



Summer 1979

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Recommended Citation

Gerald W. Thomas, *To Feed This World: The Challenge and the Strategy*, by Sterling Wortman and Ralph W. Cummings, Jr., 19 Nat. Resources J. 758 (1979).

Available at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nrj/vol19/iss3/21>

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TO FEED THIS WORLD: THE CHALLENGE AND THE STRATEGY

By STERLING WORTMAN and RALPH W. CUMMINGS, Jr.
Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1978. Pp. 428.

During the past decade a number of books have been published about the world food problem. Most of these have tended toward pessimistic outlooks, ranging from "Famine-1975" to the Club of Rome reports. This treatment by Wortman and Cummings presents a more balanced approach—still not optimistic, but with more confidence in the potential for progress in the underdeveloped world where 80% of the people will live in the year 2000.

I had the privilege not only of reading the book "To Feed This World" but of interacting with Sterling Wortman at a recent meeting of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development on which I serve. Drs. Wortman and Cummings write from a strong background in agriculture and the international scene. This new book is one of the most comprehensive treatments of the world food problem ever produced.

The authors start from the premise that there are three great eras of agricultural development: (1) The evolution, over thousands of years, of traditional farming systems, (2) an era of great progress that was science based and industry supported (largely this century) and (3) a third era which we now are entering of *accelerated, forced-pace* agriculture and rural developmental efforts. In this new era it is evident that the facts must be laid out and strategy planned to double food supplies for many countries in 10-15 years.

The necessity for action is based upon three factors: (1) increasing unrest, violence and even potential revolution by the poor masses who have aspirations for a better way of life; (2) the recent disappearance of large crop surpluses in the U.S. and a few other countries, complicated by the Soviet Union (and perhaps China) moving in and out of the dollar market; and (3) governments learning that they can develop the agricultural sector as a way of alleviating the problems of the unemployed poor.

The authors propose that the world has adequate physical resources—particularly if we explore the potential in fisheries and aquaculture as well as better waste management. In the section on "Strategy," discussions are presented of the factors leading to progress such as land tenure systems, research and education with payoff, farm inputs, finance, marketing and price. There is also a well-written chapter entitled, "Toward More Effective Assistance" which is a good review of bi-lateral and multi-national activities.

Although it is impossible to cover all of the aspects of the world food problem in any book, I note a deficiency relating to the role of agri-business and the private sector. Also, the confidence expressed by the authors that the income and employment problems of the "poor masses" can be solved largely by the agricultural sector, through emphasis on small farms, is not shared by all authorities. Nevertheless, this book is the best recent addition to the complex problem of feeding the world beyond the turn of the century.

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