

**CONSERVATION OF FOODSTUFFS,
FEEDS, ETC: HEARINGS BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 65TH
CONGRESS, 2ND SESSION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649267866

Conservation of Foodstuffs, Feeds, Etc: Hearings Before the Committee On Agriculture, House of Representatives, 65th Congress, 2nd Session by Various

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Cover @ 2017

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VARIOUS

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HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SIXTY-FIFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

H. R. 8718

A BILL TO PROVIDE FURTHER FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY
AND COMMON DEFENSE BY THE CONSERVATION OF
FOODSTUFFS, FEEDS, AND MATERIALS NECESSARY
FOR THE PRODUCTION, MANUFACTURE,
AND PRESERVATION OF FOOD-
STUFFS, FEEDS, ETC.

Printed for the use of the Committee on Agriculture



WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1918

STANFORD
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P55-62



CONSERVATION OF FOODSTUFFS, FEEDS, ETC.

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Monday, February 11, 1918.

The committee met at 10.30 o'clock a. m., Hon. A. F. Lever (chairman), presiding.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

The committee has met this morning to hear Mr. Hoover, the Food Administrator, in reference to House bill 8718, and at the request of Mr. Hoover the meeting is to be an executive meeting. We will ask Mr. Hoover to proceed in his own way in presenting the reasons which prompt the Food Administration in desiring this kind of legislation at this time.

I suggest, gentlemen, before we begin, that we allow Mr. Hoover to complete his statement, and reserve our questions until he has completed it.

STATEMENT OF MR. HERBERT C. HOOVER, UNITED STATES FOOD ADMINISTRATOR.

* * * * *

Mr. Hoover. As to the allied food situation, I do not need to go over the primary fact that there has been a degeneration of food production in the allied countries, and consequently the necessity for imports is on a larger scale than normal. All of that is known to you.

The second factor in this food situation—that is, the sources of her supplies—have considerably altered in the last few months.

For purposes of a rough picture, one can divide the food sources of the allied countries into three areas. The first is the eastern area; that is, Australasia, Malasia, and to some extent Manchuria and India. The second area is South America, and the third is North America. A gradual shrinkage of shipping has to-day practically isolated the eastern sources. We find that in Australia at the present moment there are about 225,000,000 bushels of wheat. There are over a million tons of rice in the East, and there are a million tons of sugar and a million tons of beans, and there is half a million tons of vegetable oils that are practically inaccessible in the East at the present moment. To make those foodstuffs accessible means a journey of about 120 days, to turn a cargo steamer around, as against a journey of 65 or 70 days to the Argentine, or alternately 42 days to North America. The consequence is that a given ship has about one-third the carrying efficiency in going into the East as it has coming

to the United States, and shipping, as you know, has reached such a degree of restriction that it is hopeless to carry the American Army if we are going to devote such an amount of tonnage to the East as would be implied by bringing even part of the allied deficiencies from that side. The result is to throw a very much larger load on North America.

* * * * *

It might be of interest to you to know something of the actual ration being given in Europe to the civil population. I have here only the English ration, but the English and French rations are so closely parallel that I think you can take them as indicative. In butter, margarin, and table fats, generally, the English ration is four ounces weekly per capita. Our average normal consumption in the United States is 9 ounces. In meats the English ration is now 1 pound per week per capita, and it is limited to half that amount for children under 10 years, which reduced to a population basis means 0.9 pounds per capita. That embraces beef, pork, mutton, and poultry. Our normal consumption in the United States is 3.1 pound per week. In other words, this is a reduction to considerably one-third of our normal consumption. In bread stuffs, and that is all the cereals used for human consumption, the present ration is 4 pounds a week in England, and our normal consumption is 6 pounds a week. The reduction in breadstuffs can never be made to the extent of some other commodities, and in any event the English normal breadstuff consumption has been higher than our normal consumption. In other words, it is a larger cut under our consumption than might appear.

The French ration is difficult to determine in breadstuffs, because the French have made a differential between different classes of the community. For women and children they are allowing 300 grams per diem—that is a little less than 5 pounds a week. It increases with the soldier up to 600 grams, and the average French ration would appear to be somewhere around 5½ pounds a week, taking the population as a whole. On the other hand, the French normal consumption of cereals is somewhere between 7 and 8 pounds a week. So that it is a very great reduction.

