

A Progressive response to the environmental impact of agriculture

Mervis Reissig, PDA Environment and Sustainability Task Force

We all know that Americans are more “well-fed” than people in other countries. But we also know that means quantity of food, not necessarily quality of food. Americans are fatter on the average than any other nation, and we have the highest rates of food-related diseases such as heart attacks and diabetes.

Changing our habits would benefit our bodies and our children’s bodies, but our food choices also affect the environment. Simply by shifting your family’s choices toward plant-based, locally grown organic foods, you can improve the earth’s sustainability, and promote your own healthy living. Did you know...

* Our food travels an average of 1,300 miles before it reaches our homes. Buying local food means fewer trucks and less air pollution. Less overseas shipping also greatly improves air quality: one ship creates 64 tons of particulate pollution daily.

* The U.S. has stronger pesticide laws than most of the third-world countries. Many of those countries continue the use of toxic insecticides such as DDT, which reside in the foods shipped to our grocery chains in the U.S. Sanitation regulation in some countries is practically non-existent, increasing the chances of contamination by deadly bacteria. Recent studies have shown that levels of these chemicals that are acceptable in adults can be damaging to children and may be responsible for increases in childhood diseases.

* Giant commercial farms have not only destroyed the livelihood of individual farmers in the U.S., but they are among the most damaging of all corporate businesses. Billions of dollars are spent each year to remedy the effects of agri-business farming.

- ▶ Our industrialized one-crop farming poisons the soil, encourages pests, and destroys biodiversity.
- ▶ “Chemical” agriculture is far and away the number one water polluter in the U.S.
- ▶ We need FIVE times as much land per person for a U.S. animal based diet than for the largely vegetarian diet of developing countries.
- ▶ Subsidized, worldwide shipping of food stokes global warming. And it destroys local economies along with the small farmers who are the best stewards of the land.

On the other hand, organic food – food grown without the use of insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and synthetic fertilizers – provide necessary minerals and vitamins without the build-up of toxins in the body. And, buying local foods helps to keep small, responsible farmers viable – and helps keep our communities viable as a result!

Think about it....every state still has farmers. If those farmers can support themselves and provide food to your family, your family would eat healthier, fewer fuels would be consumed and the environment would benefit. And, there wouldn't be so many people vying for the same retail and factory jobs! Everyone wins.

And a word about eating meat...millions of people do it, and so do progressives. But corporate animal feeding operations are American foulest local polluters, and they wreak horrific cruelty on animals. Progressives believe in the sanctity of all life, and we support only humane methods of housing and killing of the animals used for sustenance.