

WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE: A PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

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The World Food Conference was one of a series of major UN gatherings that have recently taken place or are being planned in the near future to discuss major problems confronting the entire mankind. The world food situation deteriorated significantly in 1972, when the total food production declined from the preceding year for the first time in 20 years. The future food scenario is not optimistic because the demand for food in developing countries is expected to increase at about 3.6% per year during 1972 to 1985, compared with the average annual increase of 2.6% during the preceding 12 years. If these basic rates are not maintained, developing market economy countries will have to import 85×10^6 tons of food annually by 1985 in normal years, and over 100×10^6 in years of bad harvests. Thus, their food import bill, at the average 1973–1974 cereal price of \$200 per ton, could become $\$17 \times 10^9$ per annum by 1985 in normal years.

The Conference hoped to secure pledges of immediate aid to alleviate the present crisis and sought to establish methods to help poor countries finance food purchases, to induce rich countries to provide capital and technical aid to help developing countries improve domestic production, and to create an international grain reserve system to prevent local famines. In general, there was agreement that in the short run food exporting countries must maximize production efforts, but the only solution in the long run lay in increasing production in developing countries where food is needed. Priority would have to be given to food and agriculture in development plans and huge increases in agricultural investment are necessary.

The major achievement of the Conference was the creation of a World Food Council which is a kind of senior ministerial committee with 36 members and its own small secretariat in Rome, associated with FAO but independent of it. An International Fund for Agricultural Development was approved but the major question of how it would be funded was left undecided. It also approved an International Undertaking on World Food Security, which is a long-term plan to have reserve stocks to avert the kind of dangerous fluctuations and food shortages that have been occurring. Among other approved resolutions were a programme to supply pesticides to developing countries, more scientific water management, increased support for the International Fertilizer Supply Scheme established in July 1974, expansion of agricultural research and training, a nutrition aid programme, seed industry development, better soil protection and conservation techniques, recognition of women's role in agriculture and food and the need for better balance between population and food supply.

The paper is a detailed analysis of the Conference including its background and achievements.

INTRODUCTION

All the major issues facing mankind at present form a complex system of cause and effect relationships in which the dynamics of our future will be shaped. What we are faced with is a series of problems that will become crises at different times and places, and if we do not act quickly enough, these could become specific problems on a regional scale, having sufficient potential to create serious implications of political, economical and moral nature for the world community as a whole. It is not in any one of them, but in the interaction among them, that the future of mankind will be decided. Increase in population and provision of basic human necessities to each individual means more food, energy and raw materials; intensifying the supply of food means more land, water, energy and fertilizers; energy crisis and higher oil prices means less energy available to boost food production and fertilizer shortages; and the common denominator in virtually all responses to these problems is more capital, less inflation, more technology and more cooperation. It is here that these concerns inevitably merge with the important issues of war and peace, monetary and trade relations.

These problems are multi-dimensional and as such no nation, however powerful, can cope with them individually and unilaterally. Many go far beyond the capacity of even small groups of most powerful nations to solve. Also, actions taken to combat these types of problems must be well planned and coordinated, otherwise steps taken to alleviate the problems in one part of the world could create negative reverberations in another.

Faced with these types of serious problems, a series of major world gatherings have been held or will be held under the auspices of the United Nations. Among these are the Conference on Human Environment at Stockholm, Special Session of the General Assembly on Raw Materials and Development at New York, Law of the Sea Conference at Caracas, World Population Conference at Bucharest, and World Food Conference at Rome. Among the future meetings scheduled are the Special Session of the General Assembly on Development and International Cooperation, Conference/Exposition on Human Settlements at Vancouver in 1976, Conference on Water in Buenos Aires in 1977 and Conference on Desertification in 1977.

The World Population Conference has already been analysed by the authors elsewhere (Biswas and Biswas, 1974 a). The present article is an analysis of the World Food Conference at Rome.

CONFERENCE BACKGROUND

The decision to convene a World Food Conference at Rome in November 1974, was taken by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1973. The conference, in the form it was held, was initially proposed by the U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger.

The gravity of the world food situation became self-evident in 1972, the

year when the total world output of food declined from the preceding year for the first time in 20 years because of world-wide adverse weather conditions. The output of cereals (wheat, coarse grains and rice), which form the staple element of diet of most of mankind, declined by 33×10^6 tons. Constantly rising world demand necessitates an increase of about 25×10^6 tons of cereals every year over the present total of $1\,200 \times 10^6$ tons. The sudden drop in production in 1972, instead of the anticipated increase, created a serious

TABLE I

Population, supply and demand for food for selected countries (Source: UN World Food Conference, E/CONF. 65/3)

Countries	% rate of growth/year*			Dietary energy supply**		Protein** supply (gms/capita/day)
	Population	Food production	Food demand	Kcal/capita/day	% of requirements	
<i>Developed</i>						
Canada	2.2	2.2	2.5	3 180	129	101
Federal Republic of Germany	1.0	2.5	1.9	3 220	121	89
France	1.0	3.0	2.0	3 210	127	105
Hungary	0.5	3.0	1.9	3 280	125	100
Japan	1.1	4.3	3.7	2 510	107	79
The Netherlands	1.3	3.0	1.7	3 320	123	87
U.S.	1.5	2.0	1.6	3 330	126	106
U.S.S.R.	1.5	3.9	3.0	3 280	131	101
U.K.	0.5	2.8	0.7	3 190	126	92
<i>Developing</i>						
Algeria	2.4	-0.8	3.4	1 730	72	46
Argentina	1.7	1.8	2.0	3 060	115	100
Bangladesh	3.5	1.6	—	1 840	80	40
Brazil	3.0	4.4	4.0	2 620	110	65
China	1.7	2.3	—	2 170	91	60
Egypt	2.6	3.4	3.8	2 500	100	69
India	2.1	2.4	3.0	2 070	94	52
Indonesia	2.5	2.0	2.6	1 790	83	38
Iran	2.8	3.3	5.4	2 300	96	60
Kenya	3.0	2.6	4.7	2 360	102	67
Mali	2.1	1.6	4.3	2 060	88	64
Mexico	3.4	5.3	4.3	2 580	111	62
Pakistan	3.0	3.0	4.2	2 160	93	56
Saudi Arabia	2.4	2.9	5.0	2 270	94	62
Upper Volta	1.8	4.7	1.2	1 710	72	59
Zaire	2.0	0.2	2.3	2 060	93	33

* Exponential Trend, 1952—1972.

