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REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS' VISIT TO CUBA

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INTRODUCTION

1. The main objective of the visit of Members of the Executive Board to Cuba was to provide direct contact with and information on WFP activities in the field for Board members; broaden Board members' understanding of the effectiveness of food aid; and afford insight into the implementation of WFP's overall policies and strategies in Cuba.
2. Cuba is classified as a low-income, food-deficit country (LIFDC). In line with government priorities, WFP works to improve the food security and quality of life of the most food insecure people, contributing to self-sufficiency of beneficiaries through the promotion of food production and assistance to the most vulnerable groups in the health and education sectors in the five eastern provinces that are facing food insecurity.
3. The following members of the World Food Programme Executive Board visited Cuba from 24 to 27 June 2002:
 - H.E. Georges Ruphin, Ambassador, Permanent Representation of Madagascar and current President of the Executive Board;
 - H.E. Mohammad Saeid Noori-Naeini, Ambassador, Permanent Representation of the Islamic Republic of Iran and past President of the WFP Executive Board;
 - Ms Maria Eulalia Jiménez, Minister Counsellor, Republic of El Salvador and past President of the Board;
 - Ms Marie-Paul Fontaine, Counsellor, France;
 - Mr Ahmed Hachemi, Counsellor, Republic of Algeria;
 - Mr Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Counsellor, Republic of Bangladesh;
 - Mr Víctor Hugo Morales Meléndez, Counsellor, Mexico;
 - Mr Rolf Gerber, Minister, Switzerland;
 - Mr Ioan Pavel, Counsellor, Romania; and
 - Mr Timothy Lavelle, Humanitarian Assistance Attaché, United States Mission/Rome.
4. Mr Thomas Yanga, Secretary to the Executive Board, represented the WFP Secretariat. Mr Lavelle was selected by the group as team leader.
5. Total WFP assistance to Cuba over the period 1963–2001 was US\$208.9 million. In November 2001, WFP responded through an Immediate Response Account emergency operation (IRA EMOP) amounting to US\$200,000 to damage caused by Hurricane Michelle, which affected some 700,000 people in Cuba's central and western regions. For 2002, WFP is winding down the five-year development project 5686.00, "Agricultural Production for Food Security in Granma Province", which involved a WFP input of US\$18.38 million. A new four-year project, 6258.00, "Nutritional Support to Vulnerable Groups in the Five Eastern Provinces," with a WFP input of US\$22.68 million, commenced on 1 January 2002. Estimated WFP food assistance in calendar year 2002 is 5,500 mt, valued at US\$2 million.
6. In 2001, the three primary donors contributing to WFP efforts in Cuba (with 4,291 mt) were Denmark, Japan and Norway. Japan's bilateral donation of 26,382 mt of rice in response to the 1998 drought, followed by Hurricane Georges, was monitored and supervised by WFP.



7. Other WFP donors in the recent past include Belgium, Canada, Finland and Switzerland.

VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS AND MAPPING (VAM)/FOOD INSECURITY IN CUBA'S FIVE EASTERN PROVINCES

8. During 1999–2000, WFP and the Cuban Institute of Physical Planning (IPF) analysed the food situation in Cuba's five eastern provinces (Granma, Las Tunas, Holguin, Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo), which comprise 54 municipalities. VAM identified 33 municipalities as “very vulnerable” to food insecurity, 11 as “vulnerable,” and 10 as “slightly vulnerable.” The study focused *inter alia* on the prevailing economic difficulties, geographic peculiarities, land salinity, climatic phenomena and low agricultural yields.
9. Moreover, the Cuban Institute of Nutrition and Food Hygiene (INHA) conducted a complementary study to that carried out by VAM. The study documented that the average diet in the eastern provinces provided less than 80 percent of the minimum recommended level of protein, less than 50 percent of the minimum recommended level of fat and insufficient levels of vitamins and minerals to sustain health. To help address these deficiencies, WFP and the Government started a nutritional support project to assist/build on existing mother-and-child care and school feeding activities in the eastern provinces. And based on these studies, WFP has now concentrated its programming efforts on the five eastern provinces.

