

European Community

News Release

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WORLD FOOD COUNCIL CONFERENCE IN OTTAWA

3-7 September 1979

Here follows an unofficial English version of the text of the statement delivered by Helmut von Verschuer, Deputy Director-General for Agriculture in the Commission of the European Communities.

"First of all, I would like to convey to you the sincere regrets of Finn Olav Gundelach, Vice-President of the Commission of the European Communities in charge of Agriculture and Fisheries, who was unable to attend this ministerial meeting. He wishes to underline the interest which he and his colleagues in the Commission attach to the work of the Council.

"In reference to the eight points elaborated at the end of the Council's consultations, I would like to confirm the interest of the European Community in these recommendations, as attested to by the EC's policy on aid for food and agricultural development which is not only an integral part of the Lomé Convention involving particular countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, but also plays a part in the yearly credits accorded for agricultural and rural development in other countries.

"At this stage, it seems that the orientation taken in the execution of aid coming from EC funds is in harmony with the orientation expressed in the eight points enumerated in the statement of the executive director.

"We thank Mr. Luis Londono, the Honourable delegate from Colombia and Vice-President of the World Food Council (WFC) for his positive appraisal of the Community's efforts to ensure an adequate form and real content in its cooperation with the developing countries. It is moreover the EC's intention to develop its cooperation with other countries, even if this is less than the cooperation resulting from the Lomé Convention.

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"The Lomé Convention constitutes an integrated ensemble of various modes of cooperation: in trade, in the stabilization of export revenues, in finance and technology, in mining and industry, and particularly in the area of rural development. In the new agreement which is to succeed the Lomé Convention we have provided for a whole chapter specially devoted to rural development.

"In the present convention, rural aid is already the most important sector to receive our assistance. In fact 36 per cent of the aid programme, or some \$1 billion, have gone toward rural development in the period 1976-1980. An important part of this aid is directed toward integrated rural development projects, which aim, first of all, to boost fish production.

"On the other hand, the funds devoted to rural development, in countries other than those covered by the Lomé Convention, have been increased considerably, in fact from \$27.5 million in 1976 to \$150 million in 1979. Most of the projects supported by the EC's cooperation programmes aim to promote the development of fish farms and to reinforce the food security of the benefiting countries. Moreover, our aid programme includes contributions to international research institutes operating under the auspices of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) in the Philippines, India, Peru and Colombia.

"Food Security"

"I would like to inform the Council of a particular aspect concerning the evolution of wheat stocks in the Community. In the past, carried-over stocks of wheat normally amounted to some 4.5 million tonnes. This year they amount to some 7.5 million tonnes. The Community is therefore considering introducing a more active stockpiling policy which will take into account both world food security and the stabilization of world and Community markets.

World Trade in Foodstuffs

"We are conscious of the important position which the EC occupies in world imports of foodstuffs. The EC's total food imports came to about \$37 billion in 1977.

"Half of these imports come from developing countries. Three-quarters of total food imports are subject to the non-preferential tariffs negotiated in the GATT, which of course underlines the importance of the GATT. Twenty-one per cent of total imports enter freely, unhindered by customs duties or other protective measures.

"Almost 60 per cent of total food imports are subject to relatively modest ad valorem duties (in the order of 4 to 20 per cent), and almost half of these imports receive preferential treatment from the Community as provided for by the General System of Preferences, the Lomé Convention or by individual agreements with Mediterranean countries.

"Twenty-one per cent of total imports are subject to variable levies or customs duties combined with additional protective regulations. Most of this 21 per cent comes from developed countries.

"I have presented these figures not in order to state that there are no trade problems, but to show that the problem of protectionism cannot be generalized."
