



INTERNATIONAL COTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Memorandum 804

To: Delegates to the Standing Committee, Coordinating Agencies, Members of the Private Sector Advisory Panel and Members of the International Forum for Cotton Promotion

From: Executive Director

Subject: Support for the International Year of Natural Fibers (IYNF)

Date: June 27, 2006

FAO Request for Government Support for the IYNF

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is sending letters to Rome embassies requesting that governments provide financial support for the organization and conduct of an International Year of Natural Fibres (IYNF).

I am suggesting that Standing Committee Delegates and Coordinating Agencies notify relevant officials in their governments of this request from FAO, with a recommendation for support. Copies of the standard letter and concept note being sent to Rome embassies are attached.

It was noted at the 476th Meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2005 that the Secretariat is working with FAO, the International Wool Textile Organization, the International Jute Study Group and other organizations with an interest in natural fibers to organize an IYNF in 2009.

The proposal originated within FAO. A resolution was adopted in November 2005 during the 33rd Session of the Conference of the FAO requesting that 2009 be designated the IYNF. The resolution will be presented to the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly later this year for adoption.

The purpose of an IYNF is to raise the profile of natural fibers to emphasize their natural, environmental and wholesome attributes, and thus promote consumption. The IYNF will be modeled after the International Year of Rice in 2004 and the International Year of Mountains in 2002. Within a global umbrella, each fiber industry will develop specific activities to be conducted.

As described in the concept note, FAO will coordinate events and communication associated with the IYNF. Initial planning has begun, additional preparation and organization will occur during 2007 and 2008, and implementation will take place during 2009. The total budget for all FAO activities associated with the IYNF is envisioned to be \$2.3 million. Delegates and coordinating agencies are asked to inform government officials of this request for support. It is also hoped that member governments of the ICAC will support the UN General Assembly resolution declaring 2009 to be the IYNF.

21 June 2006

Excellency,

I have the honour to refer to the resolution adopted in 2005, during the 33rd Session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), requesting that 2009 be declared the International Year of the Fibres (IYNF). During the Conference member countries of the Organization recognized that much of the world's natural fibres was produced as a source of cash income by small farmers in low-income and developing countries and agreed that there is a need to focus world attention on the role that income derived from the sale and export of natural fibres plays in contributing to food security and poverty alleviation. The IYNF would address all natural fibres (vegetable and animal, including cotton, wool, silk, jute flax, hemp, sisal, abaca, coir, etc.), for all applications including apparel, industrial, carpeting, upholstery, etc. There is considerable diversity among these fibres, with uses ranging from high-priced apparel to industrial applications. The objective of the IYNF would be to raise the profile of natural fibres, emphasizing their natural, environmental and wholesome attributes, and thus promote consumption.

On 13 March 2006, the FAO Director-General wrote to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, drawing his attention to the Conference resolution and requesting that this resolution be presented to the UN General Assembly with a view to the United Nations declaring 2009 as the International Year of Natural Fibres in a resolution to be adopted by the Sixty-first Session of the UN General Assembly, later in 2006.

FAO will coordinate activities under the general overview of an International Steering Committee, members of which are likely to include representatives of international fibre organizations such as the International Cotton Advisory Committee, the International Jute Study Group and the International Wool Textile Organization, and other relevant bodies such as the Common Fund for Commodities and other funding agencies.

While the IYNF would be 2009, planning and coordination activities have already begun. Attached for your ease of reference is a brief note on the activities of the IYNF, much of which need to start immediately. The bulk of the activities will be undertaken by FAO prior to 2009, and will focus on building partnerships with which to work, communicate and coordinate activities. The activities during the IYNF would be undertaken by both international and national partners, although it is proposed that FAO organize an international conference on natural fibres.

In this regard, I am seeking your Government's support, through a financial or in-kind contribution in order to make these activities possible. Also enclosed is the list of activities, the tentative time-line and associate costing for each activity foreseen. In order to achieve the full potential offered by this occasion, participation from both governments as well as representatives from the private sector and civil society is essential.

