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Final Report
on

Establishment of the National Agricultural Policy Centre (NAPC)

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- Opinions and judgments expressed are the authors' only. FAO proposes the text as basis for starting the discussion among scholars and policy makers on the issues related to the subject of the study.

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Summary and Conclusions

1. The consultant conducted 3 missions to Syria before finalizing his report. Interviews carried out with a number of high ranking officials, farmers, and individuals from the private sector; and information collected through these visits contributed significantly to the report. The establishment of the Center seems to have come at the right time. Signs confirming this fact pertain to the Center as such; others concern general trends in economic and social policies and, more specifically, the positive attitude of the Government with regard to structural economic reforms and innovations in the fields of Scientific Research and Higher Education. Ongoing changes have stressed even more the need for an agricultural policy analytical support and at the same time automatically enlarged and diversified its scope, range of activities and methodological approaches. It seems, therefore, advisable to reconsider the place and scope of NAPC in the light of the above facts and trends.
2. A Center for policy analysis is fundamentally an organization for applied economic research. Research and analysis applied to economic policy, in general and to agricultural policy, in particular, can properly be described as a process of producing information of an advanced form (such as, for instance, actual or expected policy effects) by the use of basic information. Objectivity and impartiality, to the extent permitted by human nature, must be part and parcel of the code of behavior and practices of a research center and of its personnel. Its procedures must be rigorous and transparent and its findings (reviews, monitoring reports, proposals...) substantiated and well documented. It must strive to build up gradually a solid base of knowledge, and therefore become capable of responding quickly to requests for services coming from interested organizations.
3. NAPC should be established as a public institution, affiliated to the Ministry of Agriculture, and possessing scientific, organizational, administrative and financial autonomy. It should collaborate and coordinate with all other ministries, agencies, and organizations supporting the agricultural sector
4. For the Center to meet the long as well as short term needs of decision makers for in-depth and rigorous analysis for policy options on issues of relevance, its functions should include:
 - undertaking policy analysis studies enabling the formulation of integrated, coherent and effective agricultural strategies and policies;
 - Suggesting policy directives to help relieve and overcome agricultural problems and constraints;
 - Preparing and publishing policy studies and reports to enable the integration of the agricultural sector within the economy; and
 - Conducting training courses with a view to helping in the capacity building in policy analysis and planning within the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and other related Ministries and Institutions.

5. To ensure the fulfillment of the above general objective NAPC's *main roles* shall be to:
 - Produce critical reviews of policy impact assessment nature;
 - Analyze and evaluate options for alternative policies and modes of intervention for the agricultural sector and rural areas;
 - Disseminate research information to enhance the understanding of economic concepts and policy issues among agents and agencies concerned with the development of a modern agro-food sector; and
 - Act as a highly qualified forum for policy dialogue, between decision-makers, managers and experts.
6. In carrying out these functions and in the provision of consultant services the Center shall consider as its *main end-users* the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform; other ministries such as the Ministry of Irrigation, the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade, the Ministry of Supply and Home Trade, and the State Planning Commission; public and private organizations such as farmer's and cooperative organizations, credit and investment institutions, and agro-industrial and marketing firms; university institutions, in the social science fields, in general, and in economics and agricultural economics in particular.
7. The Center may also, on request, supply services, or participate in the provision of services, to regional and international organizations.
8. Towards fulfilling the above roles the Center shall pay special attention to the following specific functions:
 - Planning and implementing a research program for policy analysis and review;
 - Producing policy reports aimed at contributing to the formulation of sound agricultural policies;
 - Publishing newsletters and ad hoc reports addressed to a wider public with a view to enhance the understanding of policy matters;
 - Organizing scientific meetings to discuss research results and policy problems;
 - Training on basic concepts of policy analysis as well as on policy options and management issues
9. The structure of the Center should have a management board and an executive director on the top of the organization. The structure would include four divisions: Systematic Research Division, Subject-Oriented Research Division, Assessment and Methodology Studies Division, and Training Division. In addition, the structure would include two services units, one for administration and the other for technical services. In its initial stage, the three research divisions could be grouped into one division having three teams of research workers, with the training responsibility being shared among them. As the Center grows, the divisions would have their full fledged status, with functions distributed within each division among a number of units. The services units may also be developed into sections, with functions distributed within each section among a number of units.

10. The Center should also take steps and collaborate with other organizations in initiatives aiming at a continuous improvement of the quality and coverage of economic information as essential ingredients for policy analysis.
11. The proposed targeted total staffing for NAPC is 45, to be attained stepwise, possibly in three years time.
12. Although advertising for certain key positions is a possible means of recruitment, it must be acknowledged that the largest part of the future NAPC research staff will necessarily come from a selection of the government officers who have been or are still being trained by the *Project*.
13. International and national consultants will constitute a strategic component of the research labor force in the first period of the Center's life. They are supposed to play an essential role not only as advisors and teachers on specific policy research matters, but especially as project leaders until the necessary experience has accumulated.
14. Written constitution and operational arrangements should be provided to guarantee that the Center would be capable of fulfilling the very objectives, roles and functions for which it is established.
15. The independence condition is extremely important for the Center to fulfill its objectives. Hence, the Center should be perceived, as an independent body, i.e. an institution capable of providing services that are not necessarily conditioned by its affiliation.
16. To increase the chances of an authoritative MB, and of real organizational, administrative and financial independence, while at the same time conferring an important role upon MAAR, the following provisions are suggested:
 - The Founding Act should not indicate, in detail, all the organizations to be represented. Rather it should fix the size of the MB, state only the types of organizations to be taken into consideration when nominating MB members and qualifications;
 - The Center should be affiliated to MAAR;
 - The Minister of Agriculture should be, if he so wishes, the Chairman of MB. Otherwise, the MB will have the authority to appoint the Chairman, upon nomination by the Minister of Agriculture;
 - Ministers or the Chairmen of the organizations to be represented in the MB will have the right to nominate their representatives.
17. In the case of a seven members MB, its structure could be 2 from MAAR, 1 from the Ministry of Irrigation, 1 from Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade or Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade, 1 from the Ministry of Planning (State Planning Commission) or the Ministry of Finance, 1 from the "Private sector" (i.e. Federation of Chambers of Agriculture or Farmers and Cooperatives organizations or Cooperative Agricultural Bank,), and 1 from Universities.

18. In the case of nine members MB, the inclusion of others organizations (for instance, the Central Bureau of Statistics) could be considered or a larger representation envisaged for MAAR.
19. The Director of the Center, though not a member of the MB should normally participate in the MB meetings, in a consultative capacity.
20. The MB takes decisions on the program of work and budget, funding proposal, contracts and cooperation arrangements with third parties, appointment of the Director upon nomination by the Minister of Agriculture, appointment of the Scientific Committee, budget adjustments and variations, purchase of rather expensive equipment and services, recruitment, and any other matters in the interest of the Center.
21. The MB can delegate some of the above functions to the Director.
22. Basic functions of the SC include: advising on NAPC program of work, review main lines of activity and suggests needed adjustments, monitor and evaluate NAPC performance; and assess training needs of NAPC staff and means to fulfill them.
23. It is proposed that the SC consists of 4 members, meet at least twice a year and remain in charge for a period of three years, and be available for a joint meeting with the MB at least once a year.
24. The Director functions include: managing the work of the Center and supervise the performance of the staff, execute the deliberations of the MB, take decisions in all matters delegated to him by the MB, maintain working relations with other institutions, make proposals on the program of work and corresponding budget for submission to the MB, report regularly to the Chairman and to the MB on the progress of work and financial situation, prepare the appropriate documentation on each point of the agenda for the MB meetings, and collaborate with the Scientific Committee.
25. The responsibility of choosing the Director of the Center should be the prerogative of the MB upon the proposal of the Minister of Agriculture. He should be appointed for three renewable years.

