
Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

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There are two futurists' ideas that have particular relevance to this report. The first is that the future should be viewed not as a single future but many possible ones and that if enough people agree on a desirable future and work toward that end, this will essentially be the future that will unfold. The second idea is from the French futurist Bertrand de Jouvenel, who stated that to preserve the ability to make choices and not become victims of necessity, public policy leaders should identify emerging situations while they are still manageable and not yet at the crisis stage.

Although there are many differing conceptions of what the world or the United States may be like in the year 2000, the outlook is in general more optimistic than pessimistic. One accepted method of predicting and understanding possible changes in the world's future is to identify present trends. The following are some of those trends that certain futurists believe will, if they continue, make the world different in the future:

- Increasing world political unification and cultural standardization;
- Growing affluence for one-half to two-thirds of the people on Earth with continued poverty for the remainder;
- Decreasing importance of the family as a social unit;
- Less industry orientation of developing countries;
- Increased longevity and personal mobility;
- Rising educational levels; and
- Greater emphasis on religion.

That these trends, if continued into the future, will affect all segments of our lives is not in question; and since the importance of food in our lives cannot be questioned either, it is essential that we be aware of changing conditions that will affect the food sector. American consumers spent an estimated \$180 billion¹ for domestically produced food in 1977, approximately two-thirds of which (\$123.5 billion) was for marketing services. Because food expenditures have been increasing and marketing services take such a large share of these expenditures, there is the incentive by industry to develop and adopt technologies that will help lower marketing costs. The development of new products, the need to reduce energy consumption, and concerns over the food supply are other reasons for developing new food marketing technologies. On the other hand, the emergence of change in certain socioeconomic factors may create a climate that forces or encourages the industry to change, economic incentives to the contrary. Understanding the issues involved and their expected impacts on society are important considerations for future legislative and policy deliberations.

¹This represents 25 percent of total consumer expenditures of \$730 billion excluding energy and services. Stated another way, Americans spent \$2.50 of every \$10 at foodstores and away-from-home eating places. *Survey of Buying Power*, 1977.

OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURES

Policy issues arise from either perceived or expected impacts resulting from the adoption of technologies. Impacts may be positive, negative, or a combination of the two; and not all impacts create policy issues. That is, negative impacts that are not severe or widespread may not be brought to the attention of policymakers, while technologies with primarily favorable impacts may create issues only as to whether policies should encourage their development and adoption.

The major purpose of this preliminary analysis was to identify and rank by priority food marketing technologies likely to raise major policy and legislative issues. Also included as part of this report is a discussion of social and economic factors that should be expected to interact with those technologies. These factors are equally as important to the execution of assessments in this area as are the technologies themselves.

Four types of technologies are discussed:

1. Available technologies in food marketing that will be more widely adopted,
2. Technologies in the development phase,
3. Technologies that will be developed and possibly adopted by the year 2000, and
4. Technological gaps.

A four-step approach was used in developing the information for this preliminary analysis:

1. Soliciting views on existing and emerging marketing technologies and related policy implications through mail surveys of specialists,
2. Preparing a preliminary report based on present marketing technologies and those new technologies revealed through the mail survey,
3. Convening a workshop to critique the preliminary report and elaborate on the issues, and
4. Preparing a final report based on all data.

Details of the procedures followed in the assessment are given in appendix B, and materials used by the working group are in appendix C.