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**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA**

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**PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
WORK PROGRAMME**

**MAIN ISSUES AND CONDITIONS WITH REGARD TO AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD IN WESTERN ASIA**

Note by the Secretariat

Item 1: Agriculture in the national economy of countries in the Western Asian region

1-1 The agricultural output of the region in 1984 contributed 6.7 per cent of the gross domestic product. This percentage greatly varies from one country to the other and on average, makes up 0.2 per cent of the GDP of the six Arab Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries. It represents 1.0 per cent or less in the GCC states with the exception of Oman and Saudi Arabia where it represents some 30 per cent. This development has recently taken place in Saudi Arabia as a result of both the drop in the GDP and the rapid growth of the agricultural sector during the past two years (see table 1).

1-2 It is worth noting that despite the fact that agricultural resources are meagre in the GCC countries the relatively rapid growth of the agricultural sector in the past few years, particularly in Saudi Arabia, has made the per capita share of the agricultural product in the GCC exceed its counterpart in the other seven member countries though they attach greater importance to the agricultural sector than to other sectors. The value of the agricultural product of the GCC states where 15 per cent of the total population is engaged in agriculture, amounts to 21 per cent of the total value of the agricultural output of the region.

1-3 One of the most salient aspects regarding the status of agriculture and food is the low level of self-sufficiency, on the whole, despite some major achievements by a few countries. Table 2 illustrates the average of net agricultural growth in a number of major agricultural countries during the period from 1974-1984.

Table 1: The agricultural sector's contribution to GDP in 1984
(in million dollars)

	Value of agricultural product (1)	Gross domestic product (2)	Per centage of (1):(2)
Egypt	5664	31658	18
Iraq	4516	45680	10
Jordan	235	3779	11
Lebanon	232	2383	10
Syria	3921	19478	20
Yemen Arab Republic	653	2751	24
Democratic Yemen	98	865	11
Sub-total	15319	106594	14
Saudi Arabia	3224	108195	3
United Arab Emirates	312	28781	1
Oman	263	8625	3
Qatar	57	6705	1
Kuwait	124	22457	1
Bahrain	54	5013	1
Sub-total	4034	179776	2
Grand total	19353	286370	7

Table 2: Percentage growth of agricultural production and population
1974-1984

	Growth of agricultural production (Percentage)	Growth of population (Percentage)
Egypt	1.4	2.6
Iraq	1.2	3.5
Jordan	6.9	2.8
Lebanon	4.7	-0.5
Saudi Arabia	4.0	4.6
Syria	6.0	3.5
Yemen Arab Republic	0.7	2.1
Democratic Yemen	-0.1	2.5
Total of ESCWA region	2.8	3.1
Arab world	2.3	3.2
World	2.2	1.8

The above table indicates that in only two of the ESCWA countries the growth in agricultural production outstripped the rate of population growth; Consequently, the per capita quota of the value of the agricultural product of the other countries and the average at the level of the whole region receded, contrary to the situation in the world as a whole where the average of agricultural production growth exceeded the population growth levels.

1-4 This situation, on the one hand, and the rise in the levels of per capita income and the consequent change in the food consumption pattern, on other, led to a rapidly growing dependence on agricultural imports, particularly of staple food commodities as table 3 indicates.

Table 3*: Net agricultural imports of the Western Asian Region

Agricultural imports	Average 74-76 (1)	Average 82-84 (2)	(2) to (1) (Percentage rise)
Amounts (million tons)	12.5	41.5	332
Value (billion dollars)	3.4	14.3	420

* Imports minus exports.

During the first period the value of agricultural imports represented 3.4 per cent of exports. They rose ninefold in the second period. Consequently, net imports rose fourfold during this relatively short eight-year period.