The Establishment of the National Agricultural Policy Center (NAPC)¹

I. Introduction

Missions in Syria

1. The first mission was carried out during the period 18 June-9 July 1999. According to the terms of reference several interviews with Deputy Ministers and Directors of Government Departments in Damascus have been arranged, thanks to collaboration and direct participation of the National Project Director (A. El-Hindi) and the National Consultant (S. Kaboul). A field trip with the participation of the CTA (E. El Hawary) and the NC was also carried out. The visit included contacts with ICARDA, several Officials in the Aleppo Governorate, and farmers of Aleppo and Homs. These meetings have provided the opportunity for ascertaining the expected functions to be performed by NAPC, for clarifying and exemplifying, when appropriate, the type and extent of reciprocal cooperation between government offices (at national and local levels) and NAPC, and for discussing some of the main options, especially those concerning the institutional position of the Center and its governance. Questions were also asked on two related issues: (a) the existence, within the institutional system of Syria, of specialized autonomous centers from which useful lessons could be drawn; and (b) the possibility of additional incentives, over and above normal salary levels for public employees, in order to secure the required professional qualifications and time commitment. Special attention was given to explore other aspects of lesser urgency but of probable substantial importance for the future performance of the Center, such as the cooperation with University Departments, private organizations and international research centers. Information and viewpoints gathered during the interviews were repeatedly reconsidered at the Center's headquarters in informal meetings with the NC, the NPD and the CTA. Informal discussions have also focused on other vital aspects (among them, the possible configurations of the Center's internal organization, modes of operation, decision making process, source of funds and degree of autonomy).
2. A second mission took place in the period 2-13 August. A first task was to collect and discuss the comments offered by the CTA, the NPD and the NC, of the Preliminary Report, which had been in the mean time translated into Arabic. Attention was then directed to the pending options, as outlined in the PR, concerning the structure of the Center, the Management Board (MB) in particular, and the underlying decision making mechanism. The next objective was the search for the most appropriate structure of the Center. Two draft documents of mine, on the governance and organization of NAPC, were circulated for discussion within the *Project*. A useful exchange of information took place also with other international consultants present at the *Project* Headquarters during the same period, (Dr Faki and Dr. Abdullah) and the agricultural economist of the *Project* (Dr. Ciro Fiorillo). At the end, in a collegial meeting, the main lines of the forthcoming proposals and critical options were illustrated to the Deputy Minister Irfan Alloush in order to secure his views and suggestions.

¹ NAPC and Center are used interchangeably throughout the text. Also the on-going GCP/SYR//ITA is referred to simply as the *Project*.

3. In the third mission (6-17 September), work was focused mainly on: (a) a first rough estimation of the cost for the establishment and the operation of the Center and (b) a reconsideration of Center's proposed organization features (including staffing and professional profiles); (c) writing parts of the draft final report. Useful exchanges of views occurred again with the CTA, the NPD, and the NC and with the international consultant (Dr Gabriele Canali) who was conducting a one-month training course on agro-industrial policies. Together with the NPD an interview took place the President of the Federation of the Chambers of Agriculture, Eng. Omar M.Al-Shalet, Member of P.A, to learn more about the role and activities of the Federation and its potential interest in NAPC. At the outset of the mission, I had also the opportunity of illustrating the main options still under consideration to Dr. Saad Ahmed, Senior Policy Officer in the FAO Regional Office for the Near East, and to Dr Marcello Gorgoni. A concluding visit was paid to the FAO Representative in Damascus..
4. The list of Government officials, University professors, representatives of the farming profession and the private sector who have kindly accepted to respond to my many questions and express their views concerning NAPC is given in Annex 1. I gratefully acknowledge their patience and kindness. Special thanks I owe to the NC, the NPD for their very useful cooperation and to the CTA who generously gave me his support and counsel when requested. Finally I am indebted to the entire *Project* staff for their full-hearted collaboration and kindness.
5. The present draft of the Final Report owes much to the numerous critical comments and suggestions received from the FAORNE after sending in a first rough draft.

II. Expectations around NAPC

Supporting Elements

6. There are several positive signs that the establishment of the Center comes at the right time. Some of these signs pertain to the Center as such; others concern general trends in economic and social policies and, more specifically, the positive attitude of the Government with regard to structural economic reforms and innovations in the fields of Scientific Research and Higher Education.
7. The Deputy Ministers of Agriculture and Directors of the Departments at the same Ministry have expressed a keen interest in the establishment of the Center and its expected contributions. There seems to be a deeply felt need for a technically sound but at the same time concrete support in the gradual move towards a market oriented economy and an increasing involvement of the Country in the search of foreign markets, for agricultural products especially. This orientation marks a substantial move away from the planning system of the past. However the changes so far adopted (especially in the field of fruits and vegetables) have clearly shown that the agents involved (government personnel, farmers, merchants, processors, transportation and marketing firms) need guidance and training to face the new situation. Policy analysis and monitoring, knowledge of foreign markets, adoption of modern marketing techniques (and related training programs at various levels), during the interviews were the most frequently indicated needs to be fulfilled. The perceived need for further changes in other important branches of agricultural production, at present enjoying a relatively high level of subsidies, and for an increasing role of market mechanisms contribute to emphasize the usefulness for a think-tank capable of providing the missing technical support in policy review and in proposing and/or gauging new forms of guidance for the agricultural sector broadly conceived (i.e. including agro-industries, distribution and consumption).

8. High-ranking Officials of other institutions (Economy and Foreign Trade, Supply and Internal Trade, and State Planning Commission) have expressed a similar interest in the establishment of the NAPC. The involvement in agricultural policy is not an exclusive concern of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR), as is demonstrated by the fact that several other ministries and para-statal organizations are represented in the Supreme Agricultural Council and that the Council itself is chaired by the Prime Minister.
9. The declared intention of the Government to emphasize the role of Science (and related policies) for the Country's economic and social development and the current examination of two important policy proposals - one to stimulate research work in the Universities and, the other, to establish a General Commission for Agricultural Scientific Research - can be read as supportive elements in favor of NAPC. This widespread positive attitude towards the Center will likely contribute to strengthening its standing and facilitate the realization of a network of cooperative relations with a broad range of institutions, national and international, directly or indirectly concerned with agricultural policies. It is expected, for instance, that the Center may be able to render services, on the basis of bilateral or multilateral agreements, to other countries of the Region and also establish working relations with the European Commission should the association agreement with the EU come through.

Concerns and Caution

10. The present justified room for optimism surrounding the establishment of NAPC should not however conceal the difficulties that any institutional innovation of the kind is bound to encounter, especially if not joined by other institutional strengthening initiatives elsewhere, in Government and private sectors. Conscious efforts in particular must be directed to obviate what appear to be some initial weaknesses.
11. If the idea of NAPC has a good chance, at last, of becoming a reality, a good part of the credit must go to the *Project* which has attempted, through a complex training program, to convert a number of agronomists - i.e. agricultural engineers with varying degrees of experience in technical and practical matters but with none or very little knowledge of economic principle and related analytical methods - into a new type of professional figure: policy analysts or, as I prefer to denominate them, potential economic researchers specialized in agricultural policy matters. It was indeed a challenge, a bet as it were, which, even if the training is not yet completed, as of now seems already destined to end in a substantial success. A success in the sense that good foundations have been laid, but obviously not in the sense that even the best trainees - those likely to constitute the core (think tank) of NAPC, are already or are likely to become at the expiration of the *Project* full fledged researchers. The latter condition implies a level of knowledge and professional competence obtainable only gradually, through further studies and continuous practical applications under the guidance, or at least with the counseling, of more experienced (senior) researchers who, by and large, have to be recruited from abroad.
12. This circumstance is sufficient to justify a further, sustained involvement of international consultants, in the early stages of NAPC, for it is essential that the expected products of the Center reach from the very beginning an acceptable qualitative level.
13. The fact that the potential success of the *Project* has been built but with a limited contribution from the local University personnel is an aspect to be remarked and not entirely in a positive sense. Indeed the possibility and extent of a collaboration with national universities, as a complement to that obtained from foreign ones, will in the

future demand greater attention. Thus, a reconsideration of this matter in the prospect of possible innovations in higher education, as the present proposal of university reform seems to indicate, recommends itself as a strategic move. For, experience shows that no research institution can thrive and prosper without a continuous exchange and interaction with higher learning institutions. Up to now, legislative rigidities, the centralized nature of Syrian Public Administration (as well as of Universities) and established habits and practices have not been conducive to the desirable forms of collaboration. However, as Syria is proceeding with economic reforms and looks towards the European Union not only as a market but also as source of institutional and organizational examples and for assistance in its further economic and social development, the issue of the relationships between decision-makers, specialized research centers and universities must necessarily come to the foreground.

