SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

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Identifying food distribution research priorities to allow major improve-
ments in total systems productivity by 1985, presents its first of many challen-
ges in definition and measurement of "productivity." Traditional definition
and measurement (basic physical input-output relationships) have been quite
narrow and specific. Tomorrow's require-
ments in both areas will be much broader
(to include trade offs within the system
for maximizing satisfaction) and more
complex. The bringing of these conditions
to the food industry's attention may be
the primary contribution of this work.

Clearly related to these issues is
the "Total Systems Concept" now rapidly
taking shape in the food industry. The
ideas that functions, institutions, and
factors of production will not be inde-
pendent in tomorrow's food industry (if
they ever truly were) is one that takes
some getting used to. Cooperation within
and "interface" between various institu-
tional levels and functional activities
requires a totally different perspective.

Technology (in terms of finished
products and services; physical handling
and distribution; and information systems)
will be evaluated less in terms of the
narrow physical productivity criteria and
more in the total resource use and value
satisfaction context. Technologies which
benefit one institutional level or func-
tional activity, but not the total system
will be challenged by the new set of
criteria.

Of the traditional factors of produc-
tion (land, labor, capital, management),
land will be effected least in the next
ten years.

Labor will continue to be adamant
as they seek a better life and a higher
level of personal satisfaction. Yet
they will continue to resist structural
change and the resulting shift in loca-
tion as well as job needs, requiring
retraining that could make desired
structural changes possible.

Capital will as always seek its
highest rate of return. The money
managers of tomorrow will not be satis-
fied with technologies or institutions
that do not pay a competitive rate of
return (such as U.S. railroads). Manage-
ment, government, labor and consumers
must work together or the necessary
financing for a progressive and viable
food industry will not be forthcoming.

Management must attract and effec-
tively utilize the resources necessary to
provide nutrition for the domestic and
export market. This must be done with
attitudes, knowledge and skills (some
new, some old) and within a business
environment made increasingly more
challenging by a wide variety of forces.
Principle among these forces are an ever
growing government influence and an ever
increasing number of outside groups such
as consumerists, environmentalists,
foreign cartels and labor groups seeking
to control and/or influence a portion of
the process.

Given the basic stimulation from this
document and encouragement from his or her
peers, it behooves the individual researcher
or teams of researchers to define manageable
tasks and get on with the research job.

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