1-5 Perhaps it is worthwhile reviewing the development in the quantities of imports at the level of the region and in terms of a number of basic food commodities as illustrated in table 4 below:

Table 4: Developments in imports of basic food commodities
(in thousand tons)

Commodity group	Average 74-76 (1)	Average 82-84 (3)	(2) to (1) (Percentage)
- Total grains	7500	22000	293
wheat	6000	12500	210
maize	650	3200	490
barley	100	4800	4800
- Total meat	165	985	600
- Live sheep*	2.8	11.0	390
- Milk**	158	650	410
- Sugar	1058	2750	250

* in million.

** fresh, condensed and powdered.

Table 4 shows that the quantities of imports rose greatly on the whole. However, the group of coarse grains (maize and barley) used for animal production, and the group of animal products (milk and meat) rose at higher rates. The first group rose because of the growing dependence on grains, notably maize for poultry, and barley for sheep. This may indicate that the higher growth rate registered in the poultry industry, and to a lesser degree in the production of meat and milk, are in essence processes of reshaping imported raw materials rather than real growth processes. However, the large growth rate in high-cost animal products is due to the growth in per capita capital and in the consequent change in food patterns.

1-6 Wheat figures prominently among the wide range of agricultural commodity groups and is rightly considered a food commodity of first strategic importance in the region. This may be attributed to a number of factors which do not all apply in the case of any other food commodities. Chief among them are the following:

1. It is the most important source of food energy as it provides an average of 45 per cent of the population's per capita calories (1,150 calories a day). Besides, all strata of the population, regardless of their income, consume huge amounts of it. Besides, the per capita demand for wheat has grown at an average rate of 4 per cent per annum (1970-1984). Consequently, during this period the average wheat consumption rose from 100 kg per annum to 176 kg;

2. The degree of self-sufficiency in wheat from local production is constantly declining at the regional level. Wheat production grew during the above-mentioned period at the rate of 1.6 per cent, while demand grew at the rate of 7.1 per cent. Consequently, self-sufficiency dropped from 47 per cent to 29 per cent. At present the region produces some 5 million tons and imports some 12 million tons;

3. As wheat production is fluctuating in the region, particularly in the rainfed areas, and as its quantities and supplies on world markets are not stable as a result of the same natural factors (which apply to both the surplus countries and the main importers like China and the Soviet Union), in addition to the fact that wheat surpluses are only available in a very small number of countries, there is a growing dependence on wheat imports from foreign sources with all the hazards it entails. Besides, there are other factors which add up to these hazards such as changes in the production policies of the exporting countries or in the security situation.

1-7 Obviously enough, there are other basic food commodities which have recently acquired growing importance. They constitute growing financial burdens on the country and there is also an uncertainty about obtaining them in the required quantities because though the sources are many, natural and man-made factors may interfere, particularly as the region's imports of some of these commodities constitute a large percentage of the volume of world trade. The region's imports of live sheep, for instance, which accounted for 28 per cent of world trade eight years ago (taking 1974-1976 as an average) recently represented 56 per cent (average of 1982-1984). Meat imports during the same period rose from 3 to 11 per cent, milk (of all kinds) from 7 to 12 per cent, sugar from 5 to 9 per cent and grains, in general, from 5 to 10 per cent (wheat from 8.5 to 11.3 per cent).

1-8 Self-sufficiency levels

After this brief review of the levels of agricultural demand and production we examine the situation in each country of the region. For this purpose, we shall make a comparison between the values of agricultural output and the per capita net agricultural imports (after subtracting the values of exports) as this will help in assessing the levels of self-sufficiency in all the countries of the region. This is illustrated in table 5.

