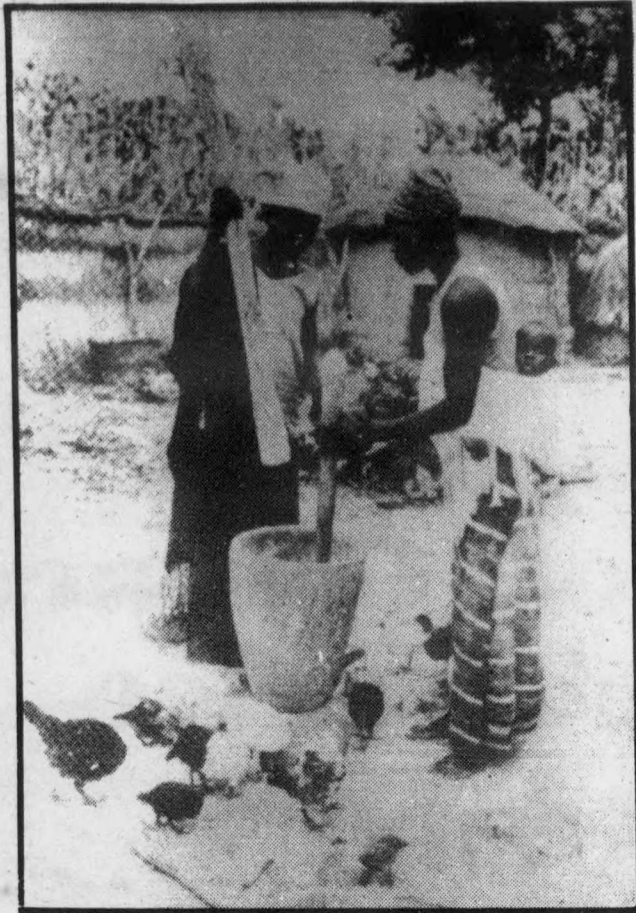


World Food



World Food Day was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to strengthen commitment to the elimination of hunger. It is commemorated every year on October 16, the anniversary of the founding of the FAO in Canada at Quebec City in 1945.

What is the situation?

The world produces more than enough food (by about 10 per cent) to meet the minimum energy requirements of all the world's population, according to the FAO.

Yet, in 1978, an estimated 12 million children under five years died of starvation. Another 420 million people suffer from the chronic undernourishment that saps physical strength and mental ability.

In a global survey, those interviewed were asked if there had been times in the last year when they did not have enough money to buy food. Yes answers came from 70 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, 66 per cent in India, 42 per cent in Mexico, 15 per cent in Italy, and 14 per cent in Japan and the United States.

Even in fully-developed, industrial nations hunger stalks the elderly, some indigenous people and families headed by women.

Why are people hungry?

Hunger is the result of poverty. To conquer hunger, every family must have a reliable livelihood.

Food production must increase to satisfy the needs of the world's increasing population. But food production will not increase without markets, without money to pay the farmer for his produce. Increasing production, then, to feed the hungry boils down to giving them the means of access to food.

How can the hungry gain access to food?

Only four countries — United States, Australia, Argentina and Canada — produce more food than their people can eat, and are therefore net food exporters. Others must import what they cannot grow locally.

Most countries aim toward food self-reliance. Some, like Japan, parts of Europe and some Middle Eastern nations, will never achieve it because they lack land. But industrial employment and resource income give their people the means to buy food.

Some countries, like those of southern Asia, have no unused land. But, with capital and improved technology, they could use what they have to harvest more crops a year and thus increase production.

People dependent upon fish for food have problems with overfishing and resulting decline in exploitable marine species, wasted catch, and management of fishery resources.

Some countries, like parts of Africa and Latin America, have land but need technological development to overcome soil deterioration and adverse climatic conditions that prevent its use.

Some countries produce enough food, but lose it in the post-harvest period because of poor storage and pests like rodents and insects.

Some countries may experience food gluts in one area and famine in others because of lack of storage and transportation facilities to distribute food where needed.

Some countries have land, but it yields half to a third of its potential because of poor water management, shortage of animal or mechanical power to work the land, or lack of seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, knowledge, skills, and the rural organization to achieve maximum use.