



J. B. KENDRICK JR.
Vice President
Agricultural Sciences
Director, Agricultural
Experiment Station
University of
California

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

WERE LAST YEAR'S sudden food shortages the result of a one-time set of special circumstances, or has the age of famine begun? Has people-production begun to outstrip our capacity for food production?

Events have brought the world food problem into sharper focus and new prominence, but the continuing debate on its nature and resolution is characterized by diverse opinions and uncertainty. The uncertainty is compounded by the variety and nature of the factors that have a direct bearing on the problem. Some of these are: population growth, affluence, availability of usable land and water, availability of such inputs as fertilizer and pesticides, availability and cost of energy, environmental concerns, and weather. This summer's drought in the middle west and the resulting revision of crop yield estimates and price forecasts is a current example of the unpredictable variants that can and do affect our complex and delicately-balanced food system.

As the leading agricultural state in the nation that is the greatest producer and exporter of agricultural products, California is deeply involved in this system.

As the family of man multiplies and becomes more interdependent, and as we hear more ominous news about balance of payment deficits, non-existent grain reserves, drought, and famine, the U. S. food production system—and California agriculture's part in it—seems destined to grow in national and international significance.

California's significant contribution to the world's food supply is due in no small measure to new knowledge and technology developed through research. Because readily available land and technology are now near full utilization, and

because of new constraints imposed by regulatory agencies and shortages of essential inputs, future advances in food productivity and nutritional quality will depend largely on our agricultural scientists and specialists in related fields. As the primary agency responsible for agricultural research in California, we felt the need for an objective, systematic assessment of the long-term prospects for world food supply and demand as a basis for future planning and allocation of resources.

Consequently, in spite of the aforementioned hazards of projecting future developments, and in part *because of* the prevailing uncertainty about the world food problem, I appointed a task force of University of California scientists to "... study and report on the short- and long-range demands on our food supplies and the factors which will affect the U. S. ability to meet these demands."

The task force report, titled "A Hungry World: The Challenge to Agriculture" has just been published. The report (reviewed elsewhere in this issue of *California Agriculture*) includes chapters on the following topics: World Population and Income; Food Demand, Nutrition and Food Technology; Crop Production; Animal Production; Aquatic Food Resources; World Food Balances; International Trade in Food Products; Energy; Agriculture and Environmental Quality; Human, Economic and Institutional Forces; and Summary and Implications.

I commend this important document to those who seek understanding of one of the fundamental issues of our time, and I extend sincere appreciation to members of the task force and the more than one hundred individual staff members who contributed their expertise and knowledge.