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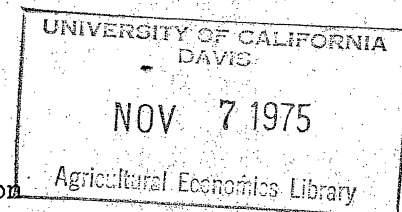
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Food supply  
Speech by John A. Hannah  
Executive Director, World Food Council  
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# THE WORLD FOOD COUNCIL--A YEAR AFTER THE WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE

The World Food Conference convened in Rome in November 1974. At that time there was grave concern about the world's food supply. World food production had declined in 1972, the first such decline in two decades. The sharp interruption in grain production, which was a part of that decline, coincided with efforts commenced in the late 60's by the developed exporting countries to reduce their burdensome grain stocks. The combination of these two developments produced frightening consequences.

Whereas food prices had been low and declining during the late 60's and early 70's, and supplies seemed to be in substantial surplus, by 1973 supplies were short and prices had risen to astonishingly high levels. Fertilizer prices also began to rise sharply as countries attempted to regain the lost momentum in food production.

While hope ran high in early 1974 that these conditions would be improved by good harvests, the weather, especially in North America, turned bad and grain production fell again in 1974.

The nations of the world came together in Rome faced with the severe crises brought on by these developments. X Food supplies were extremely short and food prices high. X Food aid had been cut drastically.

Fertilizer supplies were also short and prices high. X Fertilizer aid had also been reduced.

In addition, the impact of the energy crisis was intense. X The burden of these developments had fallen most heavily on those developing countries with food and fertilizer deficits.

The world became acutely aware of the malnutrition which was evident in these countries. X The cost of food to the world's poor had doubled or trebled in less than a year and a half.

The World Food Conference focused world-wide attention on these problems. X First of all, it sought solutions to the short-term problems of providing additional food and fertilizer aid, emergency relief and financial assistance to the Most Seriously Affected (MSA) developing countries. X Second, it undertook to develop solutions to the longer-range problems that everyone agreed were the

agreed were the fundamental causes of the world's food problems. X The solutions were embodied in 22 resolutions adopted by the conference and subsequently by the UN General Assembly.

A key element in the actions of the World Food Conference was the establishment of follow-up machinery to ensure that these resolutions would be carried out. X This follow-up machinery was embodied in Resolution XXII which created the World Food Council, the Committee on World Food Security, the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programs, and the Consultative Group on Food Production and Investment in Developing Countries; X and Resolution XIII which established the framework for creating an International Fund for Agricultural Development.

A major conclusion of the Conference was that solutions to world food problems depended largely on mustering the political will to solve the problems. X While there were obviously numerous constraints and difficulties of a technical and resource nature, it was evident that economic, social, and political factors were the fundamental causes for imbalances in food production and consumption. X The need to effectively harness this political will gave rise to the new institutions that were created--especially the World Food Council.

The tough issues still are ahead of us. ~~X~~They involve the implementation of the resolutions designed to solve the fundamental problems of:

- a. Increasing food production in the deficit developing countries:
- b. Allocating greater resources for food production;
- c. Developing a workable system of world food security; and
- d. Guaranteeing the political will necessary to see that world food problems are solved.

This brings me to the World Food Council nine months after the World Food Conference.

The World Food Council met for the first time in Rome from June 23 to 27, 1975. ~~X~~Preparations for that meeting were necessarily hurried in light of the requirement that the Council meet prior to July 1. ~~X~~The Secretariat of the Council came into being in mid-March--three months prior to the meeting.

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I have learned that I seldom get into trouble when I quote myself.

Three weeks ago today in Geneva I reported to the UN Economic and Social Council on the first meeting of the World Food Council.

I will now quote from that report.

Before turning to the report itself, I wish to make a few general comments to orient the World Food Council and its work into an appropriate perspective.

The United Nations convened the World Food Conference in Rome nine months ago. One hundred and thirty countries were represented, almost all by one or more Ministers of government.

They came with varying attitudes and perceptions, but before the Conference concluded its work they reached unanimous agreement that the world was in a food crisis situation and that it was in the interest of all to find ways to work together in the interest of all the world's people.

A distinguishing feature of the World Food Conference was the high priority it placed on effective follow-up action. X It recognized that too often in the past international conferences had produced well-phrased recommendations that had not resulted in productive action for lack of implementation machinery.

The creation of the World Food Council was one of the Conference's important recommendations to ensure effective follow-up action, and it was to accomplish this purpose that the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 3348 took the decision at the 29th session to establish the Council as an organ of the United Nations reporting to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council.

The specific mandate of the Council is described in this General Assembly resolution and in Resolution XXII of the Conference. X To conserve your time, I will not dwell here on the details. X The mandate of the Council is clearly to provide dynamic leadership at a high level in coming to grips with world food problems. X This involves recommending to the General Assembly through ECOSOC remedial actions that may be necessary on the part of governments and the agencies of the United Nations system, including its regional organizations.



