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THIRTY-SECOND REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 26 to 30 March 2012

AREAS OF PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN FOR THE FOLLOWING BIENNIUM (2014–2015), TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF REGIONAL TECHNICAL COMMISSIONS

Executive summary

- The Regional Conference is responsible for defining regional priorities, providing the most important FAO planning guideline in the Region. These priorities are also the Region's input for revision of the FAO's Strategic Framework 2010–2019 and defining its new Medium Term Plan 2014–2017.
- This paper, based on the priority areas identified by the last Regional Conference, presents an overview of the current state of progress and perceived gaps in food security, family farming, climate change/environmental sustainability and animal and plant health and food safety. The analysis is then broken down by subregion: South America, Caribbean and Central America and Mexico. Given the continued applicability of the abovementioned priority areas, this paper concludes with a suggestion to endorse them for future FAO work.

Suggested action by the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference now plays a critical role in identifying the main challenges for the future work of FAO and in providing input for formulating FAO's new Strategic Objectives, by defining regional priorities. To ensure the fullest impact on FAO priority areas in this and future biennia, the Regional Conference is requested to:

- advise on the extent to which the global challenges identified are consistent with the conditions in the Region, within the context of the global trends and FAO's Vision and Goals;
- suggest regional specificities that should be incorporated into each of the identified challenges, and which should be taken into account in formulating FAO's Strategic Objectives.

The priority areas set two years ago by the 31st Regional Conference (Panama) have proved to be applicable and relevant to the entire Region. This has been confirmed by the consultations in which FAO has engaged with its member countries to develop the national and subregional priority frameworks and the FAO strategic framework for cooperation for each of the four priority areas. It is therefore suggested that the Regional Conference should confirm the applicability of

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the following four thematic priority areas:

- ***Food and nutritional security***: an area in which member countries will be assisted in capacity-building for the development of public policies, legislation and institutional arrangements, technological innovation and management in order to improve food production, access to food and the governance of national food and nutritional security systems.
- ***Climate change and environmental sustainability***: an area in which governments will be assisted in strengthening national programmes for the sustainable management of natural resources, agroclimatic risk reduction, mitigation of emissions and adaptation of the agriculture sector to climate change, in the new context of low-carbon development.
- ***Family farming***: an area intended to assist member countries in developing institutional frameworks and social and productive innovation strategies for developing the great potential of family farming for food production, income generation and rural development.
- ***Animal and plant health and food safety***: an area aimed at building countries' technical and institutional capacity to improve animal health, plant health and food safety, and at developing information systems and health coordination mechanisms between countries to reduce the risks to the region of transboundary pests and diseases.

Any questions concerning the content of this paper may be sent to Mr Tito Díaz, Secretary of the 32nd FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (Tito.Diaz@fao.org).

I. Introduction

1. The identification of regional priorities consists of a decentralized process for identifying important areas in subregions and countries relating to problems reported by governments and other stakeholders with which FAO works, including LACFC, CODEGALAC and COPESCAALC.¹ Regional priorities reflect a medium-term strategy rationale where FAO is expected to focus its efforts on a small and relevant set of objectives. This represents a major change in two ways. First, the fact that it is a decentralized process means that it is the prerogative of the Regional Conference, represented by countries, to identify and define the areas where FAO could have the greatest impact. Second, by making the Regional Conference an FAO governing body, its mandate is weighty enough to enable the entire Organization to allocate its resources to ensure that over time it can use its potential to meet the challenges that regional priorities impose upon it.

2. It is important to note that this medium- and long-term targeting mechanism helps to build capacity over the fairly long term. This reduces volatility in planning and programming, making FAO better able to support country strategies, which form part of medium-term state policies. Notwithstanding, FAO has also demonstrated sufficient capacity to address short-term issues of paramount importance, such as the recent food price rises and volatility. Not only will this capacity to address short-term issues continue, it will be enhanced, giving FAO equal capacity to assist with the most urgent and important matters in its areas of expertise.

¹ LACFC: Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission; CODEGALAC: Commission on Livestock Development for Latin America and the Caribbean; COPESCAALC: Commission for Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture of Latin America and the Caribbean.

