

appointed successor to the retiring Director-General, Sir John Boyd Orr. The fourth annual conference also met at Washington during 15-29 November, 1948.

In a report to the annual conference the Director-General estimated that for the first time since the war provisional exports of bread and coarse grains would almost meet provisional import requirements during the period July, 1948, to June, 1949. North America has become principal supplier of all deficit areas, and this dependence on hard currency means that unless international trade and payment problems can be resolved there may be disequilibrium amongst supply, demand, and distribution. FAO considers that stability in prices and distribution is the best guarantee against such mal-adjustment, and the Council was instructed to prepare tentative plans suitable to all commodities which are in short supply or which might become surplus to demand under normal trading conditions.

For the world as a whole it remains an urgent problem to improve nutrition and increase food-production, which, in Asia at least, is not expanding rapidly enough to keep pace with population increases. Rice, which is a basic food for half the world's population, is in critically short supply, and the surplus for distribution in 1949 is less than half the quantity available in pre-war years. The conference established an International Rice Commission to enable Governments to deal co-operatively with production, conservation, distribution within countries, and consumption. This Commission met at Bangkok in March this year and the seventeen member Governments agreed on a 1949 programme of work.

Regional activities were further developed during the year, operations being decentralized from FAO Headquarters through regional offices in Europe, the Near East, the Far East, and Latin America. A series of 1948 conferences at Baguio, in the Philippines, drew up plans for co-operative action to increase rice and fish supplies and improve nutrition in South and East Asia. In Latin America there were conferences on forestry products and nutrition, and in Europe one on rehabilitation and development.

A Cairo conference made recommendations for the increase of food-supplies in the Near East, and other conferences dealt with Indo-Pacific fisheries, live-stock diseases, locust control, soil conservation, and infestation of stored food. A special Mission to Venezuela investigated edible oils. Demonstrations of food-preservation methods were made in Czechoslovakia, Greece, and Italy, and Czechoslovakia was assisted in the construction of refrigeration plants. Training schools for statisticians were held in the Near East, Mexico, and China, while China, Siam, and Ethiopia have been helped to develop veterinary services. A large number of FAO experts are engaged in field operations throughout the world.