

## NUTRITION

# Half the World Is Hungry

Today one and a half billion people in the world are underfed, but by the end of this century this figure may be more than doubled—By Barbara Tufty

► BY BECOMING AWARE of the serious food shortage facing the world today, individuals can play an effective part in future action to relieve human hunger and misery.

The problem of hunger and malnutrition, affecting more than half the world's population, can be lessened by discussing its causes and cures and by becoming aware of how other nations solve the problem, stated Dr. B. R. Sen, director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. He spoke to the World Food Congress being held in Washington, June 4 through 18, a meeting of more than 100 countries to discuss the world food crisis.

World food supplies must be doubled by 1980 and trebled by the end of the century if there is to be even a "moderate improvement" in levels of human nutrition.

Help should be given now and not later when the real crisis of population and food supply is upon us, and the number of hungry people is doubled. This is the hope of S. Y. Krishnaswamy, secretary-general of the World Food Congress.

This help from the countries who can give it to the countries who need it should supplement and not supplant the needy countries' own efforts.

The need for immediate action on the vast problems facing a hungry world is forced by two dangerous situations:

1. The enormous increase of population that by the end of the century will reach the "frightening figure" of six billion people—twice what the population is today.

2. Lack of food today to feed the world's men, women and children. There is not enough food to go around today, to say nothing of the next five, ten, or 25 years.

The World Food Congress is bringing together new facts about the world food situation, and is reinforcing the six-year Freedom from Hunger Campaign, sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

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## Third World Food Survey

► THE FOOD SUPPLY keeps increasing, but half the world is hungry or malnourished.

Although science and technology are improving the food supply, progress is mainly taking place in the developed areas.

In Asia, Africa and Latin America, the less developed areas of the world, at least 20% of the population is undernourished. Up to half, the Third World Food Survey finds, suffer from hunger, malnutrition or both. In Asia, where half of the world's population is concentrated, the people live on one-quarter of the world's food supply.

The caloric intake, in these areas, falls short of standard requirements for daily human activity. Even when there are enough calories, diet may be inadequate. Some 60% of the households in less developed areas, the survey finds, depend on cereals, starchy roots and sugar, foods inadequate in nutritional quality.

Malnutrition takes its toll by causing retarded growth of children, poor physique and health in adults, low resistance to disease, and low working efficiency.

If these consequences are to be combated, the survey finds, the food supply will have to be increased in the developing areas.

To keep pace with the population explosion, an 80% increase in the total food supply, and a 120% increase in the animal food supply will be needed by 1975.

The rise could be achieved without any expansion in cultivated area if the rational use of fertilizers, pest controls, better cultivation and irrigation, and better feeding and storage methods were adopted.

Agricultural resources can be supplemented by increasing the production of fish, a good source of proteins, vitamins and minerals.

Surplus milk and grain products from the developed countries, the survey finds, although helpful as a stop-gap measure, are not a permanent solution to the food problems of less developed countries. They should take second place to increased production by the countries themselves.

The survey was issued by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for the World Food Congress held in Washington, D. C.

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## Improving Farm Products

► IMPROVING the farmers' understanding and abilities can be more important than improving technical materials.

All efforts of propaganda, assistance, science and research would be useless if farmers remain at a primitive level of knowledge, Prof. Mario Bandini, an Italian official, told the World Food Congress in Washington, D. C.

An investment in improving the farmers' human capacities might at first show slow and even unnoticeable profits, he said. But he believes this is "by far the most profitable investment."

Prof. Bandini, president of the High Council on Agriculture and Forests of the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, called upon World Food Congress participants to discuss means of preserving good farming where it exists, of improving and increasing the production of cultivated land, and of extending food crops to new lands.

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Food and Agriculture Organization

*STILL PRIMITIVE—These Africans along the Togo coast still use primitive fishing methods and obtain only small catches, although fish is one of the most important sources of animal protein in southern Togo. The Food and Agriculture Organization has been asked by the Togo Government to help improve their fishing industry.*

## Regulate Birth Rate

► **HUSBANDS** and wives should voluntarily regulate childbirth, Prof. Arnold J. Toynbee, a British historian, told the World Food Congress in Washington, D. C.

