

DECISION N° 495

**REGIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME
ON FOOD SECURITY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL,

HAVING SEEN:

The document "Proposal for a Regional Cooperation Programme on Food Security in Latin America and the Caribbean" (SP/CL/XXXIV.O/DT N° 12-08).

CONSIDERING:

The conclusions and recommendations made by the Member States of SELA within the framework of the High-Level Regional Meeting on Food Security in Latin America and the Caribbean (Caracas, 30 May 2008) and the Regional Meeting on the Challenges of the Adverse International Economic Situation (Caracas, 30 October 2008).

DECIDES:

Sole Article.- To approve the "Regional Cooperation Programme on Food Security in Latin America and the Caribbean" (2009-2011), to be implemented within the framework of the Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat.

I. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

In May 2008, the Permanent Secretariat convened its Member States and various international and regional organizations related to the agricultural sector to participate in the High-Level Regional Meeting on Food Security in Latin America and the Caribbean. The representatives of the governments took note with interest of the document drafted by the Permanent Secretariat, titled "The increase in food prices: SELA's response" (SP/RRAN-SAALC/DT No 2 - 08), which served as the basis for the discussions that took place among the representatives of the Member States.

Participants in this meeting included officials of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), on behalf of the UN Emergency Unit for facing the food crisis; the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Cooperation (IICA) and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO).

During the debates of the meeting, participants underscored that the increase in food prices on a global scale affects the vast majority of the most important agricultural products for our region; and that there are many factors for the increase in food prices, some of them are of a short-term nature and others are the result from structural, long-term tendencies.

Similarly, participants recognized that the strategies to face the causes and expressions of the current crisis must include, as a top priority, the use of regional cooperation mechanisms among Latin American and Caribbean countries. Specifically, participants agreed that:

1. It is necessary to reposition the policies to promote agriculture within the development strategies in our countries.
2. Latin America and the Caribbean must undertake coordinated actions – to defend the interests of the region – in the negotiations of the Doha Development Round, particularly in the negotiations on agriculture, since agricultural protectionism in industrialized countries is one of the main causes for the increase in food prices.
3. it is imperative to exchange information about the progress made by each country of our region in the area of agricultural technology, with a view to strengthening horizontal technical cooperation in this field.

In concluding the debates in this Regional Meeting, the Member States made the following recommendations to the Permanent Secretariat of SELA:

1. To keep a permanent analysis on the various effects related to the food crisis and, in this regard, they emphasized the important work that SELA – with the support of other regional and multilateral organizations such as FAO, WFP, IICA, PAHO, IDB and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – could carry out as an organization for Latin American and Caribbean consultation and coordination.
2. To continue with detailed analyses of the weight that the various factors – both factors due to specific situations and structural factors – have on food production, from the economic, social and environmental standpoints.

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3. To contribute – in consultation with its Member States – to establish a Regional Cooperation Programme on Food Security in Latin America and the Caribbean, and lend support to existing subregional cooperation programmes on food security. The objectives of the Regional Cooperation Programme on Food Security would include the following:

- a) to evaluate the convenience of establishing a regional network of research institutes on food security;
- b) to promote the establishment, in any regional financial institution, of a Special Fund to assist countries with their food emergency programmes; and
- c) to study the possible benefits for the region of a Regional Agreement for High-Priority Food Supply.

Additionally, the representatives of the Member States suggested that the Permanent Secretariat of SELA should organize and convene a meeting to follow up the FAO “High-Level Conference on World Food Security and Challenges posed by Climate Change and Bioenergy”, held in Rome (from 3 to 5 June 2008), in order to analyze its results and make strides with the regional strategy on this issue. Such meeting was held in the headquarters of SELA on 30 October 2008.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

The fundamental goal of this regional cooperation programme is to consolidate a regional forum with a Latin American and Caribbean scope, within the framework of SELA, for exchange of information, analysis, dissemination and support to training of public sector officials in the area of food security.

This general goal will be accomplished by complying with the following specific objectives:

- a) To contribute to the gradual coordination of the various efforts underway at the subregional level in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to guarantee food security in the countries of the region.
- b) To promote the exchange of information, analyses, experiences and best practices as regards the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes and policies to on food security in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- c) To conduct training and professional improvement activities in order to support institutional capacities in the Member States of SELA and in the various integration and cooperation organizations existing in the region, for outlining, implementing and evaluating food security policies.
- d) To disseminate information about relevant analyses as well as best practices at the regional level, in order to contribute to promote agriculture, fishing and aquaculture in our countries and to give priority to guaranteeing food security for the most vulnerable strata of our population.
- e) To ponder the usefulness and, if it feasible, to promote the creation of a network of regional research institutes in the area of food security.

- f) To evaluate the convenience of establishing, in any regional financial institution, a Special Fund to assist countries with their food emergency programmes.
- g) To analyze the possible benefits for the region of a Regional Agreement for High-Priority Food Supply, which also includes those products derived from fishing.

III. ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED

The Permanent Secretariat of SELA would conduct the following activities in order to comply with the objectives proposed in this Regional Cooperation Programme:

1. Annual Regional Meeting on Food Security in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the participation of representatives of the Member States of Latin America and the Caribbean related to the design and implementation of agricultural development programmes and policies, as well as representatives of international organizations related to agricultural development.
2. Annual training workshop for public sector officials of the Member States of SELA directly in charge of outlining, implementing and evaluating national programmes for agricultural development.
3. Creation of a network of regional research institutes in the area of food security in Latin America and the Caribbean; and promotion of actions to guarantee the transfer of appropriate agricultural technologies to the countries of the region, with a view to ensuring an increase in food production.
4. Consultation and coordination meeting with officials of integration and cooperation organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean responsible for regional and subregional food security programmes.
5. To take note of the actions being undertaken by OLDEPESCA with a view to promoting the use of small pelagic fish for the production of food stuff with high protein contents for human consumption.

IV. PERIOD FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME

This Regional Cooperation Programme on Food Security should be conducted during a period of three years (January 2009 – December 2011). A second stage of the programme could be undertaken, in case the States Members of SELA decide to do so upon the conclusion of the process to evaluate its effectiveness in December 2011.

V. BUDGET

(Budget figures do not appear in our Website)