WHAT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD TEAM SAW

10. The team travelled extensively by road in Granma and Santiago de Cuba provinces. In Granma province, where more than 28,000 producers are assisted by WFP, the team met groups of independent farmers and farmers belonging to Cooperatives of Agricultural and Animal Husbandry Production (CPA), Basic Units of Cooperative Production (UPBC), plus several urban seedbed farms (part of the Government's urban agricultural programme), within the framework of the project “Agricultural Production for Food Security in Granma Province”.
11. Funding for this project was generated from the monetization of 19,106 mt of WFP food (1997–2002) through the Government. A credit fund of 27.2 million Cuban pesos was established, with an additional 22.7 million Cuban pesos provided by the Government for complementary economic and social investments. WFP funding for this activity ends this year, although the Programme will continue to work with the Government in the programming of credit fund “reflows”. The project performance has been reflected in sustainable increments in the production of milk, cereals, beans and vegetables, which have resulted in considerable increases in the income of project beneficiaries. WFP monetization funds have supported seedbed gardens by financing electrification of tubewells, perimeter fencing, construction of sales centres and the provision of seeds and tools. These WFP investments complement the initial ones carried out by the Government in the installation of the irrigation systems.
12. The team visited several seedbed gardens around Bayamo (capital of Granma province), staffed mainly by women and producing up to 15 varieties of vegetables. This relatively new initiative, within the framework of the WFP project, is attracting increasing numbers of women (many of them ex-housewives with no prior job experience) who are responding to pressures on their general standard of living by pursuing available employment opportunities.



13. The economic and social impact of the project on the lives of beneficiary women and their families can be illustrated by taking into account the average monthly salary in Granma province, which ranges from \$150 and \$200 Cuban pesos as compared with the average monthly income of women working in the vegetable gardens and local seedbed gardens supported by WFP, which fluctuates between \$400 and \$600 Cuban pesos per month.
14. The team visited two dairy farms, one independent and one a CPA cooperative. On both farms, milk yields had risen from 1.3 litres per cow per day in 1996 to approximately 4.5 litres per cow per day in 2001. Artificial insemination of cattle is increasingly popular due, among other things, to the training provided to cattle-raisers through the WFP project. In view of the fact that Cuba has not been able to continue importing animal feed, it has had to restructure cattle-raising by moving from the intensive use of imported products to more rustic cattle-raising practices that utilize local food, together with cattle management practices aimed at making more efficient use of natural pastures. The farmers on the farms visited were found to be hardworking and knowledgeable; and in spite of the fact that farm equipment was rustic and scarce, the mission could confirm that cattle-raisers had been able to make an efficient use of the available resources and obtain significant increments in the production of milk. Cuba does not export livestock, and milk production (a long-time government priority) falls short of need, necessitating the importation of milk powder. The project has constituted an important factor in stimulating the production of milk resulting in larger quantities of milk being delivered by producers to the industry and in allowing for reduced milk powder imports.
15. The team visited the Bayamo Processed Foods Factory (670 employees). The factory produces a variety of dairy products, including flavoured and natural soya milk, soya yogurt and blended infant weaning food. Production per annum is approximately 12,000 mt (all product lines), with 212 mt of WFP's blended food produced monthly. This product, fortified with vitamins, minerals, fats and proteins, is produced with raw materials donated by WFP. The Cuban Government takes charge of wages, transport, fuel and other administrative costs. At the same time, the mission noted that WFP fortified biscuits are produced in smaller factories located in the provinces of Granma, Guantánamo, Holguín, Las Tunas and Santiago de Cuba. The production of fortified biscuits and enriched cereal financed by WFP has contributed to the reactivation of the local industry, creating new permanent job opportunities, mainly for women.
16. Mostly in Santiago de Cuba province, the team spent 26 June touring a number of primary schools (urban and rural), day care centres, maternity homes, and a family doctor consultation office. The project "Nutritional Support to Vulnerable Groups in the Five Eastern Provinces" plans to reach 495,880 beneficiaries at 7,241 primary schools, 230 day care centres, 4,295 designated distribution points and 195 health facilities with the resources available for 2002.
17. The mission acknowledged the high priority given by the Government to the education programme and the commitment of the staff in charge of implementation of the WFP project. In the visits paid by the mission to schools where boys and girls, teachers, administrative staff and parents were interviewed, the team confirmed that the food donated by WFP was being provided in a regular manner and enjoyed good acceptance among beneficiaries. Nevertheless, in the rural sector, several primary schools visited lacked potable water and sanitary facilities were inadequate due to lack of maintenance. All schools had televisions/videos and a modest yet adequate number of computers. At the Orlando Pantoja Primary School complex (Contramaestre municipality), meals are cooked for some 1,335 students, and the school provisions another half-boarding primary school



and a special school that lack kitchens. The hillsides near Orlando Pantoja school are scoured for fuelwood for the partially outdoor cooking operation behind the school. In general, the mission noted the vital need for provision of appropriate kitchen and dining utensils in most of these schools.