3. Formally, the identification of regional priorities relies on mechanisms of interaction and dialogue with governments in the Region. It is within this dynamic that the Country Programming Framework (CPF) for FAO cooperation was formulated and endorsed by many governments. At present, more than one-third of the documents have been endorsed by governments and a further one-third of completed proposals are under discussion for final approval. These commitments represent FAO's agenda to serve every country.
4. At the 31st Regional Conference in Panama, governments established four priority areas:
- food and nutritional security;
 - climate change and environmental sustainability;
 - family farming;
 - animal and plant health and food safety, with the emphasis on transboundary diseases.
5. Since then, FAO has been working on these four fronts and has successfully coordinated its own capabilities and those of other entities working in the Region to address these challenges more fully. However, it is necessary to review global trends and trends in the agriculture sector on an ongoing basis and, if necessary, to adjust FAO's schedule of work. With particular regard to agriculture and food, the global scenario is changing rapidly, with the following global trends: (i) food demand is increasing while patterns of food consumption are changing towards more livestock products, vegetable oils and sugar; (ii) growing competition and diminishing quality and quantity of natural resources and loss of ecosystem services; (iii) energy security and scarcity, which will require agrifood chains to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels; (iv) food price increases and volatility; (v) changing agrarian structures, agro-industrialization and globalization of food production; (vi) changing patterns in agricultural trade and the evolution of trade policies; (vii) climate change; (viii) science and technology as a main source of agricultural productivity and private-sector dominance of these processes; (ix) increased recognition of the centrality of governance and a commitment to country-led national development processes; and (x) increased vulnerability owing to natural and human-induced disasters and crises.²
6. An analysis of the above trends, incorporating FAO's Vision and Goals, points to the following global challenges for the Organization's future work (i) increasing the production of agriculture, forestry and fisheries and its contribution to economic growth and development, while ensuring sustainable ecosystem management and strategies for adaptation to, and mitigation of climatic change; (ii) eradicating food insecurity, nutrient deficiencies and unsafe food in the face of increasing food prices and high price volatility; (iii) rationalizing food consumption and nutrition, while seeking to improve consumption patterns and habits; (iv) improving the livelihood of the population living in rural areas, including smallholder farmers, foresters and fisher folk, and in particular women, in the context of urbanization and changing agrarian structures; (v) ensuring fairer and more inclusive food and agriculture systems at local, national and international levels; (vi) increasing resilience of livelihoods to agriculture and food security threats and shocks; and (vii) strengthening governance mechanisms to meet the needs of food, agriculture, forestry and fisheries systems at national, regional and global levels.³
7. Given the importance of these trends and challenges for agriculture and rural life, it is crucial to acknowledge them when defining FAO's substantive priorities over the coming years, where South-South cooperation is seen to hold great potential for major progress in developing countries. While most of the problems lie in developing countries, these countries also have the productive potential for resolving them.

² Global trends and future challenges for the work of the Organization (LARC/12/INF/8).

³ *Op. cit.*

8. Nearly two years have elapsed during which FAO in Latin America and the Caribbean has been guided by the four priorities mentioned in paragraph 4. It is suggested that the Conference should endorse these priorities for the reasons set out below.

II. Realities, gaps and visions in the subregions

9. The areas were prioritized in 2010 on the basis of a set of circumstances in the Region that are just as applicable, if not more so, today. With respect to food and nutritional security, despite significant achievements in strengthening legal institutions in a number of countries – with institutional changes and the adoption of specific laws guaranteeing the right to food – the fact remains that the problem of rising food prices has jeopardized access to food in all countries and put at risk the significant progress achieved in reducing poverty in the Region. The upward trend in food prices is set to continue, although the rise may be less steep. Price volatility will also continue for as long as there is ongoing climate variability and investment migration from the financial sector into commodities, including foodstuffs traded on international markets. The likely rise in energy prices, especially for oil, will also affect such factors as farm machinery and final-product transport costs. All this culminates in high food prices and food security problems.

10. This scenario has heightened concern among the Region's net food importing countries. In particular, there has been a clear impact on Caribbean countries, which have had to earmark significant extra funding to buy more expensive food, as well as on Central American countries and Mexico, which have had to import grain and oilseeds at higher prices than in the past. South America, which received large inflows of capital from higher export prices on the back of increased food demand from China and India, expanded its social policy coverage, especially conditional cash transfer programmes, in order to ensure access to food for the most vulnerable sector of the population. Food prices and access mechanisms are crucial to food security and escalating food prices have had an impact on the Region: while around 9 percent of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean is undernourished, in the latter part of the last decade the figure rose to 15 percent in regions like Central America.⁴

