

The American Farmer . . .

# He Produces, He Consumes

(Editor's note: This is the second in a series of articles on the American farmer. The series is furnished courtesy of DEKALB AgResearch, Inc.)

The farmer's business is producing food and fiber, recognized as the world's basic industry.

In any society, the necessities

of life — food, clothing and shelter — must come first. A color television is of little comfort to a youngster whose stomach is gnawed by hunger. A dishwasher means little to the housewife whose first concern is having ample food to serve her family. Unlike many other products of our economy, food is one product we cannot do without.

As a basic industry, agriculture holds the key to the development of other industries. If most of the world's work force is required to produce food and fiber, then obviously fewer workers are available to develop other industries.

This is not to say that agriculture is the basic industry of every nation on earth. It isn't. The law of comparative advantage enters the picture; A nation develops those industries it is best suited for, based on the resources it has available for that industry. No nation is entirely self-sufficient. World trade helps fill any potential void.

For world trade to exist in the food market, some countries must produce agricultural goods in excess of their domestic needs. Few nations are doing this. But the United States is ... and it's due to the efficiency of the American farmer.

During the past few decades, the American farmer has demonstrated his amazing ability to produce. He has increased his production more than any other major segment of our economy. During the past 10 years, his production has climbed 20 percent, and he's done it on six percent fewer acres. He has done it by taking the proper mix of

land, labor, capital, technology and management, and coming up with the most efficient agricultural production the world has known. And the end isn't yet in sight.

His efficiency has made possible the export of the production from one of every four acres harvested in this country. He has made the United States the leading exporter of agricultural products, accounting for more than one-sixth of the world's agricultural exports in fiscal year 1970-71.

Perhaps a statement by Robert Stovall, vice president of Reynolds Securities, Inc., best sums up our amazing American agriculture. Writing in the February 1, 1973 issue of FORBES magazine, Stovall said, "It is ironic that the much maligned farmer and the risky, highly cyclical industries that serve him have now combined to produce the one area of expertise which the U.S. shares with no other country in the world. Others can produce automobiles, color television sets, transistors and pharmaceuticals of like quality to ours, and frequently cheaper. In the field of agri-business, however, we have no real competitor."

As time goes on, the American farmer will likely play a bigger role in the world economy. If his full productive capacity is unleashed, he will be an even more important factor in the struggle to alleviate world hunger.

It's time we recognize the importance of the American farmer's ability to produce, and accept what it has done and can



The American farmer is unequalled in his productivity. He produces enough food for himself and 47 of his neighbors. Americans have the best food in the world at the world's best prices. Other countries can match the U.S. in the production of automobiles, color TV sets and transistors. However, in the field of agribusiness, we have no competitor.

do for our economy. In the October 8, 1972, issue of the CHICAGO TRIBUNE, Economist Pierre A. Rinfret is quoted as saying, "Most people haven't realized yet that a principal part of the President's new economic drive is utilizing in full the incredible productive capacity of American agriculture."

Full employment in our economy, Rinfret continued, "requires maximum economic expansion until all idle capacity is used up, and the turning on of the full productive capacity of agriculture."

The farmer's efficiency has enabled American consumers to enjoy an ample supply of the most wholesome and nutritious food products in history — at the best prices ever. In 1972, even in the face of rising food costs, the consumer spent an average of less than 16 percent of his paycheck for food, or less than half of what he paid in 1929 and the lowest percentage in history. This has enabled consumers to spend an increasing portion of their incomes for products other than food, thereby encouraging the development of non-agricultural industries. The result ... a higher level of living for everyone.


The export of American agricultural products is a "plus" in our attempts to achieve a balance of payments in foreign trade. In 1971, total U.S. exports were valued at \$43.5 billion. That same year, the United States exported a record \$7.7 billion of agricultural products, accounting for nearly one-fifth the value of all U.S. exports. And a side benefit ... American agricultural exports require financing, storage and both inland and ocean transportation — thus, maintaining more jobs for more people.

The American farmer may be a farmer, but he's also a consumer. He puts billions of dollars back into the economy to maintain his operation. In 1971, American farmers spent \$1.8 billion for petroleum, \$1.1 billion for tractors, \$3.5 billion for hired labor and paid \$3.1 billion in property taxes. He also helps support the same industries that his non-farm neighbors do. He, too, buys refrigerators, television sets, automobiles, furniture and processed foods. In simple figures, five percent of the population accounts for nearly 20 percent of the domestic market for steel, petroleum, rubber, and other major products.

The effect of all of this is that three out of 10 jobs in America are related to agriculture. And at the heart of this is the American Farmer.



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