14. From this point of view significant examples can be drawn from the experience of the major European countries where collaboration practices have had normal course since long. Such cooperative relationships have proven to be in the interest of the public bodies that have decision-making power and executive responsibilities, but also to benefit the Universities themselves for a better performance of their educational and research role. It is worth considering that university staff members with keen interests in policy issues often can provide precious theoretical and methodological supports to their more applied and practically minded colleagues who work in specialized research centers.

III. Policy research and its implications for NACP.

15. A Center for policy analysis is fundamentally an organization for applied economic research. One should not get astray by the fact that the term research evokes mainly the image of the natural scientist, or, in the case of agriculture, that of the agronomist setting up experimental plots to test the effect of given treatments. The economist or the social scientist in general cannot run experiments, except in very sophisticated environments and mainly on the basis of simulated real life situations. However, the process of analyzing, say, the effects of a given price policy or the expected outcome of a policy change is not basically different from those typical of biological experimentation, because both must observe common rules and go through similar steps (problem identification and definition, research objectives and design, data gathering and analysis, critical assessment of results).
16. Research and analysis applied to economic policy, in general and to agricultural policy, in particular, then, can properly be described as a process of producing information of an advanced form (such as, for instance, actual or expected policy effects) by the use of basic information. The latter is currently understood to consist of secondary data, i.e. those collected and made available by statistical bureaus and departments, and of primary data, i.e. those collected directly by a research center for its own purposes. It is thus clear that the quantity and quality of basic information play a crucial role in any research work and that special attention must be given to fact-finding activities.
17. Objectivity and impartiality, to the extent permitted by human nature, must be part and parcel of the code of behavior and practices of a research center and of its personnel. Its procedures must be rigorous and transparent and its findings (reviews, monitoring reports, proposals...) substantiated and well documented. It must strive to build up gradually a solid base of knowledge, and therefore become capable of responding quickly to requests for services coming from interested organizations.

18. The NAPC will be affiliated to the Ministry of Agriculture, with scientific, organizational, administrative, and financial autonomy. However, it should collaborate and coordinate with all other ministries, agencies, and organizations supporting the agricultural sector.
19. Since the idea of an agricultural policy center was put forward several years ago by the MAAR in response to a recognized need to improving the foundations for the formulation of agricultural policies, the economic conditions and the economic and social structure of the country have undergone substantial changes. Among other things, macro-economic policies have been steered toward a market orientation, a trend that is likely to gain speed or at least become firmer as the association with EU comes nearer in sight. Furthermore, the very concept of agricultural sector has become larger and more diversified, due to the increasing importance of the agro-industrial complex, the needs for modernizing traditional marketing channels, transportation networks, and marketing practices (and, gradually perhaps, the entire distribution system). In addition, the notion of rural development has come to the foreground, which means diversifying the local economy (to increase employment, income, public services). Finally, environmental concerns are there to acquire more weight, from the need of a better management and conservation of natural resources, to the elimination of various kinds of pollution, to quality certification and food safety.
20. Such ongoing changes have stressed even more the need for an agricultural policy analytical support and at the same time automatically enlarged and diversified its scope, range of activities and methodological approaches. It seems, therefore, advisable to reconsider the place and scope of NAPC in the light of the above facts and trends.

IV. NAPC terms of reference (objective, role, functions and field of activities)

21. NAPC is established to:

- Meet the long as well as short-term needs of decision-makers for indepth and rigorous analysis for policy options on issues of relevance. This would include, among other things:
 - undertaking policy analysis studies enabling the formulation of integrated, coherent and effective agricultural strategies and policies;
 - suggesting policy directives to help relieve and overcome agricultural problems and constraints;
 - preparing and publishing policy studies and reports to enable the integration of the agricultural sector within the economy; and
- Conduct training courses with a view to helping in the capacity building in policy analysis and planning within the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and other related Ministries and Institutions.

22. To ensure the fulfillment of the above general objective NAPC's *main roles* shall be to:

- Produce critical reviews of the impact of agricultural policies in the light of current trends towards market oriented general economic policies and international agreements concerning agricultural commodities in general and food commodities in particular;
- Analyze and evaluate the options available for the formulation of alternative policies and modes of intervention for the agricultural sector broadly conceived and rural areas;
- Disseminate the results thus obtained so as to enhance the understanding of economic concepts and policy issues among the variety of agents and agencies

- concerned with the development of a modern agro-food sector and sustainable forms of agricultural production;
- Act as a highly qualified forum for policy dialogue, between decision makers, managers and experts, finalized to the identification of current policy concerns and the timely formulation of research lines as a basis for policy review and proposals.
23. For the purpose of the present report "agricultural policies" are defined as covering a broad spectrum of short, medium and long term policies and programs affecting performance of the agricultural sector, which is understood to also encompass livestock, forestry and fisheries activities.
24. In carrying out these functions and in the provision of consultant services the Center shall consider as its *main end-users* the following organizations:
- Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, which carries major responsibilities in the implementation and monitoring of agricultural policies and furthermore performs the function of Secretariat for the Supreme Agricultural Council;
 - Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Irrigation, which are directly concerned with natural resource development, conservation and utilization;
 - Other Ministries (such as the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade, the Ministry of Supply and Home Trade, the State Planning Commission) which, in particular as members of the Agricultural Supreme Council, concur to the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies as an integral part of the overall economic strategy and performance of the Country;
 - Other organizations of the public and private sectors, such as farmer's and cooperative organizations, credit and investment institutions, agro-industrial and marketing firms in order that they may successfully adjust to market oriented agricultural policies;
 - University institutions, in the social science fields, in general, and in economics and agricultural economics in particular, especially in their capacity as potential users of the Center publications and databases for purposes of basic and advanced teaching on policy issues and corresponding analytical methods.
25. The Center may also, on request, supply services, or participate in the provision of services, to regional and international organizations, especially through joint research and training projects.
26. Towards fulfilling the above roles the Center shall pay special attention to the following specific functions:
- Planning and implementing a research program for policy analysis and review.
 - Producing policy reports aimed at contributing to the formulation of sound agricultural policies;
 - Publishing newsletters and ad hoc reports addressed to a wider public with a view to enhance the understanding of policy matters;
 - Organizing scientific meetings to discuss research results and policy problems;
 - Training on basic concepts of policy analysis as well as on policy options and management issues (mainly as a by-product of own applied research and progress in accumulation of specialized knowledge on agricultural policy and related fields).

