodies, including a storage system and other connected arrangements.

The Community is still bound by directives adopted with a view to the GATT multilateral negotiations.

"The Community for its part has just, in the multilateral negotiations in GATT, submitted a full outline for an international cereals agreement, including provision for a storage system. It should conduct international negotiations on cereals security on the basis of this proposal.

4. Setting up of a Standing Committee on world food security

The ad hoc Consultations on the security of world food supplies, held in Rome from 19 to 23 May 1975, examined problems concerning the setting up of a Standing Committee on world food security.

The questions still to be studied in detail are those concerning the composition of the Committee, the frequency of meetings, the danger of overlapping with the activities of the Products Committee of the FAO, relations with the International Wheat Council and the reporting procedure. Discussions must still be held in the Committee on legal and constitutional questions relating to the FAO, the Products Committee and the Council of that Organization.

The Standing Committee on world food security could, in all probability, be set up at the next FAO Conference in November.

The ad hoc Consultations agreed that the functions of this Committee shall be those laid down by Resolution XXII of the World Food Conference, i.e.:

- to observe the situation of and outlook for demand, supply and stocks of basic food products;
- to ascertain, by means of periodic evaluations, whether the world level of stocks is sufficient to ensure a regular flow of supplies;
- to examine measures taken by governments to implement the proposed International Undertaking on world food security;
- to recommend measures regarded as necessary to ensure adequate cereal supplies to meet the minimum requirements of world food security.

5. The Advisory Group on food production and investment

The Group is responsible for encouraging the expansion of transfers of external resources to aid food production, improving the coordination of the activities of the various traditional and potential donors who offer financial and technical aid to food production on a multilateral or bilateral basis and ensuring better utilization of the resources available. This Group will have a small secretariat shared with the FAO.

This Group is sponsored by three major international organizations, the FAO, the IBRD and the UNDP; its present Chairman is Mr Edwin Martin.

The discussions held on this subject so far have pointed up the great interest shown by developing countries in the work of this organization, in which they (whether donors or beneficiaries) intend to take an active part.

6. Implementation of the information and early warning system for food and agriculture

The World Food Conference has asked the FAO to set up a world-wide information and early warning system for food and agriculture; however, China has already refused to take part and the cooperation of the USSR has not yet been obtained.

The principal objectives of this system are:

- the permanent supervision of world food supply and demand;
- indentifying countries where serious food shortages are imminent and evaluating potential needs for urgent food aid;
- contributing towards the implementation of the International Undertaking on world food security.

The Commission has recently proposed to the Council that the Community should participate in the information and early warning system for food and agriculture.

7. The International Fund for Agricultural Development

On the basis of Resolution XIII of the Conference and pursuant to its mandate, the Secretary General of the UN called a meeting of the interested countries on 5 and 6 May 1975 for the purpose of studying the ways and means of the Fund's creation. About sixty countries were represented, including some developing donor countries such as Saudi Arabia or Libya at ministerial level.

Almost all the countries taking part in this meeting showed very keen interest in the setting up of the fund, since it would make it possible to channel further investments towards the improvement of agriculture in developing countries, guaranteeing sufficient continuity to permit large-scale projects to be undertaken.

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The only decision it was found possible to reach, however, was to establish an ad hoc working group to "carry out studies and make resolutions on the establishment and operation of the Fund".

This working group is composed of 18 representatives of developing countries, both beneficiaries and potential donors, and nine representatives of developed donor countries, any other potential donor being entitled to join; this arrangement permits the incorporation into the group of any socialist countries desiring to join. The group is to present the conclusions of its work before the end of September to enable the latter to be examined at a further meeting of the countries concerned to be held in October/November 1975.

As regards the prospects for contributions to the Fund, most of the OPEC countries - especially Saudi-Arabia, Libya, Venezuela, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait - confirmed their intention, expressed at the conference, to make contributions as soon as the Fund was being operated and managed satisfactorily and was receiving similar contributions from other categories of donors.

These countries further stated their opinion that the Fund could begin operations with an initial capital of one thousand million in special drawing rights, it being understood that increases could subsequently be decided.

As concerns the industrialized countries, differences of opinion were evident between those countries which had already announced their intention to contribute to the Fund and others which expressed reservations or took a frankly negative position, such as the USSR.

The Member States of the Community were not able to present a united position, certain countries having, since the World Food Conference in Rome, supported the project of creating the Fund and ascertained their willingness to participate in a substantial way, whilst others, although not hostile to the project, recalled the measures they had already taken and expressed basic reservations about their participation.

The United States, however, has just withdrawn the reservation expressed at the Geneva meeting on the subject of their participation. Secretary of State Kissinger announced, during the OECD meeting on 28 May, that the President had decided that the United States would indeed participate in the Fund, which would consequently have at its disposal a minimum of 1 thousand million dollars per annum.

The Commission believes that in the light of these facts:

- Member States should make every effort to coordinate and harmonize the positions they will be called on to take in future in relation to the Fund and its method of operation;
- the Council should, as quickly as possible, take up a position with regard to the Community's participation in the Fund.

The Commission itself believes such participation to be desirable.

