

Chapter 1

Agricultural production in West Pakistan would need to be increased about 15 percent to feed the additional livestock that are needed to meet the deficit in animal protein. When this is added to the 10 percent deficit in the caloric content of the present human diet, it is clear that either the import of food and feed grains would have to be nearly tripled or, if food imports ceased, agricultural production of West Pakistan would have to be increased by at least 35 percent to provide an adequate diet for the present population.

Implicit in the above discussion is the assumption that the available food supply will be equally distributed throughout the population. It is more likely that the distribution of food is uneven—more than half the people have access to less than half the available food supply. In an investigation⁽²⁷⁾ of food consumption relative to income levels of several hundred persons in rural areas of the Former Punjab, half the individuals studied consumed only 40 percent of the available food (in terms of calories), while the remaining half consumed 60 percent.

Without an actual nutrition survey and a study of possible food deficiency symptoms among the people, it is difficult to know whether the diets of West Pakistan are dangerously low in vitamins, minerals and other essential minor nutrients. However, it is almost certain that average diets would be greatly improved if they contained a larger proportion of fruits, vegetables and other protective foods. An increase in fruit and vegetable production would require a considerable rise in the level of agricultural productivity because these crops do not average as many calories per acre as sugar cane and food grains.

Although crop production fluctuates rather widely from year to year, the average yearly increase is about 2 percent and tends to be a fixed tonnage amount rather than a geometrical increase. With the present rate of population growth, this means that by 1970, the gap between food supply and human needs will have widened by about 10 percent.

Of course, it is not necessary for even an agricultural region to be self-sufficient in food production. There are many prosperous agricultural economies, for example Hawaii and the meat-raising regions of the Western United States, that are heavily specialized and import the bulk of the food-stuffs. This is not the case in West Pakistan. If an agricultural nation is to

(27) Board of Economic Inquiry, Punjab; Pub. No. 121. The poorer half of the population obtained only 26 percent of total animal proteins; the wealthier half obtained 74 percent.