PLANT RESEARCH AND HUMAN WELFARE

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INTRODUCTION

When this country was founded, nineteen people out of every twenty had to spend all their time producing food for themselves and the twentieth person. That was true all over the world. A hundred years ago eight people out of every ten still had to work with the soil, producing food for themselves and the other two people. To-day this proportion is exactly reversed. About two people out of every ten produce the food for the whole ten, or, putting it in another way, one person on the land supports himself, three people in town and contributes to the support of one person overseas.

What is the significance of this fact? Just this: When nineteen people out of twenty have to spend their energy producing food, that leaves only one person to produce everything else. Obviously there won't be much else; certainly won't be any large-scale industries such as we know to-day. But when only two people out of ten have to produce food, the other eight are released to do a multitude of things. Large-scale factory production becomes possible. All kinds of social services become possible.

In brief, the degree of development of any society depends on the sufficiency of its agricultural resources and the efficiency of its farmers. Only where farmers are efficient and can release other men from the absolute necessity for devoting their time to primary production can the industries, sciences and arts that characterize modern civilization be developed. Our civilization in the United States to-day rests solidly on the achievements of farmers. These achievements...