11. Over this period, climate change has become an increasingly tangible problem for society. In the Andean region, it is impossible to ignore the impact on glaciers and fresh water reservoirs. In arid regions, rainless periods have become longer, reducing water availability. The Region's deserts are advancing, while farming areas have been forced to migrate or shrink. Subtropical and tropical regions have suffered flooding, undermining food production. The forecast is for more uncertain climate behaviour, more frequent extreme events and, in general, greater problems in planning activities in agriculture, forestry, livestock, aquaculture and fisheries and, ultimately, in food production. The negative impact of climate change will be more severe in countries already suffering extreme hydrometeorological events, which is a serious concern in areas that are also suffering high levels of poverty and food insecurity. As a result of more frequent extreme weather events, agricultural losses will become more frequent, leading to more unstable local, national or regional food availability. According to the scenarios predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), food insecurity could increase significantly.

12. In such a context, it is necessary to develop policies that integrate the issue of food security with sustainable agriculture, including good practices in the crop, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture systems to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. Indeed, FAO has focused its work on climate change adaptation and the promotion of climate-smart agriculture and livestock production. Agricultural systems must assure a number of key environmental services (sustainable agrosystem management, carbon sequestration, water resource management, soil and biodiversity protection, etc.) and socio-economic services (agricultural and non-agricultural production, food provision,

⁴ Marco Subregional de Prioridades de Mediano y Largo Plazo para América Central [in Spanish] (Subregional medium- and long-term priority framework for Central America).

preservation of traditional knowledge and culture, etc.) that contribute not only to climate change mitigation but also to improving the resilience of productive and natural ecosystems to climate change.⁵

13. Lastly, as a result of climate change, the Region is facing greater risks associated with the emergence and re-emergence of crop pests and animal diseases, as well as the increased occurrence of zoonotic diseases and food-borne infections and intoxications, with potentially devastating effects on the economy and public health.

14. From a perspective of sustainable rural development, family farming, in its capacity as food provider, poverty mitigator and buffer against economic and environmental shocks, has been identified as a suitable tool for tackling food shortage problems and the reality of poverty in rural areas of the Americas. Of particular note is the urgent appeal made by countries at various events on the subject of food price rises and volatility, held in 2011 by FAO, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)⁶, to promote family farming as a means of increasing food production and resolving the disconnect between the Region's economic growth and poverty reduction/eradication, especially in rural areas. Indeed, not only does family farming contribute to all countries by providing food (it is responsible for between 27 percent and 67 percent of total food production) and creating jobs (agricultural employment accounts for between 57 percent and 77 percent of total employment), it also contributes to more balanced rural development. Through the use of native varieties, family farming also lessens dependence on oil and oil products and, by using polyculture and crop–livestock–tree farming systems, it plays a key role in climate change mitigation and adaptation.⁷ Improving the living and production conditions of family farmers, foresters and fishers, particularly women, will help to build fairer prospects for rural areas.

15. The Region needs to make further progress in understanding, characterizing and quantifying family farming to enable it to design differentiated policies, in line with governments' public investment, macroeconomic and trade policies, thereby improving the performance of family farming. This will help to reduce poverty (particularly as regards lack of food access) and to step up efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Just over one-third of Latin America's population live in poverty and at least 13 percent live in extreme poverty. In rural areas, 52 percent live below the poverty line. Owing to its productive potential, family farming is a priority for addressing the Region's problems. However, to unleash its potential, major challenges will need to be overcome in terms of the existing institutional framework, market access, and the sustainable intensification of production.

16. Access to food is relevant from three major standpoints: food availability stemming from production and/or trade; food prices; and food quality. Food accessibility is totally meaningless if the quality of such food is poor and, even worse, if it endangers people's health. Poor health and safety are even more damaging in areas where the most vulnerable, lowest-income segment of the population manages its food. In a sense, this is consistent with the prevalence and widespread presence of basic diseases affecting large numbers of people, and has a highly adverse impact.

17. The presence of crop and animal pests and diseases, as well as the occurrence of foodborne diseases of animal or plant origin, cost Latin American and Caribbean governments, producers and consumers billions of dollars a year and pose a threat to public health, food security and trade. The risks associated with pests and diseases must be tackled promptly by means of coordinated, technically

⁵ Marco Estratégico de Mediano Plazo de Cooperación de FAO en Cambio Climático y Sostenibilidad Ambiental en América Latina y el Caribe 2012-15 [in Spanish] (FAO medium-term strategic framework for cooperation in climate change and environmental sustainability in Latin America and the Caribbean 2012–2015).

