

XXVII. SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL MEASURES FOR WIDER FOOD DISTRIBUTION

WHEREAS :

1. The provision of adequate food for all the people in each nation is primarily the responsibility of the nation concerned and that this responsibility will be met primarily by national measures ;
2. Nevertheless, undernutrition may continue for long periods of time in certain countries, while they are developing their agriculture and industry, and before they are able to produce internally or acquire abroad adequate amounts of food to meet the needs of their people ;
3. It is generally agreed that it would be desirable if arrangements could be made whereby a part of current world food-supplies could be used to supplement the national food-distribution programmes of certain countries ;
4. Moreover, relatively little attention has been given in the past to the possibilities of developing special measures for wider food distribution in the international field ;

THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Recommends—

1. That the permanent organization recommended in Resolution II study the possibility of devising measures to meet the needs of countries with inadequate supplies, and the machinery needed for this purpose, distinguishing between methods which would be used in the case of famines following catastrophes, and in the case of countries where the available food supplies are generally inadequate ;
2. That the problems of developing special international measures for wider food distribution in the latter case be studied in connection with plans in the countries concerned for the long-term development of the national resources, and for raising the technical skill and the level of living of their workers, and that the above-mentioned permanent organization collaborate with the International Labour Office on this question.

XXVIII. GOVERNMENT AND OTHER NATIONAL SERVICES IN MARKETING

WHEREAS :

Improvements in the marketing of foods and other products of agricultural or marine origin are largely dependent upon certain basic Government services, including the provision of quality standards, an efficient grading and inspection service, marketing research and education designed to promote improved marketing practices, and protection of the public, through the medium of pure-food laws, against impurities or adulterations and against unfair competition and undesirable trade practices ;

THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Recommends

1. That the permanent organization recommended in Resolution II —

- (a) Investigate the practicability, and, if practicable, assist in the adoption of international grade standards for agricultural and marine commodities and of providing machinery for controlling the use of any such international grade standards in international trade* ;
- (b) Give assistance to Governments and other national organizations looking to the establishment in each country of adequate grade standards and technical advisory and inspection services covering appropriate products, and, if requested, advise in the promotion of the educative, administrative, and legislative action necessary to achieve this objective† ;
- (c) Promote standardization of containers, both nationally and internationally, along the lines suggested in connection with grades‡ ;
- (d) Assist Governments to extend and improve standards of nutrient content and purity of all important foods, consider also the formulation and adoption of similar international standards to facilitate and protect the interchange of such products between countries, and agree upon international methods of determination§ ;
- (e) Consider the formulation and adoption of international standards or minimum requirements for drugs, insecticides, fungicides, fertilizers, and other materials used by agricultural producers, in order to prevent misrepresentation in their preparation and sale, and to promote the purchase of products best suited to particular uses|| ;
- (f) Consider whether existing international market news services adequately supply and co-ordinate information and statistics on prices and supply and demand ; and promote any improvements considered necessary¶ ;
- (g) Urge upon Governments the necessity, in the interests of better nutrition and better living, for further research into —
 - (i) Consumer needs, including palatability, packaging, food habits, shopping habits, shopping facilities, &c. ;
 - (ii) Improved methods, with particular reference to perishable protective foods and any commodities of which buffer or other stocks may be held, of processing, preservation, storage, packaging, and transport ;

* The use of any such standards should be voluntary on the part of individual countries and, if used, any one grade should apply uniformly throughout the world.

† The primary purpose of grade standards is to improve the quality and permit the purchase and sale of commodities by description rather than by inspection of each lot by buyers and sellers. Such standards (1) supply the basis for a common language for describing the product marketed ; (2) facilitate trading by minimizing misunderstandings concerning the quality of the products ; (3) reduce losses from rejections and costs of arbitration ; (4) facilitate price quotations and other market information on the basis of quality ; (5) reduce or eliminate the costs of re-sampling or inspection in various stages of marketing ; (6) improve the collateral value of warehouse receipts and thus reduce financing costs ; (7) help buyers to obtain the qualities of products they need ; (8) permit the distribution of the various qualities on the basis of their most advantageous outlets ; and (9) facilitate payments to producers on the basis of quality, which in turn would encourage adjustments in the qualities produced on the basis of consumer demand.

‡ Standardization of containers has not developed to the same extent as has standardization of grades. Lack of standardization gives rise to waste and confusion in the distribution of food.

§ In order to protect health and improve nutrition, minimum standards for the nutrient content, and in certain cases for the methods of preparation and for the artificial enrichment of staple foods, should be prescribed by Governments. These steps should be taken in addition to any measures designed to secure the absence of toxic substances and organisms from food under the usual type of pure-food laws. International standards of labelling and packaging can help, but in general the most effective action can be taken by individual countries themselves.

|| In some countries little has been done to protect agriculturists from exploitation in the purchase of materials used in agricultural production.

¶ International machinery is desirable for the dissemination of such information and for the promotion of action by Governments to make available comprehensive market data.