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Home and Foreign News

FAO Activity in the Forestry Field Steadily Expanding. Rome, August 1972. During its recent first session in Rome, the Committee on Forestry — the advisory body to the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization on world forestry problems — heard how FAO forestry field operations (also called FAO Forestry Technical Assistance Programme) have steadily expanded.

Delegates, comprising foresters and forestry administrators from 61 countries, were told that these operations were conducted mainly by FAO's Forestry Department under its field programme which covers 77 developing countries with important forest and forest industries potential. This field programme is financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with bilateral funds from certain donor countries.

"During the first fifteen years of its existence," FAO's report says, "FAO's budget for field operations was somewhat lower than its regular programme budget." This situation however, was reversed over the years and in forestry "growing emphasis was given to field activities. By the end of the fifties, the Technical Assistance Programme (TA) in Forestry was in the order of one million dollars per year, as against a regular programme budget for the Forestry Division of 0.7 millions per year."

A great change had occurred in the first half of the 1960's with the advent of UN Special Fund forestry projects.

"At the end of 1971, 73 Special Fund-assisted projects were operational, with an SF contribution of about 47 million dollars, spread over an average project duration of four to five years."

Other important sources of FAO forestry field operations are the World Food Programme (48 projects in operation for a total cost of US \$ 75 million in 1971), cooperative programmes between FAO and governments and Trust Fund projects. Some 13 Trust Fund projects were approved as of December 13, 1971, at a total cost of \$1 million. (Trust funds are funds given to FAO by donor countries to execute a particular project).

The field operations budget supervised by the Department of Forestry now amounts to about US \$ 24 million a year, including WFP, while the programme employs about 450 field officers and consultants. About 10 per cent of these field officers already come from developing countries, and this proportion is increasing, particularly in Latin America. The fields in which these forestry officers are most active are:

- institution building: establishment and strengthening of
- forest services, school and research organizations
- resource survey
- biological aspects of forestry
- forest operations, logging, transportation, etc.
- environment, recreation, national parks and wildlife
- statistics, trade and industry.

The identification of projects is now being helped by "country programming." The idea is to provide a medium-term (five years) framework for multilateral aid, closely related to the recipient country's economic and social development programme or plan. Although still in its preparatory stage, country programming permits a much better assessment of future trends than did the earlier project approach.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the most active agency in the field of forestry development, with 53 large-scale projects executed in 1971 by FAO's Forestry Department. This figure is expected to rise to 60 projects in 1972, 76 in 1973 and 79 in 1974. The biggest number of projects are planned in Africa and Latin America but the number of projects in the Asia region is increasing.

As regards future activities, the report says, requests already received or being prepared indicate that FAO activities in the fields of environment — including recreation, wildlife and national parks, institution building or strengthening, an education at sub-professional level — will increase, whereas activities in the fields of forest inventories and biological aspects of forestry will remain at about the same level.

"It is evident, too, that there will be greater emphasis on carrying projects through to the point where final reports can be used for investment follow-up," says the report.

The Forestry Department of FAO is also active in regional and inter-regional projects of interest to several countries, such as the regional wildlife advisers and the regional forest industries advisory groups which exist in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In cooperation with UNCTAD the Department is also initiating a very important inter-regional project, the Tropical Timber Bureau whose objective is to promote the trade and local elaboration of tropical woods exported by developing countries.

As regards bilateral programmes, the Forestry Department keeps in touch with the governments sponsoring them. It has thus been able to draw the attention of these countries to deserving projects when multilateral resources were not available. Also in some instances, measures have been worked out for concerting multilateral and bilateral aid.