

CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

First Meeting - May 19, 1971

Item 3 of the Agenda

A Note by the Secretariat on DEVELOPING COUNTRY PARTICIPATION

At the preliminary meeting on January 14-15, some delegations raised the question whether developing countries should be invited to accept membership in the proposed Consultative Group, and the Secretariat was asked to consider the matter and to report thereon to the Group's first meeting.

The Secretariat has concluded, for the reasons set forth below, that it would not be feasible, at least at present, to make provision for developing country membership.

1. While it is one of the main objectives of the Consultative Group to examine what is needed by way of agricultural research at the international and regional levels and to consider how those needs might be met, it is equally a main objective to review the financial requirements of high priority research activities, to consider the provision of finance for those activities, and to reach agreement on how feasibility studies should be financed. With those objectives in view, invitations to attend the preliminary meeting as well as this first meeting of the Consultative Group were confined to governments and organizations, including regional development banks and private foundations, which contribute or are potential contributors to the support of such programs. Developing countries are not, and are not likely to be, sources of financial assistance for this purpose. They are, in fact, likely to be claimants for funds on behalf of particular research programs in which they have a special interest. In this respect the Consultative Group for international agricultural research is analogous to the consultative groups for aid coordination organized for individual developing countries: the developing country concerned is not a member of the aid coordination group although it has an obvious and immediate interest in the group's activities.

2. Even without any developing countries, it already appears that there will be at least 20, perhaps more, participants in the Consultative Group. Approximately 100 developing countries are members of the Bank. It would be difficult if not impossible for the Group to carry out its terms of reference effectively and efficiently if all or even most of these countries were to become members. It would, of course, be possible

to devise a formula for the collective representation of developing countries or for representation of groups of developing countries, perhaps on a rotating basis. But it seems probable that, to give effect to the principle of developing country representation in a manner satisfactory to developing countries, it would be necessary to make provision for a relatively large number of such members, to the detriment of the Consultative Group's effectiveness. The Secretariat considered the possibility of achieving developing country representation by inviting delegates from, e.g., the Organization of American States and the Organization of African Unity, the regional economic commissions, or regional associations of scientists. However, organizations in the first category, being primarily political, would not seem to be appropriate representatives in this instance. Participation by the regional economic commissions would not seem to add materially to the participation, already arranged, of the regional development banks. In this connection, it may be recalled that at the preliminary meeting the regional banks disclaimed competence to represent their individual developing country members in the Consultative Group. As for scientific organizations, for two major regions no such organization yet exists; in another, the association is not yet fully representative of developing countries; and in a third, the existing organization may well wish to seek Consultative Group support for research programs of its own.

3. This is not by any means to say that it would not be desirable or feasible for developing countries to participate in the work of the Consultative Group. Indeed, such participation is already contemplated in several ways. For one, it was agreed at the preliminary meeting that a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) should be established, to be composed of a small number of distinguished international experts, drawn from developing as well as developed countries. The attention of delegations is invited to the fact that the list of nominees for appointment to the TAC which has been submitted to this meeting includes experts from developing countries in several different regions. The TAC will be the Consultative Group's technical arm, responsible for advising it on the principal gaps and priorities in agricultural research related to the problems of developing countries, for recommending feasibility studies to the Consultative Group, and for presenting its views and recommendations for action for the guidance of the Consultative Group. Although the developing country experts on the TAC will be serving in their individual capacities, they will be in a position to express the viewpoint of developing countries. Second, the TAC is expected to call on special working groups to investigate and formulate recommendations on specific programs. Representatives of developing countries would certainly be asked to serve on these groups. In addition, execution of feasibility studies of specific proposals commissioned by the Consultative Group upon the recommendation of the TAC will normally require extensive consultation with government officials and scientists in the region or regions principally affected. It will probably sometimes be

necessary to negotiate cooperative arrangements with the government of the prospective host country. Finally, it may be expected that the boards of trustees of any international agricultural research institutes supported by the Consultative Group will include developing country nationals, as is now true of IRRI, CIAT, CIMMYT and IITA. The Secretariat believes that these arrangements are not only the most appropriate but also the most feasible ways to assure that the views of the developing countries are fully taken into account in the deliberations of the Consultative Group.

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