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DOCUMENT 1-211/84

Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Development
and Cooperation

on

the firewood crisis in the Sahel region of Africa
and the serious implications for the Third World

Rapporteur: Mrs CARETONI ROMAGNOLI

PE 88.685/fin.

At the sitting of 6 June 1983, the President of the European Parliament referred the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Gauthier and Mr Israel on behalf of the Group of European Progressive Democrats pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure on the firewood crisis in the Sahel region of Africa and the serious implications for the Third World (Doc. 1-360/83) to the Committee on Development and Cooperation as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Budgets for an opinion.

At its meeting of 18 October 1983, the Committee on Development and Cooperation decided to draw up a report on the matter.

On 19 October 1983, it appointed Mrs Carettoni Romagnoli rapporteur.

At its meeting of 25 April 1984 under the chairmanship of Mr Poniatowski it considered the report submitted by Mrs Carettoni Romagnoli and adopted the motion for a resolution unanimously.

It asked that they be dealt with pursuant to Rule 34 of the Rules of Procedure.

Present: Mr Poniatowski, chairman; Mr Denis, vice-chairman;
Mrs Carettoni Romagnoli, rapporteur; Mr Cohen, Mrs Dury, Mr Enright,
Mr Fellermaier, Mr G. Fuchs, Mr C. Jackson, Mr Kuhn, Mrs Rabbethge, Mr Sablé,
Mr Spicer (deputizing for Mr Sherlock) and Mr Wawrzik.

The report was tabled on 2 May 1984.

The opinion of the Committee on Budgets is published separately.

The deadline for tabling amendments to this report will be announced in the draft agenda for the sitting at which it is to be considered.

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The Committee on Development and Cooperation hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the firewood crisis in the Sahel region of Africa and the serious implications for the Third World

The European Parliament,

- A. having regard to the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Gauthier and Mr Israel on behalf of the Group of European Progressive Democrats on the firewood crisis in the Sahel region of Africa and the serious implications for the Third World (Doc. 1-360/83),
- B. having regard to the report of the Committee on Development and Cooperation and the opinion of the Committee on Budgets (Doc. 1-211/83),
- C. having regard to the report by Mr C. Jackson on the European Community's development policy (Commission memorandum - Doc. 1-475/83),
- D. having regard to the report by Mr Irmer on the context of the future ACP-EEC Convention to follow Lomé II (Doc. 1-605/83/I),
- E. having regard to the second report by Mrs Rabbethge on the development of indigenous scientific and technical research capacities in the developing countries (1984 - 1987) (Doc. 1-1141/83),
- F. having regard to the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 7 July 1983 on the Twelfth World Energy Conference held in New Delhi on 18-23 September 1983 (Doc. 1-483/83, OJ No. C 242 of 12.9.1983),

- G. having regard to the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Lezzi on the conservation of tropical forests, ecology and development (Doc. 1-14/83) and the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Muntingh on behalf of the Socialist Group on tropical rain forests (Doc. 1-50/83),
- H. having regard to the following documents issued by the Commission:
- Plan of action to combat world hunger of 21.10.1981 (COM(81) 560 final),
 - Memorandum on the European Community's development policy (COM(82) 640 of 30 September 1982),
 - Special programme to combat hunger in the world of 3 June 1982 (COM(82) 320 final),
- I. having regard to the following documents and resolutions adopted by the ACP-EEC Consultative Assembly or Joint Committee:
- Siddig report on ACP-EEC cooperation in the field of energy (ACP/EEC/34/81, OJ No. C 39 of 10.2.1983),
 - Vergeer report on the sixth annual report of the ACP-EEC Council of Ministers (ACP/EEC/38/82, OJ No. C 39 of 10.2.1983),
 - resolution on ecology and development (CA/CP/360 final, adopted by the Joint Committee in Kingston on 24.2.1983),
 - Chasle report on cultural cooperation between ACP States and the EEC (ACP/EEC/49/83, OJ No. C 300 of 7.11.1983),
1. Emphasizes the importance of measures to counteract the erosion and desertification of the Sahel which are needed in order to provide a future for its inhabitants, especially in combination with measures to combat hunger;
 2. Reiterates its demand, therefore, that the post-Lomé II agreement pay more attention to environmental problems and, in particular, that measures be taken to combat desert-encroachment and deforestation;

