

# Surplus Plagues U.S. In Our Crazy Food And Farm Problem

Editor's Note: John Strohm has been farming, talking to farmers or writing about farming since just about the day he was born 80 years ago on a farm in the horseweed bottoms of the Wash. As an agricultural expert and reporter he has seen all of the U.S. (including Washington where he has served as a presidential adviser), Russia, Red China (the only accredited U.S. newspaper correspondent to gain admission), India, Southeast Asia and Latin America. In these travels, he has been struck by the cruel paradox of America trying to cut its food production while most of the world is hungry. This is the first of five articles in which Strohm tells how we got into such a dilemma and suggests some solutions.

By JOHN STROHM  
Newspaper Enterprise Assn.  
NEW YORK (NEA) — The No. 1 fear in the world today is man's dread of not getting enough food to fill family stomachs.

If you could poll all persons on earth, you would find the threat of quick extinction in atomic war lagging far behind the fear of slow starvation.

"How am I going to feed my family?" is a plaintive wail I've heard on four continents.

Yet the U.S. has spent billions of dollars to hold down food production — and threatens farmers with heavy fines if they grow too much. Does this make sense?

The brutal world facts are these: Two out of three persons on earth are not getting enough food to work efficiently. I've seen bloated stomachs of malnourished children in the Middle East... diseased, disabled, hopeless people in Latin America... the dull eyes of apathetic Chinese who have been living on wild roots.

Fanning the hunger fire is a death race between the feeders and the breeders to determine if man can produce as fast as he can reproduce. Every hour 5,000 more new mouths are crying to be fed.

It's a crazy world. While most nations hear wails of hunger, while the Iron Curtain countries desperately try to cope with food shortages, we wallow in surpluses and spend \$4 billion a year to bribe farmers not to grow too much.

Food is a problem in three great areas of the world and each is of profound significance to us all as consumers, citizens, and taxpayers. The areas are the have-not nations, the Iron Curtain countries, and the United States.

1. Have-not countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa are underdeveloped because they are underfed. Hungry people are listless people. Without fuel, the hu-



**U.S. WALLOWS IN SURPLUS** — While the rest of the world staggers in hunger, America wallows in surplus. The U.S. has amassed a bulging eight billion dollar hoard of food and fiber with the fantastic rent bill of more than one million dollars a day.

man body hits on only a couple of cylinders. What we criticize as a lazy "mamana" attitude is often more than malnutrition.

Few of these countries are holding their own in the life and death struggle between production and reproduction.

Take Egypt, one of the cradles of civilization, where an advanced agriculture was carried on 5,000 years ago. In 1875, Egypt had 5.7 million acres of cultivated land, and 5 million people barely getting by. Today, she has 6 million acres and 25 million people—five times as many to be fed from about the same land. Egypt hopes that the Aswan Dam will irrigate 30 per cent more land over the next 10 years. But by



**MALNUTRITION IN INDIA** — Bloated stomachs mark malnourished children in India. Farmers must produce enough to feed 10 million new mouths every year.

that time she also will have 30 per cent more people.

"Two thirds of all mankind are on a treadmill — the age-old struggle against chronic malnutrition," Dr. B. R. Sen, Director General of the Food and Agricultural Organizations of the United Nations, told me recently in his Rome headquarters.

Many of these people are desperately hungry. Many more suffer a debilitation that stunts the desire to help themselves. When a man and his family must devote all their time to growing food for survival, all thoughts and desire for self-help are crowded out of their lives.

"For most of the 70 less developed countries containing 1.9 billion persons," says our De-

partment of Agriculture, "diets are nutritionally inadequate, malnutrition is widespread and persistent, and there is no likelihood the food problems soon will be solved."

These people live on the ragged edge of starvation: a pound of rice or corn a day is a typical ration. They have only one acre of land per person to produce food, and they use a scant 1.5 pounds of fertilizer per person.

In the U.S., we have about 2.5 acres and use about 270 pounds of commercial fertilizer per person.

No wonder there have been marches in Mexico that had to be quelled with troops, food riots in



**POUND OF CORN** — Typical Latin American daily ration is a pound of corn per person. Many are on near-starvation diet of 1,700 calories per day.

Brazil and other nations around the globe.

Is U.S. surplus the answer to the world's food problem?

"No," says Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman. "If all our stored up abundance of food were made available abroad, it would not close the food gap for even one year."

The most our food can provide is a temporary shot in the arm for nations such as India and Egypt — while they get set to help themselves.

The No. 1 hope of the world's hungry is self-help. In Mexico I have just seen how a handful of Americans, with a small budget from the Rockefeller Foundation, has sparked a chain reaction that has doubled Mexico's food production in the last 10 years. As a result, her people today get 2,700 calories to eat — compared with a near starvation 1,700 calories only 25 years ago.