Implementation of Resolutions Adopted by the General  
Assembly and World Food Conference

The Secretariat submitted a report to the World Food Council on the progress made by the agencies and bodies of the United Nations system in implementing the resolutions of the General Assembly and the World Food Conference. X In addition, oral statements updating this information were made by various bodies to the Council. X

The Council requested that future reports on this question should include descriptions of action taken or planned, accompanied by estimates of the time for completion, especially in view of the target set by the World Food Conference to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in the next ten years.

Review of the World Food Situation and the Critical Issues  
with Which the Council Should be Concerned

The Council agreed that all countries in a position to do so and all aid-giving countries should pay special attention to the food needs of the MSA countries and take all necessary steps to help secure their required

supplies. X It noted



supplies. X It noted that, due to the improved production prospects in the current year, it should not be difficult to ensure physical availability of 6 to 7 million tons of cereals that may be required by the MSA countries during July/December 1975.

#### Implementation of the Food Aid Target of 10 Million Tons

The Council noted that since the adoption of resolution XVIII by the World Food Conference in November 1974, there have been substantial increases in food aid for 1974/75, which now totals 8.6 million tons. X Although information on food aid availability for 1975/76 was still incomplete, it appeared that the food aid target of 10 million tons of grains, which the World Food Conference had accepted as a minimum target, could be reached only if additional commitments were made by aid-giving countries to expand their food aid programs, with particular emphasis on the traditional donor countries who have not yet taken favorable action.

The Council heard a number of positive declarations by governments. X It noted that Canadian food aid in 1975-76 would be 1 million tons, almost double the previous year's level. X Australia's food aid was expected to be increased to 350,000 tons of cereals compared to its existing Food Aid Convention (FAC) commitment of 225,000 tons. X Sweden also intended to increase its multilateral

its multilateral food aid to 75,000 tons annually for the next three years, that is, more than double its previous FAC commitments. The United States planned to expand its food aid program from 5.4 million tons in 1974-75 to about 6 million tons in 1975-76. The Council noted that the European Economic Community Council of Ministers was considering a proposal to increase the Community's food aid from 1.3 million tons to about 1.64 million tons. This proposal was, however, still under consideration after continuing resistance from France and the Federal Republic of Germany and several delegates urged that the EEC countries should take an early decision on the size of their bilateral and multilateral food aid programs so as to help achieve the minimum food aid target of 10 million tons.

I personally visited EEC Headquarters at Brussels just before the opening of the Council's first session to stress the importance of meeting this target.

The Council heard a proposal by Sweden for the creation of an international emergency reserve of 500,000 tons, to be administered by the World Food Programs, to deal with the international emergencies. Sweden offered 40,000 tons as its contribution. The proposal was supported by Norway, and several representatives spoke in favor of it.

Food Security

The Council agreed that a viable and generally agreed system of world food security would be one of the main pillars of world food policy. X  
It recognized that, in its broadest sense, world food security had many dimensions, and the increase of food production in the developing countries was at its heart.

The Council also noted that many governments had given their full support to the objectives, policies, and guidelines of the International Undertaking on World Food Security, and urged all other governments to do the same as soon as possible.

On the larger issue of world food security, little progress had been made. X While a large number of countries have agreed to the objectives, guidelines and policies of the International Undertaking on World Food Security, the fundamental issue of developing a minimum level of grain stocks is far from being realized.

World grain stock levels are extremely low now. X Whereas two months ago it looked as though some building up of stocks was possible with improved crops in North America, that hope is now being eroded away by the extremely large grain

Canada and large grain purchases by the USSR from the United States. X This phenomenon is all too reminiscent of the situation that precipitated the world food problems of 1972-1974. X In this crucial area it has to be said that the situation remains precarious and effective progress has been minimal.

#### Fertilizers and Pesticides

The Council reviewed the fertilizer situation and urged that all aid-giving countries increase their bilateral and multilateral aid both in cash and in kind, to enable the MSA countries to obtain the required plant nutrients. X It also recommended that an increased proportion of total fertilizer assistance should be channelled through the International Fertilizer Supply Scheme. X The United Kingdom announced that it would increase its contribution to the International Fertilizer Supply Scheme by 15 million pounds or 33.75 million dollars. X This would amount to more than 100,000 tons of fertilizer.

The Council endorsed the recommendations contained in the secretariat document on pesticides in the context of meeting the requirements of developing countries.

IFAD

The urgent need to increase the flow of financial and technical assistance for agricultural development and food production in developing countries was again reaffirmed by the Council, in discussing the progress on the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

The task of preparing and servicing the formal meetings and informal contacts on this Fund was assigned to the Executive Director and the Secretariat of the World Food Council by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. X

There followed a series of informal contacts with governments of developed and developing countries. X The United Nations Secretary-General convened a meeting of all interested countries in Geneva on May 5 and 6. X As a result of the very positive attitude of all governments at the meeting, a Working Group was established to examine the operational, procedural, technical, and other related questions concerning the formal establishment of the Fund.