I hope that your Government will give due consideration to the activities of the IYNF and will be in favour of providing support to its implementation.

Accept, Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Tesfai Teclé
Assistant Director-General
Technical Cooperation Department

**PROMOTING, COORDINATING AND IMPLEMENTING OBSERVANCE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF NATURAL FIBRES, 2009**

Economic Sector/Subsector concerned: Commodity Development Proposed Budget Estimate: US\$2 300 000 Estimated Duration: Four years Originator of the Proposal (Department/Division/Unit): Commodities and Trade Division (ESC)
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I. Origin of proposal

Following a proposal made originally by the Joint Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group on Hard Fibres and the Intergovernmental Group on Jute, Kenaf and Allied Fibres in December 2004, and subsequent endorsement by the 65th Session of the Committee on Commodity Problems and the 128th Session of FAO Council during 2005, a resolution carried by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Conference in November 2005 asked that the Director-General write to the Secretary-General of the United Nations requesting that 2009 be declared the International Year of Natural Fibres (IYNF).

II. Sectoral context

Most countries produce some natural fibres; for some developing countries natural fibres are of major economic importance, for example, cotton in some west African countries, jute in Bangladesh and sisal in the United Republic of Tanzania. In other cases these fibres are of less significance at the national level but are of major local importance within some countries, as in the case of jute in West Bengal (India) and sisal in northeast Brazil. Proceeds from the sale and export of natural fibres often contribute significantly to the income and food security of poor farmers and processors in the least developed countries.

Since the widespread use of synthetic fibres developed from the 1960s, natural fibres have faced increased competition in the market, and in many cases traditional markets have been eroded or have disappeared.

III. Rationale

The primary logic behind the proposal is to raise the profile of natural fibres, thereby strengthening demand and contributing to improved welfare of fibre-producing farmers.

The proposal has arisen in the context of FAO's function as secretariat of the two intergovernmental groups which cover natural fibres. The Commodities and Trade Division has considerable knowledge of the natural fibre industries and of the participants of those industries, and is thus well placed to put together the international partnership required to successfully celebrate the International Year of Natural Fibres. Coupled with FAO's experience in organizing meetings and conferences, as well as in disseminating information, and drawing on the experience of earlier International Years (of Mountains in 2002; and Rice in 2004), the Organization is well equipped to undertake this exercise.

IV. Summary of proposal

The development objective of this proposal is to enhance the sustainable development of the various natural fibre industries and the well-being of producers as well as consumers through a successful observance of the IYNF.

The major activities undertaken by FAO will involve the coordination of IYNF events, and communication. A significant outcome will be an enduring international partnership of global natural fibre interests.

The immediate objectives are to effectively coordinate and conduct activities at the international and national level to celebrate the International Year of Natural Fibres; to raise awareness of the importance of natural fibres; to promote the sharing of knowledge so as to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of the natural fibres industries; and to foster an enduring international natural fibres partnership.

Activities, which should commence in 2006, and continue beyond the end of the actual IYNF, may be considered in four phases:

1. Up to the UNGA resolution in late 2006: activities to include initial conceptualising; establishment of an International Steering Committee (ISC); building a global information base of potential partner organizations; defining (with partners) the overall concept and objectives; initial communication (web site, leaflet).
2. Planning after the UNGA declaration, 2007 and 2008: ISC to meet several times and to expand its own membership; formulation of an action plan/media plan to guide the process, developing publicity materials: logo, web site, posters, school material, media releases, etc. All partners planning their programme of events for the year, publish background global study on natural fibres, convene an initial international conference on natural fibres.
3. Implementation in the year itself, 2009 - FAO as lead unit, providing communication materials, media information, maintaining web site, coordination activities; FAO's own international conference on natural fibres; many activities by various international and national partners.
4. Post IYNF from January 2010 - wrapping-up, reporting, programme of follow-up activities, continuing activities of the international partnership on natural fibres.