** 1969—1971 average.

food problem, especially as two of the main exporting countries, U.S. and Canada, had instituted policies to reduce their large surpluses. Consequently, surplus wheat stock in exporting countries fell from 49×10^6 tons in 1971–1972 to 29×10^6 tons in 1972–1973, and still further in 1973–1974. Rice reserves were virtually exhausted.

The global and regional food-population equations have been changing constantly. The present food, population and nutrition situations for selected countries are shown in Table I. The developing countries as a group were net exporters of cereals prior to the Second World War. By 1949–1951, their gross imports of cereals was 12.4×10^6 tons, rising to 34.4×10^6 tons by 1966–1968 and 36×10^6 tons by 1972 (this excludes China). In dollar values, it rose from $\$996 \times 10^6$ in 1955, to $\$3\,000 \times 10^6$ in 1967, to $\$4\,000 \times 10^6$ in 1972–1973 and around $\$10\,000 \times 10^6$ in 1973–1974.

An analysis of past trends indicate that the developed countries could not sell all the food they produced, and the developing countries could not produce enough food for their own consumption. This, contrary to popular belief, was not due to the dynamics of agricultural production in the two sectors, for the developing countries were expanding their outputs in the fifties and sixties as fast as the developed countries. The rates of growth of demand, however, was increasing by 2.5% in developed countries compared to 3.5% in developing countries, primarily due to the latter's faster population growth.

The gravity of the world food situation can be realized by the fact that the demand for food in developing countries is expected to increase at about 3.6% per year during the 1972 to 1985 period (Table II), compared with average increase of 2.6% during the preceding 12 years. If this basic growth rate is not attained, developing market economy countries will have to import 85×10^6 tons of food annually by 1985 in normal years, and over 100×10^6 tons in years of bad harvests. The magnitude of the problem becomes evident when the costs of such imports are visualized. At the average 1973–1974 cereal price of \$200 per ton, their import bills in normal years, by 1985, will be $\$17 \times 10^9$ per year. This is for cereals only: other types of food will also have to be imported. The actual consumption of cereals, and projected trend demand by main types of utilization to 1985 are shown in Table III. One, however, must not be deceived or lulled by generalizations of global or regional carrying capacities and potential total productivity. Production of food is important, but it is equally important to ensure that those who need food have access to it. In fact, the task of doubling the world food production within a generation would prove to be a much simpler task than ensuring equitable distribution.

PLENARY SPEECHES

It is against this somewhat pessimistic background that the delegates from nearly 130 countries gathered in Rome, hoping to secure pledges of immediate aid to alleviate the short-term needs while working on medium- and long-term

TABLE II

Projections of population and food demand and production to 1985 (Source: UN World Food Conference, E/CONF. 65/3)

	Population			Food			
	1970 (10 ⁶)	1985 (estimated)	1970-1985 growth rate (%/year compound)	Volume growth rates (%/year)		Volume indices (1969-1971 = 100)	
				Demand	Production	Demand	Production
<i>Developed countries</i>	1 072	1 227	0.9	1.5	2.8	126	151
Market Economies	724	828	0.9	1.4	2.4	124	143
Eastern Europe and U.S.S.R.	348	399	0.9	1.7	3.5	130	168
<i>Developing market economies</i>	1 755	2 623	2.7	3.6	2.6	170	146
Africa	279	427	2.9	3.8	2.5	176	145
Far East	1 021	1 506	2.6	3.4	2.4	166	143
Near East	171	262	2.7	4.0	3.1	180	157
Latin America	284	428	2.8	3.6	2.9	170	152
<i>Asian Centrally Planned Economies</i>	794	1 008	1.6	3.1	2.6	158	146
<i>All Developing Countries</i>	2 549	3 631	2.4	3.4	2.6	166	146
<i>World</i>	3 621	4 858	2.0	2.4	2.7	144	150

TABLE III

Pattern of cereal consumption, 1970–1985 (Source: FAO, as quoted in UN World Food Conference, E/CONF. 65/3)

	Consumption (10 ⁶ metric tons)		% increase 1970–1985	Rate of growth (%/year compound)
	1970	1985		
<i>Developed countries</i>				
Food	160.9	164.1	2.0	0.1
Feed	371.5	522.7	40.7	2.3
Other uses	84.9	109.5	29.0	1.7
Total	617.3	796.3	29.0	1.7
Per capita (kg)	576	649	12.7	0.8
<i>Developing Market Economies</i>				
Food	303.7	474.5	56.3	3.0
Feed	35.6	78.6	120.8	5.4
Other uses	46.4	75.4	62.5	3.3
Total	385.7	628.5	63.0	3.3
Per capita (kg)	220	240	9.1	0.6
<i>Asian Centrally Planned Economies</i>				
Food	164.1	215.2	31.1	1.8
Feed	15.3	48.7	218.3	8.0
Other uses	24.6	36.0	46.3	2.6
Total	204.0	299.9	47.0	2.6
Per capita (kg)	257	298	16.0	1.0
<i>World</i>				
Food	628.7	853.8	35.8	2.1
Feed	422.4	650.0	53.9	2.9
Other uses	155.9	220.9	41.7	2.4
Total	1 207.0	1 724.7	42.9	2.4
Per capita (kg)	333	355	6.6	0.4

strategies. Broadly speaking, the Conference sought to establish methods to help poor countries finance food purchases, to induce rich countries to provide capital and technical aid to help the developing countries improve domestic production, and to create an international grain reserve system to prevent local famines.

Kissinger opened the general debate by stating the U.S. position. He emphasized research and consultation rather than any radical structural changes, and outlined a five-point plan as a solution to the crisis. These were: (1) increasing the production of food exporters; (2) accelerating production in developing countries; (3) improving the existing means of food distribution and financing; (4) enhancing food quality, and (5) ensuring security against food emergencies.

Kissinger proposed new agencies to carry out his plans: Exporters Planning

Group, Food Production and Investment Coordinating Group and a Reserves Coordinating Group to negotiate an international system of nationally held grain reserves. He also proposed a Global Nutrition Surveillance System to be established by WHO, FAO and UNICEF. The U.S. pledged $\$5 \times 10^6$ for a programme in applied nutritional research, and $\$10 \times 10^6$ grant to eradicate anaemia. Funding for food and programmes to vulnerable groups was to be increased by at least $\$50 \times 10^6$ this year. He reaffirmed the American commitment to institute a system of generalized tariff preferences through multi-lateral trade negotiations so that the developing countries have improved access to the markets of the industrialized nations.