⁶ Eventos en las regiones de Centroamérica, Caribe, América del Sur y México [in Spanish] (Events in the regions of Central America, the Caribbean, South America and Mexico) (<http://www.rlc.fao.org/es/politicas/semprecios.htm>).

⁷ FAO Medium-Term Strategic Framework for Cooperation in Family Agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean (2012–2015) (http://www.rlc.fao.org/iniciativa/expertos_agri/documentos/trabajo/salcedo_en.pdf).

advanced national systems of animal and plant health and food safety, and by developing harmonized regional programmes for prevention, control and eradication. Also, better governance of animal and plant health and food safety systems in both the public and private sectors is essential for addressing this situation effectively. However, many Latin American and Caribbean countries still have serious institutional, technical and management weaknesses in their animal and plant health and food safety services and have not developed appropriate policies and strategies for efficient risk management in agricultural and food production chains.⁸ It is urgent to push ahead with building country capacity, with the emphasis on: (a) health and food safety policies and regulatory frameworks; (b) strategies for the prevention, control and eradication of transboundary diseases and for national and regional food safety; (c) risk management in agrifood and agro-industrial chains; and (d) information systems, health education, communication and advocacy. This supports the applicability of animal and plant health and food safety as a priority area for FAO technical assistance in the Region.

A. South America

18. Even though food production is sufficient in the subregion as a whole, shortfalls in individual countries have raised concerns for food security. The core problem in the subregion is not food availability but food access. While food supply often outstrips consumption, paradoxically 28 million people failed to meet their minimum calorie requirement between 2003 and 2005, even though the subregion's food supply was on average 47 percent higher than demand.⁹ During the 1990–2008 period, major progress was made in eradicating hunger from the subregion. In fact it was a record performance, as the undernourished population was reduced by more than 8 million. The Southern Cone was led by Brazil, whose undernourished population shrank by around 4 million, but other South American countries experienced a similar reduction. Nevertheless, there are still wide gaps to be closed, against a backdrop of price uncertainty that poses the most serious threat to the very poorest, who spend most of their income on food.

19. Climate change has had a significant impact on the Region. Natural disasters in the subregion have become more acute and there are recurring problems of drought and flooding in some areas and frost in others, so much so that these events are becoming repetitive and difficult to control. The loss of water sources owing to shrinkage of the Andean glaciers is set to worsen still further. All this has affected the production of grain and oilseed, which several countries rely upon to generate foreign exchange earnings, as they are net exporters. The countries of the subregion also face the challenge of reversing the degradation of farm and pastoral land, improving the efficiency of pasture-based cattle production and encouraging the adoption of integrated crop–livestock–tree farming systems to reduce emissions per unit of output, improve production sustainability and climate change adaptation, and maintain their competitive advantage in markets.

20. South America has a particularly important role to play in the global food balance as it is a geographical area with an abundance of a critical resource: water. Not only are there the Andean glaciers, as mentioned earlier, there are also river basins in the south-east of the continent that provide and store water. This water will be needed to enable South America to produce more food and continue to be a net exporter in the Region, given the expected growth in demand for food.¹⁰ Therefore the priority is relevant for two reasons: the subregion is a supplier of food to other regions but, at the

⁸ Marco Estratégico de Asistencia Técnica de FAO en Sanidad Agropecuaria e Inocuidad de los Alimentos 2012–2015, FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean [in Spanish] (FAO strategic framework for technical assistance on animal and plant health and food safety 2012–2015).

⁹ Desafíos y Perspectivas para la Subregión de América del Sur, Marco Estratégico de Mediano y Largo Plazo para la Acción de la FAO en la Subregión de América del Sur, 2012–2015 [in Spanish] (Challenges and prospects for the South American subregion: FAO medium- and long-term strategic framework for action in the South American subregion, 2012–2015).

¹⁰ Global trends and future challenges for the work of the Organization (LARC/12/INF/8).

same time, the availability of the water upon which it relies is increasingly threatened by global warming and climate change.

21. From the standpoint of family farming, while there has been institutional progress in Southern Cone countries, there is still a need to strengthen further this important farming segment. Family farming is of undoubted importance in all countries of the subregion and the immediate challenges relate to: (i) improving productivity; (ii) market access with appropriate pricing; (iii) access to the appropriate mix of funding and technical assistance; and (iv) strengthening the institutional framework for the promotion of family farming (promotion laws and programmes). The promotion of family farming needs to be linked with the new sustainable rural development approaches, especially new climate-smart farming practices that foster biodiversity management, food security and poverty reduction.