27. Applied research work finalized to analysis of policy questions, assessment of specific programs and projects shall be considered as the fundamental instrument for the achievement of the Center's objectives. To this end, the Center shall strive towards an accurate and up-to-date knowledge of the state of agricultural affairs, at the local, national, regional and international levels, especially through: (a) a systematic collection and updating of pertinent information regarding international trends and corresponding policy options; (b) the acquisition and proper storing of information supplied by the Central Bureau of Statistics, Government departments, farmers and other professional associations, etc. (c) the gradual building up of a specialized information network, of both quantitative and qualitative nature, capable of supporting the analytical work of the Center and covering the main areas of the Country, in particular by means of local correspondents.
28. The Center shall be concerned with four main groups of policy studies:
- Routine studies and analysis to provide, at regular intervals, critical comments on the current situation as well as to draw attention to emerging policy problems requiring in depth studies.
 - In depth studies of areas, sectors, and branches of production as a basis for analyses of agricultural policy problems of particular importance: for instance, analysis of the impact (at macro-and micro-levels) of specific international trade agreements and commitments.
 - Studies related to new directions of research and consultant work for which the Center should endeavor to gain sufficient expertise (through special courses, studies abroad, collaborations) in order to be able to supply competent services to end-users, especially to potential new clients.
 - Conduct of training courses and seminars; organization of events to present publications and research reports, or to create occasions for interchanging views on agricultural policies among policy makers and researchers. Trainees might include participants from the government, farmers organizations and other NGOs, and from the private sector.
29. Among the first group of policy studies the Center should produce annual Agricultural Yearbooks, i.e. (a) systematic and objective reports of the agricultural sector with a critical review of achievements, problematic areas, emerging trends in foreign and domestic fronts. It shall be prepared utilizing available statistical information (from national and international sources), supplemented by rapid field surveys, consultation of experts, results of own research and of any other pertinent and reliable source of information, such as the studies and documents produced by ministerial departments, research centers, university or international institutes. In this category should also fall special commodity reports or reports on the economic and social situation of single agricultural areas.
30. The second group of policy studies includes in-depth studies of subject matters of particular relevance for agricultural policy analysis and proposal. The following items are listed as examples of possible fields of attention: farmers' income situation and the impact of market conditions or policy changes on said income; changes in land tenure and land use patterns; labor market conditions, level and sources of employment and income in rural areas; regional cooperation in technology transfer (bilateral and multilateral); effects of technological changes, farm size adjustments, land and rental markets, etc.); international trade, supply responses and projections, processing activities, marketing channels, of specific commodities; food consumption trends.

31. The third group of policy studies includes activities that may acquire a special significance for the Center's range of action and reputation, as well as for expanding and diversifying its sources of funds. Examples of this type of work are:
 - Feasibility studies of investment and development projects (irrigation, forestry, processing plants, marketing structures.) by public and private firms or joint ventures;
 - Participation in drafting proposals for international financing, especially within the frame of relationships with the EU or Regional cooperation;
 - Assessment of the environmental impact of new infrastructures or intensive forms of agricultural production.
32. Training activities shall be planned and carried out as the logical extension of the research activities and policy analyses of the Center to ensure that the contents of courses and seminars (for the benefits of officials involved in policy design, implementation and monitoring) are based on a concrete knowledge of the problems, programs and professional fields for which training is sought or proposed. The annual number and duration of training courses should absorb no more than a fraction (approximately a quarter) of the total working time.
33. In general, all training activities should be the direct concern of the researchers themselves (and of experts in computing and communication, as the case may be), according to their field(s) of work and specialization, with the assistance of consultants, when appropriate, and with adequate logistical and organizational support from internal or external services.
34. Training activities should also be held important for internal purposes, in particular to keep improving and updating the staff professional competence and for integrating, in particular, new recruits to replace leavers or when required by a growing demand for services and related financing.
35. The Center should also take steps and collaborate with other organizations in initiatives aiming at a continuous improvement of the quality and coverage of economic information as essential ingredients for policy analysis. One such step should consist of the definition of suitable criteria of farm classification, according to farming systems and economic size, and of pertinent indicators (capacity utilization, horizontal and vertical integration arrangements, competitive position, etc.) relative to agro-industrial firms. For this and other fact-finding exercises, the Center should offer cooperation to the Central Statistical Bureau (and Departments of Statistics in the MAAR and other pertinent ministries) in order to ensure that, on the occasion of censuses (agricultural and others) and sample surveys, questions relevant for agricultural policy analysis are included and well formulated.
36. The selection and extent of coverage of the possible subjects within each field shall have to take into account the relative emphasis placed on specific policy problems by Government authorities and, more generally, the demand for specific services stemming from public and private organizations. But it will also be conditioned by the working capacity of NAPC (in terms of manpower, professional skills, accumulated experience and financial resources). To reconcile a plurality of possible options and the setting of priorities, as it is customary in research organizations, the definition of the program of work (on a triennial basis with yearly adjustments) shall be the responsibility of the Management Board, with the support and contributions of the Scientific Committee and the Center's Director.

V. Structure of the Center and work organization

37. NAPC shall be established as a public institution possessing scientific, organizational, administrative and financial autonomy.
38. The attached Organizational Chart (Figure 1) provides an overview of the proposed structure and internal organization. In brief, NAPC is run by a Management Board (MB) and an Executive Director (D), with the assistance of a Scientific Committee (SC). It is structured into 3 research sections, an Administrative Unit and a number of other units charged with the provision of the essential supporting services. All supporting units are under the direct supervision of the Director in as much they are designed to serve the research functions and thus contribute to the overall performance of the Center.
39. Questions regarding the governance of the Center are discussed afterwards. The internal organization issue are taken up under the following sub-headings:

Division of labor and flexibility

40. As proposed in the preceding paragraphs the Center is designed as an organization producing a variety of research and consultant services for several end-users concerned directly or indirectly with agricultural policies. The core of the Center's structure, therefore, is made up of the staff members (researchers and research assistants) directly involved in the production of such services. These direct producers must necessarily be allocated to different activities on the basis of their professional attitude and competence (present and potential) and the Center's program of work. However, a Center of limited size such as the NAPC, which is likely to remain small for a certain time, unless highly favorable circumstances permit a gradual expansion, cannot be structured in a rigid fashion. The main reason is that work organization by means of working groups (task forces) will often be the most suitable approach to the implementation of research projects. In addition, there may be need at times to concentrate efforts and personnel on projects (research or training) of a size not easily manageable by a single researcher or a small group. Furthermore, work organization through task force commends itself also for reasons related to the necessity of further on-the-job training of Center's staff under the guidance of experienced consultants.

Research sections

41. In the organizational Chart three research sections are proposed corresponding, even if not in a rigid way, to the main fields of activity, except for the training which is supposed to be basically a common responsibility. The three research sections should have main but not exclusive responsibility for the following broad types of activities:
 - Section 1: Studies performed on a routine basis on emerging agricultural policy issues and problematic situations demanding systematic studies.
 - Section 2: In-depth studies on specific issues of particular relevance for agricultural policy reviews (at international, national and local levels).
 - Section 3: Assessment and methodological studies (Feasibility studies, investment proposals, policy analysis models, training manuals and case studies)
42. Each section, from the inception On the basis of professional competence available or later on the basis of accumulated experience, each section can be further structured into a number of specialized units (see Chart 2). For example, Section 2 could usefully be organized into one unit dealing with policy analysis from a vertical perspective (food-

chains or *filières*) and another unit studying policy problems affecting entire areas or social groups, i.e. from a horizontal perspective. Section 3 could have a unit for monitoring the impact of macro-economic policies on the agricultural sector and the development (or adaptation) of policy analysis models.

Supporting services

43. In the attached "Organizational chart" the supporting services are shown under two headings only: *Administration*, on one side, to single out its importance in an institution with a substantial degree of autonomy and the rest of *Services*, on the other side. The latter, however, comprise a variety of functions, hence of well identified units, of which a summary description is given below.

44. Main functions of Administrative Unit:

- Accounting, budgeting, periodical reporting to MB and State authorities;
- Preparation of payment orders (honorarium, salary, allowances, etc.);
- Formulation, implementation and control of contracts with third parties;
- Purchase of equipment, current inputs, services;
- Maintenance of building, equipment, vehicles.

46. Main functions of the other Services Units

- *Translation and interpretation Unit*: interpreting for non-Arabic speaking consultants, visitors, experts; translation of documents to and from English for publications, seminars, international relations, etc.

- *Information technology Unit*: development and updating of software, databases, intranet system, web sites, etc. It may also be involved in training activities (for staff and outsiders) when appropriate.

- *Library Unit*: organization and operation of library facilities, acquisition of books, periodicals, CD's, etc.; assistance to staff members for bibliographic searches. Services may be extended to external users.

