Starvation is the oldest threat to mankind. Today, people are starving in the famines of India, Africa, and Latin America. Recent projections of six billion people on earth within 30 years have raised new fears for the population to out-run the food supply.

NEED PRODUCTION EXPANSION

The advance in American farming has been very pronounced. A Roman peasant would have felt right at home on the American farm of a century ago. He would have recognized the pitch fork, the sythe, the hoe, and many other tools used at that time. He could have stepped right into a farming job. He could step right into a farming job in many countries of the world today!

The changes of the American farm over the past century have astonished the world. More progress has been made than in all of the thousands of years of previous agricultural history.

And the pace is speeding up with each passing year. A look ahead at the next 10 years points the way to continued rapid growth in farm size and productivity. The population of the United States will increase by more than 32 million people. We will be selling more abroad, too.

The combination of more volume and better demand could mean 60 percent more in farm sales for farmers. Each additional million people will require another 172,000 beef cattle, 25,417 dairy cows, 433,000 hogs, and 1,300,000 hens at today's consumption rates.

A population increase of 2½ million people per year will call for steady expansion of livestock numbers if we are to sustain our present level of nutrition.

FARM PRICES RETREATED

The past 20 years have brought a steady increase in the price of almost everything people buy. But the money the farmer receives for a unit of grain or livestock has virtually stood still—or even retreated a little. The result has been a major "gift" to every consumer in the United States, year after year.

Food has cost far less than if the prices the farmer receives had moved along with the rest of the economy. The farmer has been able to operate in the face of steadily rising costs only by becoming more efficient.

The figures, based on USDA data and other Government sources, tell the story:

Crop production per man hour, up 148 percent; livestock production per man hour, up 149 percent; crop production per acre, up 124 percent; livestock production per breeding unit, up 111 percent.

The greater the production, the lower the cost. Record-breaking production, year after year, has helped to hold the food price line.

An important contribution has been made to the entire national economy in combating inflation. And agriculture has a better record in terms of holding the price line than any of the other industry groups.

PRODUCES FOR 37

One of the main causes of inflation is a shortage of labor. When wages climb to attract workers, the speed of the inflationary spiral zooms ahead. In the past 15 years, the number of people employed in agriculture has dropped from 10 million to just over 5.5 million. The millions of workers released have assumed an important place in our industry and distribution systems.

Today, one U.S. farm worker with the aid of modern industry supplies food and fiber for 37 others. In 1950 there were 10 million farm workers; in 1955, this figure dropped to 8.3 million; by 1960 it had dropped to 7 million, and by 1965 it had dropped to 5.6 million.

FARMERS DIDN'T SHARE BENEFITS

While prices of the food you buy and most other commodities have been surging ahead, the average prices of our farm products have been declining. Farmers have not reaped the benefits of their own efficiency. High levels of production have tended to over-supply the markets.

The increasing importance of marketing services and costs is reflected by price increases at the supermarket. The index of wholesale farm prices stood at 106.4 in 1950 (using 1957–59=100). Fifteen years later that index was down to 98.4. By contrast, consumer food prices climbed from 85.8 to 108.8 during the same period. Some comparisons are shown in Table I.