22. A number of factors in the subregion have contributed to the re-emergence of crop and animal pests and diseases. One is higher temperatures, which have triggered new problems. The impact of rising food prices on low-income populations has resulted in the substitution of foodstuffs that are cheaper but in many cases fail to meet proper food quality and safety standards. Despite some countries' efforts, diseases such as foot and mouth disease and classical swine fever still pose a risk to the subregion in terms of animal health, farmer's incomes, the food security of vulnerable communities, trade and the economy, especially in Andean countries. In addition progress is needed on the "One Health" approach, strengthening the animal–human–ecosystems interface.

B. Caribbean

23. The past few years have been difficult for the subregion, as reflected in low growth rates in countries' economies, which in some cases have been negative. The economic recession in the United States has slowed growth in the Caribbean, compounded by a rise in the cost of fuel and food, which are imported. Many Caribbean economies are poorly diversified and highly dependent on the economic situation in North America. Remittances play a crucial role, as does tourism, which is the key activity.

24. A clear priority for the Caribbean is food and nutritional security and, in this context, efforts to increase self-sufficiency in food production. The subregion has been hit particularly hard by rising food prices and the fact that it is a net importer. Many Caribbean countries export services, especially to the United States, and have had to maintain a competitive exchange rate against the dollar to protect their trade balance. The combination of food imports and depreciating exchange rates has caused food prices, which were already high at the outset, to remain high owing to exchange constraints and relatively poor availability of foreign exchange. The downturn in activities such as tourism led to lower international reserves, with the result that exchange rates failed to appreciate as they did in the rest of Latin America. With depreciating local currencies or a relatively expensive dollar, the need to import food resulted in high prices in local currency.

25. Climate change has had a severe impact on the Caribbean. While these tropical countries have been affected by extreme weather events, the scenarios do not vary much in terms of ecosystems and ecological zones, where some effects could be seen as positive and able to offset negative ones, at least partially. Poor crop production was influenced by changing temperatures and the occurrence of hurricanes and other weather phenomena of high frequency and intensity, causing extensive damage to crop and livestock production, as well as raising water levels in coastal areas, with an adverse impact on activities such as fishing.

26. The gap between production and consumption continues to widen in some countries, where imports account for around 80 percent of domestic consumption. In these economies, the agricultural sector is the third or fourth biggest contributor to GDP, making such countries highly dependent on foreign supply and more vulnerable to food price increases. This calls for promoting and strengthening domestic food production, with the emphasis on family farming.

27. Strategically, trade integration remains a key area of work for the Caribbean. Given the need to facilitate trade in food, especially between countries in the subregion, the issue of animal and plant health and food safety is seen as crucial. One way in which the subregion can manage its food dependence more effectively is through efficient trading of food surpluses within the subregion. This entails expanding the subregional market, which should also open up new investment opportunities in agriculture. This is a key area of interest that must be addressed by means of negotiations and intrasubregional agreements on foreign trade. However, as regards the flow of food, maintaining proper levels of health and safety increases the likelihood of increased trade flows, including tourism, which is one of the main sources of income. From the perspective of the domestic market, linking this priority to public health opens up great potential for improvement.

C. Central America and Mexico

28. In Central America, 51 percent of the population are poor, a figure significantly above the average for Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole. In rural areas a reported two out of three people are living in poverty, and the subregion still experiences high levels of chronic child malnutrition, with figures of around 13 percent in rural areas. Despite major efforts, in Mexico there are still around 21 million people suffering food poverty (19 percent of the total population), of whom 12.3 million live in rural areas.

29. A large proportion of households are unable to access food in sufficient quantity and quality, which has been exacerbated by recent food price rises and volatility. A number of countries in the subregion are not food self-sufficient and instead are net importers, making them vulnerable on account of the abovementioned fluctuations and foreign exchange requirements. To enhance food security in such countries, exports of other items are required to accumulate international reserves, together with less standard variables like foreign remittances.

30. Food and nutritional security is a priority area with several complex facets relating not only to domestic production conditions, but also to possibilities for trade and for using imports to meet shortfalls. Two groups can be distinguished within the agriculture sector. The first is corporate agriculture and the second, which is extremely important owing to the number of individuals and households involved, is family farming. In Central America and Mexico, not only is it a key sector for the production of staple grains, which are the mainstay of the subregion's diet, it is also a sector with severe constraints in terms of capital, technology, financing and market access. Challenges for enhancing the Region's food and nutritional security are therefore to boost local food markets, promote the recovery of traditional foods and establish or strengthen programmes for promoting family farming.