- *Public Relations unit*: includes promotional activities, documents distribution, reception of visitors, etc.

Professional profiles

45. Professional profiles of the personnel needed to staff the research sections and the service units are listed below. They correspond to the typical profiles to be found in similar research institutions at national or international level. Some of these profiles may not be easily available in Syria under present conditions. It is essential, however, since the beginning, to strive for recruits who can claim levels of formal training, professional skill and ability as close as possible to those suggested here. A working knowledge of English is also to be listed as an essential qualification for all staff members, although the required level of language proficiency shall depend on the functions to be performed.

46. Profiles of staff members who shall also normally have coordinating functions, or in any case a higher level of autonomy in work organization are as follows:

- Researcher: MS/MA or equivalent post-graduate education in economics, agricultural economics or statistics; working experience in policy analysis or certified capacity to plan and carry out research activities; Ph.D. degree or candidacy to a higher academic title considered as a desirable qualification;
- Administrator: University degree in Law or Business administration; excellent knowledge of administrative and financial rules and regulations; working experience in administration of public institutions and/or private organizations.

- Systems manager: University Institute diploma in information technology, engineering or equivalent; expertise in database, computing, and communication technology; extensive working experience in systems management.
- Librarian: University degree or Institute diploma, preferably in librarianship, or equivalent training; experience in modern methods of library organization and management; working knowledge of a second European language considered as a desirable qualification.
- Interpreter/translator: Secondary education or higher; extensive experience and proven efficiency in interpretation (including simultaneous one) and translation from Arabic to English and vice versa; capacity to edit English documents (prepared by researchers) considered as a desirable qualification.

47. Profiles of personnel who shall normally have mainly executive functions and work closely with staff members with the profiles and qualifications described in the previous paragraph:

- Research assistant: at least secondary diploma but higher education desirable (for instance, young university or institute graduate); formal training in computer programs and experience in use of spreadsheets, databases, statistical packages. Visual aids, etc.
- Administrative assistant: at least secondary diploma but higher education desirable (for instance, young university or institute graduate in business administration or equivalent); formal training in computer programs, satisfactory working experience in public or private employment desirable.
- Technical assistant: at least secondary diploma but higher education desirable (for instance, young university or institute graduate); required training and working experience to be set accordingly to the unit of allocation, i.e. as assistant to the Director or System manager or Librarian or Interpreter/translator.
- Secretary: at least secondary diploma but higher education desirable; formal training in secretarial work or equivalent essential; proficiency in use of computers for word processing, correspondence, archives, etc.; previous working experience with private organization highly desirable.
- Others (switchboard operator, driver, messenger, office boy)

Staffing

48. The proposed total staffing for NAPC and the distribution of personnel by professional categories and offices are summarized in Table 1. The proposed structure and total number (45) must be read as targets to be attained stepwise, possibly in three years time.

49. The three research sections are provisionally set of equal size in terms of staffing, but that will not be necessarily the case in real practice. No attempt is made here to go into greater details by trying to identify, for instance, how each section could be structured into smaller research units roughly corresponding to the anticipated fields of activity, because these and other features are largely conditioned, among other factors, by: (a) the possibility of recruiting personnel with the desired qualifications and level of professional capacity (including the capacity to perform as section chief or coordinator); (b) the availability of consultants as leaders of research projects and further instructors; and (c) the contents of the first triennial program of work - to be decided by the MB - which shall likely take into due account the research work already undertaken by the *Project*.

50. Each section is supposed to be coordinated by a section chief. One of the section chiefs may be charged with the function of substituting the Director when the latter is not at headquarters.
51. One of the conditions for ensuring the administrative and financial independence of the Center, while satisfying the requirements of transparency in the use of resources is to dispose of an efficient administrative service with highly qualified and experienced personnel. It is therefore possible that this unit may have to be reinforced as the Center activities expand.
52. The number of drivers/messengers - which may well appear too high - is amply justified by the peripheral location of the Center, hence by the necessity of moving frequently a large number of staff members, trainees, consultants, and visitors, besides taking of various types of correspondence.

Recruitment of personnel

Research staff

53. Although advertising for certain key positions is a possible means of recruitment, it must be acknowledged that the largest part of the future NAPC research staff will necessarily come from a selection of the government officers who have been or are still being trained by the *Project*. A selection process is of order because the final group of trainees is very likely to exhibit substantial differences in terms of economic competence, analytical capacity and potentiality of further progress. For the purpose of the present report, particularly for estimating budget requirements, a total of 18 researchers are adopted.
54. At the same time, however, taking into account the amount of resources invested in their training, it is imperative that even those that cannot be selected as members of the research staff stationed in Damascus or those that, though eligible, cannot accept the post for family reasons or other, be also made available, in various capacities and degrees of involvement, for the Center's activities. In particular, the trainees who will return to their government post in the Governorates should be associated to the Center in the capacity of "local correspondents". On considering the amount of training received, it can safely be assumed that, if well instructed and supervised, these local correspondents could play an essential role through providing the Center with information on local matters (for routine reports or for specific projects) and by performing as occasional members of research task forces. A total number of 20 local correspondents seem to be a reasonable figure for budgeting purposes.
55. Proper arrangements should be made with the organizations the local correspondents belong to so that the Center may systematically count on their collaboration, at least on a part-time or occasional basis. Also the collaboration with the Center should not hinder their career, on the contrary should be considered as an explicit recognition of their acquired abilities. Financial incentives are necessary especially if they are asked to extend the collaboration beyond normal working hours, for this would enter in competition with alternative opportunities of second jobs, which are a recognized necessity and a widespread practice throughout the country.
56. The selection and allocation of trainees to the most suitable functions shall have to follow a multiplicity of criteria such as, for example: performance in formal training courses; capacity to carry out assigned research tasks (beginning from simple survey functions or data presentation and interpretation); and other personal features such as disposition to group work and cooperation, capacity to take initiative or to coordinate the work of colleagues. Documentation collected during the training courses and personal judgments

formed by *Project* staff and experts while conducting research activities will be important factors for a successful selection.

In-service training

57. In-service training (i.e. on-the-job training) for short periods of time (3-6 months) should be offered to a limited number of select advanced students (senior undergraduate students, candidates for Master or even Ph.D. degrees) in economics, statistics or any other discipline that may be relevant to the work of the Center. Experience elsewhere indicates that this form of training is generally regarded as an efficient selection mechanism in view of possible recruitment or even only for choosing fresh outstanding graduates to be sent abroad for post-graduate studies whenever proper arrangements can be made with suitable foreign educational institutions. On-the-job training thus may also prove instrumental in establishing good working relations with Syrian universities. Finally, in-service training could also be offered to young graduates already employed provided they possess a sufficient knowledge of basic economics and can be detached to the Center by their employer.

Transfer of personnel and recruitment through advertising

58. *Project* trainees to be selected as members of the research staff are already in Government employment and can therefore be transferred to the Center. However it may be advisable for the Center to also search for suitable candidates through advertising. The scope is to verify if it is at all possible to attract the interest of persons already at work in other national or international organizations, or even younger graduates who having completed their higher education abroad may look at NAPC as a place to pursue an interesting career.

59. For the profiles of Administrator and Administrative assistants it should be possible to find qualified and capable persons among government officers. Advertising may nonetheless be a useful means to widen the range of possible candidates.

60. Advertising is undoubtedly a must for the profiles not represented in Government employment, as the operational experience of the *Project* clearly shows. Reference is made here in particular to such profiles as System manager, Librarian, Interpreter, and some types of Assistants and Secretaries. For these positions the Center must therefore be empowered, legally and financially, to turn to the market.

Consultants

61. International and national consultants will constitute a strategic component of the research labor force in the first period of the Center's life. They are supposed to play an essential role not only as advisors and teachers on specific policy research matters, but especially as project leaders, at least until the necessary experience is built up and the researchers reach a sufficient degree of autonomy, individually and as a group. In such a capacity the consultants, whenever necessary, should be ready to impart ad hoc additional training (including report writing) to the members of the task force under their guidance. The average number of proposed consultants (national and international) is 4 per year and for varying periods of time.