Kissinger pointed out that the U.S. had reordered its development assistance priorities to place central emphasis on food and nutrition programmes. An increase of $\$350 \times 10^6$ in funding had been requested and the U.S. planned to increase food aid. He then strongly suggested:

“The responsibility for financing food imports cannot, however, rest with the food exporters alone. The oil exporters have special responsibility in this regard. Many of them have income far in excess of that needed to balance their international payments or finance their economic development.”

Speaking later, Earl Butz, Secretary of Agriculture and the leader of the U.S. delegation, cautioned that the “best assurance of food security is increased production”. Production is costly, and to produce at high cost requires incentive. The incentive, he suggested, was profit, and that the farmers must have decent economic rewards for their hard work. He was in favour of internationally coordinated but nationally held reserves.

The U.S. position was subjected to intensive scrutiny. No other country or countries has as much power to help because of its dominant position with regard to exporting and production of food. With only 0.1% of the world's population employed on farms, it feeds more than 25% of the global population. Before the Second World War, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the U.S.S.R., Africa and Asia were all net exporters of grain, exporting twice as much as North America and Australia. Times have changed: these countries, with few exceptions, are now food importers.

Criticism of the U.S. was highlighted by the lack of unity within their delegation. Democratic Senators, McGovern, Humphrey and Clark insisted Butz cable the White House to get a commitment to increase aid from 10^6 to 2×10^6 tons of grain a year. When President Ford turned down the proposal, citing inflation as the reason, some of the U.S. delegates were angry. Butz defended the decision and criticized the Democratic Senators for seeking “partisan political gain” by putting the American nation “in a stance of being reluctant to go along with food aid which was not true at all”. The Administration was reluctant to offer more than it already had because of budget restraints, the likely impact on grain prices at home and simple availability of grain. Butz cited the fact that 84% of all food aid had come from the U.S.

The U.S. aid averaged 9×10^6 tons of grain from 1968 to 1972; in 1973, 7.5×10^6 tons were given. Despite reduced quantities, the U.S. supplies more

than half the world's direct food assistance. It has more cereals available for export than the rest of the world combined. The U.S. exports about 10% of its total grain harvest including both 5% as aid and 95% cash sales.

The trend, however, has been from aid to trade. The recent policy is to use American grain to bring down internal American food prices through the free market mechanism. American export aid is down 40% from levels of 2 years ago, so the U.S. is providing less food when asked for more.

Martin Davidson, writing in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (December 20, 1974), states:

"In 1972, U.S. food aid totalled 9 million tons. The following year, the aid dropped to 7.5 million tons and at least 100 000 people died in sub-Saharan Africa. This past year, only 4.3 million tons were allocated as aid, while South Asia's food deficit alone has risen to 9.2 million tons. Meanwhile, food exports this year earned the U.S. \$21 300 million, as against \$5 600 million in 1970, the difference by far off-setting the cost rises of petroleum imports which have often been blamed for worldwide inflation."

He further suggests how the U.S. has used food aid in a highly political way in recent years:

"Half of America's food aid in 1974 went to Cambodia, South Vietnam, Laos, Israel, Jordan and Malta, and some was magically transformed into weapons before it could be consumed. Israel received more food aid in 1973 than needy Bangladesh, whose population is over 70 million."

Food aid is a humanitarian response to genuine needs, but it is also a political weapon. The U.S. had made it clear before the conference that it saw the dominant position of North America as a countervailing force to the oil power in the Middle East. The Western industrial world, especially the U.S., came to the conference determined that necessary money should be supplied by the Arabs. Being told what to do with their money, the Arabs, in turn, conspicuously held back specific pledges.

China called upon the Third World countries to aim for self-sufficiency in order to keep their political independence. The difficulties the developing countries are currently facing were due to colonialism, imperialism and the two super-powers, who are imposing on them "a lop-sided, single-product economy and the exchange of unequal values and extorted super profits from them". As a result these countries have been unable to develop their national economies, and despite independence, exploitation has continued due to neo-colonialism. The example of the oil producing nations should be an inspiration to the Third World, because of its victory over colonialism.

The population increase, according to China, had not contributed to the food shortage: the real culprit is the U.S., who has been "dumping large quantities of its surplus food into the developing countries, turning some traditional food-exporting countries into food-importing ones and forcing more and more countries to live on food imports". As expected, U.S.S.R. also received its share of criticism for harping on the "use of money to be saved from disarmament to solve the food problem", but actually "engaged in arms expansion".

The solution suggested was to establish a new international economic order, with especial emphasis on economic cooperation among developing countries. China's own development from a backward country with millions starving to self-sufficiency was put forward as a model. She hoped to increase her own contributions to solving the food problem with increased development. China's wheat imports, balanced by rice exports, were to provide variety rather than feed her population. She had never engaged in food speculation. Developing countries could thus solve their food problem through self-reliance. Foreign aid should not be refused but its use to exploit recipient countries was unacceptable.

Many of China's claims were mere rhetoric rather than facts. For example, last year China was the largest customer of U.S. wheat, importing more than India. Their grain imports in the last 3 years were 9×10^6 tons, while they exported only 1.2×10^6 tons of rice. Import prices, however, are somewhat comparable because of the much higher price of rice. The Chinese record on soybeans hardly indicates "growing self-sufficiency". In the 1930's, China supplied 90% of the world market. In contrast, she imports soybeans at present. If the developing world was looking for a model, there are at least a dozen other countries that have done better at becoming self-sufficient than China.

China, in spite of her preaching to the contrary, has placed a higher priority on developing its own nuclear armaments than on maintaining its agricultural self-sufficiency. When Peru tabled a resolution for a reduction of military expenditure to release more money for expanding food production, China abstained. The Chinese felt that only the big powers should reduce expenditure others must guard against big power hegemony, The resolution was supported by the U.S.S.R.

The U.S.S.R. in the general debate endorsed the U.N. General Assembly resolution that permanent Security Council members reduce their arms spending by 10%, currently estimated at $\$250 \times 10^9$ per year. The saving could be applied to agricultural development in developing countries.

