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USDA Official Predicts Rise in Meat Consumption

Consumer attitudes, as reflected by their super-market shopping patterns and legislative demands, coupled with livestock production economics, will decide the future of the U. S. meat industry, members of the Ohio Cattlemen's Association were told last week.

Will Erwin, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, said, "The rising crescendo of voices calling for a cut-back in U. S. meat consumption so as to release grain for world food assistance is ill-advised and among other things, shows a lack of understanding of the grass and roughage utilization function of ruminants—cattle and sheep.

"I predict Americans will eat more, not less, meat.

"Consumers could insist that government exert price interference or otherwise interfere with meat production, export, and import patterns. But they are too wise to do that. Experience taught them that

it's to their advantage to allow the marketplace to perform its normal function."

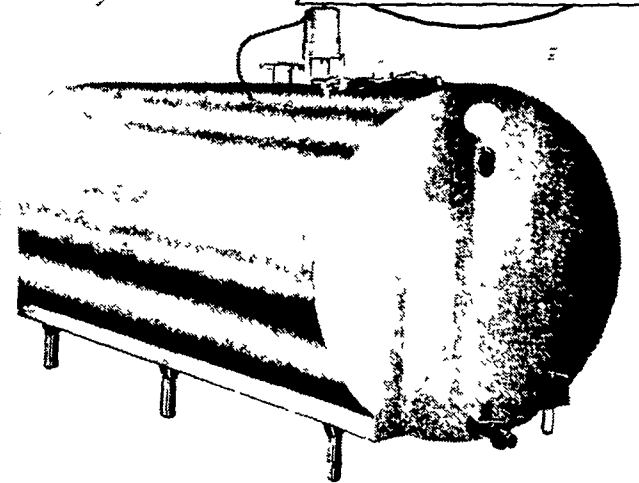
Secretary Erwin pointed out that U. S. farmers will increase corn, soybean, and wheat production by 50, 44, and 35 percent respectively by 1985 and that the nation's beef herd will be 44 percent larger by that time.

And he said, "This country is already making an enormous contribution toward meeting world food demands. We currently export the production from one U. S. acre in four—exporting 75 percent of the wheat crop, 60 percent of our soybeans, and 35 percent of the corn crop."

The official, who is the overall head of Federal rural development assistance efforts, urged Ohio farmers to use and guide community development so as to increase their economic wellbeing, quality of life, and adequacy, plus convenience in meeting everyday needs.

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