Mobility and short term assignments

62. It is proposed that the Center to the extent permitted by available resources pursue a policy of staff mobility, inward and outward. Qualified experts of other national, foreign or international organization could be seconded for short periods of time to NAPC to take part in projects of common interest. On the other hand, mobility for NAPC staff may be realized through equally temporary detachment for special tasks to: (a) Government organizations; (b) international or regional organizations; (c) research and learning institutions, at home or abroad.

VI. Governance of the Center and modes of operation

Main issues

63. The main questions concern the degree of independence and financial autonomy of which the Center should be endowed, its affiliation and relations with other government institutions, the function, composition and mode of operation of the governing body. In other words, what type of written constitution and operational arrangements can be trusted to provide a sufficient guarantee that the Center will be capable of fulfilling the very objectives, roles and functions for which it is established and thus represent a real innovation in the institutional system of the Country. These questions are taken up separately in the following paragraphs, but it should be understood that they are highly interrelated and that a certain amount of repetitions is almost unavoidable.
64. The independence condition is extremely important for several reasons. It is a prerequisite of a correct relationship between policy decision makers and policy researchers/analysts. The Center (in order to gain an authoritative position,) needs to be perceived, as an independent body, i.e. an institution capable of providing services that are not necessarily conditioned by its affiliation. Furthermore, an independent institution can more easily diversify its sources of finance (for instance, by participation to projects financed or co-financed by international agencies), adopt a flexible organization, and mobilize the collaboration of experts, consultants, visiting researchers, part-time and occasional personnel, in such a way as be able of quick responses to new demands on a broad front of agricultural policy issues, and to adequately face peak workloads.
65. Questions regarding the affiliation are also important for obvious reasons of financing as well as of administrative controls on the legitimacy of resource allocation and utilization. But affiliation normally also refers to the authority upon which the law confers the power to decide on the governing body. There are at present in Syria a few "autonomous" research or teaching centers, and on the basis of their founding acts it is safe to state that they have the following common features: (a) they are affiliated to a Ministry; (b) they are supposed to be governed by a Management Board; (c) the Minister nominates the MB members and chairs the MB; (d) members of the MB are intended as representatives of other Ministries.
66. Available evidence, however, indicates that in practice the MB after its formal establishment does rarely perform any real function and the decision making power comes to rest entirely with the Minister himself and with the Center's Director. The Director thus depends on the Minister's approval for any initiative to be taken and expenditure to be incurred. This low level of performance may be accounted for by the shortage of time of a Minister-Chairman who has a host of responsibilities and several daily engagements, or even more so by the asymmetry of power between a Minister-

Chairman and the other members of the Board. Whatever the reasons, if the state of affairs just mentioned leaves much to be desired in the existing centers it would certainly be totally inadequate for NAPC, that needs a great deal of attention and support. The challenge therefore is to look for an institutional arrangement that could avoid those pitfalls.

67. In order to confer to NAPC the desirable degree of autonomy and flexibility it would not be enough to introduce one or more clauses to that extent into the founding act, for provisions of that sort become effective if and only if the Chairman and the other MB members have the determination and authority of enforcing them through coherent decisions. Therefore, the choices concerning the composition, nomination, chairmanship of the MB are more important than, or at least as important as, the formal affiliation of the Center.

Options and proposals

68. Given the involvement of the MAAR in the field of agricultural policies, the affiliation of the Center to that Ministry would seem a natural solution, provided, however, that other important choices are also made at the same time. Affiliation, in the first place, should not necessarily mean that the Minister must also take on the function of Chairman, or even that the Minister of MAAR is the sole authority responsible for the nomination of the MB members. Some elaborations on these crucial options are presented in the following paragraphs.
69. The first and strategic option concerns the choice of the Chairman. Ideally the candidate should possess sufficient "political weight" coupled with management experience; a deep interest in sustaining and developing a research institution specialized in agricultural policy analysis; a disposition to interact effectively with the colleagues and collaborators (MB and SC members, Director, consultants); and, finally, a capacity to entertain cooperative relations with policy decision makers.
70. Of great importance are also: the definition of the "ideal" MB members and the criteria for nominating them. An explicit indication in the Founding Act of the personal qualifications that candidates should possess may well prove to be a strategic step towards the realization of an independent and forward-looking management. By so doing it is more probable that, in actual practice at the time of nomination, an acceptable compromise can be found between the position held by potential candidates and their personal qualifications.
71. A related issue is the choice of the size of the MB. It is paramount to keep the number of members within "reasonable limits", a condition that by itself rules out the possibility of incorporating "representatives" of all the organizations that are involved in or affected by agricultural policies. Only a small size MB (7-9 members) composed of competent and dedicated persons, guided by a Chairman who is in principle is not a commanding figure but rather a "primus inter pares", can display the determination and sense of responsibility of a well performing "Board of Trustees". And last but not least, it is more likely to hold fruitful meetings as frequently as needed.
72. Taking into consideration all stipulations raised in items 65-72, and to raise the chances of an authoritative MB, and of real organizational, administrative and financial independence, while at the same time conferring an important role upon MAAR, the following provisions are proposed for adoption.
 - The first is that the Founding Act should not indicate, in detail, all the organizations to be represented. Rather it should fix the size of the MB, state only the types of

organizations to be taken into consideration when nominating MB members. And qualifications....

- The Center should be affiliated to MAAR,
- The Minister of Agriculture should be, if he so wished, become the Chairman of MB. If he chooses not to be the Chairman, the MB will have the authority to appoint the Chairman, upon nomination by the Minister of Agriculture;
- The Ministers or the Chairmen of the organizations to be represented in the MB will have the right to nominate their representative;

73. In the case of a seven members MB the recommended structure of the MB could look as follows:

- 2 from MAAR;
- 1 from the Ministry of Irrigation;
- 1 from Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade or Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade;
- 1 from the Ministry of Planning (State Planning Commission) or the Ministry of Finance;
- 1 from the "Private sector" (i.e. Federation of Chambers of Agriculture or Farmers and Cooperatives organizations or Cooperative Agricultural Bank,);
- 1 from Universities (Faculties of Economics or Departments of Agricultural Economics in the Agricultural Faculties).

74. In the case of nine members MB, the inclusion of others organizations (for instance, the Central Bureau of Statistics) could be considered or a larger representation envisaged for MAAR and one of the above listed categories of organizations, such as MAAR. But the advantages of the enlargement must be weighed against the risk of a less performing Board. A seven members MB tends to stress the nomination on merit grounds, whereas it can be assumed that the larger the size of the Board the greater the weight of the representation component.

75. The suggested structure and procedure for selecting and nominating the MB incorporates a substantial amount of flexibility because, among other features, it is open to future adjustments without recourse to legislative changes. It leaves room, for instance, for bringing in or enlarging the presence of institutions, such as the Agricultural Cooperative Bank, the Farmers and Cooperatives Federations, and the Chambers of Agriculture, which are likely to acquire greater economic importance in concomitance with the development of a modern agri-food system.

76. Two members from MAAR are justified not only for its role in agricultural policies but also for its direct interest in NAPC and the substantial amount of resources (in terms of funds and personnel) contributed towards the establishment of the Center.

77. Should international assistance with financial involvement of a donor country continue then the direct participation of the involved agency (ies) in the MB would be justified and desirable, for instance, through the participation of the CTA (or equivalent Official) as an *ex-officio full* member.

78. The Director of the Center, though not a member of the MB should normally participate in the MB meetings, in a consultative capacity.

