

Quotes for Food Debate

Conventional Agriculture:

Grass-grazing cows emit considerably more methane than grain-fed cows. Pastured organic chickens have a 20 percent greater impact on global warming. It requires 2 to 20 acres to raise a cow on grass. If we raised all the cows in the United States on grass (all 100 million of them), cattle would require (using the figure of 10 acres per cow) almost half the country's land (and this figure excludes space needed for pastured chicken and pigs). A tract of land just larger than France has been carved out of the Brazilian rain forest and turned over to grazing cattle. Nothing about this is sustainable.

The average farm at the turn of the century could feed 6-8 people. Now, the average farm feeds 126. This is the most productive that farms have ever been. Farms have been revolutionized.

Chickens have always grown quickly to market weight, which these days averages around five pounds. The broiler chicken today is larger and sturdier than in years past, thanks to continuous advancements in the science of poultry nutrition and selective breeding for desirable characteristics.

Technical advances in genetics, production and processing have helped create a meat and poultry production system that today requires less feed to produce a pound of meat.

According to a 2008 Time Magazine article "a worldwide Slow Food initiative might lead to turning more forests into farmland. (To feed the U.S. alone with organic food, we'd need 40 million farmers, up from 1 million today.) In a recent editorial, FAO director-general Jacques Diouf pointed out that the world will need to double food production by 2050 and that to suggest organics can solve the challenge is 'dangerously irresponsible.'

Corn feeding isn't new, it's just more sophisticated. In the United States, cattle have been fed grain for at least 200 years. Cattle are fed grains like corn because they are nutritious, energy-rich, and can be stored for use throughout the year. Because grass doesn't grow year-round in most of the United States, feeding grains like corn to cattle helps farmers and ranchers raise a consistent, year-round supply of great-tasting beef.

Since 1990, animal agriculture's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions has remained nearly constant. This is impressive considering U.S. increases in meat production of almost 50 percent, milk production of 16 percent and egg production of almost 33 percent. The fact that GHG emissions from U.S. animal agriculture have remained relatively constant while protein production has increased dramatically reflects improved feed efficiencies, better manure management strategies and efficient use of cropland.

In the U.S, the quantity of pesticides used by farmers has decreased by four percent since 1990 while crop output increased by 15 percent, which indicates a reduction in the intensity of pesticide use due to the introduction of synthetic chemicals that are more specifically-targeted to particular pests.

Organic fruit and vegetable growers use insecticides and fungicides that are approved for organic growers. These are inorganic substances (such as copper and sulfur), microbes and toxic plant extracts. They are all registered as pesticides by the EPA and pass the same regulatory safety tests as do the synthetic chemicals used by non-organic growers.

Without the use of insecticides and fungicides, most fruits and vegetable crops would suffer losses of 50-90 percent due to uncontrolled insects and disease organisms. Fruit and vegetables in the marketplace would have insect and disease damage making them unappealing to consumers.

Without herbicides to control weeds, millions of Americans would have to take up the labor of hand-weeding fields. Organic growers typically have very high demand for people who hand-weed. These workers are expensive, hard to find and drive up food costs.

Certain animal health products—some of them antibiotics, others not—are sometimes used in raising broilers. Any such usage is regulated by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration. The purpose of these is to maintain good health in the flock or to treat outbreaks of illness. Because of steadily improving standards of poultry husbandry, the health of the flock nationwide has never been better, and the usage of antibiotics and other products has declined over the years.

After some antibiotics were banned in Denmark, more livestock and poultry became sick and required greater use of therapeutic levels of antibiotics. Furthermore, the elimination of antibiotics at the health maintenance level in Denmark has not led to a substantial impact on the incidence of antibiotic-resistant food-borne illness in humans.

If 1950s technology were used today, we would need an additional 165 million acres to produce the same amount of beef. That's an area roughly the size of Texas! All beef producers go to great lengths to be good stewards of the environment, regardless of which production method they follow. In fact, 85 percent of all beef farmers and ranchers, regardless of the type of beef they produce, say environmental conservation is important to their success. Additionally, U.S. cattle producers are using fewer natural resources to provide more abundant and affordable beef; they supply 25 percent of the world's beef with just 10 percent of the world's cattle.

Animal handling in meat plants has never been better. For more than four decades, the industry has been subject to the federal Humane Slaughter Act of 1958. Federal inspectors are present in meat plants at all times and are fully empowered to take action against a plant for Humane Slaughter Act violations. A range of actions may be taken depending on the seriousness of any offense. These actions can include shutting down

part or all of the plant until a situation can be remedied or even withdrawing inspectors from a plant, which closes the plant. No other sector of animal agriculture is regulated and inspected for animal handling practices as thoroughly as meat packing plants.

While some organic and "slow food" advocates argue that their products are more nutritious than those produced in traditional ways, the research simply does not support this notion. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which certifies organic products, makes no claims that organically produced food is more nutritious than conventionally produced food. According to USDA, organic food differs from conventionally produced food in the way it is grown, handled, and processed.

Farmers:

“Forget the pig is an animal. Treat him just like a machine in a factory. Schedule treatments like you would lubrication. Breeding season like the first step in an assembly line. And marketing like the delivery of finished goods.”

“The object of producing eggs is to make money. When we forget this objective, we have forgotten what it is all about.”

Scientists:

[With genetic engineering], we can put things like vitamin A into a rice plant. ... It's going to solve major problems in the developing world, as to [the] availability of food materials for good nutrition.

You just give them a seed, and that increases productivity in that seed itself. She said [that] for years people have tried to change cultural practices of these farmers, and it just hasn't worked. It has been a complete failure, because you have to modify infrastructure, you have to re-educate them as to how to modify their farming practices themselves. But with biotech, the technology is in a seed. All you have to do is give them the seed.

