



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF PAUL VI TO THE PARTICIPANTS  
IN THE OPEN WORLD CONFERENCE  
ON THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVES  
IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPEMENT\***

*Thursday, 25 May 1972*

We are pleased to welcome the participants in the Open World Conference on the Role of Agricultural Co-operatives in Economic and Social Development. We know that this is the first international event of its kind and we are happy to express our solidarity with you. Your visit indeed gives us the opportunity to state the importance which we attribute to your work of promoting agricultural co-operatives.

This importance is based, first of all, on the remarkable way in which such co-operatives respond to basic demands of human dignity. Man has been called to active mastery of the world's resources; we recall the awesome words of the Creator to the first man and woman : "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it" (*Gen. 1, 28*). It is man's destiny to use not only his physical strength but also the genius of his mind and the determination of his will to bring forth from the earth all that he needs in order to live humanly. It is a part of man's dignity to be, not a bystander, but an active participant in social and economic life. Agricultural co-operatives enable farmers to take an active part in making the decisions that affect their work and their lives.

But it is also a part of man's dignity, indeed his right, to join freely with others in the formation of associations. Man is essentially social, and his development depends upon his co-operation and collaboration with others. Individual initiative must be complemented by communal enterprise. Agricultural co-operatives are in harmony with man's right and need to form associations. It is our hope that a growing sense of solidarity will provide an ever stronger impetus towards the establishing and strengthening of cooperatives. Our predecessor John XXIII linked co-operatives with such an awareness; he wrote: "Rural workers should feel a sense of solidarity with one another, and should unite to form co-operatives and professional associations" (*Mater et Magistra*,

35).

But there is yet another factor which leads us to attach great importance to the promotion of agricultural co-operatives. These associations facilitate the modernization of equipment and thus help to increase productivity for the service of man. Through encouraging the increase and development of co-operatives you are enabling farmers to take advantage of what scientific and technical progress can offer them. In this way they can make a greater contribution towards solving the immense problem of hunger that afflicts so many peoples. For the benefit of all, they can thus likewise help to promote balanced economic growth and hence social justice.

With these words we wish to assure you of our profound interest in your efforts. Rural workers must play an ever more vital role in social and economic development. Those who provide nourishment for the family of man deserve every assistance and support that will enable them to live and work in accordance with the demands of their human dignity. We wish therefore to encourage you in the promotion of co-operatives and in the search for a solution to the problems connected therewith. With this intention we invoke upon you abundant graces of wisdom and strength from Almighty God.

Ci è molto gradito rivolgere il nostro saluto anche agli esperti di lingua italiana, i quali partecipano, presso la sede romana della F.A.O., alla Conferenza mondiale sul «Ruolo delle Cooperative Agricole nello sviluppo economico e sociale». Voi applicate i vostri talenti e la vostra esperienza al problema rurale, che, insostituibile nel processo evolutivo di ogni Paese, sta attraversando un periodo di crisi nell'odierna società di carattere industriale.

Non abbiamo bisogno di dirvi quanto questo problema sia sentito dalla Chiesa, partecipe materna e sollecita delle ansie e delle speranze di tutti i suoi figli. Il sapervi perciò in consonanza di sensibilità e in fervore di progettazioni e di iniziative per la promozione umana del mondo rurale, e per l'avvaloramento delle sue possibilità enormi, ci procura vivo compiacimento; e mentre vi esortiamo a non lasciarvi scoraggiare dalle difficoltà, dalle remore che possono venire da mentalità e da abitudini, invochiamo sulle vostre persone e sulla vostra opera, tanto meritoria, la continua assistenza del Signore, e la ricchezza delle sue benedizioni.

Vous êtes les bienvenus, chers Messieurs. Vous savez avec quelle attention l'Eglise accueille vos soucis et vos espoirs, cependant qu'elle vous entourage sur la voie d'un effort concerté, dans le cadre des coopératives agricoles. Les méthodes que vous préconisez intéressent d'autant plus l'Eglise qu'elles mettent en œuvre la collaboration nécessaire au développement, à une échelle qui nous semble humaine, c'est-à-dire qui n'étouffe pas l'initiative et les rapports personnels. Car il s'agit bien de mener de pair le progrès économique, le progrès social, le progrès spirituel de l'homme.

Puissent vos initiatives apporter au monde rural, avec ce sens d'un bien commun élargi,

l'encouragement et l'espoir dont il a besoin! Pour notre part, Nous implorons de tout coeur, sur vos efforts et sur vos personnes, les bénédictions du Seigneur.

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*\*Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, vol. X, p.558-560;*

OR 26.5.1972, p.1;

ORa n.23 p.2.

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