

New Zealand Society of Animal Production online archive

This paper is from the New Zealand Society for Animal Production online archive. NZSAP holds a regular annual conference in June or July each year for the presentation of technical and applied topics in animal production. NZSAP plays an important role as a forum fostering research in all areas of animal production including production systems, nutrition, meat science, animal welfare, wool science, animal breeding and genetics.

An invitation is extended to all those involved in the field of animal production to apply for membership of the New Zealand Society of Animal Production at our website www.nzsap.org.nz

[View All Proceedings](#)

[Next Conference](#)

[Join NZSAP](#)

The New Zealand Society of Animal Production in publishing the conference proceedings is engaged in disseminating information, not rendering professional advice or services. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the New Zealand Society of Animal Production and the New Zealand Society of Animal Production expressly disclaims any form of liability with respect to anything done or omitted to be done in reliance upon the contents of these proceedings.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).



You are free to:

Share— copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format

Under the following terms:

Attribution — You must give [appropriate credit](#), provide a link to the license, and [indicate if changes were made](#). You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

NonCommercial — You may not use the material for [commercial purposes](#).

NoDerivatives — If you [remix, transform, or build upon](#) the material, you may not distribute the modified material.

<http://creativecommons.org.nz/licences/licences-explained/>

"FOOD AND AGRICULTURE"

by

E.J. Fawcett, Director-General of Agriculture,
Department of Agriculture, Wellington.

The United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture assembled in May, 1943, was the first conference at which all Governments subscribing to the United Nations Pact were represented. Its objective, apart from serious study of the problems associated with nutrition and the development of food production, was to determine procedure for similarly constituted conferences held thereafter. U.N.R.R.A. and the Monetary Conference recently concluded, were of similar pattern. The delegates assembled represented more than three-quarters of the world's peoples.

The Conference faced these facts: two-thirds of the people of the world spend their lives on the land - producing food. In highly industrialised countries approximately one-quarter of the population lives on the land, whereas in backward countries the rural population may represent three-quarters of the total, or even higher. Two-thirds of the people of the world, including many who live on the land, have never had enough to eat. This means there is a total of 1,400,000,000 who do not have enough of the right kinds of food for the maintenance of health and a reasonable standard of living.

Malnutrition is present in all countries to some extent, irrespective of apparent prosperity. The annual death rate from hunger and disease caused or accentuated by malnutrition runs into millions. Mortality amongst mothers and babies is highest in those countries where the nutritional standard is lowest. The expectation of life for a child aged one year in the best fed countries is 62 to 66 years, and in poverty-stricken countries about 20 years. Infant mortality in the best fed countries is about 36 per 1000 births, and in the poorest countries 150 to 200 per 1000. The Conference recognised that poverty breeds want, want breeds fear, and fear breeds war. It has been said that "an army marches on its (full) stomach". It might well be expressed, "armies march if there are too many empty stomachs". Food itself will not abolish war, but without adequate food there can certainly be no lasting peace. The foregoing conditions prevailed prior to 1939 and the chronic conditions of food shortages then prevailing have been accentuated by the war. The population of occupied countries of Europe has been kept on minimum rations and it is feared that the potential production capacity of such countries will be impaired for some years following liberation. These, then, were the facts facing the Hot Springs Conference.

It was unanimously agreed that, within a reasonable period of time, the standard of nutrition in all countries could be raised to a satisfactory level, provided that:-

- (a) All scientific knowledge now in our possession or subsequently determined was pooled and applied to food production.
- (b) All Governments accepted the responsibility of assisting agriculture and raised the general standard of living of their people.
- (c) All Governments undertook to assist by advice and provision of finance those other countries in need of agricultural and industrial development.

In other words, it was recognised that no nation could win freedom from want alone, just as it has been demonstrated during recent years that independent action will not win freedom from aggression.

The Conference decided that the establishment of an international organisation was necessary, and set up an interim commissioner charged with the task of drafting the constitution and duties of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

The Interim Commission has now finished its task, and has presented, or is about to present to the Governments which it represents, a detailed constitution for the permanent organisation. The preamble to the constitution, and its first Article, clearly set out the broad objectives of the organisation as portrayed in the original report of the Hot Springs Conference.