On sugar the English and French rations are now both on the basis of 36 pounds per annum, which is 3 pounds per month, and our consumption, as you know, is about 84 pounds per annum or about 7 pounds per month.

The English consumption in normal times is higher than ours. These figures will indicate to you that they are in a very difficult situation, and one that I think requires all the strength that we can put into it lest the reduction in rations to the civil population should undermine the morale of the people.

Now, as to our own abilities to meet this situation: Aside entirely from transportation possibilities, we have to consider carefully what our stocks are and how far we can repress our own consumption and how much saving we can make, and we have to find some sort of an adjustment between what we can do and what they require. I would like to say, in the first instance, that all estimates of stocks of grain are more or less approximate; that one can start with the theoretical carry over of the previous year, which, in itself, is a figure of a great deal of dispute and doubt, and we can add the crop and can make

deductions for seed and for consumption, but all deductions of that kind are always based on more or less hypothetical grounds. If we consider the present wheat situation and start with a crop of 651,000,000 bushels and deduct from that 90,000,000 for seed, we have a net balance of 560,000,000 bushels of wheat to deal with for our own consumption and for export. We had a narrow margin of carry over last year, and we can expect to get through on the same basis next year. When we come to estimate what our consumption was for the first six months of the year, we find that there is no way to approach it with surety. We have two different calculations, each of which contains a maximum and a minimum. If we deduct the exports during the first six months, if we take the amount of wheat ground in the mills and make deductions for mill stocks and other uses, aside from consumption, we still find a wide variable, and that is the problem of how much above normal wheat or flour was in transit. Normally, there appears to be about 3 weeks of flour in movement in the country on board rails, and apparently about 8 or 10 days' wheat supply. This year the amount of those materials on board rails is very large indeed. How much it is we can not determine. We collected data from a large number of flour dealers with the following results from 2,386 cars:

In transit.

Under 15 days.....	397
Under 30 days.....	261
Under 45 days.....	480
Under 60 days.....	448
Under 75 days.....	500
Under 90 days.....	220
Over 90 days.....	70

The figures of the last column being "between" the days mentioned seriatim. In other words, it would indicate that the period of transit due to the slowing down of transportation had elongated out probably 50 days instead of the normal of 15 or 20. There is, thus, the factor of these materials on board rails of great importance when we calculate consumption and we can only hazard this item.

But there is also another method of calculation, and that is to take the stocks of wheat in the millers' hands—the flour, the stock of wheat in the terminals and the country elevators. There is also the stocks of wheat theoretically in the hands of the farmers. These being checked, we based a recent survey in which we found that the theoretical figure is apparently quite correct, somewhere between 28 and 30 per cent as of January 1. We can add to those amounts an estimate for the abnormal flour in transit and the abnormal wheat in transit. We can on these two bases fix the minimum amount of wheat that we have for consumption from the 1st of January to the 1st of July, as, in the theoretical calculation, a minimum of 251,000,000 bushels, and on the basis of stocks, 253,000,000 bushels. The same two bases of calculation shows a maximum, in one instance, of 281,000,000 and the maximum in the other instance of 303,000,000. The meaning of all this is that there has been a reduction in the consumption of wheat during the first six months of the year on the minimum calculations of, say, on the 5,000,000 to the maximum calculation of 60,000,000 bushels. There has therefore been a consider-

able conservation during the first six months of the year, but the actual amount depends upon all the hazards of these calculations.

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The position in corn as human food has to be approached from another point of view. As you are all aware a very large proportion of the corn this year is soft. On the other hand, in our view, there is a sufficiency of hard corn to take care of exports and to take care of the human food, because both of those items represent such a small production of the total. If there is a shortage of food values in the corn due to immaturity it will fall on the animals and not on human beings because it is possible to implement those foods to the human side and take them away from the animal side. So that we do not approach the corn situation, breadstuff problem, from the available stocks, but what we require for these purposes. The corn problem also, from the domestic human food point of view, has a neck to be bottled in the milling capacity of this country; the total corn milling capacity of the country representing the amount of corn that can be implemented into breadstuffs. That domestic demand we estimate at about 72,000,000 bushels for the six months of January 1 to July 1, and the export demand at 150,000,000 bushels, which goes directly as corn grain.

