

Introductory Remarks

Roger Guffey*

As president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, I have the pleasant assignment of welcoming you to our symposium on agricultural trade. We are gratified with the excellent attendance at this meeting, because it reflects wide interest in the issues that will be discussed here. We are particularly pleased to see the representatives of international organizations and foreign countries in attendance. A meaningful seminar on world agricultural trade would be difficult to achieve without this kind of international participation.

The symposium on agricultural trade represents the first of what we hope will become an ongoing series of conferences on important economic issues. As we developed this program, our major objective was to consider an economic topic about which important public and private decisions will be made during the coming years. We also wanted the topic to be of significant concern not only to the Tenth Federal Reserve District served by this Bank, but also to the nation as a whole. A related objective was to bring together, in a suitable setting, a group of top-level decisionmakers from business, government, and academia—who have considerable expertise in the selected topic. In doing so, the symposium would serve as a vehicle for promoting public discussion and for exchanging ideas on the issue in question. We believe the program we have put together for this symposium satisfies these criteria.

Agricultural trade is likely to be an important policy issue in the period ahead because 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 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 — raises several economic policy questions. Will the struggle to feed a hungry world 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 advan-

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tage 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. Our speakers have all made impressive contributions to the current store of knowledge about agricultural trade. Thus, their presentations — and the discussions during this symposium — hopefully will clarify some of these issues and lead, in turn, to a **greater** understanding of world agricultural trade policy alternatives and more informed policy judgments.