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**PANEL: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN FOOD PROTECTION:
"FROM THE FARM TO THE TABLE"**

FOOD SECURITY

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In one of his most quoted aphorisms, Tommasi di Lampedusa, aristocrat and man of vast culture, reminds us that “for things to change, they must remain the same.” He was referring, of course, to the restoration of conservatism, hoping that manipulation would freeze historical processes. However, perhaps much more profoundly, he was noting that, depending on their nature and how they occur, even sweeping changes can keep the balance of power intact. Thus, change ends up as a preemptive strategy to retain power, provided that it comes at the initiative of an enlightened elite.

But this century—the “short” century, as Eric Hobsbawn (1994) called it—has also proven, painfully and discouragingly for many, that sweeping changes, even those emanating from below and affecting the social fabric, have represented a significant setback for the fortunes and happiness of the people and thus have not kept faith with their promise. In fact, as Joseph Stiglitz¹ recently reminded us, the changes implied by some forms of development also entail profound social transformations. And, if reforms designed to promote development are to transform entire societies, they will have to involve these societies in their entirety. This has led to growing concern about “ownership” and participation in development strategies and in the creation of institutions that give expression to that ownership and participation. (Ibid).

Let us briefly review what we understand by “change.” We want change because we want progress, because we want to alter and improve an existing situation. But, at the same time, we must admit that we are not starting at zero: there is no *tabula rasa*. As a result, we must respect the need for continuity. Historical processes provide us with an inheritance and a structure, give us starting points, and impose constraints. Weaving a new tapestry for the global society demands that we merge the threads of change with the threads of continuity. We can state today that we are beginning to witness, in a perhaps still contradictory way, the emergence of a new consensus. We know what is bad and what is unacceptable—hunger, malnutrition, torture, inequity—and, at the same time, we agree on what is good, on what can help us meet the goals to which we now aspire: freedom, democracy, the right to choose, and full citizenship.

Furthermore, we understand that these goals can only be met through a fragile balance between change and continuity: **change** for adapting to new situations, to scientific and technological innovation, to geopolitical change, to economic and political movements, and to the redefinition of roles and responsibilities between governments and civil society; and **continuity** for guaranteeing the effects of principles that remain valid over time and for recognizing the influence of the past on the present and on building the future. When advocating change, we must therefore seek balance. We must find a path imbued with a rationality that fully understands the process of change, appreciating its

¹ Stiglitz, J. Distribution, Efficiency and Voice: Designing the Second Generation of Reforms, Conference on Asset Distribution, Poverty and Economic Growth, Brasilia, Brazil, July 1998.

roots and sensing its direction, its pace, and the risks involved. Only then can we become the architects of change instead of becoming swept up in it by the mere force of events.

What changes are we referring to? At the most basic level, humanity must change the way it feeds itself. We must develop new and better production, distribution, and consumption processes. We must galvanize the talent and creativity of every sector of society to devise new strategies and solutions. Each of the seven commitments of the Rome Declaration and Plan of Action issued by the World Food Summit of 1996 makes special mention of the joint role that governments and civil society should exercise in the monitoring and implementation of these commitments. In fact, as national and international agencies increasingly recognize, partnerships and alliances are the cornerstone of successful development.

Why is this such a critical topic? Because it has been clearly demonstrated that:

- although the market is the driving force for development and well-being, failures have occurred because of incomplete or unequal access to information;
- although public policies play a decisive role in creating environments that enable business to succeed, there are numerous shortcomings in their implementation owing to distortions arising from opportunistic or profit-seeking behavior; and,
- although the organizations of civil society, and specifically, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), are fundamental for development, there also are flaws in cooperation that need to be addressed.

As a result, strategic partnerships are not only a simple gesture of good will but an institutional structure that is fundamental to overcoming the limitations and constraints that we encounter when seeking balanced and equitable development.

First of all, I would like to present a general summary of the current and future world outlook for food security. I would then like to briefly outline some case studies, to highlight some interesting activities in some countries that to some extent have alleviated food insecurity. Finally, I would like to discuss a strategic food security program that FAO is implementing.

1. The Concept of Food Security

In elementary terms, food security means that the population always has access to enough nourishing food to live a healthy and active life. Four dimensions are implied in the concept of food security: access, stability, availability, and sustainability of supply; and there are several levels of aggregation—global, national, the household, and the individual. Given the multidimensional nature of this concept, it is safe to say that achieving universal food security for the individual, which implies similar achievements at the subsequent levels, requires a combination of social, political, and economic conditions. With the growing integration of the world economy, it is becoming more difficult for a country to remain unaffected by the decisions and activities of other countries. Similarly, this same integration generates potential, transmitting the effects of a drop in production in one country to all the countries and, hence, cushioning the negative impact that it would have on food security in a given country.

