

Partime Farmers Socially Acceptable

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Agricultural products are influenced strongly by government programs. However, sometimes we forget that the other half of the

income comes from products that are not supported."

"We do have a major surplus problem in agriculture. Not so much because of changes in export demand, but simply because productivity has increased much more rapidly than I think most people would have projected 10 years ago. In the mid 1970s people were concerned about the world not having enough food. They were worried about us running out of technology and ruining our soils and depleting our underground water supplies. This has happened to some extent. But it's just remarkable what happened to world ag production."

"Africa has stayed behind to

some extent and the problems there are extremely serious. But in western Europe and in Asia as well as in the U.S. production has increased dramatically. Ten years ago India was a deficit country but now while there are hungry people in India you can see that their food supply relative to the ability to purchase has put them in much better shape than they were 10 years ago. The so-called green revolution has increased wheat and rice supplies so they have actually exported grain."

"China, which five years ago imported 15 million tons of grain, has exported grain in the last year. In the U.S. change in the productivity of dairy cows has

gone up much faster than the rate of the population. Wheat production has gone up 25 percent in less than 10 years. And the optimism about increases of productivity continues. The bovine growth hormone and additives to make feed conversion more efficient add to this optimism. Many people now think we have not nearly reached our potential in crop yields. Even in our water supplies we are pumping water from lower resources but we are also making more efficient use of our water."

"So the results have been an increase in production that has surpassed our ability to find markets. We will likely put into storage about 70 million tons of grain this year. We started the year with 90 million tons so we'll be up to 160 million tons. That is equivalent to about 20 percent of our grain production being registered as surplus. Dairy products are about nine to 10 percent surplus. And even soybeans has an eight to 10 percent surplus over needs."

"Since the population is growing at only about one percent per year, the prospects of doing away with surplus by increasing demand is not likely to be encouraging. Ef-

fects of income on food consumption are not nearly as great as they were 10 years ago. Even when people get a wage increase they do not buy very much more food. At the rate we are going for grain supplies, it would be at least 10 years before we could use up the kinds of excess production we have seen. In dairy products we are about five years ahead of our population needs."

"Even if Chernobyl did affect Russia's grain fields, we still have enough surplus grains to fill the gap. Prices jumped from a psychological effect. But in fact, we have enough grains to accommodate any increase in the demands the Soviets are likely to make."

In a question and answer period following Dr. Robinson's discussion, he said it will take longer to incorporate some of the new technological advances than was expected concerning the bovine growth hormone. He said farmers still need to inoculate the cows daily, and government approval for the product is still necessary. On a question regarding marketing, he said we should develop products for the market, rather than markets for the products.

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