I will not go into further details as to how supplies are arrived at. In barley we apparently have an available balance, as at January 1, of about 107,000,000 bushels from which we need deduct about 14,000,000 for export, 20,000,000 for brewing, and the balance for human and cattle food. We can mill barley in our wheat mills and are doing so.

In rye we have, as at January 1, about 25,000,000 bushels, so we are able to supply the allies with 6,000,000 bushels and have 19,000,000 bushels ourselves. Rye is only a minor factor.

In oats our supply, from a human point of view, our limitation is again the milling capacity. The total we can mill in the six months is about 31,000,000 bushels, and of this the allies wish 5,000,000 or 6,000,000 bushels of milled materials--and unmilled grain in addition.

The net result of these figures is that our breadstuff supplies--considering our mill capacity--amounts on January 1 to about 470,000,000 bushels. If we allow all of the export demands, we shall part with about 160,000,000 bushels, or a balance of about 300,000,000 to 330,000,000 bushels, whereas our normal requirements for breadstuffs are 420,000,000 bushels of all kinds of grain, so that we have a deficiency of about 25 per cent in our breadstuffs; that is, the breadstuffs that we can implement into human food. Alternatively we must increase our output of corn meal and our proportion of corn meal in diet. The drain of wheat, however, is in an undue proportion. Now, I do not take the attitude that we can do a considerable part and that we have to compromise with the allies, that they take more corn and oats as raw products, and we must reduce our consumption to the utmost that we can and still maintain the morale and public health of our people.

The other essential foods are, first, beef. The allied beef position is one of extreme difficulty, because they have been largely securing Argentine beef; but with a gradual loss of refrigerating steamers

they are forced, for that particular reason and others, onto our market; and in order to maintain the supplies which they demand, we will have to ship in beef products from the United States about 450,000,000 pounds of beef in the six months from January 1 to July 1.

As you are, perhaps, aware, in prewar conditions our six-monthly shipments were somewhere about 35,000,000 pounds. This is, therefore, an enormous increase. If we take the cattle in the country and make computations on the average percentage of slaughter and arrive at the problem as best we can as to our available supplies, we have practically but little beef surplus. Theoretically, on that calculation, we can show that there is in the six months 100,000,000 pounds of exportable beef, as against the demand for 450,000,000 pounds. That is the best position that we can arrive at. So that if we are to ship this quantity of beef to the allies, we have to save from our consumption at least 350,000,000 pounds. That means that we must save of beef approximately 10 per cent of our consumption.

In pork products—we have to consider pork products and the vegetable oils as one item because they have become now absolutely interchangeable through the use of lard substitutes. Our supplies of these commodities can therefore be blocked together, because if we run short on pork products we can substitute exports of vegetable-oil compounds, or if the pork products increase we can diminish vegetable-oil exports. Of these two items, the allies and the necessary neutral demands amount to 1,800,000,000 pounds for the period from January 1 to July 1, and we are deficient in our calculations of our minimum supplies of somewhere from 800,000,000 to 1,000,000,000 pounds of being able to ship these quantities without reduction in our consumption, or the need of reducing our consumption 12 to 15 per cent. On the dairy products, I have not gone into it because in this desperate situation of world food dairy products, again, can be substituted with the animal and vegetable fats, the pork and vegetable oils. They are asking from us from 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 pounds of butter and cheese for the six months January 1 to July 1, and we are shipping those to the extent that our stock in the country shows that we can do so.

There are some features of the food position of the United States that are of some interest and importance. The outstanding concern is the increase in consumption since the European war. Take it by and large in the great finished commodities, our consumption has increased about 10 per cent per capita in the United States since 1914. That, I think, can only be attributed to the increased prosperity of the country, the higher wage level, and the necessary rise in the standard of living. That increase of consumption is of such tremendous import that unless we can again bring consumption back to somewhere near the 1914 normal we can not hope to meet export demands. I think that we can take it that there would be no damage to public health if we adopted such measures direct or indirect, as would reduce to the prewar normal. When one comes to such measures, the implementing of them falls with different incidence on different classes of the community, and it is necessary to take a great deal of care that they do not fall on those classes in the community who are already on the minimum basis of nutrition. We can estimate that