2. A Sketch of the Food Security Map

2.1 At the global level

Even though food production levels are high enough to meet the nutritional requirements of the population and the per capita supply of food for human consumption will increase faster than population growth for at least the next 20 or 30 years, more than 800 million people are currently suffering from malnutrition (nutritional energy deficiency).² Of these, 255 and 269 million live in South Asia and East Asia, respectively (22% and 16% of their respective populations). In sub-Saharan Africa, while the absolute numbers are smaller (215 million people), proportionately 43% of the population suffers from malnutrition.³ Millions more suffer from protein-energy deficiency, micronutrient deficiencies, and the effects of contaminated food and polluted water. Most of those

² Although this figure includes only the hungry in developing countries, it should be underscored that there are foci of food insecurity in developed countries, especially in those with changing economies. For example while there are no precise figures for the Countries in Transition, the per capita food supply has apparently declined in the 1990s, due to massive unemployment, low productivity, lack of credit and subsidies for consumers and producers and lack of price controls, and political instability. In the market economies, government austerity has perhaps adversely affected food security, especially that of people in difficult economic circumstances due to cutbacks in social security and rising unemployment. The World Food Summit. Food Security Situation and Issues in Europe, FAO, Rome, 1996.

³ FAO, *The Sixth World Food Survey*, Rome: FAO, 1996.

suffering from food insecurity reside in rural areas and depend on stagnant if not declining agricultural resources for their daily food and nutrition requirements.

At the same time, the poverty is on the rise, and in 1990 more than 1 billion people in the developing countries—or at least 30% of their population—were living in extreme poverty.⁴ This situation, coupled with a lack of employment opportunities in rural areas, has also contributed to the heavy migration of rural dwellers to the cities in search of a better quality of life. Rural emigration, especially of men, has significantly increased the number of women heads of household in these areas, a figure that ranges from 16% in the Near East to 60% in some parts of Africa, with more than 7 million in Asia and the Pacific.⁵

While violent conflicts lead to food insecurity, social deprivation has also affected many households. For example of the 34 countries with an inadequate food supply between 1969 and 1992, 20 of them were at war or involved in domestic armed conflicts during the period; another three countries that showed a modest improvement in terms of food security were also engaged in a war or experiencing civil conflict.^{6,7}

2.2 In Latin America

At the start of the present decade six countries of the Region were in a critical situation with respect to food availability; that is, their supplies were lower than the minimum food requirement, which is nothing more than the energy needed to support a healthy and active life; four more countries were in a precarious situation, with a supply lower than 1.1 of the minimum requirement. The rest of the countries exhibited full sufficiency in terms of aggregate availability, which is not to imply an absence of problems access among poor families. Concerning stability, over the past three decades 10 countries have had high levels of instability in terms of the availability of basic grains. These are largely the same countries that suffer from insufficient availability. The degree of food dependency can be estimated in terms of the weight of imports in the energy supply, and the value of food imports versus the external purchasing power generated by exports. Using the criterion of the proportion of imported calories, the Caribbean countries exhibit critical levels of dependency (over 40%); seven more countries exhibit levels of 30% to 40%. In terms of the sacrifice of available foreign exchange, four Latin American countries and the Caribbean countries in general are facing difficult situations.

⁴ FAO, *World Agriculture: Towards 2010 – An FAO Study*, Nikos Alexandratos (ed.), Rome: FAO, 1995, 314-16.

⁵ FAO, *FAO Plan of Action for Women in Development* (C 95/14 – SUP. 1), Rome: FAO, 1995.

⁶ FAO, *Food Security Assessment* (WFS 96/TECH/7), Provisional Version, Rome: FAO, 1996.

⁷ (N. Alexandratos, ed) Co-published by J. Wiley and Sons, UK and FAO, Rome, 1995 (in French by Polytechnica, Paris, and in Spanish by Mundi-Prensa Libros, Madrid).

One obstacle to achieving food security in the Region is the fact that deficient food consumption in a high proportion of the population is not reflected in the market. To a large extent, the malnourished population and the poor population lacking effective demand capacity are one and the same. The principal underlying factor in the mass malnutrition of the Region is the lack of income to purchase food. According to the latest available data, some 34% of the urban population and 53% of the rural population are poor, with extreme poverty at 13% and 30%, respectively. The vast majority of the malnourished population is concentrated in these groups. The lower-income countries, which have serious difficulties financing the rapid growth of national food production and limited external purchasing power, also have the highest coefficients of poverty and extreme poverty. In low-income countries with food deficits, over 50% of the urban population is poor, while in rural areas this figure exceeds 60%.

