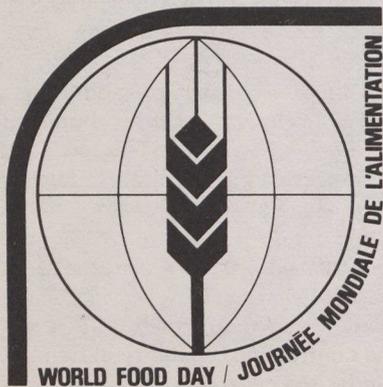


Participation in World Food Day

Canada will join with other countries around the world to celebrate World Food Day, October 16. The day is designed to mark the beginning of a global effort to draw public attention to the severity of world hunger and promote efforts to overcome it.

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When the conference that established the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was held in Quebec City, on October 16, 1945, the world food situation was critical. Production had been forced into restricted patterns, and normal distribution of food supplies had been disrupted by a global war.

Raising living standards

The objectives of the new organization then were to promote the common welfare of its member nations by "raising levels of nutrition and standards of living of the peoples under their respective jurisdiction: securing improvements of the efficiency of the production and distribution of all food and agriculture products; and bettering the condition of rural populations and thus contributing towards an expanding world economy and ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger".

The FAO estimates that the number of severely undernourished people in developing market economies (the developing countries not including China or the other Asian centrally-planned economies) rose from some 360 million in 1969-71, to about 420 million in 1974-76, to more than 500 million today.

Developing countries are obviously the most affected by malnutrition, but industrialized countries are not exempt. In North America, for example, many elderly people, native populations, and single-parent families live below the poverty and hunger line. And even affluence has its nutritional price. The de-

generative diseases of the heart and digestive system that are major health problems of the developed countries result from overeating and poor diets.

Canada and the United States together hold more than 40 per cent of the world grain reserves, take a two-thirds share of total world grain exports, and supply two-thirds of all food aid. The abundance of North American agriculture is "the world's last line of defense against famine", says the FAO.

Canadian participation

As Canada's Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan pointed out in a speech launching World Food Day activities in Canada "many Canadians do have a deep desire to share the wealth we have with others around the world. But we need to be moved; we need to feel that we are making a personal contribution — actively participating in the world, helping in our family of nations and not just sitting numbly watching it flickering by on the television set".

Survey reports on Canadian health habits

Half the Canadian population uses some medication in any given two-day period, according to a recently released report by Health and Welfare Canada.

The report entitled, *The Health of Canadians*, is based on information collected from 31,000 persons in 13,000 households by the Canada Health Survey. The study was carried out jointly by Health and Welfare Canada and Statistics Canada in all provinces between July 1978 and March 1979.

The survey was designed to generate the data necessary to determine the health status of Canadians, to identify populations exposed to risks of future illness and to evaluate the impact of illness as it relates to the individual and the health care systems.

The 237-page report contains more than 100 statistical tables which deal with such topics as alcohol use, tobacco use, physical activity versus fitness, seatbelt use, immune status, health problems versus disability, emotional health, blood pressure, blood biochemistry, health services and medication.

Highlights

Some highlights of the findings in the report are:

— Canadians are sick an average of 15.7

Canada has a special role to play in World Food Day. The FAO was created here, in no small part due to the efforts of Canadians like former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, who was chairman of the Quebec Conference in 1945. As one of the leading food-producing nations of the world, Canada continues to contribute human, financial and technical resources to international food programs.

Canada has chosen as its theme "Food for all", and is organizing activities to give individual Canadians an opportunity to "put their own views on food and world nutrition into clearer focus" and to act on them. Representatives of federal and provincial governments, development agencies, voluntary organizations, and producer and consumer groups have formed a co-ordinating body to plan for World Food Day. Some of the proposed activities include public lectures, exhibitions, television specials, poster and essay contests, and "hunger suppers" as well as other fund-raising events.

(By Rowan Shirkie in IDRC Reports.)

days annually; females and the elderly contribute disproportionately to this average;

- 12 per cent of Canadians suffer from long term disability;
- heart disease, mental disorders, bronchitis and emphysema are more common among lower income groups;
- people with higher incomes are more likely to consult a health professional on a routine basis;
- in provinces with seatbelt legislation, 60 per cent of automobile drivers and passengers wear seatbelts all or most of the time; elsewhere, the figure is 16 per cent;
- three-quarters of the population consult a doctor at least once a year; half visit a dentist;
- half the population uses some medication (medicine, pills or ointments including birth control pills and vitamins) in any given two-day period;
- health risk exposure caused by smoking and drinking is higher for males because they smoke and drink more than do females;
- heavy smokers tend to be heavy drinkers; and
- physically active persons, on average, have better emotional health and lower blood-pressure than do sedentary people.