Table 5: Value of individual demand for agricultural products
in the countries of the region in 1984
(in US dollars per capita)

Country	Domestic production (1)	Net imports (2)	Total individual demand (3)	Percentage of (1) to (3) (Self-sufficiency percentage)
<u>Group A</u>				
Syria	360	33	393	92
Iraq	298	146	444	67
Egypt	124	65	189	65
Yemen Arab Republic	102	81	183	55
Jordan	70	128	198	35
Lebanon	88	169	257	34
Democratic Yemen	47	112	159	30
Average of group A	178	84	262	68
<u>Group B</u>				
Saudi Arabia	298	486	784	38
Oman	222	340	563	39
United Arab Emirates	249	641	890	28
Qatar	195	773	968	20
Bahrain	130	507	637	20
Kuwait	73	583	656	11
Average of group B	257	504	761	34
General average	190	148	338	56

Table 5 illustrates a number of facts of vital importance for an understanding and an assessment of the current agricultural situation at the level of the region with its two groups (A and B in the table), and at the country level as well. Following are some of the facts in question:

1. According to the criterion used in table 5 the entire region has a 56 per cent self-sufficiency rate, group A has a 68 per cent self-sufficiency rate and group B (the GCC countries) has a 34 per cent self-sufficiency rate;

2. Though the GCC states' level of self-sufficiency is low and represents almost half its counterpart in the group A countries, the absolute value of the per capita agricultural domestic product share exceeds the contribution of group A by 44 per cent, contrary to the general impression of the limited agricultural resources in these countries. The agricultural resources are limited in absolute terms, but the per capita share is higher than that of the countries of the other groups. The low level of self-sufficiency in group B is mainly due to the huge per capita demand and to the food pattern which consume a good deal of the high price products. This is obvious in columns 2 and 3 of table 5. The total value of individual demand on agricultural products in group B is almost three times its counterpart in group A (US\$ 760 compared to US\$ 262). Though the domestic product in group B provides more than 44 per cent of group A for every member of the population, the net per capita agricultural imports are six times their counterpart in group A. These figures reflect the low food level in group A compared to the high consumption level in group B;

3. It is worth noting that Syria occupies a prominent place among the group A countries and Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates are chief among the group B countries in the contribution of the per capita agricultural product. It is to be noted too that Egypt, the first agricultural country in the region in terms of volume of agricultural production and productivity levels has been relegated to the eighth place (after Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain) in the value of the per capita of agricultural products because of over population. In 1984, the population represented 45 per cent of the total population of the region (45.7 million out of 101.9 million). However, the value of Egypt's agricultural output represented 29 per cent of the total product of the region (US\$ 5.7 billion compared to US\$ 19.4 billion).

1-9 Finally, reference must be made to the relative burden of agricultural imports on the national economies of the countries of the region. Table 6 illustrates these comparisons showing that in 1984 these imports accounted for between 2 per cent and 27 per cent of GDP. Democratic Yemen shoulders 27 per cent, Lebanon and the Yemen Arab Republic 19 per cent, Jordan 11 per cent, and Egypt 9.5 per cent. However in view of the abundant GDP in the oil countries the burden of these imports range between 2 per cent in the United Arab Emirates to 5 per cent in both Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Table 6: Percentage of net agricultural imports in the national economy
(1984)

Country	Net agricultural imports (in million dollars)	Percentage of the GDP (Percentage)
<u>Group A</u>		
Egypt	3011	9.5
Iraq	2212	5.0
Jordan	433	11.0
Lebanon	447	19.0
Syria	358	2.0
Yemen Arab Republic	520	19.0
Democratic Yemen	231	27.0
Average of group A	7212	6.7
<u>Group B</u>		
Saudi Arabia	5265	5.0
United Arab Emirates	805	2.0
Oman	401	5.0
Qatar	225	4.0
Kuwait	993	4.0
Bahrain	210	4.0
Average of group B	7901	4.3
General average	15113	5.3

Item 2: Major agricultural issues and the role of regional co-operation

2-1 Agricultural production and efforts for its development are mainly a national responsibility and depend on available resources and potentials. However, agricultural activity, by its nature, shows a prompter response to joint inter-regional efforts in zones of similar agricultural environments than many other sectors. Other factors, which will be cited later, also provide adequate objective justifications for this co-operation on the basis of mutual benefit.