According to estimates from the Sixth World Food Survey, in the 1970s and 1980s the proportion of malnourished people in the Region fell from 19% to 14%, only to rise again to 15% at the beginning of the 1990s. Proposing a minimum goal of 6% by the year 2010 appears to be reasonable. For the nine countries of the Region with 16% of the total population and 47% of the malnourished population, the goal would be to achieve a supply of 2,700 calories per day per capita of food energy by that date. For these countries, this would imply a growth in food availability of 3.5% annually, with a rate of 2.4% for the rest of the Region. Reaching this goal requires a strategy that increases the availability of food while tackling the priority problem of generating higher levels of income for the poor in order to improve their ability to access food. Rural development (understood as its links with urban centers) plays a significant role in both respects.

3. Global Outlook for Food Security

3.1 Trends in Agriculture and Rural Development

Some trends should be highlighted that will affect the context of food security. Some of these rather qualitative characteristics can be summarized as follows:

- Agriculture that is broader, transcending simple primary production, linked to other economic agents, and integrated horizontally and vertically. This agriculture depends to a large extent on a system of efficient and effective services.
- Agriculture that is contractual, permitting the establishment of clearer, more balanced rules among the different agents of production, favoring private contracts (for example, leasing or parceling of land), and promoting ties with the business community.

- Agriculture that is flexible, emphasizing the links with the various markets—for example, the land-credit, land-labor, and labor-credit markets.
- Agriculture based on human knowledge and human capital, targeting investment toward the development of human capacity and regarding producers as agents of the market and entrepreneurs.
- Agriculture that is linked to macroeconomic policy due to its higher status as a basic component of the national economy and society.
- Agriculture that is backed by the State through differentiated policies that effectively respond to the needs and resources of the various types of producers, regions, and products.
- Agriculture that recognizes the feminization of agricultural work, with the growing participation of women in agricultural activities and their specific problems of access to resources and low remuneration for their work, from the standpoint of growing equality between men and women. The trend toward a greater presence of women in the agricultural sector, with the concomitant drop in the participation of men, should be noted (FAO, 1997). This reality goes hand in hand with the growing number of rural households headed by women, due among other things to the emigration of men in search of better jobs in the cities or abroad.
- Agriculture that is associative—that is, a sector made up of economic organizations that make it possible to take advantage of economies of scale and gain access to new commercial and financing channels.
- Agriculture that is linked to a concerted policy of social well-being that emphasizes mutual responsibility to relieve poverty and strengthen the negotiating capacity of the poor rural.
- Agriculture that is sustainable, integrating the concept of conservation into resource use, with new technology systems suited to productive heterogeneity. An agriculture that supports rural production and guarantees sustainable development.
- Agriculture that is urbanized and diversified, recognizing that a growing share of the food supply comes from agricultural producers located in urban areas. Indeed, urban agriculture makes a substantial contribution to income flexibility and food security. In addition, the tremendous dynamism of nonagricultural rural

employment has turned activities unrelated to agriculture into a significant source of income, which often exceeds the income generated by sectoral activities or at least constitutes a sizable portion of the household economy. Migration substantially increases in periods of sluggish economic growth. Remittances from family members living abroad have increased systematically, reaching significant levels in the external balance of the countries of the Region. In some countries they play an extremely important role, with figures higher than the total value of agricultural exports.

- Agriculture that recognizes globalization and its growing influence on national agricultural systems—especially, the closer tie between agriculture and external financing, the demands of international competitiveness, the need to establish links and build partnerships, and the importance of advanced technology based on human knowledge.

3.2 Projections for the Year 2010

It is worthwhile at this point to review some of the conclusions about the global outlook for the year 2010 that appear in the recent publication *World Agriculture: Towards 2010 - An FAO Study*.⁸ The findings are important, since they will enable us to visualize different scenarios for the future. It should be emphasized, however, that these results are not prescriptive in nature nor do they assume a kind of determinism; they merely identify the current trends and discuss their future consequences, assuming that the macroeconomic context and sectoral policies do not change. It is obvious that future government policies and macroeconomic development will pose new and unforeseeable conditions before the year 2010. However, it is worth emphasizing four of the trends treated in this publication:

- The steady, but slow, growth of the world population. United Nations projections (1998) indicate that by the year 2010 the world population will reach approximately 7 billion, in contrast to the 5.3 billion of 1990 and the 3.7 billion of just 20 years before. Some 94% (1.6 billion) of the total increase will occur in the developing countries. The greatest population increase will probably occur in Sub-Saharan Africa, with an annual population growth rate of 2.9%.

