

Henry Wallace: Science To End Hunger Forever

In early 1941, Henry A. Wallace, then Vice-President-elect for Franklin Delano Roosevelt, took steps to launch what became the Mexico-based International Center for Research in Wheat and Corn (CYMMIT), which produced the Green Revolution for those crops, and became the flagship institution for the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR).

The CYMMIT project was one among the many economic initiatives of the FDR period, all associated with the principle that scientific breakthroughs can be deliberately fostered, to cause continual advances in agricultural production. This was a personal creed of Wallace, who served two terms as Secretary of Agriculture (1933-40) in the FDR Administration, as FDR's Vice President (1941-45), as Secretary of Commerce (1945-46), and fulfilled many special functions during World War II, including co-chairman of the Manhattan Project, and chairman of Economic Warfare for the War Mobilization Board.

Wallace repeatedly stated that science, coupled with related economic policies, especially food reserves and decent conditions for family farming, can eliminate hunger and want throughout the world.

Three programs of the Wallace/FDR period are most important for consideration today, given the policy morass in Washington, D.C. around bio-foolery, and the world food stock crisis.

1. Crop and livestock genetics can and must be vigilantly advanced, in the service of the public good, not under private cartel control.

2. National and international food reserves are essential to protect populations in times of disaster.

3. High-tech, family-run farms are essential for the national interest, so therefore, the Federal government must be sure that the farmer has infrastructure (water, transportation, communications, education), affordable inputs (machinery, fuel, electricity, chemicals), and an income that is based on prices covering his costs—a “parity” policy. This runs directly counter to globalization.

In 1936 and 1937, two successive volumes of the *Yearbook of Agriculture*, published annually by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, were titled, “Better Plants and Animals,” and dedicated to genetics. Wallace, in the preface to the 1937 volume, wrote:

“Life is always changing because environment is always changing. There are always new types of diseases, new insect pests, changes in soil fertility, changes in consumer demands. The work of the plant and animal breeders is directed to meeting these changes. It has only just begun. . .

“If genetics enables us to outdo nature’s own efforts, it is because it is in the truest sense a science of cooperation with nature. We want to do different things than nature does—for example, in the creation of hogs with plump hams, or wheat-X-grass hybrids with plump seeds—but we have to learn nature’s methods of doing them. I think that more knowledge of how to cooperate with nature for our own good is the greatest need of the world today.”

Wallace himself was a master plant and animal geneticist. In 1923 he developed the first commercially viable corn hybrid, and in 1926 founded what became the Pioneer Hi-Bred International seed company.

But he himself regarded as his most successful achievement, the 1938 law for a U.S. “ever normal granary,” to store up grain in surplus years to cover lean years. He wanted this internationally, and said, moreover, that “after adequate storage supplies of wheat, corn and other grains have been established, it becomes the part of wisdom to conduct further storage operations in the soil rather than in the grain bin,” foreseeing advances in soil fertility and crop science to end hunger forever. (Jan. 26, 1937, National Farm and Home radio)

For more on Wallace, see Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., “The Geometry of the Henry Wallace Nomination,” and Robert L. Baker, “Henry Wallace Would Never Have Dropped the Bomb on Japan,” *EIR*, Nov. 7, 2003.



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—Robert L. Baker