

	FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS	CFS: 76/2 December 1975
	ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ALIMENTATION ET L'AGRICULTURE	
	ORGANIZACION DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA LA AGRICULTURA Y LA ALIMENTACION	

Item III of the
 Provisional Agenda

COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

First Session

Rome, 5-9 April 1976

INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKING ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY:

STATUS OF ADOPTION BY GOVERNMENTS

Summary

The attached document contains the text of the International Undertaking on World Food Security, and a list of the 66 member countries which have subscribed to it, as of 1 December 1975.

STATUS OF ADOPTION BY GOVERNMENTS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKING ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

(as of 1 December 1975)

ARGENTINA
AUSTRALIA
BANGLADESH
BELGIUM
BOLIVIA
BURMA
BURUNDI
CAMEROON
CANADA
CHAD
CHILE
COLOMBIA
CONGO
CYPRUS
DENMARK
ECUADOR
EGYPT
ETHIOPIA
FINLAND
FRANCE
GAMBIA
GERMANY, FED. REP.

INDIA
INDONESIA
IRELAND
ISRAEL
ITALY
JAPAN
KOREA
KUWAIT
LIBERIA
LUXEMBOURG
MADAGASCAR
MALTA
MAURITANIA
MEXICO
MOROCCO
NEPAL
NETHERLANDS
NEW ZEALAND
NICARAGUA
NIGER
NIGERIA
NORWAY

PAKISTAN
PHILIPPINES
POLAND
PORTUGAL
SENEGAL
SIERRA LEONE
SPAIN
SRI LANKA
SUDAN
SWEDEN
SWITZERLAND
TANZANIA
THAILAND
TOGO
TUNISIA
TURKEY
UGANDA
UNITED KINGDOM
UNITED STATES
UPPER VOLTA
URUGUAY
YUGOSLAVIA
EEC

INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKING ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

(Annex to Resolution 1/64 of Sixty-Fourth Session of FAO Council, November 1974)

I. Common purpose and responsibility

1. Governments adhering to this Undertaking, taking account of Resolution 3/73 adopted by the Seventeenth Session of the FAO Conference and Resolutions XVI, XVII and XVIII of the World Food Conference, recognize that the assurance of world food security is a common responsibility of the entire international community. They, therefore, undertake to cooperate in doing their utmost to ensure the availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic foodstuffs, primarily cereals, so as to avoid acute food shortages in the event of widespread crop failures or natural disasters, sustain a steady expansion of production and reduce fluctuations in production and prices.
2. Recognizing that food security needs to be tackled from several sides, especially through strengthening the food production base of developing countries, appropriate national stock policies, food aid programmes, and other measures including long-term trade agreements, governments undertake to adopt national and international measures to ensure an accelerated growth of food production, as appropriate, and in particular to assist the developing countries which are highly vulnerable to crop fluctuations and where there are increasing consumption requirements.
3. As regards stock-holding policies, all governments, in conformity with their institutional and constitutional requirements should:
 - (a) adopt policies concerning cereal stocks ^{1/} which take into account the policies of other countries and would result in maintaining a minimum safe level of basic cereal stocks for the world as a whole,
 - (b) review or establish, or take measures aimed at establishing, stock targets or objectives which have the purpose of maintaining stocks of cereals in the country or in the interested groups of countries concerned at least at the levels regarded as necessary for ensuring continuity of supplies including provision for emergency situations in case of crop failure or natural disaster ^{2/},
 - (c) take measures aimed at ensuring stocks are replenished as soon as feasible whenever they have been drawn down below such minimum levels to meet food shortages.
4. In periods of acute food shortages, nations holding stocks in excess of minimum safe levels for meeting domestic needs and emergencies undertake to make such supplies available for export at reasonable terms.

II. Guidelines for establishing and holding stocks

5. In establishing, reviewing and/or adjusting national stock policies and desirable minimum stock levels, governments should give consideration to the following guidelines which are understood as a framework within which each country would develop its own stock policies according to its circumstances:

^{1/} The term "stocks" means the supply of cereals carried over in stock at the end of the marketing year of the country concerned.

^{2/} It is recognized that some of the major exporting countries of grains and especially rice are developing countries which lack the capital resources required to maintain stocks beyond current requirements.

- (a) Vulnerability to crop failure owing to drought, floods or other natural hazards, and extent of resulting shortfalls in national cereals output,
 - (b) The size of normal annual requirements for domestic consumption and, where applicable, for export,
 - (c) The degree of dependence in normal conditions on imports of cereals and the scale of possible emergency import requirements in relation to the average level of world trade of the product concerned,
 - (d) The period of time required for imports to be arranged and delivered to the country in periods of emergency or sudden domestic shortage, and for internal transportation to centres of consumption,
 - (e) The period of time likely to be required to expand cereal production sufficiently to replenish stocks if these are drawn down to meet food shortages,
 - (f) The proportion of national supplies entering commercial market channels,
 - (g) The requirements of any government distribution programme of foodgrains to vulnerable sections of the population,
 - (h) The desirability of locating stocks in a manner and place which ensure that the cereals are available for delivery when and where they are most likely to be required; and which, with the available storage and transport facilities, minimise the financial costs involved and also, where appropriate, facilitate urgent shipments to recipient countries in the shortest possible time,
 - (i) Pledges to WFP and other international food aid programmes and allocations for bilateral food aid programmes, including specific pledges for national and regional stock-building,
 - (j) Maintaining a regular flow of supplies at reasonable prices to meet foreseeable variations in demand from importing countries,
 - (k) The possibility of an interruption in the flow of imported supplies by events outside the government's control (dock strike in exporting country, shipping difficulties, etc.),
 - (l) The special position of developing countries, as set out in Part IV below.
6. The special difficulties of a number of developing countries in maintaining national stocks at desirable minimum levels place an added responsibility on the rest of the international community for ensuring world food security. Governments should take this into account in fixing their stock targets or objectives, and should where possible earmark stocks or funds for meeting international emergency requirements.