"PREAMBLE

"The United Nations, being determined: to work separately and together to the end that want and the fear of want shall be progressively abolished; to take all measures within their power to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of the peoples under their jurisdiction;
to improve the efficiency of agricultural production and distribution; and being resolved to co-operate internationally for the achievement of these ends;

hereby establish the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, which shall be governed by the provisions of this Constitution.

ARTICLE 1.

"The purpose of the Organisation shall be to promote the common welfare by furthering separate and collective action by the Member nations to raise levels of nutrition and standards of living, to secure improvements in the efficiency of the production and distribution of all food and agricultural products, to better the condition of rural populations and to contribute towards an expanding world economy."

The Interim Commission has finished its work - it now remains for Governments to signify their determination to put theory into practice. We all realised at the Conference that it was an easy matter to formulate principles and to expound policies. Their implementation will call for understanding and determination on the part of participant nations. I believe, however, the will to convert precept into practice is there. This belief is strengthened by the practical steps taken by the same group of nations in the establishment of the organisation known as U.N.R.R.A., and by the degree of unanimity apparent at the recent conference on monetary matters. It was appreciated by delegates at Hot Springs that the Food and Agriculture Organisation could not function as envisaged unless it were associated with a complementary organisation capable of offering finance to member nations requiring funds for the development of agriculture and/or industry. Therefore the acceptance in principle of some form of international bank is of paramount importance.

It is not necessary at this meeting to stress the short term problem of food supplies. It is recognised that for two to four years after the cessation of hostilities in Europe all the food which can be spared will be inadequate to meet the needs of liberated nations. It is expected that the flow and distribution of food will be subject to rationing and other forms of control. We know of the negotiations between the Governments of the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand for the purpose of arranging a firm contract until the end of 1948. This arrangement gives the United Kingdom, ourselves and other countries a breathing space which must be used to determine the part we can play in the post-war food economy of the United Nations.

I have indicated that it was a simple matter for a conference of comfortably housed and well fed delegates to sit and declare that all nations must work together to ensure a well fed world. How is this philosophy to be implemented, and what are the likely repercussions on the internal economy of New Zealand? The scope for extra food consumption is positive. As an example we need only quote the position in the United States of America - a country on the whole well fed. The National Research Council gives the annual consumption of a relatively costly diet group as follows:-

<u>Food Groups</u>	<u>Pounds per person per year.</u>
Grain products	194 lbs.
Milk (as fluid)	53 gals.
Starch-rich tubers, roots, fruits	150 lbs.
Mature leguminous seeds and nuts	13 lbs.
Vitamin C-rich fruits	95 lbs.
Leafy-green, yellow vegetables	154 lbs.
Other vegetables and fruits	194 lbs.
Meats, fish, poultry	119 lbs.
Eggs	23 doz.
Sugars	35 lbs.
Fats	51 lbs.

This diet is good by any standard, yet it is stated that if the United States is to carry out the pledge to do all that is needed to assure adequate nutrition for its own people, it will need to increase the consumption of dairy products by about 40%, garden crops by about 80%, eggs more than 20%, and fruit 20% above the average quantities consumed in the years 1935-1939. To achieve this end, and assuming that the United States produces all its own food requirements, this would represent an increase of 12% or 40,000,000 acres additional under crops. If this is the position in America, some very slight appreciation may be gained of the overall world position.

Let me reiterate some of the principles laid down by the Hot Springs Conference as fundamental to a better fed world. These principles are important in relation to New Zealand agriculture.

