

1 November 1985  
PR 12/85

## MEASURES TO COMBAT FAMINE IN AFRICA

### 1. Implementation of the Dublin Plan.

On 4 December 1984, the European Council meeting in Dublin approved a plan to aid famine victims in the eight worst-hit African countries (Ethiopia, Sudan, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Angola and Mozambique). The plan's aim was to supply Africa with a total of 1,200,000 tonnes of cereal equivalent from the European Community and its Member States, to which would be added a further 800,000 tonnes from the rest of the international community. In this way it was hoped to meet the most pressing needs of the people affected until the next harvest in November this year.

By 1 October, all aid under the Dublin Plan had been fully committed and operations were almost finished. European Community aid to combat hunger this year has totalled some 1,250,000 tonnes of cereal equivalent worth 430 million ECU\*), 87% of which has been supplied.

However, the contribution made by the Commission of the E.C. and the Member States cannot be measured merely in numbers; they have tried to find practical solutions for the countless difficulties encountered on the ground.

### Matching products and aid to real needs.

The Community has supplied not only cereals but also a wide range of high-energy products (sugar, vegetable oil, milk powder, etc.) and above all seed, urgently needed for the next harvest. Great care was taken to protect local and regional markets. Finally, in a continent torn by a number of armed conflicts, the Commission has devoted special attention to the problem of refugees and has financed programmes of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to the tune of some 35 million ECU. The Dublin Plan is thus much more than a way of supplying cereals from Europe's surpluses.

\*) 1 ECU = \$0.84

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Procedures for supplying aid with the necessary speed.

Decision-making was speeded up considerably by the Commission's move to set up an emergency team and accelerate the normal emergency and food aid procedures. The time between reception of a request for aid and despatch and landing of the aid has been reduced considerably, down to 40 days in some cases.

Coordinating aid.

To maximize the impact of the relief operations, coordination both within the Community and with other aid donors was improved.

The Commission instituted joint planning with the Member States of aid offers and despatch and receipt operations. It worked on the spot not only with the governments of the recipient countries but also with four international organizations and 24 European non-governmental organizations (NGOs). At the same time there were many contacts with the other major donors (U.S., Canada, Australia).

The Commission would like to pay a particular tribute to the NGOs, which have often, in the most difficult conditions, been those best able to reach victims who were likely to be left unaided.

The Community's response to the huge logistical problem.

As the international community responded by despatching more and more foodstuffs, it quickly became clear that the main problem would be the logistical one of distribution, with bottlenecks in ports and other centres which could not be relieved with the fleet of ageing trucks available, in regions where access was often difficult (Ethiopia) or over the vast distances to be found in countries which are almost continents themselves, (Sudan, Mali, Chad, Niger). The problem was made worse by the arrival of the rains, which were a godsend for the next harvest but a nightmare for the road and rail systems.

The Commission made efforts to finance as much as possible of the internal cost of transporting its aid and even, in some cases, that of the Member States. The Member States supplied new trucks (more than 600 in all) with stocks of spare parts and mobile repair and maintenance units. The Commission helped to finance the refurbishing of the Sudan railway. From May through the end of October, it organized a vast "'Community airlift'" in Sudan, using nine heavy transport aircraft and three helicopters from the Member States and the U.S., and contributed 7 million ECU to the cost of the fuel.

Thanks to these efforts and to the coordination of deliveries, the stock situation was re-established by September in all West African ports serving Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad. It has also improved in two of the three ports serving Ethiopia (Massawa and Djibouti), but is still worrying in the third Ethiopian port (Assab) and the single port in Sudan (Port Sudan).

2. The short-term outlook.

The FAO's early warning system, and the weekly information sent by the Commission delegates, seem to indicate that, on the whole, the prospects for the next harvest are better than at the same time last year. The spectre of famine would seem to be receding, but we must still be cautious, as accurate harvest forecasts are not yet available.

The situation is still very worrying in two countries where the harvest looks likely to be well below average: Niger and above all Ethiopia, where a shortfall of between 800,000 and 1 million tonnes of grain is expected.

3. Post-crisis planning has to start now.

In the medium-term countries whose economies have been so hard-hit have to be put back on their feet. Stocks of seed have to be built up again, farm tools, fertilizers, pesticides and all the inputs necessary for agriculture have to be supplied and more stores must be built, if we are to ensure that the displaced persons and refugees will be able to return to their land and once again become productive agents of development.

In the long term, there is the whole problem of African agriculture being threatened by desertification. Some encouraging trends though have emerged in the follow-up to the recent programming of financial resources; one such trend is the choice to concentrate the support which the European Community will give on development of rural sectors and on projects which will best attain the priority goal of food security.

Flash:

The Commission outlined on 31 October a two-pronged 200 million ECU plan to deal with the urgent rehabilitation problems for drought-affected African countries. Further details will follow.

DUBLIN PLAN

Emergency and Food Aid ( in cereal equivalent) for the eight worst hit African countries\* 1 October 1985

		Total Commitments	Despatched or under way
COMMUNITY EMERGENCY	Quantity	281 610	100%
-food and seeds	value	108 212 000	-
-other aid	value	55 652 000	100%
-stocks by country	value	11 136 000	-
Sub-total	value	175 000 000	94%
COMMUNITY FOOD AID	Quantity	324 385	88%
(estimate-250 ECU/tonne	value	31 096 250	-
MEMBER STATES FOOD AID	Quantity	631 020	80%
(estimate - 250 ECU/tonne	value	157 755 000	
	Quantity		
Total food aid and seed	value	1 237 015	87%
	value	347 063 250	
Total other aid	value	55 652 000	100%
Total stocks by country	value	11 136 000	-
GRAND TOTAL	VALUE	413 851 250	87%

\* Ethiopia, Sudan, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Angola and Mozambique