

# Bergland affirms goal to eliminate hunger

**TOR'S NOTE:** The following are excerpts from the given by USDA Secretary Bob Bergland before the Ministerial Session of the World Food Council in Manila, The Philippines, June 20, 1977.

We are here today to affirm our common commitment to the objective of eliminating hunger and malnutrition. I believe that all nations - regardless of differences in culture, economic systems, or stages of development - have a common goal of providing adequate food for the world's population. Unless this goal is achieved, and unless we, as people and nations working together, can assure an adequate diet for all, our other economic and political goals become

meaningless and will never be achieved. As President Carter said last month, "We know a peaceful world cannot long exist one-third rich and two-thirds hungry."

Thus, food must be an area of international cooperation, not international conflict. Problems of hunger and malnutrition must bring forth the best of our national political commitments. Food must not be regarded as a weapon or as an issue which divides us in either purpose or action.

President Carter wishes the delegates to this World Food Council success in their deliberations, knowing that all you and your leaders share our commitment to a common task.

The World Food Council is the highest political body dealing exclusively with issues of food. It is the forum where these issues can be defined and discussed and courses of action recommended to appropriate national and international bodies for decisions and implementation.

This council was created during a time of crisis. Supplies of food were scarce, and prices were high. During the last year, grainstocks have increased rapidly and grain export prices have fallen sharply. But large numbers of people still are undernourished and, in this sense, the world food crisis still is with us. All of the topics on our agenda recognize this fact and seek to deal with it. Accordingly, my initial remarks will present my government's policies on a range of food and agriculture related issues.

The majority of the world's very poor live in the rural areas of developing countries, and therefore, the basic problems of poverty, unemployment, and hunger cannot be solved without improvements in the agriculture of these countries. Efforts to increase food production in poor countries must be continued and expanded. Also serious efforts to improve distribution must be made to assure that food actually reaches the undernourished people.

We welcome the contribution of the conference on international economic cooperation toward our common objectives in food and agriculture. That conference reaffirmed the need for concerted efforts by all countries to achieve satisfactory rates of food production in the developing countries. It is committed to the establishment of a \$1 billion international fund for agricultural development. The conference also took actions which will contribute to the attainment of an international emergency food reserve coordinated by the world food program and will lead to improvement in the availability of essential agriculture inputs. Agreements were reached on other substantive matters which need not be debated

again in this session. My government regards the results of this conference as significant and helpful in the task we are continuing in this meeting.

The United States will continue to make a major contribution to programs aimed at promoting agriculture development. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 requires that the United States development assistance focus on helping the poor majority in the poorest countries. The United States Bilateral Aid Program awaiting final action by the Congress calls for more than \$700 million in food and agricultural development programs. Also, the United States plans to contribute \$800 million per year from 1978 through 1980 to the World Bank's International Development Association. About 30 per cent of these funds are distributed on a concessionary basis for food and agricultural projects in the most needy countries. Finally, the United States has pledged \$200 million to the International Fund for agricultural development.

Increased production is central to long-term world food security. But food security also requires assurance that adequate supplies will be available in the event of shortfalls in production caused by weather or other adverse events. Supplies should be adequate to prevent extreme swings in prices that create economic hardship for the poor in all nations and for almost all in poor nations.

In order to improve world food security, the United States already has taken action to establish a domestic foodgrain reserve. This reserve will be accumulated during this period of adequate supplies and low prices for return to the market during periods of short supplies and high prices. We commend the similar actions by other countries such as India, the Philippines and others.

But food security is not the sole obligation of the United States or a few nations. The world should not want its food security to rest in the hands of a few nations. Responsibility for world food security must be shared widely. Therefore, the United States hopes the International Wheat Council soon can lay the foundation for negotiations of an agreement which would include a coordinated system of nationally-held reserve stocks. We believe a world food security system should include these features: First, a reserve stock mechanism must be designed to reduce wide fluctuations around the long-run trend in market prices. We are willing to consider price indicators to trigger reserve actions. Second, the cost of reserve stocks must be shared among both exporting and importing nations. Special provisions should be made to assist poor nations in meeting their share and third, we must prevent interruptions in trade for grains which

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