
Rising Demand for Meat Sparks Changes in Global Agriculture

Because people in Third World countries want to eat more meat, far-reaching changes may occur in the developing nations' social and economic systems, the dean of the University of Idaho College of Agriculture told U.S. and Canadian animal scientists. Raymond J. Miller said increased productivity in livestock production cannot be achieved easily in countries with infertile soils, harsh climates, inadequate control of crop and livestock pests, low levels of scientific knowledge, and progress-inhibiting social and religious taboos.

Speaking to the Western Section of the American Society of Animal Science and the Western Branch of the Canadian Society of Animal Science, Dean Miller said North American scientists are being called on to help the Third World find answers to its agricultural problems. "We need to give attention to the total picture in a developing country. It's a mistake to try to change just one thing, since there are many inter-related problems," he said.

When the economic status of people improves, their diet changes and their consumption of animal protein increases, Miller pointed out. He said Tunisia's consumption of animal protein has increased twofold as the nation has developed economically.

"In the United States, we obtain about 73 percent of our dietary protein from animal products. In the Soviet Union, 50 percent of the protein is from animal sources. The proportion drops to 23 percent in Latin America and to 12 percent in China," Miller said.

The cattle population of the world has increased 45 percent in the past 25 years, he said. In the Third World countries, increased knowledge about nutrition and other management practices could lead to greater efficiency in livestock production, the dean said.

"Sixty-seven percent of the land used for grazing is located in the developing countries. Unfortunately, soil fertility and forage management are poor in the Third World. Insects are a serious problem in areas that never receive the world's best pesticide—winter. The tsetse fly, common

in Africa, is a threat to livestock. If this fly could be controlled, 100 million head of additional livestock could be supplied."

Livestock nutrition programs are a limiting factor in the Third World, Miller said. Waste use and management programs also are needed, he said. "Wastes should be returned to

the soil, but in many countries they are used for fuel. To provide fuel, methane gas could be extracted from wastes and the residue used for fertilizer, but traditional practices are difficult to change," Miller said.

Efficient animal agriculture may sometimes be unachievable on small farms where labor-intensive practices are used, the UI educator said. Extensive development of roads, markets and processing facilities will be needed in countries which are upgrading their livestock industries, he added. **AJ**