INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS FOR
AGRICULTURAL TRADE SYMPOSIUM
MAY 18-19, 1978

-Roger Guffey-

and extend a warm welcome to each of you to our symposium on ag trade — a special welcome to our foreign guests

Good morning. My name is Roger Guffey. As president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, I have the duty—and it is a pleasant one—to call this meeting to order and to welcome you to our symposium on agricultural trade. We are delighted to have all of you here today. The excellent turnout for this meeting is very gratifying, not only because it reflects your interest in the issues that will be discussed here but also because it gives us all a chance to become better acquainted. Speaking for myself, I have been looking forward to this occasion for several months.

ag trade particularly appropriate

This symposium on agricultural trade represents the first of what we hope will become an ongoing series of conferences on important economic issues. We had a number of objectives in mind as we formulated the plans for this program. The chief objective was to select an economic topic in which important public and private decisions will be made during the coming years. It was assumed that the topic selected would have a significant impact not only on the economy of the Tenth Federal Reserve District but also on the nation as a whole. A second objective was to bring together in a suitable setting a group of top-level decisionmakers from business, government, and academia who have considerable knowledge and experience expertise in the selected topic. In doing so, it is hoped that the symposium would serve as a vehicle for promoting public discussion and for exchanging ideas on the issue in question. Finally, we felt that an important objective should be to publish the proceedings of this symposium so it could serve as an informational source in future public discussions. It is our feeling—and we hope you agree—that the program we have put together for this symposium satisfies these criteria. We believe that agricultural trade will be a prominent item on the farm policy agenda for the next several years.

The reason that agricultural trade is likely to be an important policy issue is that the future prosperity of U.S. agriculture will depend largely on the maintenance and expansion of agricultural export markets. Moreover, the United States and its trading partners are presently engaged in multilateral trade negotiations that will determine the new environment in which trade will occur during the next few decades. The American ag producer ~~farmer~~ has a major stake in these negotiations. Indeed, agricultural exports are important to all Americans—providing jobs in a wide range of occupations, stimulating economic growth, and earning much needed foreign exchange.

The title for this symposium—World Agricultural Trade: The Potential for Growth—immediately raises several questions. Will the struggle to feed a hungry world ~~and thus end the Malthusian specter~~ result in more exports for U.S. farmers, or less? What are the implications for U.S. trade if the developing countries have a comparative advantage in agricultural production? Can the food shortage problem in many parts of the world be solved with greatly expanded food-aid programs? Is the issue of expanding agricultural trade an economic problem—or a political one as well? Other important questions could be asked. The speakers for this program have all made impressive contributions to the level of knowledge that currently exists on agricultural trade. As a result of their expertise in the area, the program promises to be very stimulating.

Now I would like to introduce the person who will be serving as moderator for our session this morning. ~~He is~~ Durward Varner, is currently chairman of the University of Nebraska Foundation. Woody also serves as chairman of the Board of Directors for the Omaha Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. All of our directors make an important contribution to the management of our Bank in many ways but particularly by providing current information on economic and financial conditions in the District. Woody's close association with agriculture, together with his years of administrative experience at a number of midwest universities—including serving as president ~~the presidency~~ of the University of Nebraska—have made him a knowledgeable observer of the agricultural scene. It is a real pleasure to turn the meeting over to ~~him~~ Durward (Woody) Varner. at this time.