

# If Food Production Is Profitable We May Continue to Enjoy Eating

**N**OT many people die from overwork. A great many die because of what they eat or don't eat.

In countries where food is produced abundantly, people may eat too much or eat things which are not healthful. Where food supplies are inadequate, people suffer from malnutrition and unbalanced diets even if they manage to avoid starvation.

Surplus food is a rare phenomenon in world history. When it has occurred, it has not lasted long. Perhaps plentiful food makes people careless about waste, or induces laziness and indifference to the temporary nature of abundance.

It has been estimated that mankind has adapted for use as food only about 250 species of more than 25,000 species of plants that grow on earth. Yet these few sorts offer such a variety that it would seem everybody ought to have enough to eat, especially when plant foods are combined with animal foods.

The best fed nations include those

with strong livestock industries. The poorest fed nations include those with little or no livestock kept for food. These must be a reason or reasons.

Livestock, especially cattle, can utilize large amounts of unpalatable grass and other coarse, relatively low protein plants, transforming them into foods that humans can digest. Most of the land around the world produces only "roughage", which humans cannot or will not eat. Few meat animals are produced on grain only.

When we have plenty, we may not be as careful about waste as we are when food is scarce. Higher prices and greater awareness of widespread hunger in other parts of the world have made people quite concerned about the need to stop food waste.

Many movements have been organized, aimed at all ages. One at Stillwater called Campus Organization for Food Ecology promoted smaller servings in OSU cafeterias, including sale of half a sandwich, but naturally it didn't become a popular thing.

Other groups are trying to discourage use of what they identify as "junk foods", arguing that factory processing is undesirable, even though combining ingredients may serve to extend the usefulness of separate items.

Faddist ideas are gaining, too, such as the suggestion that main meals be omitted in favor of frequent snacks all day long, because snackers aren't as likely to get fat. Not only is this debatable, but it also would have a hard time diverting us from our established custom of mealtime conversation.

Nearly everybody knows that non-meat eaters are called vegetarians. Finicky dieters now are being subdivided into additional categories. Those who supplement plant food with eggs and milk are ovo-lactarians. Those who eat only seeds and grains are granivores, and those who stick to fruits are fruitarians. The word "vegans" refers to those who won't use any animal product at all.

Most people prefer greater variety than those specialists every meal every day. If food production is made profitable for growers and we avoid overregulation, we may continue to enjoy it.