NUTRITIONAL PLANNING

A concerned society must include the implicit social and cultural factors when consideration is given to the basic components of nutritional planning.

Nutritional planning in a given society, at a given time, means the determination of the amounts of different types of foods which are required to meet the needs of physical growth and development and health maintenance and to keep to a minimum the diseases of nutritional origin. This estimate should then become the intended goal of production, of technology, of commerce, and of the legal and monetary market regulations. This type of planning is only valid if the following three conditions are fulfilled:

-- a clear definition of food items, measures of their quantity and quality, and recognition of the factors that tend to modify them

-- a precise determination of diseases issuing from inadequate food consumption

-- the cause and effect relationship between the ingested nutrients and their consequence in health.
Nutritional planning is, in reality, an extension of the legislative power of the political society exercised in the field of consumption goods: a social consensus which entrusts to "experts" the responsibility to organize food production and distribution through an objective and logical technique called planning. The responsibility of food supply is, in fact, the keystone of a society.

For optimal food planning a society may need to make certain agricultural changes. For example, planting fields of corn may be a better choice than planting wheat; and small multicrop farming may have to give way to intensive cultivation of specific crops with property, farming techniques, and the price structures being modified as a consequence.

Today food processing can be categorized on three levels:

-- In underdeveloped countries it is often primitive, following the cultural pattern of a society.

-- It is artisanal, as it is practiced in rural areas and small communities where housewives' habits, their limited kitchen facilities, and the social significance of meals all have bearing on the process and the incidental service rendered.

-- It is an agglomerate industry that is found in large urban areas.

In artisanal processing raw products of the land are transformed into bread, cereals, cheese, and wine by simple, small-scale techniques; produce goes directly from the farm to the village markets; and fish, fowl, and cattle are killed and dressed for immediate local distribution and consumption.

Quite in contrast is the large, urban manufactory which converts the same grains, produce, fowl, fish, and cattle from the raw state through processing and packaging to foods of safe and regulated quality either for immediate