Agriculture in the region, as in other parts of the developing world, is facing many problems and constraints which may be divided into the following groups:

1. Problems related to the natural environment, chief among which are the scarcity of irrigation water, fluctuation of rainfall, intensive aridity, spread of unproductive desert soil, land salinity and erosion, and declining productivity of other natural resources, such as pastures and fisheries;

2. Low productivity because of the low level of the technology employed;

3. Social factors involving the efficiency of agricultural manpower and the provision of the basic needs of rural communities;

4. Economic factors related to pricing and other policies and their impact on making agriculture equitably lucrative and attractive to workers;

5. The agrarian structure, that is the systems of ownerships of sources of production, and how far they are conducive to efficient employment of resources;

6. Organizational matters related to the efficiency of the institutions concerned with planning and implementing agricultural development work such as research, extension services, co-operatives, credit, education, training of workers, etc.

7. The availability of basic material infrastructures that serve agricultural production, marketing and rural population.

2-2 Most agricultural issues fall under these main titles, which are too numerous and manifold to be tackled in this report. However, we shall cite them and single out those among them whose nature and management needs calls for joint action. Chief among them are:

1. the natural conditions of agricultural resources: these resources, which are primary agricultural materials do not only suffer from widespread inefficient practices but also from relative lack of concern on the part of the authority which concentrates on increasing productivity and does not attach due importance to the negative consequences which such practices have on productive resources. Chief among these practices are:

- (a) Excessive use of irrigation water because of the persistence of primitive methods. This limits the available agricultural patch and leads to soil salinity, as well as poor drainage, excessive salinity and drying up of wells;

- (b) Use of agricultural machines and implements which do not suit the environment in the region and consequently lead to soil erosion;
- (c) Over-pasturing and excessive cutting of natural forests which lead to the loss of the natural green cover both as a source of pasture and as a means of protecting the soil from rainfall because trees stop rain from sweeping the fertile surface soil to rivers and seas and help the soil to retain the rain water thereby replenishing the stocks of ground-water. The widespread desertification phenomenon in the region is one of the direct consequences of these conditions;
- (d) Extinction or the danger of extinction of certain types of wild animals and mammals, firstly, because of excessive hunting by the use of modern weapons; secondly, by hunting during the mating season; and, thirdly, by failing to observe restrictions imposed on the numbers allowed;
- (e) Pollution of river waters, ground-water and sea water with chemical materials as a result of the irregular use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, industrial waste, etc;
- (f) Low productivity of several fisheries in regional sea waters because of over-fishing.

It is worth noting that the agricultural environment in the region is marked by scarce resources and a fragile balance which may be easily impaired by erroneous practices in view of the prevailing aridity. This is particularly manifest in the aggravating desertification as a result of the above-mentioned loss of balance. It is worth noting that the grave point which the excessive exploitation of resources has reached is a relatively recent phenomenon that has accompanied the rapid population growth rate and the growing demand on food and its rising price. This has made producers eager to increase production in the absence of effective controls, restrictions and laws, as well as insufficient awareness, by competent authorities regarding the grave consequences of these practices.

Obviously enough, many of the measures required for nationalizing the use of these resources, preserving them and promoting their productive capacities are to be taken at the national level. However, much has to be done in co-operation among the countries of the region particularly in the neighbouring groups. Chief among these domains are:

(a) Common natural resources like the rivers which run in more than one country (Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Sudan); seasonal rains (two Yemens); common groundwaters (Al Hammad Basin between Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia and other basins between Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain); sea fisheries (littoral countries of the Arab Gulf, the Red-Sea and the Mediterranean) etc;

(b) The factors which affect natural resources or agricultural production and which are not static such as infectious diseases and contagious epidemics, moving sands, and pollution of common waters.

