



WHAT IS AN FAO COIN

Five years ago next month, fewer than two hundred 2-page coin albums were presented to world development leaders by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Those few pages of coins were the forerunners of ten thousand F.A.O. Coin Albums, grown thus far to nine pages in two volumes.

Since that modest and symbolic beginning in 1968, more than 700,000,000 FAO coins have been minted for authorities representing more than one billion people, or about a third of the population of the earth. Furthermore, other nations are planning FAO coin issues; if their population is added to this total, we find that more than a billion and a half people are represented in this endeavor, or more than 40% of mankind.

In the last two decades it has become increasingly difficult, even for the specialist, to keep track of the newly independent countries of the world, let alone the coins issued in their names. Additionally, most of these newer nations are the very ones whose interest is great in development programs, including especially those for food and agriculture.

How then do we find, out of the hundreds of types of world coins being issued currently, which are those devoted to the FAO Coin Program?

What is an FAO coin?

An FAO coin is one that has been included in the FAO Albums, or is about to be, or is otherwise recognized by the FAO Coin Office in Rome as having been authorized by a government cooperating in the objectives of the FAO Coin Program.

The coin is intended to be primarily educational and to carry the "Food for All" message as widely as possible over the course of a generation or more. Seignorage from the coin generates revenue locally which can be used for food programs. Sales of the Album and other items create some international funds for FAO development projects.

What does an FAO coin look like?

Remember that the FAO coin functions as any coin, that is, as a medium of exchange or a measure of value. As such the FAO coin is issued as a circulating or commemorative coin as part of a given nation's policy. This results in a wide variety of sizes, shapes, valuations, and of course, designs.

An FAO coin may include:

- ** the letters "FAO" or
- ** a slogan such as "Grow More food" or
- ** symbols of food or agriculture, or
- ** any combination of these three kinds of identification.

Included below is a table which lists more than 150 present or proposed FAO coins, together with some indications as to their characteristics. The last three columns in the table provide the designations for each coin as to the design combinations noted above.

Of course the use of a slogan or an agricultural motif does not alone identify an FAO coin. Any number of pieces with such designs bear no relation to FAO; indeed most antedate the FAO program. (The wheat ears on our original Lincoln cent provide an obvious example.) The use of the letters "FAO" would seem to provide the least questionable identification for entries in the FAO Coin Plan. And yet there are already six coin types in existence, bearing the initials, that are NOT considered genuine. These include five gold coins bearing the name of Lesotho, and a silver pseudo-coin of Ajman. See footnotes (a) and (f) following the table below.

Inclusion in the Albums provides the final imprimatur for an FAO coin. But the Albums do not delineate the broader aspects of the Coin Program. Much as the entire field of world coins, so the FAO group exhibits a number of facets:

- ** individual coins
- ** coin sets
- ** proofs
- ** proof sets
- ** fleur de coin sets
- ** patterns
- ** philatelic-numismatic covers

These aspects, differing from country to country, are also detailed in the table which follows.

Outlining some of these characteristics is not to understate the importance of the FAO Albums themselves, or the worthiness of the programs to which the proceeds accrue from continued sales thereof. But it does reveal a variety of factors open to the collector's consideration and may give him ideas as to different possible ways of approaching FAO coins.

Additionally FAO coins can provide the collector with a kind of window-on-the-world, as a way into discovering leads to other specialties. For example, lets us consider that since most of those nations already in the Program are developing countries, many are located in Africa and in Asia; and that collecting FAO coins could lead to specializing in those from one or another continent, or in first issues by newly independent nations, or in coins commemorating anniversaries of independence.

There is a major reason for considering FAO coins not only as a collection in itself, but as a stepping-stone to other interests in world coins. FAO COINS ARE EXCEEDINGLY WELL DOCUMENTED. All kinds of regular and special information is available on each and every coin. Data have been painstakingly and systematically gathered by the FAO Coin Office from the various Central Banks and Ministries of Finance and Mints from around the world, with whom FAO has dealt from the beginnings of the Coin Plan

Are FAO coins readily available?

Most individual FAO coins are offered for sale by dealers in current world coins. Many are also available through the mints or ministries of finance in the countries of origin. Some are also available as sets or parts of sets. Again, the table below can be of some help in indicating which coins are (or were) available separately.

Insofar as the original FAO Albums are concerned, the first few pages have long since been sold out. FAO is attempting to locate some of the original recipients, particularly of pages 1 and 2, who would be willing to release the pages to FAO for issue to other collectors. Various other pages are still available from FAO in Rome, including the ongoing pages in Album 2.

Many of the coins included in Album 1 of the FAO collection have also been mounted in panels and are arranged for framing and display. These panels provide a way for late starters to obtain a representative collection of the original FAO coins.

Detailed information on these albums and panels is available from the FAO Coin Office in Rome.

It should be noted that FAO has also participated in the preparation of a number of medals and tokens related to FAO programs or commemorating various anniversaries. Information on these items is also available.

What is FAO?

Related to the United Nations are fourteen autonomous inter-governmental agencies, a few of which are:

**World Health Organization (WHO)

**International Monetary Fund (IMF)

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

One of this family group is FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization

Its fundamental purposes include.

** raising nutritional levels and standards of living,

** improving the production and distribution of food, and

** bettering the condition of rural populations.

FAO provides an information service, promotes action toward improving marketing, processing and credit policies, and furnishes technical assistance.

The FAO Coin Plan was initiated to help support these efforts, and to call our attention to the need for providing "Food for All."