

HUNGER NOTES

a newsletter of World Hunger Education Service

Vol. XII, Nos. 9-10

February-March 1987

New directions in farming **Part two:**

BIOTECHNOLOGY: BOON OR BANE FOR THE WORLD'S HUNGRY?

Getting the issues in focus
with the help of

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Editor's Introduction

Think about economic refugees from other countries seeking work in the United States. Think about economic refugees from rural areas both here and there joining the many urban unemployed all over the world—more unemployed with each new generation. Think about 800 million people too poor to buy food in a world where farmers go broke from prices too low on what they produce to meet the costs of producing it, while taxpayers in high-tech countries spend billions to keep their farming systems from collapse. New directions in farming are urgent if essential needs are to be met—sustainably—both here and in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—needs not only for nutritious and abundant food supply, but needs also for healthy families and communities, needs for stable, adequate incomes for all; and needs for the dignity of productive work.

Improved farming systems and technology alone won't meet those needs anywhere. But neither can such needs be met anywhere *without* changes in current agricultural practices practically everywhere. In January, HUNGER NOTES looked at a promising new direction in agriculture called "alternative" or "reduced-input" agriculture. Now, in this issue we look at another new direction that is zooming in on the world's agriculture with accelerating speed: biotechnology. Its implications are staggering—both in its positive potential and its possible dangers. Public policy must guide this powerful new genie wisely and well, but many who must help shape policy are just beginning to learn the language. Parts of this HUNGER NOTES are from Jack Doyle's book *ALTERED HARVEST: AGRICULTURE, GENETICS, AND THE FATE OF THE WORLD'S FOOD SUPPLY* (Viking Press, 1985). Everyone interested in food should read this book (Does that leave anyone out?).