Russia believed the real solutions are in the socio-economic and political fields. There is also acute need for agrarian reform. Great potential for food production exists, since only half of the arable land in the world is being used at present. Russia dismissed the idea that population explosion contributed to the food problems: the world can easily feed 30×10^9 to 40×10^9 people. This contention was questioned since the conference was called because of the inability of the world to feed even less than 4×10^9 people. Most of the good agricultural land in the world is already under cultivation; the capital requirements to bring additional acreages under production could be quite prohibitive.

In recent years, Russia, among other East European countries, has imposed a severe impact on the world food situation by importing large amounts of food. Also, Russia has never joined FAO. According to her official reason it is due to the cost in foreign exchange. However, her reluctance may very well

stem from the fact that it would be another international forum where she would be under pressure from developing countries to give even more aid. Despite political pressures at the conference, Russia did not join FAO, the agency responsible for the implementation of most recommendations.

The President of Mexico, Luis Echeverria, arrived on the scene to claim leadership of the Third World. He declared the world's inequities were due to multinational corporations "acting in the service of reactionary terrorism". These companies have kept secret information on existence of deposits of natural resources, which they now use to create confusion within a particular nation or between nations. They are also responsible for much of the one-crop agriculture in the Third World. "There are sufficient resources on the earth to meet foreseeable population growth in the years to come", said the President, but, there was an imperative need to transform the international economic order. It was also a mistake for developing countries to accept blindly as development models the present patterns in industrial countries.

In a speech, which one could have mistaken to be the U.S. position, Cuba lectured the oil-producing nations:

"Oil grants rights, but it also bestows responsibilities. The oil-producing nations with great financial surpluses should elaborate a strategy for aid for development that may to some extent compensate the increased cost of energy."

However, the U.S. policies, and not the oil-producing countries, were to blame for the world inflation. As far as Latin America is concerned, the pending debt is caused by the U.S.

The OPEC nations had their power felt here. One after another they defended their position of having raised oil prices to obtain an adequate share of their resources and expressing a willingness to invest in agricultural projects in developing countries. According to the Iranian Minister, Jamshid Amouzejar, who oversees Iran's oil interests, "years of neglect, inaction and unfair policies by the West", caused the food crisis, and not increased fuel costs which occurred only a year ago. "The population of the world is still increasing at about 200 000 per day and this unprecedented growth of the world's population is compounding man's difficulties in feeding himself". Sound population policies are necessary because of limited resources. Iran repeated its proposal for a new Special Development Fund, presented at the Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly in April 1974. Iran pledged a contribution of $\$150 \times 10^6$ for the first year to the Fund to be financed by oil exporting and industrial nations.

Venezuela called for "nothing less than a new international economic order" to solve the present world food crisis. World hunger was not the result of the recent petroleum crisis. In the last 50 years, during which the price of petroleum was insignificant, there existed the problem of hungry and under-nourished people, along with the indifference of those countries who exploited their resources and labour.

Attacking U.S. policies as the cause of world inflation, the Libyan Minister of Agriculture declared that "the Libyan Arab Republic will make the im-

perialistic American oil companies responsible for the oil reserves so far plundered from the Libyan territories". Libya asserted that a big portion of its oil revenues was wasted to make up for the soaring prices of food commodities, machines and production inputs. Iraq emphasized that vast as the new wealth of the oil producing countries may seem, they were not really rich because their agricultural sector was not developed.

Pope Paul addressing conference delegates at the Vatican expressed views similar to the Chinese, Soviets and the Mexicans, essentially blaming the rich countries for the inability of the poor to feed themselves. The Pope called for urgent efforts to deal with starvation, but, as expected, denounced population control.

"It is inadmissible that those who have control of the world and resources of mankind should try to resolve the problem of hunger by forbidding the poor to be born."

The Pope viewed the present crisis as a crisis of civilization and solidarity:

"When too much confidence is placed in the automatic nature of purely technical solutions, while fundamental human values are forgotten. It is a crisis that shows itself when the accent is placed on the quest for economic success deriving from the large profits for industry, with a consequential almost total abandonment of the agricultural sector and the accompanying neglect of its highest human and spiritual values."

In the developing world, agriculture is the most underdeveloped sector. He called for reform and reversal of present attitudes to agriculture. The dignity of those who work on the land must be "unceasingly proclaimed and promoted". But the solution of the present problems are dependent in the long run on the political will.

The world's farmers, represented only by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, felt that they had been badly slighted by the Conference. Charles Munroe of Canada, its President, stated pre-conference consultations with farmers had been inadequate. In his opening address, Dr Waldheim had spoken of world food problems being solved by governments, economists, and businessmen, said Munroe, "but all these together cannot produce one kilo of food".

There was general agreement among governments as to the gravity of the world food situation, but their views differed on its causes and solutions. They agreed that in the short run, food exporting countries must maximize production efforts, but the only solution in the long run lay in increasing production in developing countries, where food is needed. Priority would also have to be given to food and agriculture in development plans; huge increases in agricultural investment were required. Many speakers stressed the need for greater self-reliance in developing countries. Dr Tolba, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), emphasized in probably the only real scientific speech of the Conference the importance of maximizing production without destroying the ecological basis for production on a long-term sustaining basis.

Other speakers mentioned the need for land reform and an integrated approach to rural development. Production problems often lay in social and

political causes. It was essential also to mobilize the human resources developing countries possessed in abundance. Farmers must be given evidence farming is profitable.

Delegates called for more research, specifically research applicable to developing countries. Implementation of existing knowledge and the importance of carrying it to the farmer were stressed.

Improved distribution of food and adequate nutrition were of the essence. Storage and transportation systems in developing countries were primitive; irrigation facilities and water management practices were inefficient. The supply of fertilizer to developing countries was an urgent priority.

The general debate stressed the need for a system of world food security. Adequate reserve stocks and a good information providing speedy information on harvests and shortages were essential to world food security. Stocks of 500 000 tons were proposed for aid in emergency relief. Several speakers called for the strengthening of the World Food Programme, who informed the Conference that their projects had reached barely 5×10^6 beneficiaries. There was an unanimous call from the Third World for the implementation of the new international economic order.

Many Third World leaders, however, seemed less interested in remedies for the hunger of their own people than in trying to prove that colonial exploitation in the past, rather than neglect of agriculture in the present, lies behind that hunger. Their familiar argument is that anything that goes wrong in a developing country, after however many decades of independence, after however many 10^9 dollars of aid, is due to "colonialist exploitation" in the past. India, for example, told the conference "help must not be regarded as charity but deferred compensation for past colonial rule and later trade restrictions".