Population growth is probably the most important global trend that impacts on food security. It has taken nearly 1 million years for the human population to reach 1 billion. During the next 10 years, there will already be another billion people.

⁸ See T. F. Homer-Dixon, JH Boutwell and G.W.

The structural characteristics of the world population also vary in such a way as to affect food security. Twenty years ago, 80% of the population in the developing countries lived in rural areas. By the early 1970s, one city in Sub-Saharan Africa already had more than half a million inhabitants; by 1990, 10% of the population of that region lived in cities with more than 1 million people; and as we approach the new millennium, 40% of the population will live in urban areas.

This manifest shift toward a more urban world is attracting the attention of a variety of institutional groups, markets, and infrastructure and food policies. These structural changes also affect the agricultural labor supply and produce important changes in food security. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the steady emigration of men to the cities or other places in search of better jobs and better wages gives women the primary responsibility for agricultural work. Women produce the three-quarters of the food of that region.⁹

- Better outlook for overall economic growth in developing countries, with significant exceptions. Although it is obvious that as a result of the Asian crisis and more recently, the Brazilian crisis, the world outlook is rather uncertain. The Region is probably one of the areas in which the outlook for recovery looks brighter. Since 1991, after the foreign debt crisis and the difficulty of recovering macroeconomic balances, which meant economic stagnation and the consequent fall in per capita income during the previous decade, the annual GDP growth rate has been positive. Even GDP per capita has grown each year in the Region, with the exception of 1995, when the capital flight (mainly in Mexico and Argentina) led to regional economic growth that was lower than population growth.

There has been sustained progress, even in more recent years, which have been buffeted by tremendous external *shocks*. The Asian crisis, the economic crisis in Russia, the collapse of oil, copper, and other basic commodity prices, El Niño, Hurricane Mitch, and other natural disasters, such as the earthquake in Colombia, have seriously affected the external balance and heightened pressures on the fiscal accounts, posing major challenges for economic management in the Latin American countries. As a result, economic growth in 1998 was only 3%, but even so, per capita income grew by 1.3%. For 1999, the crisis in Brazil, the adjustment processes in several Andean countries, and the persistently unfavorable international market for the basic commodities of the Region herald another difficult economic year.

⁹ See WFS 96/TECH/3 “*Success Stories in Food Security*”, FAO, July 1996 (provisional version).

Despite their external and domestic difficulties, most of the countries have come o recovering their principal macroeconomic balances. The current account deficit continues at a little over 3%, but always within the framework growing reserves, thanks to the influx of foreign capital. Widespread inflation, which traditionally reflected the inconsistencies in the Latin American economies, has now become the exception, an expression of specific crises. In the past two years (1997 and 1998) the average for the Region was 10%; half of the countries already had single-digit annual inflation rates, and in most of the others, the rate was under 15% (only in Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela was it between 20 and 40%).

- World agricultural growth will probably continue to slow. The 1.8% annual average growth of world agriculture—0.25% a year in per capita terms—will slow

during the period up the year 2010, in contrast to the past. This is basically the continuation of a long-term historical trend; it is not a negative result *per se*, since it reflects the slower growth of the world population, changes in diet, and per capita growth of dietary intake due to urbanization and economic growth. This is the case in the majority of the more developed and some developing countries. The negative aspect of the slowdown in agricultural growth is that it has been under way and will continue at a time when many countries and much of the world's population exhibit totally inadequate levels of consumption and access to food. In short, the slowdown in global agricultural growth is also due to the fact that the people who could consume more do not have enough income to purchase more food, which in turn would promote greater production.

- Progress in food and nutrition, but not for all. The implications of the trends cited above are that per capita supplies of food for direct human consumption in the developing countries as a whole will continue to increase from 2,500 calories per day in 1990-1992 to just over 2,700 calories per day by the year 2010. It is likely, then, that the Near East and North Africa, East Asia (including China), and Latin America and the Caribbean will be approaching or reach 3,000 calories per day. South Asia may also make significant progress, although by the year 2010 it would still be in an intermediate position, with 2,400 calories per day. However, the forecasts indicate that per capita food supplies in Sub-Saharan Africa will remain at very low levels, e.g., only 2,170 calories per day. In terms of absolute numbers, therefore, chronic malnutrition will shift from South Asia—around 240 million people malnourished in this region in the year 2010—to Sub-Saharan Africa, where 35% of the population--roughly 300 million--will continue to suffer from chronic malnutrition.