3. Supports the continuation of the reforestation policy as an essential means of combat against the desert;
4. Urges that the programmes to promote the development of an indigenous scientific and technical research capacity in the developing countries should be examined with a view to ensuring that they contribute to forestry development and protection; recalls that the continuing destruction of the forests is having adverse consequences for agriculture and pastureland;
5. Considers that both industrial and rural reforestation should be developed on the basis of studies of the particular features found in various parts of the region and that, where possible, the natural forest should be protected;
6. Calls on the Commission to urge the Sahel countries to submit further projects concerning the firewood economy;
7. Welcomes the fact that experiments are being carried out with the aim of economizing wood, and particularly the work on the 'improved stoves';
8. Notes that these experiments have not yielded fully satisfactory results but is convinced nevertheless that they should be persevered with since the difficulties which have arisen seem to be basically more cultural in nature than technical;
9. Asks, and this is also a matter concerning cultural cooperation, that future projects should be supported by exhaustive studies of local customs and traditions, particularly amongst the female population;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the explanatory statement to the Council and Commission of the European Communities.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Traditionally the Sahel is that area lying between the Sahara desert to the north and the savannahs of western and central Africa to the south. It is made up of the following states: Cape Verde, Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Upper Volta, Niger, Mali and Chad. Apart from Senegal and Mauritania, all of these countries were classified as LDCs (Least Developed Countries) during the United Nations Conference held in Paris in September 1981.

The Sahel climate consists of a short rainy season of between two and four months and a long period of drought for the rest of the year.

Sectoral studies of the region's ecology and forestry show that the farmers and herdsmen who used to live there before the serious drought of 1968-73 lived a life which was well adapted to the natural resources available.

Since that time incessant population growth has destroyed this age-old equilibrium and the natural system has not managed to recover.

The truth of the matter is that the difficulties with the climate are only partly responsible (an insignificant proportion in the long term) for the process of desertification which is rather due for the most part to the actions of man. It is man who destroys the fields and pastureland and turns them into desert by maintaining herds that are too big, foolishly cutting down forests, employing incorrect methods of agriculture and failing to control urban growth.

I. Firewood: a cause for worry

Historically firewood has played and continues to play a fundamental role in the life of man. Although it has been gradually replaced by fossil fuels in the industrialized world, the energy problem for a third of humanity in practical terms means a daily struggle to find enough wood in order to be able to cook.

In the Sahel region in particular wood is still a major and irreplaceable source of energy. For example, it provides 97% of all the energy consumed in the Upper Volta.

According to reliable estimates wood consumption amounts to approximately 18 million tonnes per year, of which some 16.3 million is used to meet the population's energy needs. At the present rate of increase in consumption there will be a deficit in less than 10 years' time which, if the trend is not reversed, will be extremely serious for the inhabitants of the region.

To prevent this happening, the following points must be borne in mind:

1. The increase in the demand for firewood is related to the growth in population, but at the same time there is a reduction in natural resources.
2. There has been an increase in cultivated land and animal stocks which are fed on products gathered from the woodland.
3. There has been insufficient upkeep of the projects which have been carried out.
4. The local inhabitants have been involved very little in the preparatory studies for or in the carrying out of the reforestation work.

Of course, the scarcity of wood is only one example of the imbalance created in the region between demand and production but it is one of the key problems to be faced, together with the food deficit (now chronic) and the as yet unstoppable advance of the desert which is the basic cause of all these problems.

The new strategy which followed the devastating drought of the early 1970s set the following objectives, to be met by carrying out reforestation programmes in the area.

- a) to combat desertification and the deterioration of the environment,
and
- b) to satisfy the energy needs of the people.

Alongside these plans, work is being carried out (though still at the experimental stage) on:

- a) improving the use of wood by distributing improved stoves, and
- b) developing alternative energy sources.

II. Increasing wood production

In recent years enormous sums have been spent on creating vast plantations of fast growing exotic trees designed to meet at least part of the increase in the demand for wood. These experiments have not yielded the results expected for a number of reasons as we shall see below.

At the same time other experiments have been going on with similarly patchy results concerning rural reforestation and management of the natural forest.

