

to all developing market economies, which together recorded an increase during the year in their cereal output of 13 million tonnes to 367 million tonnes, total cereal production in MSA countries fell marginally in 1976 from 189 million tonnes in 1975 to 188 million tonnes. An improvement in total MSA cereal production in 1977 to 196 million tonnes was primarily a reflection of improved crops in India since output in all other MSA countries only advanced from 87 to 88 million tonnes.

23. Despite the very serious situation in the MSA countries, the prospects for increasing food production in developing market economies may now be somewhat better than they appeared in 1974. Although in 1970-76 the average annual rate of increase in food production in developing market economy countries was only 2.8 per cent, the two years of good weather after 1974 resulted in food production in these countries rising by 7 and 4 per cent respectively in 1975 and 1976. Food production in these countries will continue to be subject to the vagaries of weather, but improved cultivation techniques, the better supply of inputs and the use of new varieties of cereals all hold out the possibility that in the period up to 1985 the average annual rate of increase in food production in developing countries may be rather higher than the 2.6 per cent forecast. It is encouraging to observe that in 1974-76, although not unfortunately in 1977, food production in the developing market economies rose on average by 4 per cent, the figure called for in the Second Development Decade.

III. Proposals on Food Policy at the World Food Conference, 1974

24. Any review of international food policy at the present must start with the comprehensive programme of action proposed at the World Food Conference, and must analyse subsequent developments in institutions, activities, and policies. The major aims of the Food Conference included the formulation of programmes to increase food production in developing countries, to improve the distribution and consumption of food, to strengthen world food security and to bring about a more orderly system of agricultural trade and adjustment. In all the Conference adopted no less than 22 resolutions, intended to cover all aspects of the world food problem. The first resolution set out the objectives and strategies of food production, while most of the remaining 21 resolutions were concerned with ways of achieving these objectives. It may be, in retrospect, that all 22 resolutions were too diffuse in coverage, and that, although they referred to all the main issues and requirements, they lacked precise proposals as to the attainment of the desired objectives. Nevertheless, the World Food Conference also made concrete proposals for the establishment of new bodies, for example the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Council, and thus laid the bases from which further international action in the sphere of food policy could evolve.

25. The first resolution of the Conference declared that the "highest priority should be given to policies and programmes for increasing food production and improving food utilisation in developing countries, so as to achieve a minimum agricultural growth rate of 4 per cent per annum" and that "all Governments should accept the removal of the scourge of hunger and malnutrition as the objective of the international community as a whole ... within a decade..." The initiatives called for by the remaining

21 resolutions were wide-ranging and comprehensive, although in many cases far from specific. Broadly the initiatives covered seven main areas of policy, viz:

- (i) Measures to improve food production in developing countries, including the provision of adequate supplies of essential inputs, the development of the necessary rural infrastructure, the adoption of policies to encourage the production and conservation of food, and the necessary progressive changes in the agrarian structure.
- (ii) Measures to increase substantially the flow of external financial assistance to agriculture and food production in developing countries and to ensure a more efficient use of financial and technical assistance.
- (iii) The endorsement of the International Undertaking on World Food Security, in particular by the maintenance of adequate national or regional stocks of food and by participation in an improved food information system.
- (iv) An improved policy for food aid, including increased commitments and forward planning by developed countries, and better co-ordination of bilateral and multilateral food aid programmes.
- (v) The recognition of the inter-relationship between the world food problem and international trade, and of the need to stabilise agricultural markets and to improve access in developed country markets for agricultural exports from developing countries.
- (vi) Policies and programmes to improve nutrition, including a global nutrition surveillance scheme, an internationally co-ordinated scheme for nutritional research and the extension of nutrition intervention and special feeding schemes, particularly for the most vulnerable groups.
- (vii) Priorities for the achievement of an integrated agricultural and rural development, including the efficient use of land and water resources, the introduction of appropriate technology, and the involvement of the rural masses in programmes to relieve rural unemployment and improve family incomes and living standards.

26. To give an impetus to its recommendations the World Food Conference called for the establishment of a number of new international bodies, while at the same time it urged existing institutions to undertake or collaborate in a number of new activities. The World Food Council was to be established by the General Assembly as a co-ordinating mechanism for the follow-up of policies regarding food production, nutrition, food security, food trade, food aid and related matters. A Committee on World Food Security was to be established by FAO, which would report to the World Food Council; its

role would include monitoring of the implementation of the International Undertaking on World Food Security. A Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes was to be established, also reporting to the World Food Council. FAO was to take fresh initiatives as required to expand the global information and early warning system. The Conference asked IBRD, FAO and UNDP to organise a Consultative Group on Food Production and Investment in Developing Countries (CGFPI), the main functions of which should be (a) to encourage a larger flow of external resources for food production, (b) to improve the co-ordination of bilateral and multilateral donors and (c) to ensure a more effective use of available resources. In addition, Resolution XIII of the Conference resolved that an International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) should be set up immediately to finance food production in developing countries.

27. These institutions have now all been established and their development is analysed more fully in the next Part (IV) of this study. Meanwhile it must be stated that the World Food Council, the body charged with overseeing the implementation of the decisions of the World Food Conference, essentially lacks the authority to carry out its tasks, since it is not located in the UN General Assembly, but is attached to the Economic and Social Council. Thus, despite the important role of co-ordination assigned to it, its authority and influence are uncertain. In each of its three meetings during 1975-77 it has debated important issues and made recommendations, but governments have been slow to implement these and there is no obligation upon them to do so.

28. As an example of the Council's lack of authority the slow response of the international community to the need to build up grain reserves may be cited. The 1977 meeting made important recommendations about setting up a security reserve of grains. Although the Council's recommendations called for negotiations to proceed as rapidly as possible for the establishment of an international system of nationally held reserves, a note of real urgency was lacking; indeed the negotiations on a new international arrangement to replace the International Wheat Agreement of 1971 are being conducted slowly. A third season of good grain crops in 1977-78 has resulted in very large end-of-season grain stocks. As a consequence, the United States acted to cut the wheat area by 20 per cent in 1978, and that for coarse grains by 10 per cent. Pessimists can all too easily envisage a situation in 1978-79 or later where the occurrence of poor crops in certain developing or centrally planned economies together with the cuts in grain output in North America could face the international community with short grain supplies, high prices and, because of lack of prompt action in 1977 and 1978, still no international security reserve. The problem of how the World Food Council, meeting only once a year, can impart a sense of urgency to its proceedings is vitally important. Perhaps the Council should concentrate all its efforts each year on only one key issue, rather than attempt to cover several, as it has hitherto done.

29. It was suggested to the 1978 meeting of the World Food Council that as the Council's previous calls for global action had proved of little value more specific lines of approach might be adopted. Calls could be addressed, for example, to the appropriate aid institutions, such as the Development Assistance Committee, to regional groupings of developing countries, and even to selected countries. A promising line of approach suggested was that of promoting food and nutrition programmes for selected developing countries in co-operation with selected developed countries and international agencies.