It is obvious that individual country efforts are futile in coping with issues of common resources and related factors whether in terms of their distribution or mobilization, and their preservation and development. Besides, co-operation in matters related to natural resources may extend to other fields such as joint surveys and periodic examination of the conditions of resources. All these technical activities need diverse specialities and high capabilities which the countries of the region do not have adequate means to carry out properly. This may justify the establishment of specialized joint institutions for this purpose. Co-operation in this field may also extend to the co-ordination of legislation on the use and preservation of resources and to the exchange of expertise.

Finally, it is worth noting that co-operation in some fields of natural agricultural resources in the region has won some concern mainly in the form of studies of common resources by regional institutions (The Arab Centre for the Study of Arid and Dry Lands and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development) or by international organizations (The Food and Agriculture Organization). However, up till now there is no regular institutional or methodological base that would guarantee persistent and concerted efforts starting from survey studies up to the practical programmes required for the realization of specific objectives.

It is believed that there are adequate justifications for drawing up a regional programme for preserving agricultural natural resources to be preceded by extensive negotiations in various fields of specialities to get acquainted with the degree of the countries' response to this initiative and to map out the general framework for the proposed programme in terms of fields of activity, patterns of co-operation and the contribution of national and regional efforts;

2. The question of the development of agricultural technology in the region is of equal importance to the preservation of natural resources. In the past, there was a growing concern with agricultural research and with the adaptation of appropriate technology at the national and the international levels. At the national level, there was a marked development in the agricultural research institutions. At the international level several international agricultural research centres were established in developing countries including the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) with its headquarters in Aleppo. Its activities also cover part of the rainfed areas of the ESCWA region. However, it is worth noting that despite the considerable need for regional co-operation in this field, it only won partial and formal attention at the level of ESCWA and the Arab world as a whole.

It is known that appropriate agricultural technology must be the product of the natural and socio-economic environment where it is to be adopted. Accordingly it is unlike the technologies of other production sectors, industry, for instance, which can be imported from a different environment. Even that may be imported must be subjected to research to guarantee that it becomes appropriate to the new environment. It is worth noting that raising agricultural productivity, that is vertical development, depends on technological development, particularly as the potentials of horizontal expansion, that is increasing the stretches of agricultural land, have become extremely limited or non-existent in most countries of the region.

Agricultural research has recently followed the system-research method which deals with agriculture as an organic system of interacting factors. This is a major development compared to the factor-research system which had prevailed earlier. Genetic researches to improve the productivity of a certain type of crop, for instance, are now underway according to the new system together with a series of other research projects on the new breed of water and fertilizer requirements, as well as the appropriate type of soil, its resistance to diseases and epidemics etc. As a later development, the above-mentioned research is complemented with socio-economic research into the variables which the new breed may introduce into the entire agricultural system, the manpower it needs, other requisites, the potential of its introduction and persistence in the agricultural system, as well as the cost and returns of this change. Obviously, the long series of researches and studies required for obtaining and applying modern agricultural technology needs immense technical, organizational and financial capabilities which are not adequately available in most, if not in any, of the countries of the region. Besides, the great similarity in the environments of the agricultural region and the partial similarity of sub-environments are to be taken into account. The Arab Gulf countries are similar in possessing desert environment, while the rainfed countries to the north of the Arabian Peninsula are similar. There is also a similarity between the irrigated areas in the river valleys. It is for all these reasons that co-operation in this field on an environmental basis would help these fields of research, avoid duplication, save resources and heal weak points in the systems and capabilities of the existing national research centres. Co-operation in this field may take place at different levels ranging from negotiations and exchange of information to co-ordination and merger whereby a unified regional agricultural research system would be based on the establishment of joint environment research centres that would feed a network of national research centres for application and adaptation.