The causes of the partial failure of all the experiments conducted so far may be found in two basic factors arising from human errors in addition to the drought:

- (a) lack of involvement on the part of the local inhabitants, and
- (b) considering the firewood problem outside its natural and social context.

By concentrating efforts solely on the production of wood, particularly in industrial reforestation programmes, insufficient account has been taken of the other needs of the peoples of the region which are met from the natural woodland: the production of food for both man and animal and the use of forestry products in traditional medicine.

III. Appraisal of the forestry programme strategy

An assessment of the forestry products and their revision on the basis of projects under way is still in progress and one cannot say that there is a consensus on the priorities for future programmes.

Some would give precedence to the production of wood on the basis of foreseeable needs. They advise extending the large plantations towards the southern areas of the Sahel which enjoy a higher rainfall.

Others take into consideration the population's needs for a whole range of forestry products and are in favour of greater protection for natural vegetation. Yet others consider rural reforestation to be the better option in the long term.

We take the view that each of these options has its advantages and must be taken into consideration having regard to the particular needs of the area and resisting any tendency towards inflexibility.

IV. Better use of wood

Research into more efficient utilization of wood has concentrated on transforming it into charcoal. The results obtained so far are encouraging, but this technique will be only one contribution amongst many towards solving the problem.

Set against this, the results of tests on alternative sources of energy (solar energy, wind energy etc.) have not been very good.

The most interesting experiments made in order to reduce the consumption of firewood have consisted in distributing improved stoves (wood or charcoal burning, open or closed). One should add immediately that these are still at the experimental stage and the experiments conducted so far have not given totally positive results, but one can say that the outlook for the future is bright if the difficulties which have emerged so far can be overcome.

In designing and distributing a certain number of prototype stoves (built with materials easily found locally), attention was given solely to the energy aspect, neglecting the degree to which they might be acceptable to their users for socio-cultural reasons. This approach has been the cause of a series of difficulties which have still not been resolved.

There are now some thousands of improved stoves in the Sahel region. Many of these are no longer being used either because of various drawbacks in their design or for some more general reason.

The question is:

- (a) to what extent have the improved stoves been accepted, and
- (b) has their acceptance been simply a formal one in the full knowledge that they would never be used?

This encouraging answer comes from one of the greatest authorities in the field: Mrs Ki Zerba. 'The improved stoves do constitute an appropriate technology even though they will bring many changes to the customs and working conditions of women in the Sahel' and it is to this point to which greater attention needs to be given (1). It needs to be realized that these new technologies mean a radical change in the position of work. In a conventional three stone stove one is working with an open fire very simple to control. One need only put in more wood and watch the flame and the intensity of the fire - there are thus no particular problems.

However in the new stove, because the wood burns in a more or less closed environment, it is not possible to make a visual check on the flame and the intensity of the fire. In addition they require maintenance and cleaning which are not familiar concepts in the region.

Furthermore more wood than is necessary can be put on an open fire when one wishes to go away and perform other tasks (e.g. fetching water or going to market), but this is something which is impossible with the improved stoves given the small volume of the firebox.

Finally, since the various stoves have been built to a height normal in western kitchens, the women of the region find them difficult to use since they are used to working at ground level rather than standing.

The stoves built so far have made it possible to identify these difficulties which were not foreseen on the drawing board. Once a solution has been found, the stoves should be accepted much more readily.

(1) Taken from the speech by Jacqueline Kizerbo of the ICDCS Secretariat at the congress held in Rome at the Italo-African Institute on the influence on the condition of women of current development policies in the Sahel - and the outlook for the future, 29/30 April 1983

V. Conclusions

It will be seen from the above that a lot has been done on energy saving (i.e. saving firewood) but much remains to be done.

The improved stove experiments have been and are still the subject of discussion amongst experts. We feel that work on them should be continued because, even though quite a number of drawbacks have emerged, by taking this experience into account it should perhaps be possible to make them more acceptable to the people of the Sahel.

The more serious difficulties and limitations which have been encountered have shown the need for a new approach to the matter taking account not only of the technical factors, but also the usages and traditions or, in other words, the culture of the peoples concerned.

