

In addition to these periodic reports, FAO frequently requests technical, statistical, and economic information from member countries in connection with specific projects. Steps have been taken in New Zealand, and presumably in other member countries, to forward to FAO copies of all official statistics and any publications, governmental or otherwise, which deal with agricultural problems.

Information obtained from the periodic and other reports is used as a basis for conference discussions and recommendations. It also serves, with data obtained by the standing advisory and *ad hoc* committees, as the basis for the technical reports which FAO is issuing to assist with particular problems.

One method used by FAO which has met with considerable success has been the sending of missions of technical experts to war-devastated or backward countries to assist with the reconstruction of their agriculture. The first of these was to Greece and operated from May to July, 1946, and since then similar missions have been sent to Poland and to Siam. Small missions of technical experts have also been sent to countries requesting advice and assistance on specific problems—for example, a mission has visited Venezuela to offer advice on oil-bearing plants.

THE WORLD FOOD CRISIS

FAO is essentially an organization dealing with long-term food and agricultural policy and was not equipped to deal with the food emergency which arose in 1946. Hence, when early in February of that year the United Nations General Assembly called on FAO for assistance to deal with the food crisis which was looming as a result of the war and successive bad harvests, and which would be greatly accentuated by the expected termination of UNRRA, the Combined Food Board, and the Emergency Economic Committee of Europe, it was not without some hesitation that Sir John Boyd Orr agreed to co-operate as far as was within the power of FAO's still embryonic organization.

A meeting, known as the Special Meeting on Urgent Food Problems, was convened in May, 1946, in Washington. The outcome was the setting-up of the International Emergency Food Council, replacing and enlarging the Combined Food Board (United States of America, Britain, and Canada), to allocate foodstuffs, seeds, and fertilizers on the most equitable basis possible, in an endeavour to bridge the gap (estimated at the time at 10,000,000 metric tons of grain) between the supplies available and those required.

IEFC, as it soon became known, began operations almost immediately. Through the commercial section of its Legation in Washington, New Zealand has had representation on several of the commodity committees. The Council was intended to end its activities in December, 1947, but in view of the prolonged nature of the food crisis it was decided at the third session of the conference in September that IEFC be absorbed by the newly formed Council of FAO, of which the former is now a committee. Its activities are now confined to cereals and to oils and fats, these commodities still being in short supply.

WORLD FOOD BOARD PROPOSALS

FAO's first session of conference was held in Quebec in October, 1945. Between then and the second session in Copenhagen in September, 1946, important developments occurred in world food problems apart from those considered at the special meeting in May. It was appreciated from the start that if FAO were to achieve anything worth while it would have to go beyond the important but narrow sphere of issuing factual information and giving technical assistance. Throughout the war and up to this day there has loomed in the minds of farmers and agriculturists in the Western World the word "surplus." Memories still linger of the days when wheat was burned, coffee dumped, and bonuses paid farmers not to produce; when increased production merely served to lower still further an already uneconomic price. Not only is this "fear of plenty" a factor in