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FAO CONFERENCE SAYS MAN HOLDS KEY TO WORLD PROTEIN RESOURCE

Man was challenged at the final session of the FAO International Conference on Fish in Nutrition to "plow" the seven seas and make them yield protein in twice the amount of that provided by land.

Fishery scientists and industrialists were challenged to provide fish proteins to persons in all walks of life in forms which are nutritive and acceptable and within the range of each income group.

The conference findings, accepted in the final session, plainly stated that the future of food from the sea rested squarely in the hands of the human race. By wise management, research, and application of the results of the research man could learn how to farm the sea, to fertilize it by artificial upwellings which would bring the rich nutrients from the lower levels to the productive surface, and to guide its production and harvest. Or man could spoil what resource he has by misuse, over-fishing, pollution of the waters and in other ways.

Several facts were developed at the conference which began on September 19 and ended on September 27. Chemists, biologists, nutritionists, and industrialists from 33 nations attended. The sessions were held in the State Department Building in Washington, D. C. The conference was sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

It was reported that more than half the peoples of the world are suffering from malnutrition. Many millions lack enough of the proper food ingredients for an adequate and balanced diet while other numbers are suffering from such diseases as atherosclerosis and various coronary ailments associated with food excesses and lack of proper balance in the diet.

The meeting clearly indicated that fish protein and other food substances associated with it had the answer for both these unhealthy conditions; that there was exciting evidence which warranted more and immediate research on fish and the lowering of blood cholesterol levels and the possibility of fish as a key item in health nutrition; and there was evidence that fish protein

offered the most practical way of getting this necessary ingredient into the diets of the undernourished peoples of the world. There was evidence showing the value of fish as a supplement to regular articles of human food, as a nutritious food in its own right, and as a supplement to the food of land-based animals used to supply protein to man.

The secret of fish protein's unique ability to help in the diet and health is believed to rest in its full quota of the essential amino acids, its unsaturated fatty acids, its minerals and its trace elements.

The conference did not hesitate to expound the assets of fishery products; nor did it flinch when the problem side of fish in nutrition was discussed.

It was freely recognized that the same product which can be so valuable in saving millions of adults from under-nourishment and which can save babies from kwashiorkor, rickets, and other damaging or deadly diseases of malnutrition is unstable and tends to deteriorate during the period when other protein food such as beef is reaching the height of acceptability.

It was recognized that fish can be and is prepared to meet the demands of the most fastidious who have a world of food from which to choose but that it is difficult to get fishery products in forms acceptable to those who starve because of the difficulties of climate and transportation or who must go without because of lack of means to pay.

The conference came up with what it considered a valid answer for this question. It recommended that ways be provided to get fish protein to those who need it now by the use of the most adaptable traditional form--dried, smoked, frozen, dehydrated, canned--and plunge ahead with research to get a more acceptable and adaptable product. Another answer was to increase the supply of land-based protein through the use of fishery products as protein supplement of animal feed. There was ample evidence at the conference to show the value of fish protein added in any form--fillet or flour--to the vegetable diets of man or beast.

It was stressed at the meeting that much more research is necessary and that the research falls into two broad fields--basic scientific research in chemistry, biochemistry, physics, biophysics, bacteriology and a host of associated subjects; and technological research on how best to apply the principles learned in basic research to minimize waste, retain nutritive quality and assure acceptance by consumers. Many speakers also urged that "we shorten the gap between what we know and what we do."

The work of the conference was summarized by Donald L. McKernan, Director of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Department of the Interior, who cited the National Institutes of Health, Department of Health, Education and Welfare for its financial contributions which made it possible for many of the scientists to come to the conference, the National Academy of Sciences also

for financial help, the fishing industries of Mexico, Canada, and the United States for cooperation and for providing recreation for the delegates, to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations who sponsored and arranged the conference, and the Department of State which acted as host in behalf of the Government of the United States.

Replies of thanks came from Professor B. C. Guha of the University College of Science and Technology, Calcutta, India, and from Dr. K. J. Carpenter, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, England. Dr. D. B. Finn, Director of the Fisheries Division of FAO and Eirik Heen, Chief of the Branch of Fishery Technology, Fisheries Division, of FAO expressed their gratification to all delegates and those "in front of and behind the scenes" for the success of the conference.

A summary of the conference discussions was prepared by a committee and accepted by the conference. It contains the rapporteurs' comments on each of the five main topics, the findings of the conference, the recommendations, and lists of those in attendance, speakers, and topics.

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