



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search

<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>

aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

APR 11 1963

Staff Contribution 7-25

Miscellaneous Staff Contribution
of the
Department of Agricultural Economics

Purdue University
Lafayette, Indiana

**For information concerning additional available publica-
tions write: Librarian, Department of Agricultural Economics**

7-25
MR. CITY CONSUMER - YOUR BEST FRIENDS ARE FARMERS

by Dr. R. B. Wilson

Farmers in the United States are suffering because their good record of farm productivity has placed them in a poor public relations posture with urban consumers.

They are in trouble financially even though they are producing the best food supply in the world.

While we in this nation worry about eating too much, about two-thirds of mankind has only a sub-standard diet as measured by reference standards for calorie requirements developed by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. By sub-standard I mean not enough food in terms of calories to promote growth and maintain body tissue and physical well being at desirable levels. Nutritionists call this "a form of starvation."

While "nutritional hunger" faces so many people in 70-some nations, according to U.S.D.A. Foreign Agricultural Economics Report No. 4, our farmers are producing the greatest variety and finest quality food ever known. And it is an outstanding bargain today. United Nations figures for 1958 show the percentage of income spent for food in Italy is 46 percent; Japan, 51 percent; and Nigeria, 71 percent. In the United States, food takes only 20 percent of our take-home pay. The Russians have to spend over 50 percent of their income for food, and in France and England it is about 30 percent. A decade ago, an hour's work in the U. S. would buy about 1.8 dozen eggs, or 6.5 quarts of milk. Today, one hour of work is worth 3.6 dozen eggs or 8.1 quarts of milk. That's why we say food is a bargain.

Secretary of Agriculture Freeman says "no where on earth, and never before in the history of man, has any nation achieved the remarkable record of efficiency and production which the farmers of this nation have done in this century." He says Americans eat better, and cheaper in relation to our income, than any other people, and that we also share our abundance with more people than any other nation.

Farmers have wrought this "miracle" with large "doses" of science and technology and with a smaller percentage of the population engaged in farming each year. Now, only about 10 percent of our total labor force works in agriculture and forestry. In the Soviet Union it is more than 40 percent. At the time of the Civil War, one farm worker supported five people. Today, one American farm worker feeds 26 people. Today, one Russian worker feeds five. In food production, one American farm worker equals five Russians according to Charles S. Murphy, Undersecretary of Agriculture, U. S. Department of Agriculture. It is said that "it now takes so few of us to produce the food, clothing and shelter for the rest of us, that the rest of us can provide the highest standard of living ever known for all of us."

Our agricultural productivity is the envy of the world. It brings a steady stream of foreign visitors to our country who want to see how we can be so productive. They want to see how we do it so they can improve their own food supply and have the luxury of worrying about success and surplus instead of about sub-standard diets and the threat of starvation.

Despite their amazing record of production, our farmers have found themselves in a price-cost squeeze. In the rich agricultural corn belt, Indiana farmers who keep records with Purdue University and are better than average farmers earned only 4.3 percent return on their investment during the period 1955-1959. This is

what the farm business earned after all expenses were paid and is not exorbitant. National figures show that farmers realize unfavorable earnings when compared with non-farmers. Of course, there are exceptions, but farmers certainly aren't "profiteering."

I have heard farmers called "hogs drinking at the public trough" and "robbers driving Cadillac's at tax payers' expense." It is high time that city people begin to recognize that our farmers and our productive agriculture are blessings. It is true that we have a serious "farm problem" in agriculture, but we cannot blame only the farmers.