This issue, as the previous one, has to be taken as a positive initiative that would start with negotiations between countries to reach a clear conceptualization of the nature of the joint action which they want to embark upon;

3. The unbalanced distribution of the agricultural development resources. The comparisons made in this report (see table 5) have indicated that the levels of agricultural self-sufficiency measured by the value of the agricultural domestic product percentage of gross demand on agricultural products (domestic product + imports) and of the current (1984) per capita demand reached 56 per cent in the region as a whole, at an average of 34 per cent in the six GCC states and of 68 per cent in the other seven countries. (However, there is a great discrepancy between the percentages of the last group ranging between 30 per cent in Democratic Yemen to 92 per cent in Syria).

The figures indicate that the region as a whole is still far from achieving a reasonable level of food security which may be considered to be acceptable or reliable. Besides, the potentials of great expansion in agricultural production, particularly horizontally, is almost limited to a small number of countries in the region, chief among which are Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In Egypt, there are potentials for horizontal expansion in the long-term after the establishment of projects for increasing the storage of Nile water. Egypt and Sudan have started joint projects for this purpose. Though there are several studies on prospects of

agricultural production in the countries of the region, available information is contradictory, deficient and unfit for scientific comparability because of methodological differences. This calls for expansion in these studies and strict unification of methodologies to reach a reliable conceptualization of the potentials of the forthcoming stage. It is to be coupled with complementary studies of demand-forecasts to form a complete picture of the food budget in the forthcoming stage and to get acquainted with the ability of countries with major agricultural resources to cover the food deficiency in other countries.

The average per capita income in the four countries possessing greater agricultural weight in the region is as follows for 1984:

Saudi Arabia	US\$ 10,000
Iraq	US\$ 3,000
Syria	US\$ 1,800
Egypt	US\$ 700

This indicates that Saudi Arabia is in a better position to use its agricultural resources, which are limited by nature, without any need for a foreign contribution. Iraq has vast potentials to increase its financial resources but the current exceptional circumstances and the magnitude of the investments required for the utilization of its agricultural resources (such as projects for storing water, networks for irrigation and drainage, land reclamation and other material infrastructural works) limit its present potentials for agricultural investment. It is also obvious that Syria's and Egypt's capacities for providing capital for agricultural infrastructure and investment are limited. On the other hand, the countries of the region which have capital surplus and excessive food shortages, possess very limited agricultural resources compared to the high levels of demand on food commodities as has already been indicated.

The case of unbalanced distribution of agricultural development resources, whether natural or financial, among the countries of the region calls for an appropriate institutional framework that can attract capital from countries with a financial surplus to invest them in countries with agricultural potentials and with proper legal frameworks that can absorb them and guarantee the stability of the investments. This is a major issue in the region, and is still more important at the level of the entire Arab world. It is also difficult and has already met little success though several serious attempts have been made. Chief among these attempts were the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID) in Sudan, the Unified Agreement for the Investment of Arab Capital in the Arab Countries - worked out by the League of Arab States -, the Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation (against non-commercial risks) and a number of joint Arab agricultural investment companies. The aim of these bodies is to invest Arab financial surpluses in agricultural countries in the Arab world.

It is well known that investing capital in agriculture encounters several obstacles because agricultural investment by nature is more liable to hazards than many other types of investments. Besides, it needs a whole combination of requisites to guarantee its success and stability. This combination of technical, economic and social factors, as well as a legislative, institutional

and infrastructural base, which may be called "the investment climate", is to be found in varying degrees in the countries of the region, but are not sufficient enough to attract investors.

In view of the paramount importance of this multi-sided question, it is imperative to make a thorough study of it to get well acquainted with the constraints to investment in different countries. This would be the basis of adopting necessary measures to cope with the constraints. Before making the proposed study it is important to refer to the relevant studies and measures in this respect such as the joint study made by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and to the studies made by the Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation. Perhaps there are other references and it is also possible to consult relevant institutions with regard to this matter.