Several countries, however, did call for self-scrutiny. "What has happened to us that our people are starving?" questioned The Philippines.

"Developing countries have resources and land. It is not used, it is indeed shameful and degrading to wait for aid. We are not helpless, we must help ourselves".

The Conference had its usual share of unprofitable international politics. Nearly one-tenth of the allotted time was wasted by procedural wrangling. Delegates haggled over which countries and regions would get elected positions in the three committees which would draft Conference proposals. They often displayed more interest in the political positions than in their attempt to solve the food problem.

There were, however, moments when the grave reality made itself felt. One of the committees was discussing a draft resolution on ways of improving nutrition:

"Considering that large numbers of people... lack adequate and appropriate food and that this causes adverse effects on their health, their development and their ability to learn, work and enjoy life; whereas overconsumption among the affluent impairs their health".

The delegate from Bangladesh suggested that "enjoy life" be substituted

by “work for a basic livelihood”, since the question of “enjoying life” does not arise in many cases. A sobering hush ensued and no one contested the point.

CONFERENCE ACHIEVEMENTS

Acceptance of the problem and realization of its dimensions was probably the greatest achievement of the Conference. In contrast, the World Population Conference at Bucharest could not even agree that population was a major problem. Countries expressed a genuine desire for coordinated international action but there was no concrete evidence of any change in political will. The U.S.S.R. and China for the first time took serious part in the discussion of the world food crisis.

The major achievement of the Conference was the creation of a World Food Council after abandoning the World Food Authority proposed by the Conference Secretariat. The World Food Council will be established by the General Assembly as a U.N. body reporting to the Assembly through the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The developed countries had wanted a coordinating body to be controlled by ECOSOC whereas the developing countries wanted the agency to be controlled by the General Assembly for their own reasons of power and self-interest. The major powers have more influence on ECOSOC, where representation is on a regional basis, than in the General Assembly, where each nation has one vote and thus the developed countries are outnumbered.

The Council will be a kind of senior ministerial committee with 36 members and its own small secretariat in Rome, associated with FAO but independent of it. Its members will be drawn from member states of the U.N. or its specialized agencies, nominated by ECOSOC and elected by the General Assembly. The Council will be responsible for coordinating the work of all U.N. agencies dealing with food. It will not have power to order action, but will report on needed actions. Under the Council will be various committees on food aid, food security, fertilizer research and technical assistance for agriculture.

Less success was achieved in devising funding for agricultural development in the developing world. The Conference approved the International Fund for Agricultural Development but the major question of how it would be funded was left undecided. It was suggested that the fund, originally proposed by Iran, Algeria, and Venezuela, is to be supported on a “voluntary basis” by developed countries and “all those developing countries that are in a position to do so”.

The central purpose of the U.S. delegation seemed to be to extract a promise from the members of OPEC to use some of their oil revenues to finance agricultural development. When, however, OPEC proposed the Agricultural Development Fund, the U.S. seemed to prefer Kissinger’s original proposal for a Coordinating Group for Food Production and Investment organized by the World Bank, FAO and UNDP. But OPEC money in a

financial institution devised by the U.S., and channelled through the American-dominated World Bank was unacceptable to the Arabs. Only two developed nations, New Zealand and Australia, had signed up for the Fund by the end of the Conference. The Federal Republic of Germany stated they would not contribute and the EEC expressed reservations. The lack of any precise financial commitment by OPEC enabled the industrial nations to leave without committing themselves. OPEC declared the Fund would be established whether industrial nations contributed or not and operating by early 1975.

The Conference approved an International Undertaking on World Food Security. This is a long-term plan to have reserve stocks to avert the kind of dangerous fluctuations and food shortages that have been occurring. The nationally held stocks are to be coordinated internationally. It is not an instrument of Food Aid or Emergency Relief, except in keeping available for those purposes adequate world buffer stocks. A standing committee within FAO is to be responsible for World Food Security.

Essential information for the World Food Security to function is to be provided by the Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture. This System is a network to monitor current production and stocks of main food commodities; prices; export availabilities and import requirements; prices and supplies of main agricultural inputs, particularly fertilizers. It is also to forecast weather conditions and crops. Member governments are to supply the information which will be kept confidential. China and the U.S.S.R. expressed the view that information programmes were violations of national sovereignty, and thus a clause was inserted allowing nations to withhold information for reasons of national sovereignty. This loophole which enables nations to supply only information they wish to reveal leaves the system somewhat ineffective. This approach, for example, in Africa, has resulted in disaster in the past.

Formerly, governments had resisted this type of scheme because information on stock levels could encourage speculation, pushing up prices when stocks are already low. With proper demand—production information, developing countries, which would increase production if given the incentive of export sales, however modest, could have their market guaranteed instead of seeing it suddenly disappear because of a bilateral agreement between the importer and a major producer country.

The only nation to express reservation about the resolution was China. The U.S.S.R., not a member of FAO which the resolution identifies as the most appropriate body to supervise the system, has stated it will consider participation. As they are both major producers and importers, capable of disrupting the world market, the cooperation of China and U.S.S.R. is essential.

The Conference Secretariat had proposed that in addition to nationally-held stocks under the Food Security Undertaking, there should be a stock of 500 000 tons of grain strategically placed, and controlled by some international body to be made available for emergency relief. It was decided these reserves were unnecessary but governments were urged to earmark stocks or funds for

such emergencies. Grain producers were strongly opposed to a stockpile which could depress farm prices. The Conference did, however, approve a forward-planning strategy of food aid until production in developing countries is increased. There was a general agreement on a level of 10×10^6 tons a year for 3 years beginning in 1975.

The Conference approved resolutions proposing:

- A pesticide programme to supply developing countries.
- Irrigation, drainage and flood control programmes to aid developing countries.
- Increased support for the International Fertilizer Supply Scheme established in July 1974. Developed countries were urged to cut back on non-essential uses of fertilizer, viz., gardens, parks, etc. Use of organic fertilizer is to be increased as estimates indicate that animal and human wastes in developing countries represent several times the required fertilizer inputs.
- Expansion of agricultural research, training and methods of disseminating findings among growers. The resolution emphasized the need for research applied to developing countries.
- A nutrition aid programme including special feeding for malnourished children and studies on fortification of staple food with vitamins.
- Seed industry development.
- Control of African trypanosomiasis.
- Better soil protection and conservation techniques.
- Recognition of women's role in agriculture and food, their right to equality and the special nutritional needs of mothers. Rural women in the developing world account for over 50% of food production.
- The "achievement of a desirable balance between population and food supply", and the need for sound population policies to ensure couples the right to determine the number and spacing of births in accordance with national needs.