- (1) There has never been enough food for the health of all people. This is justified neither by ignorance nor by the harshness of nature. Production of food must be greatly expanded; we now have knowledge of the means by which this can be done. It requires imagination and firm will on the part of each Government and people to make use of that knowledge.
- (2) The first cause of hunger and malnutrition is poverty. It is useless to produce more food unless men and nations provide the markets to absorb it. There must be an expansion of the whole world economy to provide the purchasing power sufficient to maintain an adequate diet for all. With full employment in all countries, enlarged industrial production, the absence of exploitation, an increasing flow of trade within and between countries, an orderly management of domestic and international investment and currencies, and sustained internal and international economic equilibrium, the food which is produced can be made available to all people.
- (3) The primary responsibility lies with each nation for seeing that its own people have the food needed for life and health; steps to this end are for national determination. But each nation can fully achieve its goal only if all work together.
- (4) National and international action is necessary to eliminate deflationary influences on agricultural income, in order to maintain an equitable balance between the purchasing power of agriculture and industry.

The foregoing principles envisage an advance toward a self-reliant economy in all countries, but as purchasing power depends on the establishment of industries and the production of goods and services, the transition must necessarily be slow. New Zealand has perhaps the highest standard of living in the world, and in the main this has been made possible by the volume of exported products from the soil. We have been provided with soil and climatic conditions which have facilitated increasing production of meat, dairy produce and wool, our increasing capacity co-ordinating with an increasing consumption capacity in the United Kingdom which has been our main market.

It is apparent that for many years we cannot rely on a greatly expanding market within our shores. It is possible that some change in diet may be effected - fruit, vegetables and milk might replace meat and bread. With an increase in industrialisation and a corresponding increase in population, production from the soil of commodities such as fruits and vegetables will be increased, but our basic economy must always rest on the proceeds from butter, cheese, meat and wool. I am convinced that economic secondary industries can and will be developed in the Dominion, but such development should be along lines which, in the main, will utilise our natural products. If we could aim at a target figure for progressive increases in population and take steps to ensure the achievement of such objectives the development of agriculture would be greatly facilitated.

But we finally come back to outlets for exportable surpluses of butter, cheese, mutton, lamb, beef and pig meats. (For the time being I am not considering wool, tallow, hides, skins and edible by-products.) Within four to five years of the cessation of hostilities, we shall be faced with the hard facts of markets and competitive values.

We have established that all countries could consume more of the foodstuffs we are able to export. The ability to consume depends on spending power. I believe the general trend of spending power will be upwards: Such has been the history of world economy and there appears no reason why the reverse should now apply. In fact, it is essential, if the philosophy of the United Nations and the Atlantic Charter is to prevail. This does not necessarily mean that New Zealand will enjoy the present range of commodity prices indefinitely, but whatever may be the trend of prices for our goods in world markets, our economy will remain essentially sound, provided an even balance is maintained within our own borders.

We must still look to the United Kingdom for our main outlet. What are the prospects of continuity of demand at reasonable prices? The Coalition Government on its formation in 1940 pledged itself to the recognition of "the importance of maintaining after the war a healthy and well-balanced agriculture as an essential and permanent feature of national policy". All parties of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom insist that the maintenance of a healthy and prosperous agriculture must be paid for by a charge on the national resources. The Prime Minister, when outlining the four years' plan, stated that since the United Kingdom would, after the war, have to grow a large proportion of its own foodstuffs, the expansion and improvement of British agriculture must be part of the plan, and that, in order to maintain this expansion and improvement "there were likely to be substantial charges which the State must be prepared to shoulder". It is generally agreed by British authorities that British agriculture cannot expand its dairy industry to provide any material quantity of butter or cheese, and that the United Kingdom must always be dependent on imports for a great proportion of its meat requirements.

In this connection I should like to quote an extract from a pamphlet recently to hand, and published by three members of Parliament on behalf of the Tory Reform Committee:-

"If British policy is to be governed by the decision of the Hot Springs Conference, we consider it essential that the quantity and price of imported food should be settled by the Government, in accordance with the following principles:-

- (a) It should be an object of British policy to provide the public with the greatest possible amount of the best possible food. Imports should never be limited with the object of maintaining high prices by means of scarcity. It is generally recognised that after the war our economic position may oblige us to restrict the total volume of all our imports, giving priority to those things which we most require and which cannot be produced at home.