Specification of the functions of MB, SC, and D

79. The MB takes decisions on:

- Program of work (annual and triennial) and the corresponding estimate of revenue and expenses;
- Any funding proposal, for submission to the relevant institutions;

- Contracts and cooperation arrangements with third parties (national, bilateral and international);
 - Nomination of Director;
 - Nomination of Scientific Committee;
 - Budget adjustments and variations;
 - Purchase of rather expensive equipment and services;
 - Recruitment (of staff and consultants), remuneration, promotions, secondment, etc.;
 - Recommendations and proposals from the Scientific Committee;
 - Any other matter in the interest of the Center.
80. The MB can delegate some of the above functions to the Director. The MB shall also deliberate on the maximum amount of expenditure, which the Director is empowered to effect without MB approval and the procedures to follow when doing so.
81. The Chairman of the Management Board
- Convenes the Board and formulates the agenda of the meeting;
 - Ensures the implementation of the MB deliberations and recommendations
 - Takes autonomous decisions in cases of urgency
82. Supervises the performance of the Director and the follow up of the MB's deliberations.
83. Basic functions of the SC are:
- Advice on NAPC program of work and on best means to implement it (including updating of information, communication technologies and scientific cooperation with related national and international institutions);
 - Review main lines of activity (achievements and problems) and suggests needed adjustments;
 - Monitor and evaluate NAPC performance
 - Assess training needs of NAPC staff and means to fulfill them (including scope and program of visiting scholars and consultants).
 - Submit recommendations and proposals to the MB
86. It is proposed that the SC:
- Should consist of 4 members,
 - Should meet at least twice a year and remain in charge for a period of three years;
 - Should be available for a joint meeting with the MB at least once a year.
84. For the first time, before the expiration of the *Project* and the full assumption of responsibility by NAPC, the names of the personalities invited to take on the assignment should be agreed upon jointly by the participating agencies. Afterwards the nomination of the Scientific Committee should be the responsibility of the MB, unless otherwise stipulated within the framework of further international assistance.
85. The Director shall:
- Manage work of the Center and supervise the performance of the staff ensuring good working relations and a smooth functioning of the Center;
 - Execute the deliberations of the MB;
 - Take decisions in all matters delegated to him by the MB;
 - Maintain working relations and consultations with Government offices at national and local levels, and with international organizations as appropriate;
 - Make proposals on the program of work and corresponding budget for submission to the MB;
 - Have full authority in executing the program of work approved by the MB;
 - Report regularly to the Chairman and to the MB on the progress of work and financial situation;

- Prepare the appropriate documentation on each point of the agenda for the MB meetings;
- Collaborate with the Scientific Committee.

86. The responsibility of choosing the Director of the Center should be the prerogative of the MB upon the proposal of the Minister of Agriculture;

87. The Director is nominated for three years, and can be confirmed

Qualification requirements for SC and D

88. Members of the SC are to be nominated among national and international scholars and experts of high scientific qualifications, with experience in economic research, research organization and policy analysis.

89. Director's qualifications:

- Higher university degree (MA or Ph.D.) or equivalent formal training from an accredited institution, in economics or agricultural economics or statistics;
- Successful management experience in public or private organizations (preferably in the field of economic research, or at least in the organization and analysis of statistical information)
- Experience or familiarity with the organization and modes of operation of foreign research institution in agricultural economic research and policy analysis;
- Capacity to write and supervise the drafting of policy reports and to interact actively with decision makers;
- Capacity to motivate and organize the work of collaborators and to interact in a constructive fashion with other international consultants;
- Capacity to maintain cooperative relations with other research and educational institutions, at home and abroad

VII. Budgetary requirements

90. The financial requirements for the establishment and the operation of the Center are broken down into two main components: (a) investment funds necessary to physically adapt the premises presently housing the Project and to equip the spaces thus made available with the facilities required by NAPC: (b) funds necessary to cover the yearly expenditures for the Center's normal operation and programmed activities. Both types of estimated financial requirements are obviously based on the proposals concerning structure, staffing, modes of operation, as illustrated in previous sections.

Initial investments (Table 2)

91. The building presently used by the Project is generally considered to be apt for NAPC, provided the spaces so far occupied by another agency ("Agricultural Extension Project") can be appropriated and converted to suit the Center needs. Of the three class rooms on the ground floor one should be converted into offices while a second one should house the library, a meeting room (for MB, Scientific Committee, working groups and the like) and some additional office space. Other investments are necessary for general improvements (rest rooms, entrance/ reception, etc...), for extending air conditioning, telephones and Intranet connections, road pavement....

92. Whether it should be possible to maintain a few rooms as guest space to host local correspondents when summoned to the Center or some occasional trainees not resident in

Damascus, it is a matter requiring further scrutiny. In any case alternative arrangements to meet these needs should be looked for because priority in the allocation of building space and facilities must necessarily go to the working requirements of staff members and consultants.

93. It is also taken for granted, for the time being, that the furniture, technical equipment (PC's, copiers, air conditioners,) and motor vehicles in use to the Project can be transferred to NAPC when the Project expires. Funds allocated to this scope, as proposed in Table 1, are therefore limited to the investments strictly necessary to complement the existing stocks of various types of equipment and furniture. Investments for additional means of transportation, over and above those already in use in the Project, seem fully justified by the fact that, given the specific location of the Center, a much higher number of staff members (in additions to consultants, occasional trainees, visitors) will need to be moved back and forth daily. Furthermore, the frequency of communications and physical displacements of staff members and consultants between the Centers headquarter, Government offices and other end-user sites are also likely to intensify greatly as the Center becomes fully operational.
94. The option of constructing a third floor has been briefly considered, especially during the last mission, while discussing the Centers space requirements. Its cost has been roughly estimated at about five millions S.P., plus fixed equipment. Whether the present structure would support an additional floor is, however, a matter requiring an expert judgment. An additional floor would certainly be necessary should the present Project be replaced by a similar training initiative to be housed jointly with NAPC. It cannot be excluded in any case that the construction of some additional physical space, either vertically or horizontally, may become necessary for a proper housing of NAPC after the first initial 1-2 years of operation. As far as I can judge, the layout of the core building and the amount of ground space surrounding it should easily allow for a limited horizontal expansion at reasonable cost.

Annual costs (Table 3)

95. The estimated annual costs presented in Table 3 can be taken to represent the requirements of a fully operational Center, roughly corresponding to the third year of operation. In other words it is taken for granted that a gradual start is inevitable (and probably desirable) even if the most favorable conditions prevail. The following paragraphs are meant to provide a justification for each category of expenditure.
96. The Management Board (MB) is the central decision-making body. Chairman and MB members will be held responsible to the Syrian political and administrative authorities for their management decisions and for the good use of available resources. The proposed honorarium, which is intended both as an incentive and recognition of the importance of the posts, assumes that the MB shall meet about four times per year. Obviously it is up to the political authority nominating the Chairman and the other MB members to determine the appropriate amount of the honorarium and conditions of payment. A higher honorarium for the Chairman is the normal practice elsewhere on account of the greater responsibility and time involvement, which the function implies. Also, in order to intensify attendance the honorarium of each member may be split into a fixed component and a variable one geared to the number of meetings actually attended.
97. The Scientific Committee (SC) is assumed to meet normally twice a year - a planning meeting to advice in the preparation of the annual (and triennial) program of work and a

review meeting in the middle of the year- for a total involvement of 15 days. The SC is also supposed to meet at least once per year with the Management Board.