If the world is to defeat the scourges of famine, undernutrition and malnutrition, another victory must be won—voluntary regulation of the number of children born, he charged. However, at least several generations will be needed to educate the majority of wives and husbands to understand this point of view.

Man has learned in the course of history to hunt, fish and farm, he noted, but in each instance the increases in food production were counterbalanced by increases in population that devoured the margin of food supply.

"We have been godlike in our planned breeding of our domesticated plants and animals," he said, "but we have been rabbit-like in our unplanned breeding of ourselves."

Man has continued to breed to the limit with a lack of control that he would never dream of granting to his domesticated animals and plants.

Prof. Toynbee told the congress that the human race must become a single worldwide unit in mastering the critical problem of hunger. Two fundamental educational projects are necessary to solve this problem: production and distribution of food, and voluntary regulation of the world's birth rate.

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## Excess Body Fat

► **HAVING TOO MUCH** fat on your body is another form of malnutrition.

This type of malnutrition causes much damage among the few well-to-do who eat too much and exercise too little, explained Prof. C. Glen King, president and scientific director of the Nutrition Foundation, Inc., New York.

Severe penalties are paid in the form of a higher incidence of coronary heart disease, cerebral strokes, diabetes, hypertension, cancer, liver ailments and kidney failure, Prof. King told members of the World Food Congress meeting in Washington to discuss the world hunger crisis.

The trend toward excess body fat is evident among the well-to-do in poor countries, as well as being the dominant form of malnutrition in advanced areas.

Yet other conditions prevail in stark contrast for about one-half the world's population living in areas that are not advanced technologically.

Here the lack of good quality protein foods such as milk, meat, fish, eggs or poultry causes another type of malnutrition that shows its damaging effect in the form of stunted growth, mental and physical lethargy, swelling induced by water retention, greatly decreased resistance to infections, and many other unpleasant symptoms.

Intensive efforts of the United Nations agencies, with cooperation of national governments, voluntary agencies, food industries and private foundations have aided the

drive to lessen the suffering from malnutrition. One of the greatest contributions to newly developing areas is in helping establish training and research programs within each country, Prof. King believes.

He cited the "phenomenal record" of a cooperative program to improve crop yields in Mexico. In addition to having a strong national agricultural research service and school within 20 years, he said wheat, corn and bean production has doubled and the chicken industry has tripled. Twenty years ago Mexico's 21 million people averaged 1,700 calories a day; today 37 million Mexicans average 2,700 calories a day.

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## Food Increase Consumed

► **THE SMALL GAINS** achieved in food production in many developing countries have been wiped out by population growth, during the past 15 years.

Any attempt to stabilize the human population, however, is a highly complex matter, Dr. B. R. Sen, director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, explained in Washington, D. C., on the eve of the World Food Congress.

For the rest of this century, the world cannot count very much upon the contribution of population control measures, Dr. Sen warned.

In the developing societies today, children under 15 years of age make up 37% to 42% of the total population. While that group is passing through the child-producing ages, natural increase will continue to be high even if the family size is falling.

Moreover, falling mortality itself will also tend to increase the proportion of young people, since reductions in death rates will occur mainly among infants and children.

The attempt to feed this growing crowd of people and to fight hunger and misery is the most formidable task facing mankind today.

The FAO is sponsoring the World Food Congress, being held June 4 through 18, in an effort to help solve the immediate and future problems of relieving hunger throughout the world.

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## MEDICINE

### Too Much Insulin Possible In Diabetics

► **OVERWEIGHT** DIABETICS usually have higher than normal levels of insulin, so any treatment that adds more of this hormone only aggravates the problem. This and other discoveries of the past ten years offer hope for greatly improved management of diabetes, Dr. Harvey S. Sadow, clinical research director of Arlington-Funk Laboratories, Yonkers, N.Y., said in the medical journal, *Metabolism*. For the overweight, a rigidly correct diet should be sufficient treatment, but when results are not attained by diet alone, Dr. Sadow suggests a modified diet plus phenformin, a drug taken by mouth to lower blood sugar without converting it to fat.

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