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# Agriculture Exclusive U.S. Asset

**T**HE FIRST and one of the principal developments that enabled the United States of America to become a world leader was our ability to produce more food than the people could eat.

This came about through industry of the people, their interest in new methods, better plant varieties and improved livestock, and by dissemination of information about advancements.

After two centuries, agriculture still is one of our greatest, most exclusive assets. Abundant food always will be a valuable resource. The world needs more food for increasing populations.

The United States has spent billions of dollars to supply underdeveloped nations with food while teaching leaders how to produce more food. Progress is slow, but gains are being made.

Big changes are occurring in the most heavily populated countries, too. India, which only five years ago was the world's biggest importer of wheat and rice to feed her huge population, is reported to be planning

to export food grains in 1979.

China, which has one-fourth of the world's people, has a goal to double its 2 percent a year increase in food output. This would amount to a significant gain in world food supplies.

Russia may be closer to modern agricultural productivity than we have thought. The Soviet Union harvested the biggest grain crop in its history in 1978. Some of it may be exported.

In a copyrighted story written for The Kansas City Star, Fred Kiewit tells of a month he spent in the Soviet Union learning about farmers and farming.

Kiewit says workers on the Soviet's 26,600 collective and 18,100 state farms usually do not work as hard as American farmers.

Two or more persons may be assigned to tasks that would be done by one man in the United States. But with 25 percent of the 260 million citizens engaged in agriculture, labor is no problem.

Kiewit says that even though technology generally is behind the United States in efficiency and pro-

ductivity, and quality of products is lower, the Russian people eat "reasonably well."

There is no indication that Russians have caught up with American farmers or will do so soon, but their agriculture is gaining.

In China, 85 percent of the population reportedly is engaged in agriculture. Vast stretches of the sprawling nation are mountains and deserts, but the amply watered subtropical lands in southern regions produce luxuriant crops of rice.

A comprehensive report on China in Time magazine says that food is neither abundant nor of good quality. Farmers are poor and more chemical fertilizers are needed to increase yields.

With doors now open for exchange of technology and purchase of such resources as fertilizers, China could make rapid gains.

The United States may be about the only country in the world where government programs encourage and virtually compel farmers to cut back on food production. The world still needs more food!