Item 3: Types of agricultural co-operation and the role of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia:

3-1 For any co-operative effort to succeed and persist it must be based on realizing the mutual and equitable benefit of the parties concerned. It must also be founded on an institutional (and if necessary a legislative) base that would define its objectives and methods, specify the commitments of the parties involved, provide the required technical and administrative services and formulate a practical stable methodology for it. In the field of agriculture in particular, co-operation can take place at different levels and in varying forms as it can proceed gradually both in extent and commitment. Though there are several agricultural fields - some of of which have already been mentioned - where close co-operation between countries can yield major results, practical considerations dictate that co-operation should make a modest beginning within an appropriate institutional framework and then proceed, in the light of the acquired experience, to higher levels and greater fields depending on the conviction of the actual parties in the feasibility and positiveness of joint efforts.

Co-operation in the field of agriculture has won great attention and has been adopted, with varying degrees of success, by most regional organizations such as the European Economic Community (EEC), the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) and Latin American organizations. However, at the Arab level, no comprehensive or semi-regional system has emerged until now, with the exception of the new experiment of the Gulf Co-operation Council states through a comprehensive co-operation agreement covering a number of other sectors. The most important attempt in this respect is the programme concerning the different stages and types of Arab agricultural co-ordination and integration (February 1984) which is still being negotiated by the concerned countries. Other relevant Arab efforts were made by a number of joint Arab institutions specialized in one aspect or another of agriculture. However, they do not comprise organs concerned with practical agricultural co-ordination and integration. Obviously enough, there is a dire need for appropriate institutional arrangements that would enable the countries of the region to examine prospects of joint agricultural action on a practical sustainable basis.

3-2 A review of the methods pursued by the above-mentioned regional organizations and Arab agricultural co-ordination and integration programmes indicates that agricultural co-operation may take place at several levels with graded depths and scopes which may be summed up in the following:

- (a) What might be called the advisory level. The functions and objectives of this type of co-operation are confined to the exchange of advice between the parties concerned on their agricultural policies and plans, in the first place, and the harmonization of these policies as much as possible, in the second place. Regular in-depth consultations in this direction may lead to major benefits conducive to the rationalization of these regional policies and plans particularly at this time when countries are showing growing concern with regard to agriculture and its constant development. It is worth noting that this type of co-operation does not call for any special legislative or administrative measures, or prior or subsequent commitments by countries because any resolution or measure which the countries would adopt as a result of this co-operation are voluntary and are prompted by their own conviction of their feasibility. Participating in this "advisory group" in addition to the representatives of the countries involved may be a number of concerned regional and international organizations. In this manner national experience would be enriched with regional and international experience.

In this connection it is worth noting that the Expert Group Meeting on Critical Factors in Wheat Production and Distribution convened at the initiative of ESCWA from 9 to 12 December 1985 adopted a recommendation on the formation of such an advisory group. It also recommended ESCWA to follow up its implementation to act as the secretariat of the group once it was formed.

- (b) What might be called the level of co-ordination of agricultural policies and plans. This co-ordination requires prior rather than subsequent consultations for the adoption of policies and plans. It also requires a legislative base that would make it legally binding. The CMEA adopts this approach and every member commits him/herself to a specific production objectives as part of a common regional objective. Accordingly, surplus commodities are exchanged within the framework of protection from foreign competition.
- (c) A more developed type of co-operation which goes beyond co-ordination in that it is aimed at achieving complementarity in the resources required for agricultural development, particularly complementarity of financial and agricultural resources. It is one of the modes of co-operation proposed by the above-mentioned Arab programmes for agricultural co-ordination and integration.

As far as ESCWA is concerned it is obvious that the second and the third modes do not lie within the scope of its competence as they are the responsibility of joint Arab institutions at pan-Arab

or regional levels in accordance with their founding the agreements and statutes. In view of this legal aspect and of the importance of cautiousness in such efforts it is believed that the role of ESCWA may be concentrated on establishing an advisory group, boosting its activities and taking initiatives - through it - vis-a-vis the other proposals mentioned in this report (the three reports in the second part).