In this connection, it should be recalled that in its communication concerning technical and financial aids by the Community to non-associated developing countries (Doc. S/406/75(GCD 10)), the Commission earlier emphasized that it shared the conclusions reached by the World Food Conference on the need to ensure that the food needs of the developing countries were met and hoped that the Community would make this aim one of the fundamental principles of its development policy. The Commission also stated that whilst Community aid should for the most part take the form of direct action, consideration should nevertheless be given at appropriate time to the desirability of contributing to the international fund for agricultural development, to stimulate similar contributions by other donors.

Such participation would sharply underline the fact that the Community is conscious of the scale of the food problem facing the developing countries and does not intend to stand aside from an important initiative in this field but, on the contrary, to contribute in a concrete way to this new endeavour in international cooperation.

II. Participation by the Community in the World Food Council

In view of the fact that many of the subjects treated by the World Food Council concern matters within the competence of the Community, the latter's institutions should establish positions on these subjects, assert them at the World Food Congress, engage in the corresponding negotiations and accept, as necessary, any resulting commitments.

The most appropriate solution would be for the Community itself to joint the Council¹, but this was not found possible when Resolution 3348(XXIX) was adopted on 17 December 1974. However, as the President of the Commission indicated in his letter to the President of the Council, and as the representative of Italy pointed out in his statement (of which the text is annexed) made on behalf of the Community at the informal meeting of the World Food Council held on 24 February 1975, a solution adequate to meet the specific needs of the Community has yet to be found.

In the present circumstances, the Commission believes that an appropriate solution would be, when the rules of procedure of the World Food Congress are adopted, to insert into these rules a provision which, without granting the Community the right to vote, would give it the opportunity to express its views to the Council without restriction and submit texts on matters within the field of its competence. The text of a suitable provision, which could be introduced into Article 59 of the draft internal rules already drawn up by the United Nations Secretariat, is annexed.

The Commission believes that a solution of this kind must be adopted in the case of a new body concerned with economic matters such as the World Food Council².

¹The Congress consists of 36 members of which 8 are Western European States and others (Italy, UK, France, German Federal Republic, Japan, Sweden, Australia, United States).

²A similar solution should be sought at an appropriate time in relation to the Community's participation in the work of other bodies linked or closely associated to the World Food Council: the Committee on World Food Security, the Inter-governmental Committee of the World Food Programme, the advisory group on food protection and investment in the developing countries.

The Commission considers that a decision should be taken at Community level before the World Food Council; such a decision would make it possible to obtain, at the first meeting of the World Food Council, an amendment to the draft rules of procedure proposed by the Secretariat, so that the Community could make an immediate contribution towards the achievement of the objectives of the World Food Council.

Lastly, it is proposed that the Council should agree that the amendments to the draft rules of procedure (given in Annex I) should be put before the World Food Council.

Annex I

Text of Articles 59 and 60 of the draft rules of procedure for the World Food Council, prepared by the Secretariat of the United Nations (Doc. WFC/2 of 24 April 1975), as amended by the Commission proposal¹.

Non-member States, groupings of States, national liberation movements and specialized agencies.

Article 59

The representatives nominated by

- (a) any State which is not a Member of the Council,
- (aa)¹ A grouping to which Member States have delegated powers in fields falling within the competence of the Council²,
- (b) A national liberation movement to which the General Assembly has granted observer status,
- (c) A specialized agency,

may attend Council meetings and participate, without the right to vote, in its deliberations on matters affecting that State, that grouping of States, that liberation movement or that institution. Such representatives may submit proposals on which a vote may be taken at the request of any member of the Council.

¹These amendments are underlined in the text.

²This text has borrowed certain elements of its wording from Article 12(2) of the Charter of Economic Rights and Obligations of States, which was specially designed to cover the case of the Community.

Other inter-Governmental and non-Governmental
Organizations

Article 60

1. The observers nominated by:

- (a) an inter-Governmental organization to which the General Assembly has granted permanent observer status or which has been designated by the Council under special or permanent arrangements, and
- (b) a non-Governmental organization invested with advisory status to the Economic and Social Council or the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,

may attend sessions of the Council when the latter is examining matters which come within the competence of such organizations. At the request of the Chairman, and subject to approval by the Council, these observers may make brief explanatory statements on questions which come within the particular competence of their organization.

2. These observers may submit explanatory memoranda on matters which figure on the Council Agenda and these memoranda shall be distributed by the Secretariat in the various working languages to all Members of the Council.

Annex II

Declaration on behalf of the Community, made by the Italian representative¹ at the informal meeting of the World Food Council held on 24 February 1975

"I should like to draw your attention, Mr Chairman, to a particular concern of those States represented here which are Members of the European Economic Community.

The World Food Council will soon be called upon, in the course of its work, to deal with matters which, within the Community, are subject to common policies (such as the common agricultural and commercial policies) or which take the form of Community action (as is the case with food aid).

Consequently, in certain cases the Community will have to state its position as a body, acting through its own institutions. It would be advisable for the World Food Council to adopt appropriate measures, at some point in time, to take account of this. It would doubtless be premature to debate the matter at this stage, but the delegations of the States to which I refer thought it proper to draw the attention of our colleagues to this point."

¹ Speaking in his capacity of representative of the Member State due to take over the Presidency of the Council in the second half of 1975, since Ireland does not have membership of the World Food Council.

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

NEW TEXT OF

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APPLIES TO THE

ENGLISH VERSION ONLY

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