A major part of the preparation for the IYNF will be developing an international partnership of organizations to participate in its planning, coordination and implementation. There is no single organization or grouping of organizations which covers a range of natural fibres. Intergovernmental bodies, such as the International Cotton Advisory Committee and the International Jute Study Group, actively work to support the fibres which they cover. FAO itself embodies some of the international bodies which would be involved in the IYNF, including the Intergovernmental Group on Hard Fibres and the Intergovernmental Group on Jute, Kenaf and Allied Fibres. There are other groups, mainly non-governmental, with interests in various fibres and include those representing farmer/producers, as well as traders, processors and textile manufacturers. Consumer groups and retail organizations might also be included. One of the objectives of the proposed exercise would be to assist in forming closer links between the various bodies covering the diverse range of natural fibres. Thus, an international partnership would be formed for the IYNF, but it would also be expected to endure beyond December 2009 to the continuing benefit of the global natural fibres industries.

Potentially, partners in the exercise include:

- international fibre organizations: ICAC, IJSG, IWTO, etc;
- other UN agencies;
- consumer organizations: consumers international, national bodies;
- national producer organizations: indian silk producers, US cotton producers, Australian wool producers, etc;
- funding bodies;
- commercial: traders, processors, retailers;
- in some cases, national committees would be established in cooperating countries.

FAO would be the lead unit, guided by and working in close cooperation with an International Steering Committee. FAO's role would be primarily to communicate information about natural fibres and the IYNF, and to coordinate activities to be undertaken by various international and national organizations. The proposed budget of around US\$2 million would allow some support to be provided to national events, but much of the cost of these would need to be borne by the local organizations.

V. Benefits and justification

Benefits fall into three streams:

- enhanced profile of natural fibres would lead to stronger demand, hence to improved returns to producers and producing countries – food security, education etc from earnings;
- environmental/health benefits in consuming countries, from increased awareness and increased use of natural fibres;
- enhancing international cooperation by partnership building.

(Note the relevance to UN Millennium Development Goals No 1: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; No 7: ensure environmental sustainability; and No 8: develop a global partnership for development).

OUTLINE OF PROPOSED CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2006	<p>International Steering Committee (ISC) to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define objectives; 2. Further develop its own membership and a broad set of partners; 3. Develop the concept, nature of activities, role of various partners. <p>Establish contact with organizations in each country, encourage formation of National Committees to plan and implement activities in each country.</p> <p>Partners, international and national, encouraged to develop their own objectives, likely activities, funding needs and sources.</p> <p>Identify funding – seek donors.</p> <p>Continue work with member nation sponsors in UNGA, draft UN resolution.</p> <p>Outline communications plan for media contact, publicity materials, initial communication materials such as leaflets and web site.</p> <p>FAO planning activities, recruiting a project coordinator, etc., in preparation for more intensive planning next year.</p>
September 2006:	<p>UNGA resolution to declare 2009 the International Year of Natural Fibres.</p>
2007 and 2008	<p>Detailed planning of events for 2009 – much in the hands of partners.</p> <p>Publication of FAO Commodity Study <i>The Global Natural Fibres Economy</i> – possibly to be launched at an international conference on natural fibres</p> <p>FAO as lead unit to develop/prepare: logo, posters, fact sheets, brochures; calendar of events; all on a web site. Media releases.</p> <p>FAO regional events. IYNF to be publicized at all possible events.</p> <p>Develop a plan for sustainability of progress beyond the IYNF.</p>
November 2008	<p>Grand opening of the International Year of Natural Fibres.</p>
2009	<p>International Year of Natural Fibres.</p> <p>Activities by partner organizations around the world could include: conferences/meetings; demonstrations/fairs/shows – a Natural Fibres Expo?; Fashion events, art/photographic competitions/exhibitions, events aimed at school children, essay competitions.</p> <p>FAO as lead technical unit coordinating calendar of events, media coverage.</p> <p>Also FAO Conference on Natural Fibres in Rome; regional FAO events?.</p>
2010	<p>Wrapping up activities, reporting (measuring impact?)</p>
Future	<p>Ongoing activities of the international natural fibres alliance.</p>