The Working Group met in Rome from June 30 to July 4, just after the first session of the World Food Council. X The Working Group has made significant progress. X But several important matters remain to be considered

at the Group's

at the Group's second session which will be held in Geneva from September 22-26. It is anticipated that the Working Group will then present its report to a second meeting of all interested countries later this year. It is hoped that the IFAD may become operational in January 1976.

The new Consultative Group for Food Production and Investment (CGFPI) held its first session in Washington, July 21-23, and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research met in Washington the following week. The CGFPI is moving toward a clearer definition of its objectives and, in cooperation with the World Food Council, FAO, and IBRD, is developing a more precise indication of the food gap and the resources needed to fill that gap. The newly established International Agricultural Policy Research Institute will also commence to operate in mid-August with Headquarters in Washington, and begin to tackle the very crucial issue of what policies are more compatible with the needed growth in food production.

#### Program of Action of the Council

The Council agreed that, as the world's highest political body dealing exclusively with food, its main functions would be to monitor the world food situation in all its aspects, including what international agencies and governments are doing to develop short- and long-term solutions to food problems; to look at the



to look at the total food picture and determine in its coordinating role whether the world food strategy as a whole makes sense; ~~X~~to identify malfunctions, gaps, and problem areas; ~~X~~and to exert its influence to get any necessary improvements made.

The Council agreed that its Secretariat should maintain a close watch over the efforts of international agencies and governments to increase food production and to improve world food security. ~~X~~It felt that the Secretariat should scrutinize, review and comment, frankly and impartially, on situations as it finds them and should suggest improvements to the Council as and when necessary.

To sum up, the World Food Council has held its first session. ~~X~~Some may feel that it fell short of expectations. ~~X~~There was a pessimistic comment from outside the Council to the effect that the aims and objectives of the Council may be unattainable. ~~X~~I have a different view.

What strikes me as being of overriding importance is not that the Council did not achieve dramatic results at its first brief session. ~~X~~There are no instant, dramatic breakthroughs in resolving the world food problem. ~~X~~ After all, Rome was not built in a day.

What is most important, , is that the session pr  
clear evidence that the international community as a whole still places a  
very high priority on solving the world food problems and that many more  
governments are now clearly committed to pursuing their search for cooperative  
solutions. X If I view matters with optimism, it is not because I wish to  
minimize the difficulties experienced in the past and those which still lie  
ahead, but because I feel the truth of the old Chinese proverb that a journey  
even of a thousand miles must begin with the first step, and I feel that the  
World Food Council has taken that all-important first step.

The real hope for achieving the goals of the World Food Council rests  
with the intangibles of political will.

There will not be significant results in achieving increased food  
production in the food deficit developing countries unless the leadership  
of each country demonstrates it has the will to make the fundamental decisions  
required to provide the encouragement to their own farmers to do what is  
required to increase their food production.

There will not be the required decisions to reestablish the substantial food reserves needed for world food security unless the food-exporting countries and those with available resources are willing to join in an effort to achieve through joint action the World Food Conference objectives in world food security.

If the International Fund for Agricultural Development is to become an effective instrument, the financially able developing countries must retain the attitude that led them to sponsor World Food Conference resolution XIII, and the developed industrial countries must be willing to join with them on a comparable basis to provide the economic input required.

If the food aid to feed the starving or grossly malnourished people of the world is to be available, the willingness of all countries to participate in this activity must continue unabated.

It is my firmly held conviction that if there is to be peace in the world, there must be enough food to alleviate hunger everywhere.

That is a prerequisite to the achievable hopes for lives of better quality for the children and children's children of all people of all continents--all races--all religions--all political philosophies--everywhere.

We are dealing basically with feeding the world's hungry people in the belief that if the nations of the world can demonstrate to themselves that through cooperation and understanding this difficult goal can be achieved, then possibly that success can lead the way toward achieving progress in solving some of the other difficult economic problems that the world now confronts in its search for a more equitable international economic order--such as the need for an international monetary system that works, the problems that grow out of the energy crisis, the problems of the developing countries in finding markets for their exportable products, and the rest.

If the countries of the world will not agree to work together in solving the food problems of the world that are so clearly in the best interest of all of them, they are not likely to agree on anything.

With good progress toward achieving our goals in food and agriculture, the other serious problems that beset mankind may be easier to solve.

We are dealing with the most basic of the world's problems.

It is important that we always keep the focus directed on the welfare of all the world's people, but particularly on those at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder.

In the end, it is only people that are important.

That is about where the World Food Council finds itself in August 1975.

If you have questions, I will be glad to try to answer them.

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