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RELIGION NOW

The world needs its farmers

Farmers must be recognized as saviours of our world, as civilization faces one of its greatest crises, that of a universal shortage of food to feed the world's population. We are learning that the world does not produce enough food at present to adequately feed its growing population, and many are starving. We import much of our own food, food that is needed by the countries from which it comes.

Farmers of the 21st century may be the people who rescue civilization. Only farmers can get us through this crisis. According to 400 scientific experts who have spent the last four years studying the future on behalf of the World Bank and UN Food and Agriculture Organization, agriculture is going to mean more to

civilization than anything else today. The world's two billion farmers are the guardians of the soil and its products of foodstuff. According to the World Bank panel, farmers will not simply have to feed the world — a task requiring a doubling of the already immense global food supply — but also restore its forests, cleanse its waters, protect its wild species, improve its soils and absorb a substantial percentage of the carbon we all emit as we go about our daily lives.

Our province has taken baby steps in this direction by setting aside a **greenbelt** safe from industrial and urban spread. This area needs to be enlarged to safeguard our farm lands and those who work the fields to produce food. We talk of economic development, but will find that we can't eat money. Even now there are complaints of the rise in cost of groceries. Sadder still is the fact that many of the groceries — which we are quite able to afford — come to us at the expense of those people who have little to eat, in the countries from which we import our food.

The time has come to recognize that our present world civilization is unsustainable and attention must be given to increasing food production. Third-world countries need farming equipment and agricultural development. We need to better support our own farmers and the farmers of the world. And farmers around the world must unite in this task.

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