In recent times this new approach has indeed been gaining recognition and the need to develop human resources and foster awareness of the cultural aspects of development (1) is one of the most important objectives for the future.

One can no longer encourage or accept action determined from outside which is foreign to the customs of those who have to work alongside it. The error of trying to impose foreign models on day-to-day habits was one committed in the case of the first improved stoves and it naturally provoked a negative response from those people most directly involved - the women of the Sahel. 'The connection between the social system, the cultural tradition and the intervention programme' (2) must always be borne in mind in order to prevent any resounding failures in the future. Only when the inhabitants of the region make a fundamental contribution, when they participate and utilize their experience in drawing up and implementing the programme of work, will it be possible to escape from the present situation and improve the quality of the projects.

(1) E. Pisani : 'Memorandum on the Community's Development Policy'

(2) M. Chasle : 'Report on ACP/EEC Cultural Cooperation'

COUNTRY (Population in Millions)	C O N S U M P T I O N O F W O O D						
	KG/PER HEAD/PER DAY		MILLIONS OF TONNES/PER YEAR			WOOD FOR FURNITURE ETC. (Million tonnes per year)	TOTAL CONSUMPTION (Million tonnes per year)
	URBAN SECTOR	RURAL SECTOR	URBAN SECOTR	RURAL SECTOR	TOTAL		
CAPE VERDE (0.4)	0.22	0.36	4	25	29	12	41
GAMBIA (0.6)	2.50	3.64	137	591	728	62	790
UPPER VOLTA (6.1)	2.80	1.69	357	3,454	3,811	230	4,041
MALI (7.0)	0.66 (1)	1.00 (1)	600 (1)	2,150 (1)	2,750(1)	419 (1)	3,059 (1)
	1.90 (2)	2.00 (2)	820 (2)	4,300 (2)	5,120(2)	539 (2)	3,659 (2)
MAURITANIA (1.5)	1.50	1.25	193	498	691	45	736
NIGER (5.3)	1.00	1.00	250	1,830	2,080	104	2,184
SENEGAL (5.7)	1.42	1.86	1,000	2,800	3,800	848	3,746
CHAD (4.5)							
31 MILLIONS	TOTAL SAHEL COUNTRIES		2,541 (1)	11,348 (1)	13,889(1)	1,610 (1)	15,499 (1)
			2,761 (2)	13,498 (2)	16,259(2)	1,840 (2)	18,099 (2)

- (1) Highest estimate for MALI
(2) Lowest estimate for MALI

SOURCE: Information contained in the summary of the KDCS/Sahel Club Programme 'Quantifying the demand for wood in the Sahel Countries', Banjul, 13-22 October 1982.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (Doc. 1-360/83)

tabled by Mr GAUTHIER and Mr ISRAEL
on behalf of the Group of European Progressive Democrats

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on the firewood crisis in the Sahel region of Africa
and the serious implications for the Third World

The European Parliament,

- A. having regard to the scourge of deforestation which is afflicting the Sahel in particular, where consumption of firewood for heating and cooking results every year in the loss of 12 million hectares of tropical forest,
- B. whereas firewood is virtually the sole source of energy and economic resource of a population of more than 100 million people, for example in Upper Volta, where firewood provides 97% of the energy consumed,
- C. having regard to the exponential increase in the consumption of firewood and the resulting desertification, which is affecting the entire Sahel, condemning the population to famine in the medium term,
 - 1. Is extremely concerned at the serious disequilibrium caused by this phenomenon in the development, energy supply, agriculture and ecology of the Third World countries affected, especially in Africa and Asia;
 - 2. Emphasizes that this phenomenon is threatening the survival of 100 million people;
 - 3. Considers that emergency measures are necessary;
 - 4. Calls on the Community to release the appropriations necessary for immediate aid and for the implementation of a plan of action within the framework of development policy;
 - 5. Proposes that, with a view to reducing the consumption of firewood, the Community should supply to the countries concerned improved wood stoves to replace open fires;
 - 6. Stresses that such an investment, equivalent to the cost of constructing a medium-sized dam (around \$100 million) would enable two million stoves to be installed and would save one million hectares of forest;
 - 7. Calls on the Commission to submit appropriate proposals to the Council as soon as possible;
 - 8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the Governments of the Member States.