The resolution adopted on trade merely requests improved treatment of exports from the poorer countries. It urges the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and the FAO to intensify their efforts concerning trade in food products and asks all governments to cooperate in solving trade problems, especially those faced by developing countries.

COMMENTS AND ANALYSIS

Trade proved to be the most difficult issue at the Conference. Developed countries effectively resisted the demands of the developing nations for trade preferences stating that the Food Conference was not the proper forum for trade negotiations; which should be discussed at UNCTAD and GATT. Policy guidelines for trade negotiations could be discussed. The main resistance from the rich nations centered on all proposals which aimed at pegging international commodity prices and rationing foodstuffs between nations. The

developed states were also vehemently opposed to the indexing of Third World import costs to export prices.

The "Group of 77" (currently numbering 104) attempted to introduce broad international trade reform measures to make them biased in the favour of developing countries. Mexico introduced a draft resolution to the Committee dealing with trade on behalf of the "Group of 77". Among the 21 proposals of the Mexican resolution were requests for elimination of farm support programmes, reduction of tariff and nontariff barriers and prices of agricultural inputs related to agricultural products. The developing countries wanted to postpone repayments of their debts and to have preference to the Third World exports, even if they competed with domestic products.

The EEC promised at the Conference to consider the interests of developing countries when formulating its farm support policy. What developed countries will do is doubtful. There has been a strong tendency to give domestic buyers protected access as evident in the U.S. actions on soybeans and wheat sales and the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy. At a time of economic recession, the developed countries will probably be even more reluctant than in the past to open their markets to industrial products of poorer countries, and thus intensify their own problems of already high unemployment.

Rising agricultural protectionism in the sixties contributed to the distortion of production patterns which tended to preserve different levels of global development and poverty instead of rectifying the situation. Consequently, high-cost inefficient producers increased their share of the world's supply of cereals and livestock products at the expense of more efficient producers. If protectionist measures were eliminated, the consumer in the rich countries would be better off, as would the worker producing food products in the developing countries. The number of products in which poor countries are competitive is limited and quotas more restrictive than tariffs imposed. Rich countries should open their markets particularly to sugar and cereals.

For the developing countries, increasing foreign exchange earnings through expanded trade, has a great advantage over aid in that it does not need to be repaid. The protection against exports from poor countries reduces their export earnings and incomes. Industrial nations have foreign aid programmes to offset the losses due to protectionist policies, and thus the average person pays more for the product because of protectionism and then has his taxes increased to support foreign aid to offset damages in developing countries. The net effect of rationalizing economic activity would be in the interest of all countries: more jobs, better production efficiency, lower prices, higher living standards and a more equitable distribution of wealth.

If developing countries are to finance development out of economic growth, improved terms of trade must be obtained. While the foreign exchange earnings of a majority of developing countries are predominantly dependent on exports of agricultural and food products and raw materials, their modest share in agricultural exports is continuously declining. In addition, trade restrictions have imposed a heavy burden on the balance of trade and payments

of developing countries. The extent of price fluctuations and supply uncertainties aggravated by speculation have led to general instability in agricultural trade. Soaring prices freeze many Third World nations from the market, and many people working in the area of aid, including Dr A.H. Boerma, Director-General of FAO, have suggested the suspension of the system of free market mechanism. Suspending a free market system, however, is questionable when more food is desired from those who practise free enterprise. Trading conditions and opportunities exert a strong influence on incentives to production in both developed and developing countries.

The Conference called for reduced waste of food resources. In developed countries, consumption of food is excessive; food is often misused as pet food. Affluent people in all nations are consuming disproportionate quantities of meat. Educational programmes to avoid food waste and inform the public about necessary protein intake and available resources other than feed-lot meat should be initiated. In developing countries, per capita grain consumption is 400 lb.; it is approximately five times the amount in North America, of which only 150 lb. are consumed directly in the form of bread, pastries and breakfast cereals. The remainder is consumed indirectly in the form of meat, milk and eggs. Processing cereals through farm animals not only requires more cereals, but also lengthens and increases energy intensive patterns of production. Some have suggested that by 1972, nearly one-third of the world's increased demand for food reflected increases not in population, but in rising affluence. Since 1965, the U.S. per capita annual grain requirement has gone up by 350 lb., largely in the form of beef and poultry, which is nearly equivalent to an Indian's entire diet for a whole year. The European and Russian figures are close behind the Americans. Yet, few would argue that these countries were suffering from undernourishment in 1965 (Biswas and Biswas, 1975b).

It would be comforting to believe, as some have suggested, that eating less or changing the diet in the developed countries will mean more food for the hungry elsewhere. At present neither the mechanism nor the infrastructure exists to transfer such extra food from surplus to deficient economies. In addition, there is a real danger that it would mean lower prices resulting in lower production. Buying relief commodities in the open market and allowing the price mechanism to ration their domestic use, still remains one of the major means to acquire the desired commodities without reducing the incentive for production.

The same argument applies to restriction of non-agricultural fertilizer use. Temporarily, reduced demand would result in lower prices. The farmer in Bangladesh could then buy more fertilizer with the same money, if he has any money and if anyone can get the fertilizer to him. In the long run, lower prices will mean less production. On the other hand, fertilizer industries in developing countries are inefficient. For example, the Indian fertilizer industry operates at 40 to 60% capacity due to the inadequacy of the Indian economic infrastructure and the problem of dealing with the Indian bureaucracy. In this situation, the best policy is to encourage India to feed itself.

Currently food losses encountered during storage processing and handling of the foods processed could easily feed hundreds of millions more people. Losses occur in all countries. Primitive storage results in decimation by rats, insects, fungus, and mildew. In Africa, nearly 30% of all crops is lost in storage. Rodents are man's major competitors for food. Even the most conservative estimates indicate that India's rodent population of 2.4×10^9 destroys 10^6 tons of food per year, roughly the amount needed to feed India's annual growth in human population. Even in a developed country like the U.S., the rodent population has been estimated at well over 120×10^6 (Biswas and Biswas, 1975a).