- (b) The overseas producer, like the British farmer, is also entitled to a fair return for his labour. It is not good for international trade that overseas producers should be impoverished to provide us with cheap food at an uneconomic price. We believe this to be the right interpretation of the resolutions of the Hot Springs Conference.
- (c) If foreign countries should refuse to co-operate in maintaining a world price, we do not suggest that Britain could alone undertake the burden of doing so. It should, however, be possible for us to be of real help in this matter to the Empire. In the absence of full international co-operation, there would be moral and economic justification for a policy intended to stabilise agricultural prices at an economic level within the Empire.

The quantity and price of imports should therefore be determined by the Government in negotiation with foreign exporters of food. It is a mistake to assume that this would involve state management of distribution. The useful enterprise of the merchant, the carrier and the shopkeeper will not be hindered, but rather aided, by the steadying of wholesale prices. Great fluctuations in the price of primary products, which the farmer can neither foresee nor sustain, have always been detrimental to commerce. Reasonable stability in wholesale food prices, as the Macmillan Report showed in 1931, would benefit all other industries, which do not profit in the long run by the exploitation of an agricultural community consisting of insolvent employers and underpaid workers."

I think in the future, primary producers of the world will favour security through predetermined contracts. A comparison of experience of the between-war-years, with conditions obtaining under contracts (not necessarily Government to Government transactions) will cause producers to hesitate before returning willingly to open competition. If security can be effected, however, stagnation must be avoided. Security and efficiency must be co-ordinated, otherwise security cannot be maintained. New Zealand requires an expanding agriculture in the interests of national development. Whatever British sentiment may be, we must remember that the United Kingdom will need to fight for export markets for manufactured goods, and reasonably priced dairy products and meat are essential. All our old competitor countries will be in the field, and possibly new ones. In addition, we must face the fact that margarine as a competitor of butter will assume ever-increasing importance, we cannot rely on the removal of tariffs in those countries which otherwise would be potential customers. We must again rely on the United Kingdom, but our expanding production must, if possible, find outlets in countries not hitherto exploited, and we must play our part to ensure that international organisations to be established so direct their energies that our products may be consumed in greater quantities throughout the United Nations. Although it is impossible to forecast the future, I am reasonably optimistic so far as New Zealand agriculture is concerned. That does not mean we can rest on our achievements and trust to good fortune and the benevolence of possible customers. We have a task to perform.

Whatever the future may bring in the way of markets, competition and prices, the establishment of the F.A.O. together with a central organisation controlling buffer and developmental finance, our duty to the world at large and to the Dominion in particular is to ensure that our agricultural structure is sound and well balanced; and that producers are placed in a position whereby they may meet changing world conditions. We are not immediately concerned with policies designed to spread the national income. These must be determined by higher authorities. It is satisfactory, however, to know that the Organisation for National Development recently established has a lively appreciation of the fundamental importance of primary industries in the national economy, and is determined so far as lies within its power, to so mould development that the rural structure is safeguarded.

As scientists and administrators of Government policy, our duty lies in the direction of guiding the organisation and practice of improved technique, better balance in farm organisation, the prevention of unnecessary losses in stock and stock feed and in any other direction calculated to improve the efficiency of production with a corresponding lowering in unit cost. The focal point of all our endeavours must be to this end. If we lose sight of cost factors we fail in our duty.

Thus the investigator in the animal field must aim at the control and eradication of disease, improvement in breeding from a unit production viewpoint, and in the nutritional requirements of farm stock. Workers in the field of plant life must endeavour to improve pasture strains and give a lead in the direction of more abundant and better balanced diets.

The student of farm management must direct the organisation of individual farm units, and indicate the combination of farming activities best suited to any particular district or area.

The administrator must work in the direction of safeguarding the potentialities of our soil through the control of erosion, the utilisation of natural resources, co-ordination of distribution of finished products, the proper provision of finance for capital development, and the ensuring of supplies required in the process of production. He must further direct his energies towards better social amenities in rural areas and endeavour to create a better understanding between rural and urban interests.

