

# 1976 World Food Conference

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## Abstract

*The world food problem is a composite of many interrelated factors including the political, economical, social, and technological aspects of agriculture and food production. Today, far more technology is available in the world than is needed adequately to feed the world's expanding population. Providing food for millions of hungry people will continue to be the greatest challenge facing the world during the last quarter of the twentieth century.*

The second World Food Conference, organized and sponsored by Iowa State University, was held at Ames, Iowa, June 27 through July 1, 1976. This conference differed from the first World Food Conference held in Rome nearly three years ago in that attention was focused on the interdisciplinary aspects of the world food problem from the scientific-professional rather than the political-governmental viewpoint. The general objective of the Ames Conference was to broaden and intensify the involvement of natural and social scientists and educators in solving world food needs through concentrated efforts among universities, research organizations, and extension services in many disciplines.

Conference workshop sessions attended by 600 participants representing 70 nations were (1) maintaining and improving plant and animal resources, (2) human resources, (3) technology for food production and preservation, (4) food production policy, (5) distribution and marketing policies, (6) physical resources for food production, (7) impact of food situation on national and world development, (8) consumer policies, (9) impact of food situation on environment, (10) selection and use of technologies, (11) impact of food situation on people, and (12) institutional resources.

## Observations and Needs

General observations made by the various workshop sessions included:

1. Agriculture continues to have a poor image in far too many countries around the world. Food production is frequently considered a low-status occupation to be avoided by educated people.

2. Technologies perfected in the laboratory of developed nations may not work successfully on the farms of less developed countries. This is especially true if technologies are exported to farms in developing countries with vastly different cultural values and social systems.

3. There is need for more skillful interpretation of technology and for personalized extension of applied research. There is a need for the combined knowledge and human skills found in the agricultural scientist.

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4. Food will continue to be produced for people and for profit. It may not, however, be produced in adequate supply to meet world needs without profit incentive for farmers to produce food crops. Food production incentives are a primary need and were a singular shortcoming in earlier, less successful schemes to feed the world's expanding population.

5. There is an international urban bias which places rural people, and especially the farmer, at a political, economic, and social disadvantage in many countries around the world.

6. Starvation on a catastrophic scale is not an immediate problem in the world although millions of persons exist in severely malnourished conditions.

7. A major constraint to the need for increased food production is the lack of will, governmental and otherwise, to make the necessary commitments to increased food production.

## Conclusions

Conference delegates concluded that the world food problem is a composite of many problems. Altering one part of the food-and-nutrition system may often cause changes in other areas. Food shortages result probably as much from social impediments as from technological ones. Far more technology for adequately feeding the world is available today than is being interpreted, adopted, and practiced. Food reserves, through a world-wide system of granaries, are needed to avert serious disasters in the future.

According to Dr. John A. Hannah, Executive Director of the World Food Council, United Nations, Rome, and final speaker at The World Food Conference, solving world food problems can be considered the greatest challenge of the last quarter of the twentieth century. The solution of world food problems can be found only through the serious commitments made by individuals, organizations, institutions, and governments in the use of resources and the application of knowledge and human activity. Members of NACTA will make their contribution as agricultural educators and scientists in helping to solve present and future world food problems by becoming actively involved at local, state, national, and international levels.

## References

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