And this despite the fact that her population is the fastest rising in Latin America. Many have not nations have the resources to do likewise.

Significance: Underdeveloped areas will remain underdeveloped so long as they cannot get enough to eat. Pouring money and food into these countries is like pouring it down a rathole—unless it helps them get on their feet. The U.S. almost alone has the knowledge to do the job.

2. Food is the Achilles' heel of Iron Curtain countries who force their farmers to work collectively. Food production dropped in every country the Communists took over — and I've visited them all.

Recent Russian reports reveal food rioting that had to be smashed with Soviet troops. In 1953, as I toured Soviet farms, I saw Khrushchev's boasts on catching up with U.S. food production. They were plastered on signs in potato patches, cow barns, pig pens and collective farm headquarters. These wild promises now have been replaced by bitter complaints of failure. The situation would be worse except for the fact that a big share of Russia's food comes from the tiny private plots each farmer has. Russia has nearly half of her

people on the land. A farmer can feed himself and 3 or 4 others.

In the U.S., under private enterprise, only 8 per cent of the population is on the land, and one farmer produces enough to feed himself and 26 others.

Red China is on the verge of collapse today primarily due to the mishandling of 500 million peasants. I was in Red China during the formation of the communes — the only accredited American newspaper correspondent to penetrate the Bamboo Curtain. I saw the Communists destroying all vestiges of private enterprise — such as private farms, private vegetable gardens, even private pigs. More recently, I talked with gaoing refugees who had been eating weeds, leaves and wild roots. From her neighbor, I learned of a mother who threw her three children into a river to drown and then jumped in to drown with them — rather than see them die of slow starvation.

It's a grim fact that 40 million Chinese would have starved last winter if China had not bought grain from Australia and Canada. Unless they can buy more surplus grain, an equally desperate situation faces the Chinese this winter.

The U.S. taxpayers now pay more than \$1 million a day to store surplus crops we don't need.

It is not mere coincidence that the best fed Communist countries are Yugoslavia and Poland — where Red authorities reluctantly gave up trying to herd farm-

ers into collectives. Red Chinese officials have seen a little light.

They now promise peasants their own private pigs and garden plots, in the hopes a little private enterprise will produce more food.

In the U.S. government planners want stricter controls so farmers will produce less.

Significance: We are not doing enough to exploit our food superiority. The developing nations should be told that the Communist way leads to less food and rationing. If they want to hitch their wagon to the star of plenty — that's the U.S. Our gift is not food, but know-how and system.

3. The U.S. also has a food problem — too much. It has cost the taxpayers \$48.6 billion the last 28 years as we tried to limit food production.

We have the best fed nation on earth. We eat 4.66 lbs. of food daily in a wide variety of vegetables, meats and dairy products, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization. An Indian eats 1.23 lbs., and 85 per cent of that is rice. We eat 10 times as much animal protein as the Far East, and our children are bigger, healthier, stronger.

No farmers on earth ever produced so much food... to feed so many... such a high quality

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at such a reasonable price. But government controls threaten the farmer's efficiency. And does it make any earthly sense

(in a world of want to threaten farmers with jail if they grow too much food?) (Next: The ABC's of the Crazy Farm Problem.)

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## Water Shortages Predicted For Klamath Basin Streams

Streamflow in the Klamath Basin during the 1953 irrigation season will be much below average and the only lands that will have satisfactory water supplies are those served from stored water sources, according to a report released today by W. T. Frost, snow survey supervisor for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, cooperating with Oregon State University and state engineer. Most other lands will have severe water shortages.

Feb. 1 at many key snow courses. Present snow is only 22 per cent of average and only one-fifth of the snowpack of last year at this date.

Watershed soils have been favorably recharged with the moisture content now up to 80 per cent of total capacity compared with 63 per cent one year ago.

Storage in Upper Klamath Lake is 332,400 acre feet on Feb. 1 compared with 299,100 a.f. one year ago. This storage is average and even with limited expected inflow will be satisfactory for irrigation.

Clear Lake storage is 112,000 a.f. the first of the month or double the water stored a year ago. There will be sufficient irrigation water from this source although carryover for next year will be limited.

Gerber Reservoir now holds 28,200 acre feet compared with only 1,800 a.f. one year ago. In-Lake reservoirs (Preliminary data from U.S. Bureau of Reclamation) has been substantial during the period since Oct. 1. The totals are 25,000 a.f. and 65,000 a.f. respectively. Forecasted inflows to these reservoirs for the February-June period are 25,000 a.f. for Gerber and 45,000 for Clear Lake.

The above forecasts assume normal winter conditions for the next two months.

Statewide, Oregon's water supply outlook for the spring and summer months of 1953 is extremely poor except where adequate reservoir facilities can provide stored water. Reservoirs con-

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