Finally the advisory service to producers must be strengthened to ensure that results from investigations in all fields are presented to farmers in such a manner that science and practice are moulded to obtain the highest possible output at the lowest possible unit cost.

If we do these things honestly and to the best of our ability we shall be able to join with President Roosevelt, who in addressing the delegates to the Hot Springs Conference declared its objective to be:-

"To build for ourselves, meaning all men everywhere, a world in which each individual human being shall have the opportunity to live out his life in peace; to work productively, earning at least enough for his actual needs and those of his family; to associate with the friends of his choice; to think and worship freely; and to die secure in the knowledge that his children, and their children, shall have the same opportunities. That objective, as men know from long and bitter experience, will not be easy to achieve. But you and I know also that, throughout history, there has been no more worth while, no more inspiring challenge. That challenge will be met."

DISCUSSION

Miss J.P. St. John: As Mr Fawcett has stated, all these things we hope to do depend on full international co-operation after the war. Is it understood at every Conference of this nature that full international co-operation includes all nations, even those who are our enemies now?

Reply: These facts were fully recognised at the Hot Springs Conference. After the war there must be provision whereby nations which are at present our enemies can, under reasonable safeguards, be brought into the organisation.

Mr A.H. Ward: Had Mr Fawcett any particular commodities in mind when he spoke of the extension of our marketing of primary products to India and China?

Reply: I was referring particularly to our staple commodities. There has been a feeling that countries such as India and China will not, as a mass, adapt themselves to the consumption of meat and butter. From the purely nutritional viewpoint of course that is not correct. There are certain racial or religious scruples which may have to be overcome in India, but taking it by and large it is agreed that if the goods are available there will be a fairly rapid appreciation and absorption of them, particularly perhaps in China and within certain castes in India. From what I have seen of the representatives of these nations they like the good things of the world just as well as the next man, provided they can be made available at appropriate prices.

Mr W. Metcalfe: The Hot Springs Conference would include, I presume both the immediate problem of food and also the long-term problem of food?

Reply: Yes, primarily long-term.

Mr W. Metcalfe: Considering the long-term problem, and considering such a country as India or China, we cannot say that the responsibility for education and development in these countries must remain entirely the responsibility of these countries, because if we do say that we are immediately faced with the problem that it is certainly not within their capabilities. Has there been any discussion along these lines?

Reply: You are quite correct in your statement. The principle enunciated by the Hot Springs Conference, and as I gave it to you, is that primarily the responsibility rests with the Government of the particular country. This point created a great deal of discussion at the conference. It was, however, unanimously agreed that if you remove the primary responsibility from the country itself you encourage factors which are not good. At the same time it was recognised that some countries themselves could not achieve the objective, and therefore, within the organisation known as the Food and Agriculture Organisation, there is provision whereby, through exchange or in one way or another, the backward countries will be offered all the facilities which are available from the pooled knowledge of contributing countries. That includes personnel. It was envisaged that there would be, within that Organisation, facilities for supplying technical and instructional personnel, either from the Organisation itself or by way of exchange from some of the other nations represented in the organisation. In other words, it might be likely that New Zealand would be asked to send, say to India or China, a certain number of scientists for a given period to provide workers there with the best possible advice. In this connection I might say that, within the last few days I have had a request from Bengal for three scientific workers from New Zealand; two on the dairying side and one on the poultry side. The Prime Minister has been extremely interested in this request and has asked me to make the men available if it is humanly possible. Three men are being offered to Bengal for twelve months to give them the best advice which we have in New Zealand. That is the class of exchange which I envisage will take place under the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

Professor W. Riddet: You mentioned that forty nations agreed to accept the principles that were announced. In that connection you mentioned also that the principles were to be exercised in the light of slight adjustments to the Atlantic Charter and that we don't expect absolute freedom of trade. (1) Would you feel satisfied that the forty nations which signed the pact conscientiously agreed to it, or that one or two merely signed to be part of it? (2) In your opinion were those present sufficiently influential in their own countries to carry into effect the general principles announced? One can't help feeling that, however strong the difficulties may be in administration, so long as the will is there the ways and means will be found later.