

SOCIOLOGY

Famine Menaces World

The world is threatened by a great famine that can be relieved only by immediate food shipments, better agricultural programs and birth control—By Barbara Tufty

► A HUNGERING WORLD is facing an imminent shortage of food and a surplus of people.

Overshadowing even war, the food-people situation is alarming scientists and economists. In the next few months, it will probably dominate national and international politics.

To help stave off the growing threat of mass starvation, four urgent actions are needed:

1. Use of our diminishing food surpluses to stop-gap hunger in critical areas such as India,
2. Changing of the U.S. domestic farm production so that more food is grown for world use, thus increasing the acreage allotted for crop production,
3. Sending of hard-hitting U.S. experts to help other countries raise their own food—an effort that must start at once to keep the world from a gigantic famine,
4. Spreading of birth-control information and practice with utmost speed, as India is now doing. The lag in reduction of the world's population is even more difficult to remedy than the lag in food increase.

Dwindling Surplus

The vast surplus of wheat, corn, grain and other products that for years were brimming over the nation's food bins and granaries are diminishing. This has come about through careful efforts to keep export high and farm production low. Wheat surpluses have been sharply reduced to about 750 million bushels, almost half of what they were in 1961, Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman recently reported to President Lyndon B. Johnson. Supplies of feed grains—corn, sorghum, barley and oats—have been reduced nearly a third, tobacco stocks are low, and cotton surpluses are the lowest since 1957.

Now, however, the threatening world hunger is changing the situation. Granaries again need to be filled, more crops need to be grown and more food produced.

The U.S. system of crop acreage allotment needs to allow farmers to grow more crop for immediate food use.

Fortunately, the agriculture system is flexible and more crops can be produced by increasing the acreage allotted to farmers and modifying the payment procedure that has formerly kept production down.

More feed grain could be grown immediately, agricultural experts are confident. At present, one-third of the base acreage of these grains is now out of production—an estimated 25 million to 35 million acres. These acres are being kept fallow, some with a covering of grass, and could be immediately put back into production. Areas affected would be the corn belt area, the

sorghum fields around Oklahoma and Kansas, and the barley fields of the northern plains and the northern Pacific lands. These grains could be shipped to lands where the people would welcome them as food.

Yet the sending of more food to hungry nations is only a stop-gap procedure.

The real long-term solution lies in applying 20th century scientific methods to local farms throughout the world so that each country can raise its own food. This is advocated by Dr. William C. Paddock, agricultural expert with Latin American experience who was formerly with the National Academy of Sciences and is now a private consultant on problems of tropical agriculture.

More money and effort should be spent on sending top-notch experts into foreign lands for several years to understand local problems realistically, he advises.

Most of our existing U.S. foreign aid programs have been shortsighted. Set into practice with good intentions, these programs have wasted time and effort on ineffectual agents and ineffective methods that have usually proved useless.

U.S. experts often have not been given time or opportunity to understand the problems of the local countries.

Thus they have failed to transfer and adapt productive 20th century and U.S. agricultural know-how to the poor soils and archaic farming practices.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is the only existing organization with the necessary muscle, energy and scope to carry out realistic programs with successful experts, Dr. Paddock pointed out. Other agencies, including AID (Agency for International Development), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), the Peace Corps and land grant organizations have been unsuccessful because they lack basic factors such as adequate funds and sufficient numbers of experienced and highly trained agriculturalists.

Must Face Reality

The newly developing nations themselves should face the food crisis by spending more money on agricultural problems instead of on status symbols such as schools, hospitals, government buildings and roads—all secondary to the urgency of food. This is the opinion of Dr. James G. Horsfall, director of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven, Conn.

Yet all these efforts to increase food will be futile unless the world halts its tremendous increase in population.

Statistics on future crowding are formidable. By the end of 1969, there may be 17 million more people in the United States than there are today, 30 million more in Latin America and 36 million in Africa, according to United Nations estimates. There will be about 325 million more people in Asia, including China. This means more than 400 million more people within five years if population trends continue at the current rate.

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Food and Agriculture Organization

BUSY PEOPLES—Getting hungry peoples to cultivate their own fields and grow their own crops is a major step in battling the world's growing famine. Here farmers from Togo, Africa, prepare soil for tapioca plants and maize.