I am pleased to be with you today and to contribute to this multidisciplinary study of food, man, and society. This theme reflects the duality of approach that is essential if an improvement in the nutritional wellbeing of humanity is to be achieved. It is necessary to examine the food-man equation not only in terms of aggregate supplies for a total number but also in terms of constraints on the availability of food to the individual-constraints which may be imposed by society. I shall attempt to pay particular attention to this second, sometimes overlooked, aspect, for it is man's society and his place in it that, to a large extent, determine whether he has access to sufficient food, or is to be counted, along with his children, among the hordes of the hungry.

I note that my contribution on the availability of food is placed early in the deliberations of this Congress. This may well be appropriate in symbolizing the key role that those whose task it is to make food available must play in the better nourishment of mankind. I propose, therefore, to present to you some of the salient facts concerning both the struggle to produce enough food and the distribution puzzle of ensuring that the availability of food matches better the dispersion of the human need. I hope that this will serve as a worthwhile contribution to the broad approach reflected in the theme of the Congress.
AVAILABILITY OF FOOD

FOOD PRODUCTION AND POPULATION

The logical starting point in a review of food availability is to consider whether food is being produced in sufficient quantities and whether it can be produced in the future in sufficient quantities to meet the fast-rising number of mouths to be fed. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is constantly engaged in reviewing available information to throw light on these questions.

Views about the ability of the world to produce sufficient food for its inhabitants tend to be influenced by performance in the most immediate past. Opinion sways from optimism to pessimism according to the size of recent harvests. It is wise to take a longer perspective in food production and population growth. For this discussion, let us consider the period from 1952 to 1974.

The human population seems to have grown in the last twenty years at a rate unprecedented in history. This is due to a major acceleration in the population growth rate of the developing regions resulting from rapidly declining mortality rates and static or even rising fertility rates, both of these due to a welcome improvement in health facilities and education in these regions. These developments have more than counterbalanced the continued slowing down of population growth in the industrialized countries. At this time the annual addition to the population is around 80 million. The population that had to be fed in the middle of the period reviewed, 1962-1970, is only half of that which may be expected to need feeding by the end of this century.

In view of this demographic situation it is no mean achievement that world food production expanded faster than population in both the 1950's and the 1960's. Per capita food production, therefore, was improving during this period. However, a warning note is struck by the fact that the improvement in per capita production was slowing down in the 1960's compared with the earlier period. In the developing market economies the improvement in per capita food production in the 1960's was only 0.5 percent a year, compared to 0.7 percent a year for the