18. During the visits to maternity homes, the mission noted the priority given by the Cuban Government to the mother-and-child programme and within it to the adequate feeding and nutrition of this beneficiary group. Through the health services outreach network, there is a concerted attempt to reduce the incidence of low-birth-weight babies and the infant mortality rate. Interviews carried out with expectant mothers and health-care staff, evidenced the high impact of WFP's food assistance.
19. On 27 June the team met with a number of ministers in Havana who provided a "snapshot" of the state of the Cuban economy, highlighting *inter alia* that recent declines in tourism, shortfalls in export and other convertible currency revenues, and lack of access to international financial institutions continue to hamper Cuba's economic "recuperation/transformation".
20. And while the Government commented that there had been gradual recovery since the early 1990s, it underlined that evident food needs remained. It emphasized its appreciation for the United Nation's focus on the five eastern provinces, "historically the most neglected areas of the country" and "the region most geographically susceptible to natural disasters". In this context the mission considers WFP's assistance to vulnerable groups through Project CUBA 10032.0 still relevant.

CUBA/HAITI COLLABORATION

21. Since it was pointed out that the team had visited Haiti prior to Cuba, Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Minister H.E. Engineer Marta Lomas recounted a trip that she had made to Haiti in 2001 and commented that some 600 Cuban technicians (doctors, medical personnel and some fishery and agricultural technicians) are presently working in that country. It was noted that FAO and the Governments of Haiti and Cuba had just signed a "south-south" Special Programme on Food Security (SPFS) cooperation agreement, which would further increase the number of Cuban agricultural technicians posted in Haiti.

TEAM OBSERVATIONS

22. Team members made the following observations:
 - a) They noted the interest of the authorities of the Cuban Government at all levels to achieve the commitments made with WFP in the execution of its projects.
 - b) They noted that WFP's assistance to Cuba remained relevant. Being based on food insecurity vulnerability analysis, it allowed WFP to target the scarce available resources to the neediest population sectors and geographical areas, thereby allowing for greater impact of food assistance.
 - c) They noted the need for approval of a United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Cuba. In particular, there should be closer collaboration between WFP and UNICEF in support of primary education in rural schools. WFP



could play a pivotal role in “pulling along the other United Nations agencies into the eastern provinces”.

- d) They noted that WFP’s present donor base for Cuba was quite small and that resources allocated are insufficient to achieve objectives contained within Project CUBA 10032.0.
- e) The team noted that WFP projects have contributed to important progress in women participation in the management of project resources. In this respect, the team requested that all WFP/United Nation’s projects continue to further strengthen their focus for women.
- f) The team acknowledged that since the mid-1980s, Cuba had been a donor to WFP, and from 1996 it had contributed 2,500 mt per year. Most recently, for 2001 and 2002, Cuba donated 2,500 mt of raw sugar each year (valued at US\$1,000,000). Similarly, the Government has regularly contributed towards meeting a percentage of WFP’s operating costs. Its contribution in 2001 to WFP in-country costs is estimated at US\$45,000.
- g) Both in the health and education sectors, the members of the Board were able to verify the priority given by the Government to the achievement of the feeding and nutritional programmes, which are part of the national programmes in these sectors, and that WFP has cooperated in these two sectors with outstanding results.
- h) One Board member, having observed the Bayamo factory’s extra production capacity, suggested that the factory be tapped by WFP for regional purchases, e.g. as in the case of Haiti.

CONCLUSION

23. As now structured, WFP’s modest-sized programme in Cuba is geared to supporting the country’s social safety net and protecting vulnerable populations. Moreover, WFP is positioned to respond quickly to emergency relief situations in the disaster-prone eastern region.
24. The Government is making efficient use of the resources delivered by WFP and has used its food assistance within the framework of national education and health development programmes, thereby making that assistance more relevant, contributing in an effective manner to the attainment of development objectives established by the government.
25. Finally, the Executive Board members listed above take this opportunity to personally thank all the Cuban authorities, the WFP Cuba country office and the entire staff of WFP Cuba, and the WFP Rome Secretariat for their tireless efforts in making this trip a most useful and productive endeavour.

