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Asian Food Bank plan

BANGKOK Jan. 12.—The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has recommended establishing an Asian Food Bank to cover shortages and emergencies in the region according to an ESCAP report published here today reports Reuter.

The bank would also take over marketing and centralise the buying and selling of food for its members to ensure outlet for exporters and stable supplies for importers.

The proposal is being discussed this week by officials from the 34-member countries before the commission's annual meeting in March.

ESCAP said food supplies during the 1980s were expected to be tight and prices high and warned that the 1981 bumper crop of rice in Asia should not lull countries into a false sense of security.

A regional food reserve would be an effective way of overcoming crop uncertainties the report said.

The food bank's aim was to establish a system of "collective self-reliance" where by reserves were pooled food purchases were financed and markets were found for surplus production the report said.

Each ESCAP member would earmark for the bank an agreed percentage of its grain production. This would be its quota which it would be able to use in times of emergency.

Supplementary assistance would also be available depending on page 12 Col. 2

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ding on the size of the bank's food reserve and donations from richer countries.

Another source of supply would be short-term pledges of food from nearly self-sufficient member countries such as Pakistan or India when they had temporary surpluses from bumper harvests the report said.

ESCAP also recommended that stocks of grain should be maintained by major food exporting countries at convenient locations within the Asian-Pacific region to ensure an immediate supply in times of crisis and at reduced shipping rates.

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