

American Industry Goes to War—

Plenty Is Assured With Nation Producing 90% of Own Food

'42 Expected to Be Banner Farm Year; Curtailment in Variety Expected

By THOMAS R. HENRY.

NEW YORK, Feb. 10.—The United States will never go to bed without its supper in this war.

It produces about 90 per cent of its own food. Only 10 per cent—for the most part non-essentials—comes from abroad. A lot of that is imported from Latin America, where production has not been decreased, although transportation may offer a major problem.

Still, the food habits of the country are due for some major changes, in the opinion of officials of the General Foods Corp., which produces about 120 of the "groceries" which are likely to appear in the housewife's daily list.

Food production is at the highest level the Nation has ever known. Unless there is a major drought—and there are no serious signs of one at present—1942 should be the banner year of American agriculture.

Rigid Economy Expected.

On the other hand, there has never been so great a demand. The population is increasing every year, although at a declining rate. During the past year the birth rate has been greater than normal. The more mouths to feed, the more food is necessary.

Folks eat more under war conditions. The General Foods Corp. figures indicate that a soldier eats from two to three times as much as a man at a desk or at a fairly easy machine job. A defense industry worker on overtime eats about half again as much as under normal conditions. At least 10 per cent of the total food produced is being sent to England and other allies. Moreover, a reserve is being built up for the rehabilitation of both conquered and enemy countries after the war. So, regardless of the abundance of things to eat, rigid economy probably is unnecessary.

With such economy there is an ample supply of wheat, the staff of life for two years, and of corn for 18 months—even in the face of an unanticipated major agricultural disaster. Meat production is on the increase and there is no anticipation at present of "meatless days," such as were necessary in the last war. There appears to be a liberal supply of fruits and vegetables.

Variety Due for Curb.

But in the variety to which Americans have become accustomed some curtailment may be necessary. A fair example is sugar. General Foods is one of the largest sugar users in the world. There are few prepared foods into which it does not enter. Especially it is essential in canned fruits. General Foods is allowed 80 per cent of its 1941 supply under present restrictions. They probably will be lifted later. There is about as much sugar available to the United States as before the war. Only nervous hoarding and account for the present alleged shortage.

The general public, says Verne E. Burnett, vice president of General Foods, probably never will notice the sugar restrictions so far as processed "groceries" are concerned. A good deal of the cane sugar may be made up with dextrose from corn. A few lines which consumed a great deal of sugar but which were neither

chocolate and for cocoanuts—especially since charcoal from coconut shells is essential for some types of gas masks.

The major shortages are expected in purely East Indian products—namely tea and tapioca. These, however, may not be so serious as has been expected. Some tea has arrived since the declaration of war. Ships carrying troops and supplies to the East must have some sort of a return load. The Dutch, especially, are eager to pile everything they have on board rather than allow it to fall into the hands of the enemy.

All sorts of groceries are packaged in cardboard boxes and the cardboard shortage is becoming critical for the food processors. The major reason is that enormous quantities are required by the Army and Navy. Shells have heavy wrappings. Nearly all food delivered to the services is in cardboard packages. Most of the food sent to Great Britain under the lease-lend program is in cardboard. The British need for it is very great. Last year was the biggest business year the food industries have known and most of the reserve was used up.

Cardboard to Be Thinner.

Various means are being employed to make up for the deficiency. Packages for popovers and breakfast foods, for example, are being made with less and thinner cardboard. Up to now, said a General Foods official, "one of these packages could have been used for a football without much chance of being broken open. Cardboard and paper are cheap, and we wanted to give the public the utmost against any possible contamination of the foods. But, after all, we don't expect packages of breakfast foods to be used for footballs."

Wax paper wrappings on the outside probably will be dispensed with. Cartons will be bigger. This makes it possible to get more food in less paper. One of these operations alone, it is calculated, will save 100 tons of paper during the next year. Extensive window and counter displays will be a great deal of paper, much of which did not even bring any advertising return.

Take, for example, coffee.

After roasting it loses its flavor very quickly if exposed to air. The so-called "coffee gas," responsible for coffee aroma, is one of the most volatile gases known. So coffee not only is packed in tin cans from which the air has been evacuated but these are sealed with a special kind of cement, a notable ingredient of which is obtained from sea weed.

Coffee Packing a Problem.

General Foods Corp. has made considerable progress in packing coffee in glass, of which there can be no possible shortage so long as sand and labor holds out. Experiments are under way on absolutely nonporous cardboard containers for coffee and a few other products which must be kept from contact with the atmosphere.

There may, General Foods officials fear, be temporarily a slight shortage in coffee, but the situation can only be made worse by hoarding. Brazil is producing as much of the product as ever—far more than enough for the world supply.

May Convey Imports.

With most of the European continent cut off, the United States is the only important customer. But there is a shortage of shipping facilities. Coffee convoys may be in order if the situation gets more serious. The same may be true for

Van Hyning Forecasts Post-War Welfare Needs

Conrad Van Hyning, District director of public welfare, told the Kalorama Citizens' Association last night that the population increase in the District of Columbia would not exert great pressure on public welfare at the present time, but would at a later date when employment decreases.

Mr. Van Hyning outlined the work of his bureau and told of the aid and rehabilitation children were receiving. Albert J. Obert, representing the Junior Board of Commerce, emphasized the necessity of salvaging all scrap metals and papers which could be used for defense purposes. Monte Sanger, representative to the Federation of Citizens' Association, suggested the association go

on record as opposing the Government taking over schools without first consulting the Board of Education.

Mrs. Frank Slinguff reported for the Membership Committee and Mrs. Marion White gave the treasurer's report.

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