Inadequate transportation results in food loss and reduces the efficiency of its distribution in most developing countries. It is much cheaper, for example, to move commodities between coastal points in Brazil and New York than to other points in Brazil, especially if inland transportation is involved. If more capital was available to upgrade transportation systems, build better storage facilities and modernize marketing methods, there could be a great increase in the food available for developing countries.

The Conference left many questions on money and policy to be worked out later in international negotiations. The long-term strategy for increasing food production in developing countries is an expensive one without any firm commitment to finance it. The strategy is one of high input, requiring large infusions of technical aid.

The Conference Secretariat had suggested that the flow of capital to aid agricultural development in the Third World must be stepped up to $\$5 \times 10^9$ a year (at 1972 values) by 1980, more than three times the present level of $\$1.5 \times 10^9$. The sums foreseen as coming from the World Bank, other multi-lateral agencies and bilateral donors amount to about $\$2.7 \times 10^9$, leaving a shortfall of some $\$2.6 \times 10^9$ per year.

The implementation of Secretariat recommendations alone would cost $\$11 \times 10^9$ to $\$12 \times 10^9$. It is evident that the present annual rate of investment in the agricultural system of the developing countries of $\$8 \times 10^9$ to $\$10 \times 10^9$ should be almost doubled, to $\$16 \times 10^9$ to $\$18 \times 10^9$ per year.

The Secretariat suggested that the arable land in the developing countries should be increased from 737×10^6 ha in 1970 to 890×10^6 ha by 1985 at cost of over $\$30 \times 10^9$. Most of this land would be located in four areas: the Amazon Basin, Mekong Basin, Southern Sudan and the tsetse fly region of Africa. Even if this is accomplished, the fact still remains that the nations with the greatest need for food are densely populated and do not have surplus arable land. Irrigation schemes serving 46×10^6 ha should be renovated at a cost of $\$21 \times 10^9$ over 11 years. Existing schemes often operate at less than 50% efficiency. Irrigation would have to be extended to an additional 23×10^6 ha at a cost of $\$38 \times 10^9$. Thus, if the Secretariat recommendations are to be realized, substantial aid would be needed for years to come.

The Conference failed to secure the food aid necessary to stave off immediate famine. By the end of the Conference only Canada, Australia and Sweden had pledged grain. Canada generously committed 10^6 tons annually for the next

3 years. However, a post Conference meeting called by Dr Boerma found the necessary 7.5×10^6 tons. The meeting was attended by the U.S. and other major grain exporters but not by the U.S.S.R. and China. India, Bangladesh and other recipients also participated.

There is no doubt that more international cooperation is needed if the developing world is to become self-sufficient agriculturally. There are, however, valid claims against food aid. For example, foreign assistance in the past has benefitted élite groups, and has often contributed little to the welfare of the poor in developing countries. This is not surprising since the parties in power derive support from the very people who stood to lose most from land reform. Thus, one can argue that food aid has helped to prevent social development. The wealthy élite of countries dependent on aid has often opted for prestigious buildings rather than introducing land reforms. Expensive consumer goods are imported with the foreign exchange that could be used for agricultural inputs. In most developing countries prestige projects appear to receive preference over agriculture in the allocation of development funds.

Martin Davidson states the disadvantages of aid:

“Agricultural assistance enriches the wealthiest farmers. India’s Agriculture Minister Jagjivan Ram said in 1969: ‘Three to four percent of the biggest farmers exert all the political power, wield their influence, make all the decisions in collaboration with the State administration and take all the resources and technical knowledge of government experts for themselves, while the poor receive very little’.

Bulk deliveries of grains, meanwhile, permit governments to lower priorities on agricultural development, remove incentives to increase production, maintain inequitable pricing systems and postpone land reforms. Thus a liberal Congressman in the U.S. call for more food aid, the injustices stemming from such goodwill are reinforced.”

Food aid can be considered as the product of surpluses. The U.S. invented the concept of food aid and later used it in a battle against communism. Several delegations called for the de-politicizing and rehumanizing of food aid in general. Earl Butz, therefore, may be right when he prefers trade to aid. But ending dependency on aid is easier said than done, especially when developing nations keep producing people faster than food. Despite inefficiencies in distribution, food aid can help to prevent starvation as it has in the past.

Neither population control nor land reform, the major answers to the crisis, were seriously discussed. Population growth in the underdeveloped world has contributed to the present crisis, not only by increasing the demand for food, but by reducing resources available and putting ecological stress on food-producing systems. So they deteriorate. Resources that might have been spent on irrigation and flood control facilities have had to be spent on imported food. High population growth has reduced the independence of the Third World and impeded its social and economic development.

Since Bucharest, it has been unfashionable to refer to population as a problem. Only Iran and a few other delegations proposed population control at Rome. But, in spite of powerful opposition by the U.S.S.R., the Vatican, Poland and Brazil, a group of 23 Afro-Asian countries succeeded in getting

the Conference to adopt a resolution calling for population control policies as a long-term answer to the food problem.

A sound population policy should focus on people realizing their new life expectancy and not on contraception alone. At the same time new opportunities should be provided for moving upward in the social system through agrarian reform, more equitable distribution of wealth and increasing farmers' incomes by giving them better prices.

Successful agricultural development will have to bring subsistence farmers into the mainstream of economic and social development. This will require measures ranging from land reform to improving rural education, from the development of cooperatives to the elimination of the class system. Little is known about how to effect this type of development.

Redistribution of land in favour of the landless, the unemployed, and those with very small holdings would result in increased production, higher employment and better distribution of income. Neglect of food production in the countryside had led to migration to urban areas already overcrowded. If agriculture receives higher national priority, and labour-intensive food production processes are encouraged, teeming millions of unemployed could be mobilized for agriculture, thus contributing to the solution of two major problems at the same time.

Vast areas of farmland in Asia, Latin America and Africa remain in the hands of absentee landlords and the poor sharecroppers who work the land have little incentive to improve it. One can argue that the main hindrance to agricultural progress in developing countries is the system of land ownership — the concentration of large tracts of lands in the hands of a few — a form of land monopoly. In Africa, the size of cultivated land in the developing countries is much less in relation to total land. But the size of cultivated land cannot be increased at will beyond certain limits imposed by semi-feudal social relations prevalent in these countries. Scarcity has led to monopoly and semi-feudal land management exists in almost all African countries. Expropriated peasants compete for leasing the land. With cheap labour available, big landowners are not interested in modernizing techniques. Also, millions of hectares of cultivable land without water and labour are tied up to the big landowners.