3.3 Implications

This review of move toward the elimination of malnutrition and food insecurity and the projections on the most likely developments between now and the year 2010 suggest that at least some pockets of malnutrition and food insecurity can be found in all the countries. Thus, no country should be indifferent to the global food situation. However, the critical problem lies with countries that have low food supplies, a high percentage of malnutrition, and have made very little progress toward achieving food security. The projections for these countries point to a future that will probably bring more of the same. If we review the common features of the 47 countries with under 2,300 calories in individual food supplies, we find that: 41 are located in Sub-Saharan Africa; in 37 of them, at least 60% of the population lives in rural areas (implying a very high dependence on agriculture for employment, income, and the acquisition of foreign exchange to pay for food imports); and most have very low or negative average growth in per capita food production. To this we could add that the 19 countries with 2,700 calories or more are highly dependent on food imports and, while not highly dependent on agriculture, require food assistance for a significant portion of their food supply. This situation may not be sustainable in the long run. The transformation in progress is producing changes in the use and ownership of resources. This may translate into a trend toward the concentration of lands and agrarian capital in large modern farms, leaving medium and small farmers behind. Massive alterations in the structure and technology of production may lead to significant changes in the location of agricultural activities and a different geographical distribution of labor. In the medium term, sectoral adjustment implies a major displacement of jobs and the population, with major repercussions for rural population distribution. Shantytowns inhabited by landless wage earners may continue to pop up near expanding areas of modern agriculture, while many traditional farms become unviable in areas in crisis in which alternative occupations are hard to find.

4. The FAO Special Program for Food Security (SPFS)

Aspects of food security, like aspects of poverty, should be understood within our current context, taking into account the worldwide transition from highly managed or State controlled economies toward market economies. This transition has been occurring in developing and developed countries alike and has been fostered by structural adjustment policies whose main components usually include: macroeconomic stabilization, the liberalization of trade, and the redefinition of the role of the public and private sector.

The package of policy reforms included in the structural adjustment has evolved over time to the point where it is now common to speak about a second generation of structural reforms. Experience has shown which policies work and which don't and the

amount of time and ongoing joint effort that are needed to bring about the change. Today, there is greater emphasis on the social impact of the reforms, on assistance to create the necessary conditions for growth (including financing for infrastructure, education, extension, and training), and on the creation of market institutions. A clearly negative aspect of the transition process, especially in agriculture, is the inadequacy of the institutional and legal structure needed to support competitive markets. Based on these experiences we strongly support the idea that markets do not operate in a vacuum. They demand information, rules to govern actors in the market, and institutions to strengthen it.

An effective macroeconomic context is absolutely necessary, as it makes possible the elimination of antiagricultural biases created by the overvaluation of the exchange rate, which acts as a direct tax on agriculture. It also permits import substitution policies and keeps inflation under control. However, during the transitional period the State will have to serve as an arbiter among the various actors in order to define in the short term who will be the winners and who will be the losers. Of course, the balance of power will be an important factor in this arbitration, and if the agricultural food sectors do not have sufficient power they will be the losers in this dispute. However, the main problem is small producers. It is essential to recognize and assess the importance of policies and institutions geared to small producers—policies and institutions that bolster their food supply and effective demand and thus support their negotiating capacity. Sen points out that the demands of the market do not reflect biological needs or psychological desires, but are choices based on shifting relationships between rights. Focusing on rights tends to emphasize legal rights. Other relevant factors—or example, market forces—can be seen as operating through a system of legal relationships (property rights, contractual obligations, legal exchanges, etc.). Between food availability and the right to food, he says, is the law. The deaths from malnutrition may reflect legalization with a vengeance.

4.1 Lessons of the Food Security Programs

If we look at the success stories in the attempts to achieve higher levels of food security⁹ we will find a number of basic characteristics: the average economic growth in all these countries has been above average, domestic agricultural growth has been an essential ingredient in this process, and several countries have obtained improvements in a relatively short period of time, in most cases around 10 years. If we look at the failures we would have to point out two key factors: policies that discriminate against agriculture; and problems of governance, which may have led to the wars and political unrest. Indeed, 20 of the 34 countries with a deterioration in their food supply between 1969-1971 and 1990-1992 were involved in a war or experienced civil strife at some time during the period.