[I know] a standard response is, "Well, they should just be eating more green leafy vegetables." I've been to India. I've stayed in a very nice hotel in [the] center [of] New Delhi. Families [are] living on the sidewalk on an old patch of blanket. ... They no longer have a little garden plot to grow their materials. They're stuck in a concrete jungle someplace [where] they don't have access to green leafy vegetables and they're living on a handful of rice every day. The Rockefeller Foundation and others [are] recognizing this, and they have focused on issues like Genetic Engineering, which changes the quality of that food that they do have available. ...

Americans purchase 35 billion pounds of chicken per year. To suggest that this tremendous demand could be met by small-scale farming with labor- and energy-intensive methods is simply a fantasy.

Non-conventional Agriculture:

Consumers are deliberately being kept in the dark about food, where it comes from, what happens to it, and what it does to their bodies.

Farmers:

There are no seasons in the American supermarket. Now there are tomatoes all year round, grown halfway around the world, picked when it was green, and ripened with ethylene gas. Although it looks like a tomato, it's kind of a notional tomato. I mean, it's the idea of a tomato.

The way we eat has changed more in the last 50 years than in the previous 10,000.

I think it's one of the most important battles for consumers to fight: the right to know what's in their food, and how it was grown.

To eat well in this country costs more, and some people just don't have it. We need a change in policy so that the carrots are cheaper than the chips.

Farmer says – People have got to start demanding good wholesome food – we're good honest people. We'll deliver that!

“A culture that just views a pig as a pile of protoplasmic inanimate structure, and can be manipulated by whatever creative design humans can foist upon that critter, will probably view individuals within its community and other cultures in the community of nations, with the same type of disdain and disrespect and controlling-type mentality.”

“But perhaps the most alarming ingredient in a Chicken McNugget is tertiary butylhydroquinone, or TBHQ, an antioxidant derived from petroleum that is either sprayed directly on the nugget or the inside of the box it comes in to "help preserve freshness." According to A Consumer's Dictionary of Food Additives, TBHQ is a form of butane (i.e. lighter fluid) the FDA allows processors to use sparingly in our food: It can comprise no more than 0.02 percent of the oil in a nugget. Which is probably just as well, considering that ingesting a single gram of TBHQ can cause "nausea, vomiting, ringing in the ears, delirium, a sense of suffocation, and collapse." Ingesting five grams of TBHQ can kill.”

“Were the walls of our meat industry to become transparent, literally or even figuratively, we would not long continue to raise, kill, and eat animals the way we do.”

“When chickens get to live like chickens, they'll taste like chickens, too.”

“...There's a lot of money in the Western diet. The more you process any food, the more profitable it becomes. The healthcare industry makes more money treating chronic

diseases (which account for three quarters of the \$2 trillion plus we spend each year on health care in this country) than preventing them.”

“Much of our food system depends on our not knowing much about it, beyond the price disclosed by the checkout scanner; cheapness and ignorance are mutually reinforcing. And it's a short way from not knowing who's at the other end of your food chain to not caring—to the carelessness of both producers and consumers that characterizes our economy today. Of course, the global economy couldn't very well function without this wall of ignorance and the indifference it breeds. This is why the American food industry and its international counterparts fight to keep their products from telling even the simplest stories—"dolphin safe," "humanely slaughtered," etc.—about how they were produced. The more knowledge people have about the way their food is produced, the more likely it is that their values—and not just "value"—will inform their purchasing decisions.”

“Eating is an agricultural act,' as Wendell Berry famously said. It is also an ecological act, and a political act, too. Though much has been done to obscure this simple fact, how and what we eat determines to a great extent the use we make of the world - and what is to become of it. To eat with a fuller consciousness of all that is at stake might sound like a burden, but in practice few things in life can afford quite as much satisfaction. By comparison, the pleasures of eating industrially, which is to say eating in ignorance, are fleeting. Many people today seem perfectly content eating at the end of an industrial food chain, without a thought in the world

“The ninety-nine cent price of a fast-food hamburger simply doesn't take account of that meal's true cost--to soil, oil, public health, the public purse, etc., costs which are never charged directly to the consumer but, indirectly and invisibly, to the taxpayer (in the form of subsidies), the health care system (in the form of food-borne illnesses and obesity), and the environment (in the form of pollution), not to mention the welfare of the workers in the feedlot and the slaughterhouse and the welfare of the animals themselves.”

“Half of all broccoli grown commercially in America today is a single variety- Marathon-notable for it's high yield. The overwhelming majority of the chickens raised for meat in America are the same hybrid, the Cornish cross; more than 99 percent of turkeys are the Broad-Breasted Whites.”

“You may not think you eat a lot of corn and soybeans, but you do: 75 percent of the vegetable oils in your diet come from soy (representing 20 percent of your daily calories) and more than half of the sweeteners you consume come from corn (representing around 10 percent of daily calories).”

"Ignoring potential non-target detrimental side effects of any chemical, especially one used as heavily as glyphosate [Monsanto's RoundUp herbicide], may have dire consequences for agriculture such as rendering soils infertile, crops non-productive, and plants less nutritious.

To do so might well compromise not only agricultural sustainability, but also the health and well-being of animals and humans."

U.S. export markets are feeling the brunt of consumer rejection abroad. According to American Corn Growers Association, U.S. corn growers have lost \$814 million in the last five years due to the rejection of GE food by foreign markets.

The pollen from genetically engineered crops does not stay within the boundaries of a GE field, but can drift into neighboring fields. The results are unwanted environmental pollution and a legal nightmare for farmers.