

RATIONING OF FOOD IN AMERICA

Following are excerpts from the broadcast last night by Mr. Wickard, America's Food Administrator:

The way we manage our food supply will have a lot to do with how soon we win the war. Food is a weapon - the most powerful weapon. And food we consume here at home is just as much material of war as food we send abroad to our soldiers and fighting allies.

American people are fortunate as regards food. Our food production resources are the greatest in the world. If we manage our supply well, if everyone co-operates fully, we will not only have enough food to win the war but have enough to give everyone of us here at home a healthful well-balanced diet.

What are the essentials for the right kind of food program? Basically they are simple. First we need to produce as much of the right kinds of food as we can. Second, we must see to it that this food once produced is used where it will do most good.

So far as food production is concerned we have done well - remarkably well. For three years in succession our farmers have broken all previous high records. Same is also true of food processing industry which has likewise done well despite obstacles. There are definite limits to the amounts of food we can produce.

We have only so much good farmland, so many milk cows, so many beef cattle, so many fruit trees. Labor, steel, rubber and many other materials are scarce. If we use more of these resources for food production we will have less for our armed forces and for other war production.

Since there are limits on our capacity to produce, it is doubly important we make sure food goes to places where most needed. We cannot waste food or give some people more than a fair share. Even though the total supply of food is enough to go around people in some communities today are unable to get a fair share of certain kinds of food. That is why canned fruits and vegetables will be rationed, why meat is going to be rationed. Rationing some foods is the best and fairest way to be sure every American gets enough to eat. It is the way to assure the health of our children. It is the way to keep people strong and healthy for war jobs. It is the way to make food a stronger weapon for winning the war.

Already we have acted to see that food prices, along with other prices, do not go too high so we do not have rationing through higher prices. We must act further to see that food supplies are divided fairly, especially since purchasing power is rising while food prices are stable. Through rationing we must do this to safeguard national health, efficiency and morale.

Since we are breaking all records for production, some people may wonder why it is necessary to ration any food. If we did not send any food to our soldiers or allies our people here at home would have more than they could eat. But, of course, we intend to use food as we are using other vital resources - to win this war as quickly as possible.

Food from the United States is playing a tremendous part in war strategy of the United Nations. Our fighting men must have plenty of food - far more than they needed in civilian life. Wherever they go large food reserves must travel with them. Our men who landed in North Africa, for instance, had large emergency food supplies. Nearly every lb. of food we send Russia goes direct to the Russian Army. That food saves lives not only of Russian soldiers but of our American soldiers who otherwise would face a much stronger German army some time in the future.

Food we are sending to the British is helping to keep their armies strong and to keep war production going at full speed. General Montgomery's men who chased Rommel across North Africa ate a lot of American food. Next year our armed forces and our fighting allies will need about a quarter of all the food we produce.

Of course we are furnishing our armed forces and allies with more of some foods than others. We are sending largely products which are high in concentrated food value, which ship easily and keep well - foods like meat, dried fruits, vegetables, milk and eggs. Consequently here we will need to eat more of some foods than we have been eating in the past, and less of others.

Presently, assuming we meet production goals, and military lendlease needs stay in line with present estimates, it looks as if we will have a civilian food supply about as big as we had in the last half of 1930's.

Generally we can be fairly well satisfied with the prospects for food supplies but we must be deeply concerned about food distribution. Success or failure of our wartime food program depends upon how well we divide our supplies. That is why I have been putting so much emphasis on rationing as part of our food program.

Although we have a comprehensive food program operating today, including rationing foods such as sugar, coffee, we need to go still further regarding rationing. Let me tell you some reasons for rationing canned fruits and vegetables for they illustrate in a way reasons for rationing any food.

Canned fruits, vegetables and dried fruit are among foods most needed by our fighting men and allies. Next year half our production of dried fruit will go abroad to save shipping space. Nearly half our production of canned fruits and vegetables will go to our boys in the service, mainly in this country. Now our production of processed fruits and vegetables is larger than it has ever been. Even so after taking out large quantities for the armed forces we have available for civilians just a little more than half the amount they have been using in recent years.

The method we are going to use - points system - is the best one I know for getting the job done and still giving the greatest range of choice to both consumers and grocers. As it applies to the greatest range of vegetables housewives can use their coupons for the particular kinds of food they like best. As many of you know the point system of rationing is now used very successfully in England.

Despite the tremendous demand for American food, food available for civilian consumption in 1943 will more than meet the nutritive standards set up by the National Research Council and other groups composed of nutrition scientists.

I think I might as well tell you, however, that everyone will not get as much of every kind of food as he or she wants. There may not be as much pleasure in eating but just the same there will be enough for an adequate healthy diet.

We should have a well planned nutrition program. Malnutrition is not altogether a matter of poverty. Sometimes it is a matter of ignorance. In this as in other phases of the program the government and people must co-operate.

Britain has already demonstrated how effective a food program can mean a rise in dietary standards for people as a whole even though there is reduction in total food supplies. All in all British people are better fed now than before the war began and it is because they are dividing supplies better than they did in the past.

Nations of the future must see to it their people have enough of the right kinds of food to eat. We have made a beginning toward this end. Now is the time to go farther. I realize the entire food program is something comparatively new to all of you. We have never fought global war before either. I am depending on you to make the program a success. With your support I do not see how we can fail for many of us here at home the battle of food offers our greatest opportunity to contribute most directly to winning the war. I am confident you will make the most of this opportunity.
