

BACKGROUND NOTE

The Conference has been called to deal with two perspectives of the world food problem:

(a) the immediate problem which is one of depleted world grain stocks, high prices for foodgrains, petroleum and agricultural inputs, physical shortage of fertilizers, and strain on the balance of payments of most developing countries; and

(b) the longer term problem, i.e., the situation as it can be projected to 1985.

The basic conclusion of the assessment, on which proposals for national and international action before the Conference are based, is that, while there are reasonable prospects for a balance between world demand and supply of foodgrains by 1985, this would be based essentially on the productive capacity of the developed countries. However, if current trends were to continue, the import requirements of the developing countries would by then be of the order of 80 to 90 million tons a year. This is regarded as an unmanageable situation on virtually any assumption about the prospective capacity of the developing countries to pay for imports of foodgrains of that order of magnitude.

The major emphasis of the Conference, therefore, is likely to be on proposals to increase the capacity of the developing countries to produce food. The Conference will also, however, address itself to the problem of