Nevertheless, it is fair to emphasize that food security, as numerous studies show, is clearly a problem of inadequate access to food—that is, a problem of insufficient

demand and not just insufficient supply. The long-term solution, of course, is the eradication of poverty.

In some countries, such as Zimbabwe and Indonesia, improvements in food security have been highly dependent on the creation of an adequate incentive system to boost agricultural production, especially the crops grown by small producers. In other countries, such as Costa Rica and Tunisia, the impressive achievements have derived from the strong antipoverty programs that preceded the structural adjustment. Great strides were made in poverty reduction, and the structural adjustment programs were subsequently coupled with safety nets to protect the poorest segments of the population; in Costa Rica, the net result was an average annual increase in per capita food availability of around 1%, from 2,200 calories per day in 1961 to 2,900 in 1992; in Tunisia, the per capita availability increased in roughly the same period from 2,000 per day to the current 3,500.

Agrarian reform also helped to achieve better food security in China and Tunisia. China is applauded for its ability to feed more than one-fifth of the world's population with only one-fifteenth of the world's arable land. From a level of 1,500 calories per capita per day at the beginning of the 1960s, China increased its food availability to over 2,700 calories per capita per day by the early 1990s, almost exclusively through increases in national production. Most of this was the result of major reforms initiated in 1979. These reforms, which were basically of an institutional nature, included diversifying the rural economy, specializing production, expanding the right to land, permitting greater flexibility in the choice of employment, crop selection based on regional comparative advantages, and expanding the role of the markets. However, the most important change was the creation of the "household responsibility system" (HRS), which restored the primacy of the family home over the collective commune as the basic production and management unit in rural China.

4.2 Guiding Principles of the SPFS

In compliance with the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit, which laid the foundations for food security at all levels of society, and addressing one of the principal priorities in the Region, the Special Program for Food Security is aimed at strengthening food security in low-income countries with insufficient food production.

The SPFS cooperates with governments in organizing a national program that will make it possible to identify the need for resources—their own and those of complementary external sources—as well as the technical definitions that will permit channeling of the funds.

4.3 Internal Partners

The Special Program is a matrix of the activities of FAO technical projects in the field. Especially involved are the areas specializing in policies, agronomy, animal production, irrigation, and rural and forest development.

4.4 External partners

Financing for projects and events comes from the FIDA, IDB, UNDP, WFP and World Bank, regional and subregional banks, and donor foundations. The developed countries provide also support through the services highly qualified experts, within the framework of the TCDC agreement and South-South cooperation, as well as universities and agricultural research institutions.

Nearly half of the world's nations are classified as "low-income countries with food deficits." By definition, they are countries that are currently unable to meet the food needs of their population and, at the same time, lack sufficient foreign exchange to cover the requirements for food imports. In Latin America and the Caribbean, nine countries are in this category: Bolivia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Suriname. The SPFS has been created with the conviction that viable technical and institutional instruments exist in many of these countries.

The underlying premise of the SPFS is that, through consultation with farmers and national experts, it will be possible to develop technology packages and relatively low-cost, accessible measures that will increase agricultural production; rapidly and sustainably increase and stabilize basic food production through the transfer and application of improved technologies and organization in areas with agroecological potential; and create a favorable economic and social environment for food production, improving food security by reducing the pressure on natural resources and dependency on food assistance and fostering greater economic development.

The Program is grounded in the following principles:

- national appropriation;
- priority attention to areas and food products with potential;
- participatory approach to planning, execution, and evaluation processes;
- respect for the environment and environmental protection;
- consideration of the role of women.

The pilot phase consists of four complementary, related components. This phase is planned and implemented by the governments and participating rural communities. As a result, since every program is formulated and directed at the national level to respond to the specific circumstances and priorities of each country, the content is very diverse.

When the pilot phase comes to an end, an evaluation of the constraints is conducted at the national and regional level that will serve as the foundation for

preparation of the expansion phase.

The expansion phase has three components:

- a program of policies on food security and for the agricultural sector;
- A three-year agrarian investment program;
- the preparation of project feasibility studies.

Projects in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Haiti are already under way. In Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala the components of the pilot phase will be addressed during the period 1999-2001, while projects in the Dominican Republic and Cuba are in the development phase. In Honduras and Nicaragua the emphasis has been on strengthening local organizational capacity and on soil and water management. Finally, the project in Guatemala is aimed at the creation of a decentralized institutional management model to support production and trade.