31. Over the past 20 years, the number of tropical storms, hurricanes and floods has increased in all Central American countries and they are frequently reported by the media. Owing to the increased frequency and intensity of weather events, probably as a result of climate change, smallholder farmers do not have enough time to recover from adverse effects, leading to a loss of capital for huge numbers of smallholders. One of the priority actions in this thematic area is therefore to improve agroclimatic risk-management systems.

32. Major opportunities for agriculture have been opened up by globalization and trade liberalization, in the form of global agreements and binational treaties, as well as by increasing subregional integration. Opportunities do exist, but exploiting them calls for compliance with the animal and plant health requirements governing international trade in crop and livestock products. In addition, a regional approach is needed to manage and control transboundary pests and diseases, many of which can have a devastating impact on the output of family farmers, as they have fewer resources to deal with them. Furthermore, it is crucially important to prevent, manage and control such pests and diseases because of their implications for family farmers' productivity, and hence food and income generation.

III. Focus on priority areas for the future

33. Two years ago, this Regional Conference identified four clear priorities on which FAO has been working since. An analysis of the circumstances that led to the original decision clearly reveals that the problems targeted have not yet been resolved, meaning that these priorities are still applicable.

34. Indeed, the priorities set by the Regional Conference two years ago have proven to be relevant for the entire Region, as confirmed by the consultations that followed the subregional priority frameworks and the FAO strategic framework for cooperation drawn up for each of the four priority areas. FAO work in these areas has taken a medium- and long-term approach.

35. The FAO strategic framework for cooperation for the four areas, in line with the subregional priority frameworks, is broad enough to incorporate short-term issues and other specific needs at regional level and in each subregion. Similarly, FAO can adapt the emphasis on the different priorities to suit each country's needs. The gender perspective and consideration of the needs of indigenous communities, Afro-descendants and rural youth have been mainstreamed into all related FAO activities.

36. In the past two years, two lessons have been learned. The first is that, in any medium-term strategy a minimum amount of time is required between sowing and reaping. Project implementation is not a short-term process, and coherent and consistent work on carefully identified priorities is required in order to change the current situation. The second is that there are still gaps to be closed in the original four priority areas in Latin America and the Caribbean.

37. To counter past problems of dispersion and limited impact, a clear signal is therefore needed that efforts and actions will be concentrated on a small set of priorities, at both regional and global levels. The Regional Conference now plays a critical role in identifying the main challenges for the future and in providing input for formulating FAO's new Strategic Objectives, by defining regional priorities. To ensure the fullest impact on FAO priority areas in this and future biennia, the Regional Conference is requested to:

- advise on the extent to which the global challenges identified are consistent with the conditions in the Region, within the context of the global trends and FAO's Vision and Goals;
- suggest regional specificities that should be incorporated into each of the identified challenges, and which should be taken into account in formulating FAO's Strategic Objectives.

It is therefore suggested that the Regional Conference should confirm the applicability of the following four thematic priority areas.

- **Food security**, with the emphasis on the governance of food and nutritional security systems, access to food and changes in consumption patterns. It also addresses such issues as transparency and competition in food and agricultural markets, trade policy, the dynamics of land, food sovereignty, the rural labour market and the eradication of rural poverty. In addition, it seeks to strengthen the Initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean without Hunger (ALCSH).
- **Climate change and environmental sustainability**, with the emphasis on: institution-building (development of national agroclimatic disaster plans with special attention to adaptation, reconstruction and risk management) aimed at promoting sustainable, low-carbon agricultural development; research, communication, information and training at all levels (technicians, professionals and decision-makers); and forestry development, as a factor of environmental protection and sustainability.
- **Family farming**, with the emphasis on: the sustainable intensification of goods and service production; market access (boosting local markets, public procurement to supply school feeding programmes and integration of chains); development/reorientation of institutions (national strategies for promoting family farming, institutional arrangements, records of family farmers, legislation and policy instruments). This concept also focuses

on the development of small-scale fisheries as part of a household production rationale and the promotion of sustainable rural development in general.

- ***Animal and plant health and food safety***, with the emphasis on: improving health, eradicating foot and mouth disease and classical swine fever from the continent and controlling huanglongbing (HLB), also known as citrus greening disease; enhancing institutional capacity, national health policy frameworks and the human resources of national systems of animal and plant health and food safety under the “One Health” approach, seeking to improve regional coordination; promoting smallholders' access to animal and plant health services; and improving biosecurity in family and backyard farming systems.