III. Necessary safeguards

7. Bearing in mind the serious problems which have arisen in the past owing to the accumulation and disposal of large agricultural surpluses, full consideration should be given by governments to the possible repercussions on the structure of production and trade which might arise from implementing the world food security policy. Governments should continue in this respect to observe the principles and consultative obligations as developed within the FAO and the Consultative Sub-Committee on Surplus Disposal which may be amended and extended as necessary.

8. To this end:

(a) All countries should endeavour to arrange their national food stock policies in ways which avoid adverse effects on the structure of production or international trade, paying particular attention to the interests of developing countries heavily dependent on food exports.

(b) Governments should recognize the need to promote the efficient use of world agricultural resources and consider measures designed to afford producers adequate protection against the effects on world prices of accumulation, retention and release of stocks held as a result of this Undertaking.

IV. Special assistance to developing countries

9. To promote the effective participation of developing countries in this Undertaking, in order to achieve the objectives of world food security, it is imperative to ensure the adequate availability of cereals and accordingly an acceleration of the rate of growth of their agricultural production. Such an increase requires a constant review by the developing countries of their overall agricultural production policies and the various alternative courses they may follow as well as the active support of the international community in the development programmes of the developing countries within the context of their national development priorities. The concerned international financial and technical organizations, the developed and other potential contributor countries should urgently take the necessary measures to enable the developing countries to obtain the required financial, technical and material assistance, and in particular fertilizers and other inputs needed to increase their agricultural production.

10. Continued reliance would also need to be placed on bilateral food aid programmes and the World Food Programme for meeting shortages which cannot be covered through normal commercial trade, as well as unforeseen shortages and emergency situations.

11. International assistance also has an important role in providing food aid and financial assistance on soft-terms or in grant form for meeting the minimum requirements of cereals and the maintenance of stocks, and particularly emergency stocks, in the developing countries, for research on the development of storage facilities suited to conditions in these countries, and in furnishing advice on stock and related policies within the context of national development programmes. Developed countries and other potential contributors as well as the international and regional development agencies concerned should give additional assistance in identifying and mobilizing the resources required by developing countries for these purposes.

12. As regards the WFP in particular, the degree to which it can assist developing countries by providing food aid for national reserves is severely restricted by its resource position and its priorities. Governments should, therefore, consider making additional resources available to the WFP, to enable the Programme to play its role to the fullest possible extent in assisting developing countries to achieve food security as well as in emergency operations.

V. Information system

13. The effective functioning of the world food security system will depend greatly on the availability of timely and adequate information. Governments members of FAO should furnish to the Director-General on a regular basis all the available information on national stock levels, government stockholding programmes and policies, current and prospective export availabilities and import requirements for cereals, and relevant aspects of the supply and demand situation, as well as on assistance provided to the food production programmes in developing countries. Other governments should be invited to provide similar information. In order to avoid unfavourable market repercussions in particular, the Director-General of FAO should ensure, where so requested by a government, that the data supplied by that government to the Information System are made available on a restricted basis only to the governments adhering to the Undertaking.

14. To keep all governments directly informed of current developments in the international cereals position during periods when world supplies are scarce, the Director-General of FAO should prepare, on a quarterly basis or more frequently, concise factual appraisals of the situation and outlook which should be circulated promptly to governments.

15. In the assembly and analysis of information and statistics, the Director-General of FAO should seek the assistance of the International Wheat Council and other inter-governmental organizations concerned.

VI. Intergovernmental consultations

16. The adequacy of world cereal production and stocks should be kept under continuing review, so that timely action can be taken to maintain world food security. For this purpose, the governments adhering to this Undertaking should, with the assistance of FAO and other concerned intergovernmental organizations, consult together to:

(a) Review the progress in accelerating cereals production in developing countries and the assistance provided to them for this purpose, particularly in regard to the supply of essential agricultural inputs,

(b) Make periodic evaluations of the adequacy of current and prospective stock levels, in aggregate in exporting and importing countries, for ensuring a regular flow of supplies of cereals to meet requirements in domestic and world markets, including food aid requirements, in times of short crops and serious crop failure; account should be taken of the considerations set out in the guidelines, and

(c) Examine such short-term and longer-term policy action as considered necessary to remedy any difficulty foreseen in assuring adequate cereal supplies for minimum world food security.

VII. Provision for review of the Undertaking

17. This Undertaking, including arrangements and guidelines, may have to be revised, particularly if future international negotiations lead to the assumption by governments of specific commitments substantially affecting the Undertaking.