Reform measures in Taiwan, Egypt, and Mexico have been somewhat successful. Japanese farms placed in the hands of tillers have made Japanese farmers four times as productive as other Asian farms. A 8-acre farmer in Japan, with family labour, a strong cooperative structure, high fertilizer inputs and small-scale mechanization, is among the most successful producers of food per capita per acre in the world. Taiwan is not far behind. Small farmers with security of tenure and with enough cooperative credit and services produce the world's highest returns per worker, and often per acre. This fact encourages aid to the poorest people in the countryside. Alleviation of poverty and opportunity results in automatic limiting of family size. In the final analysis, the national policy-makers will have to back the 500×10^6 small and often marginal farmers of the developing world: no country can improve its status on a long-term basis without such measures.

What is necessary is a low input strategy considering the needs and resources of the small farmer and adapting the tradition of his community. Technology must be appropriate. Developed countries, multilateral agencies and industry are not responsive to the modest needs of the small farmer. Thus, the Conference Secretariat document can be severely criticized for proposing a high-input strategy. After all, the Conference was called because this strategy had failed! In addition, such a high-input energy-intensive strategy is unlikely to increase world food production on a long-term sustaining basis (see Biswas and Biswas, 1974 b, 1975a). With energy becoming the most vital of agricultural inputs, the Asian peasant who expends 0.05 calorie to produce 1 calorie of food energy may be a better farmer than the American mechanized agrotechnician who expends 10 calories of energy for every one he produces.

An editorial in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (December 20, 1974) states the Third World's problem is too little self-examination, too little scrutiny of its food production strategies and too little self-help. In the underdeveloped world, food production is the least developed sector. Rural uplift has been tilted to the rich farmer in the hope that a spin-off from his accelerated agricultural growth would mean more employment. In practice, the rich farmer has resisted the extension of irrigation facilities to the small cultivator. Few countries in Asia and hardly any in Africa have implemented massive soil and water conservation schemes, land reclamation or restructuring of holdings. Nations that have introduced tenancy reforms have failed to provide supporting credit institutions.

Similar concepts were expressed by the Inter-American Development Bank at the Conference. The Latin American subsistence farmers operate outside the mainstream of economic activity and modern technology. Although 40% of the population is engaged in agriculture, the farm sector accounts for only 15% of the region's gross domestic product.

To evade the need for agrarian reform is the route to starvation and collapse. Yet, neither the old elites nor the new ruling groups wish to share power or reduce their own standards. In many developing nations, the inequality between social groups is as great as it is between nations. If the rich in poor countries do not wish to share with their poor, is it realistic of them to expect people in other countries to sacrifice for their poor? Frequently when gifts of aid and loans are extended to the governments in developing countries, they do not get to intended recipients. Anthony Hagen, who headed the U.N. relief operation in Bangladesh, claimed that out of every seven tins of dried milk sent in by the aid agencies, only one reached its intended recipient. The balance was channelled into more profitable areas. Even when there is no direct corruption, maladministration may prevent food from reaching those in need.

Maladministration and lack of adequate infrastructure also affects food production and distribution processes. It has been estimated that the lack of credit availability even through India's nationalized banks, coupled with lack of appropriate marketing opportunities (including opportunities to buy goods) has done far more to hold back potential crops than has bad weather.

Eugene Whelan, Minister of Agriculture for Canada, points out that it will cost developing countries between $\$220 \times 10^9$ and $\$250 \times 10^9$ a year by 1985 to buy food they need to feed the additional population they will gain in the next 11 years. "Yet", he states, "there is no single developing nation in the entire world that has put its priority on domestic food production". The Mexican delegate, Edmundo Flores, at the Conference, decried the fact that many Third World countries place a higher priority on buying prestigious football stadia and airlines than on putting through important land reforms.

Agriculture receives higher priority in the developed world than in the developing world. Yet, even in the developed countries, government policies are mostly short-term and politically expedient. Neither U.S. nor Canada has a long-term policy in this area. The individual farmer is usually given no guidance as to what crops to grow or how to maximize his production. Large commercial farms in North America are replacing small farmers who daily leave their farms unable to make a living. Big companies are increasingly dominating the food and agricultural industry. The condescending social attitude that farming is an indignity exists largely because the average farmer receives a small economic return for effort expended. Although the circumstances of the farmer in the developed countries are much better than in the developing, there is much scope for improvement.

Amidst the general pessimism, however, there is a ray of hope. A recent study by the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture projects a 51.9×10^6 ton grain surplus in the developed countries by 1985 and a shortfall of 47.6×10^6 tons in developing nations. The major problem could be the lack of adequate distribution facilities, especially in developing countries. Even today, malnutrition of the poor is more linked to distribution of food than production. At the moment, the world grows enough food to feed everybody. People starve because it is not in the right place, is too expensive, or is being eaten by someone who does not really need it.

Probably the main reason why the world food problem has never been solved is because of lack of political will and a strong commitment on the part of everyone to solve it. Nearly all the countries at the Conference were eloquent at explaining where the responsibilities of other nations lie. Rich countries must give more hard cash to the Third World which must divert aid on a massive scale to improving agriculture. However, over $\$200 \times 10^9$ dollars are spent annually for military purposes while $\$1.5 \times 10^9$ is allocated to agricultural assistance in the Third World. Even a 10% cut in arms budgets would provide the funds proposed in the Conference agenda for agricultural investment. Food aid is necessary in time of famine, but rural development is the best way to obtain more food. The deeper causes of the world food problem lie in rural poverty and in traditional as opposed to modern agriculture in developing countries. As the Pakistani delegate told the Conference:

"The developing world shall have to recognize the solution of their food problem lies in their own hands and within their own countries".

The inescapable message from Rome is that the developing countries must help themselves. Selfish as this view may be, it is the only realistic policy over the long-term. Despite all the aid and development programmes, the food situation had deteriorated and clinging dependency increased. The present situation is not a crisis which appeared recently, but has been building up due to several long-term factors which were not perceived or acted on. What we now have is an emergency superimposed on a chronic crisis. One fact is certain, famine will not wait. Megadeaths from famine are no less terrible than the slaughter of war, and they require the same political effort and authority to hold them at bay. As Sayed Marei, the very competent Secretary-General of the Conference, concluded:

“Judgement on the success or failure of this Conference is going to be made by hungry men in Africa or Asia”.

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