98. Given the important role attributed to the International consultants, a time involvement of about 60 days, in two visits, is foreseen. The budget includes the cost of an average of 4 international consultants for the first three years of operation, when their participation plays a strategic role for a successful start of NAPC. Their number and presence could be greatly reduced, perhaps to half, in subsequent periods. It is worthwhile to take into consideration the possibility that an international consultant may also perform as member of the SC.
99. A longer time involvement is budgeted for the national consultants. Their lower unit cost, in comparison to that of international consultants, reflects the salary structure and market conditions prevailing in the country. Daily subsistence allowances (d.s.a.) for internal displacement are justified by the direct participation in the implementation of research projects requiring fieldwork.
100. The unit cost of a local correspondent is based on the forecast of a yearly participation equivalent to about 60 days of full-time work and a presence at NAPC headquarter of about 20 days. Since most of them are likely to be recruited among the Project trainees returning to their original working locations, a total number of 20 local correspondents would seem, under present conditions, a reasonable guess. A larger number of local correspondents would certainly be useful provided the work plan and the coordination capacity of the Center can make good use of them.
101. The remuneration for the Personnel stationed at NAPC's headquarters must necessarily reflect the salary scale, which applies to all government employees. A scale that allows only a very limited discrimination among different categories of personnel and a ratio of two to one between the highest entrance pay (\$80 per month) and the lowest (\$44). For budgeting purposes an average monthly gross salary of \$150 per month has been chosen. However, at the same time, an equal amount is earmarked to provide an incentive system capable of bringing the actual remunerations to acceptable levels. Daily allowances for field trips are obviously an essential cost item for a research center, but may also provide, albeit to a limited extent, some additional incentives. Finally, a substantial sum is budgeted for travel abroad, mainly by the Director and researchers, for study tours and attendance of courses, seminars, international meetings, etc.

VIII. Concluding Remarks

Assessment of NAPC

102. It is highly desirable to foresee the conduct of an objective external assessment of NAPC's overall performance after the first three years of effective operation. A Committee composed of scholars and experts in economic research and policy analysis nominated by FAO in consultation with Syrian authorities and the Donor country could carry out this exercise.

Promotional activities

103. NAPC represents a substantial innovation in the Syrian institutional framework. There is therefore a sharp need for promotional activities – of the types already initiated by the Project itself – to make known, outside the restricted circle of the persons directly involved in it, the why and how of the establishment of NAPC and the specific functions it is expected to perform. These effort have, among others, the scope of (a) avoiding misunderstandings and fears, especially by some Government Departments, of duplication of work; (b) avoiding or reducing the danger of isolation which is likely to emerge if the initial information flow from the Center might be insufficient by itself to convey a convincing picture of its work and potentialities.

104. Promotional activities can take various forms:

- Organization of seminars and workshops to discuss why and how changes in economic policies toward agriculture are of order, with invitations to Government authorities and technical personnel.
- Organization of short training courses for Government intermediate officers
- Setting up working groups jointly with experts of other institutions (Government and others), for instance, to assess the state of information concerning specific sectors or geographical areas for the purpose of fact-finding surveys finalized to monitor policy effects.

Services on payment

105. The amount of paid services that can be rendered by the Center will be constrained by the priority to be accorded to the main institutional functions. But it should be understood that they might play a useful and fully justified role for at least two reasons. First, they may prove essential for the acquisition of additional financial resources, thus enhancing the degree of autonomy of the Center and the possibility of economic incentives for the Center staff. Second, closer relations with the market demand for services will offer the possibility of an external control on the Center's work quality. Reasonably no firm will be inclined to purchase services from an institution which does not have the reputation of performing services at least as good that those obtainable from alternative, national and international, providers.

Further assistance from the Project

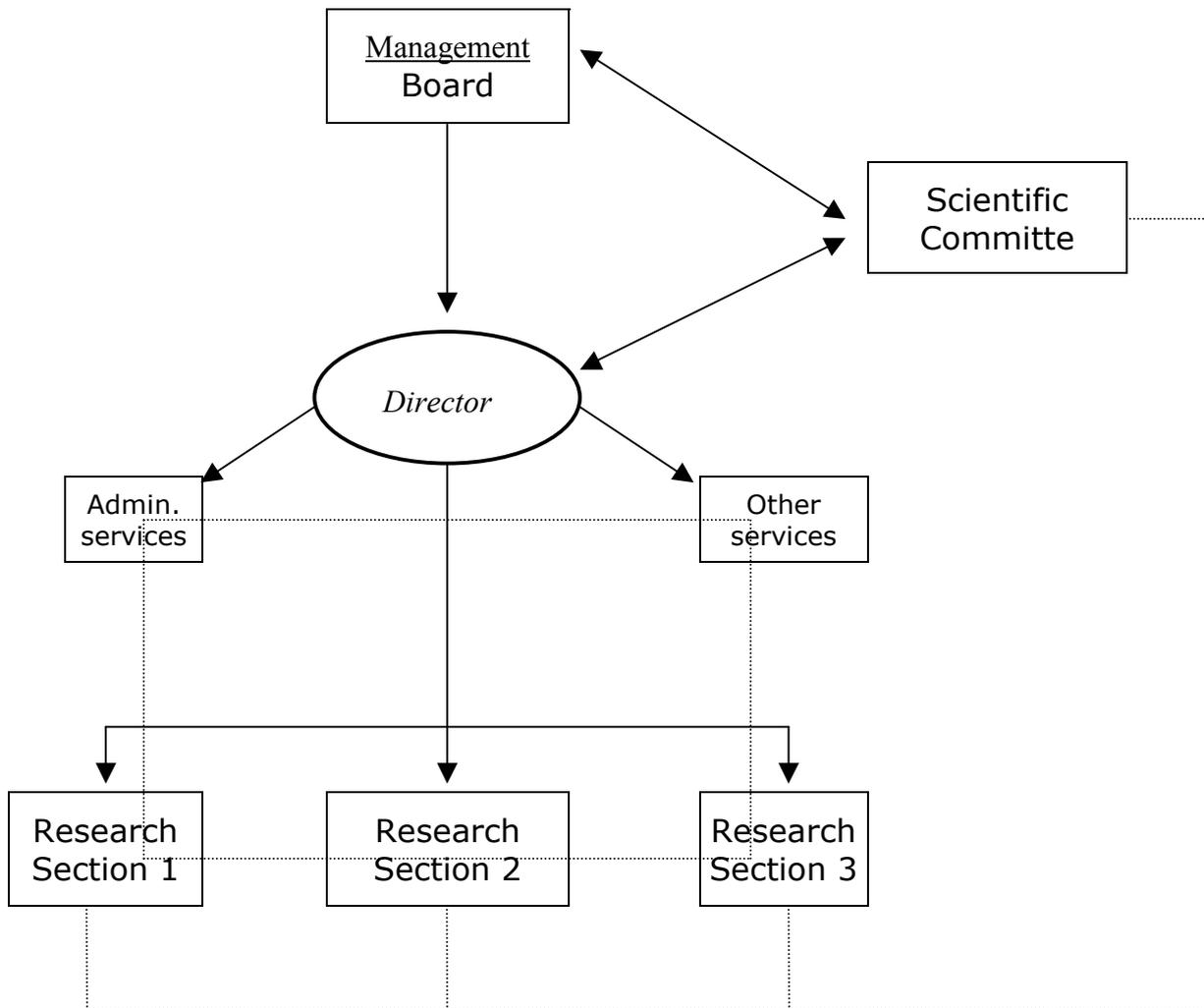
106. The strong relationship between the *Project* and NAPC is amply recognized in Syrian circles to the point that often they are supposed to coincide, as if the Center *de facto* is already in operation.

107. The positive role of the Center for the training of the future NAPC research staff has already been stressed. But the Project can further assist in:

- Selection of trainees and assessment of their capacity and potentialities;
 - Design of further training activities for NAPC permanent staff as well for the “local correspondents”
 - Selection of additional personnel for the research sections and supporting services;
 - Selection of international consultants;
 - Establishing working agreements with national and foreign universities and research institutions.
 - Preparation of a blueprint for the first triennial program, based, among other considerations, on the experience and results of the policy studies, seminars and workshops already carried out.
108. Special attention must be given to identifying the differential needs for further training displayed by the trainees to be associated to the Center in various positions and capacities.
109. Early agreements with national and foreign universities for training purposes, exchange of personnel and possibilities of title recognition are another important matter to attend to.

Figure 1

N A P C ' s O r g a n i z a t i o n C h a r t



Heavy lines = command, coordination, interaction
Dotted lines = service links and cooperative relations

Figure 2

