

News of Science

FAO Decennial

■ The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations has begun its second decade of operation. A decennial celebration was held 14-16 Oct. at the Chateau Frontenac, Quebec, Canada. Participating in the observance were agricultural officials of the United States, Canada, and the FAO North American Regional Office. The Quebec site was chosen for the ceremonies because FAO's organizing conference was held there on 16 Oct. 1945.

Since that time the organization has grown from 42 to 71 member nations. It is the only international agency set up to deal directly with the immediate and long-range problems of food and farming throughout the world.

In May 1943 representatives of governments of 45 countries met at Hot Springs, Va., to seek ways to banish hunger and establish a stable world agriculture. It was thought that international cooperation might be kept alive if it was centered around urgent practical matters outside the realm of international politics—such problems as how to apply modern agricultural science more widely, how to apply modern nutrition, and how to raise living standards and conditions of rural people. Since at that time food was one of the world's greatest problems, the representatives to the Hot Springs conference decided to create a world-wide organization that would work toward adequate food supplies for all people.

FAO was the first of the permanent agencies that were born from the wartime partnership of the Allies. John Boyd Orr, nutritionist and founder and head of the Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen, Scotland, was elected first director-general. The motto *Fiat Panis* (Let There Be Bread) was adopted.

FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations system—that is, an organizational entity separate from the U.N. It has its own constitution and governing body made up of member nations. FAO operates, however, under an agreement with the U.N. to work cooperatively toward common objectives. Some member governments of FAO are not members of the U.N. and vice-versa. The

purpose of this agreement with the U.N. is to make possible the concentration of technical knowledge on world agricultural problems, and at the same time to provide joint action on mutual international problems.

Under FAO's constitution, member nations are pledged to carry out the following objectives: (i) to raise the levels of nutrition and standards of living of the peoples of their country and the world; (ii) to secure improvements in the efficiency of production and distribution of all food and agricultural products; (iii) to better the condition of rural populations; (iv) to contribute toward an expanding economy.

To carry out these objectives, FAO's work is divided into three principal categories: (i) it collects, analyzes, and distributes to member nations the basic facts on food and agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; (ii) it promotes concerted national and international action by recommending definite ways and means for putting the latest facts and scientific methods to use; and (iii) it gives technical assistance to member countries requesting it.

A world food survey in 1946 was one of the first jobs completed by FAO. This survey demonstrated the value of collecting basic data on just how much food different peoples are getting and how that amount compares with their need. The survey indicated that more than half the world's peoples did not have enough food to maintain normal health prior to World War II. FAO has continued to make annual reports on world food and agriculture.

When a member country requests technical assistance from FAO on its particular problems, FAO can send one or more qualified individuals to work with scientists and technicians of the country. FAO now employs several hundred specialists in virtually every phase of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries and has them working in many parts of the world.

FAO promotes and coordinates international action in many ways. Greece set up a national nutrition service on FAO's recommendation. The locust problem in several Central American countries and in the Middle East has

been minimized through a cooperative program in which FAO has assisted.

Many international commissions and study groups have been established through the aid and encouragement of FAO. An example is the International Rice Commission, whose purpose is to raise production and consumption levels in rice-eating countries. In recent years, FAO has studied the appearance of surpluses of certain crops in several countries. After the 1953 FAO conference, it created a committee to work specifically toward an orderly solution of these problems. This committee, made up of representatives of 21 member governments, including the U.S., periodically meets to discuss possible solutions to the surplus commodity situation.

FAO, in reviewing agricultural development of the past decade, says that world agricultural production was more than 25 percent greater in 1954 than it was in 1946-47 (excluding the Communist bloc). The world is now producing about 20 percent more rice, milk, and cotton than it was before the war; about 30 percent more wheat, fats, and meat; 50 percent more fruit and sugar; and 80 percent more natural rubber.

World fisheries' production, seriously reduced during the war because of loss of fishing boats, has increased 20 percent over prewar figures. At the end of the war, FAO estimated that world agricultural production was down 5 percent and that world population was up 10 percent from prewar levels, with a consequent per-capita fall in production of about 15 percent. By 1954 production was up again, however, and in some countries surpluses were beginning to develop in wheat, sugar, and cotton.

In fact, the changing picture of world trade has been striking. Until 1952, North American food exports were three to four times larger than they had been before the war, but at that time they began to decline. On the other hand, food exports from the Far East are still less than half the prewar volume. European food imports, once high, have settled down to a figure of about 10 percent lower than before the war. Latin American food imports, although they have increased sharply, remain relatively small. FAO reports that slowness in world trade of agricultural products arises largely from the drive for greater self-sufficiency.

Dorset Dwellings

Big, roofless stone houses that belonged to the Dorset people were discovered on Walrus Island in the Canadian subarctic this summer by Henry B. Collins, archeologist for the Smithsonian Institution. These houses, arranged in a