

Most of the agricultural resources of the Far East are devoted to food production, but per capita yields are among the lowest in the world. This is the result of the small amount of agricultural land per capita, the low capital inputs in agriculture, and the inefficient subsistence farming which characterizes the area. Per capita income is lower than any other region of the world except Communist China.

Some Far Eastern countries have to export foods in order to buy other necessities; others divert land to nonfood crops for export in order to obtain foreign exchange. Even so, the area—a net exporter before World War II—now is a net importer of over 10 million tons of food grains, mainly wheat, but also pulses, fruit and vegetables, and dairy products.

India's problem is conspicuous. Over the past 25 years, during which the population increased 120 million, cereal production has increased only 20 million tons. In the years immediately ahead with population increasing by nearly 8 million new Indians a year, India will need to import at least 4 million tons of grain and by 1970 as much as 8 to 10 million tons.

Pakistan, with an annual population increase of 2 million or more, was once an exporter of wheat and rice. It is now an importer of both. In a recent interview while in the United States, Ayub Khan of Pakistan conceded that Pakistan will require 1.5 million tons of food from the outside to feed 2 million new mouths added to the population each year.

The population of Indonesia is increasing at a rate of 1.5 million a year; imports of cereal grains are increasing. The situation is similar throughout the Far East.

The Department of Agriculture sees little prospect that there will be large production gains over the next few years for the Far East as a whole, although India has better prospects than other countries for improvement. The estimate is that imports of wheat will go up 50 percent between 1958 and 1966; nonfat dry milk imports will double; the net importers of vegetable oil will triple imports.

The difficulties to be overcome before the food deficits are reduced significantly are indicated by these figures:

|                                                       |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Per capita availability of arable land, hectares..... | 0.3  |
| Percent of world fertilizer production.....           | 0.8  |
| Labor force in agriculture (percent).....             | 70   |
| Literacy of rural population, examples:               |      |
| Afghanistan (percent).....                            | 5    |
| Pakistan (percent).....                               | 15   |
| India (percent).....                                  | 20   |
| Average income per capita.....                        | \$80 |

The problem posed in the Far East is serious. Even if supplies were available from other areas in sufficient quantities to fill the need and if foreign exchange were not required to pay for imports, there are other barriers to an early solution. People have to learn to prepare and eat foods to which they are not accustomed. Usually, unloading facilities at ports, storage and processing establishments, and transportation are inadequate. While some gains along these lines are being made, particularly in India, the food deficiency could very well become more severe in the next few years. The area is in urgent need of outside financial and technical assistance, and new ideas on ways to meet the crucial danger of increasing hunger for millions of people.