

Green Mission News

July 2012 Green Mission News

External Article Links:

- Compassionate Climate Action

<http://blog.greenhearted.org/2012/05/its-juggernaut.html>

- Symphony of the Soil, Deborah Koons Garcia's latest film now showing

symphonyofthesoil.com

- Beth Terry's book Plastic-Free: How I Kicked the Plastic Habit and How You Can Too, now available

www.amazon.com/Plastic-Free-How-Kicked-Plastic-Habit/dp/1616086246/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1340923104&sr=1-1&keywords=beth+terry

- Meatifest destiny: How Big Meat is taking over the Midwest

grist.org/factory-farms/meatifest-destiny-how-big-meat-is-taking-over-the-midwest/

- The Deadly Addiction to Cheap Meat

How the overuse of antibiotics on livestock is making us sick.

inthesetimes.com/article/13350/the_deadly_addiction_to_cheap_meat/

- Grade A Choice? Solutions for deforestation-Free Meat.

www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/global_warming/Solutions-for-Deforestation-Free-Meat.pdf

- Eco warriors, arise! Vandana Shiva

www.asianage.com/columnists/eco-warriors-arise-128

- The Elephant in Rio

Don't bank on a new "green economy" to solve our climate challenges.

www.otherwords.org/articles/the_elephant_in_rio

- People can change their role in nature

www.whatifwechange.org/#/home

- Rio 2012: it's a make-or-break summit. Just like they told us at Rio 1992
George Monbiot

www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jun/18/rio-2012-earth-summit-protect-elites

- Migration as Ecology: How Culture Evolves

<http://culturestrike.net/migration-as-ecology-how-culture-evolves>



-A Farm for the Future (BBC Documentary; 48 minutes)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3sxMByA1R0

- Cradle to Cradle thinking. Why recycling may not be the answer.

An introduction by Bill McDonough (3 minutes)

www.openideo.com/open/e-waste/inspiration/cradle-to-cradle-thinking.-why-recycling-may-not-be-the-answer./

- Braungart: Waste Incineration is not a rational choice (page 20)

<http://www.recyclingmagazin.de/PDF/rm0003.pdf>

- Why genetically engineered food is dangerous:

New report by genetic engineers: “GMO Myths and Truths”

earthopensource.org/index.php/news/60-why-genetically-engineered-food-is-dangerous-new-report-by-genetic-engineers

- Bill McKibben: It's Time to Fight the Status Quo

www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/1095

- Group plans to open 'zero-waste' grocery store this summer

www.statesman.com/business/group-plans-to-open-zero-waste-grocery-store-2354452.html

- At the crossroads between green economy and rights of nature

pablosolon.wordpress.com/2012/06/07/at-the-crossroads-between-green-economy-and-rights-of-nature/

- U.S. Water Policy Still All Wet

www.fpif.org/articles/us_water_policy_still_all_wet

- Causes of Water Pollution – GMO Farming, Glyphosate Big Contributors

<http://naturalsociety.com/glyphosate-causes-of-water-pollution/#ixzz1zENJ9KXR>

- The Foundations of a Blue Economy

CAP Launches New Project Promoting Sustainable Ocean Industries

www.americanprogress.org/issues/2012/06/blue_economy.html

National Snow and Ice Data Center

- Sea ice tracking at record low levels

nsidc.org/arcticseaicenews/2012/06/sea-ice-tracking-at-record-low-levels/

- A Vertical Farm is Growing in Chicago

ibtimes.co.uk/articles/20120622/vertical-farm-growing-chicago.htm

- Whole Foods Market launches online lifestyle magazine

www.darkrye.com/

- Does the farm bill care more about big business than people?

www.latimes.com/news/opinion/opinion-la/la-ol-farm-bill-big-business-20120614,0,2829499.story

- How Big Ag Erodes the Farm Bill's Environmental Protections

www.good.is/post/big-ag-erodes-farm-bill-environmental-protection/

- David Suzuki Foundation's Strategic Sustainability Roadmap

www.thenaturalstep.org/en/canada/featured-project-kicking-david-suzuki-foundation-s-strategic-sustainability-roadmap

- Dubai's 'Sustainable City' to Include Horse Transportation

www.greenprophet.com/2012/06/dubais-sustainable-city-horses/

- Zero waste: Exciting, radical and real

sustainablebusinessforum.com/marcgunther/58657/zero-waste-exciting-radical-and-real

- Earth911 Special Report on Labeling: what label helps recycling?

business.earth911.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/Earth911-SpecialReport-Labeling.pdf

- Introducing... The Eight Great Greenwashers

www.newint.org/features/2012/06/01/greenwashing-companies-corporation/

Full Length Articles Below:

- Eating Our Way to a Better World?

- Genetically engineered plants threaten health, economy

- EcoTeas wins packaging honor

- WASTE by Wendell Berry

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Published on Tuesday, June 12, 2012

Eating Our Way to a Better World?

A Plea to Local, Fair-Trade, and Organic Food Enthusiasts

by [Andrea Brower](#)

My belly is full. It seems no matter how hard I try to “eat my way to a better world”, that world never materializes. The organic and fair-trade industries are booming, Farmers

Markets are the new norm, the word “locavore” was added to the Oxford Dictionary, and Michelle Obama even planted a White House garden. But agribusiness continues to consolidate power and profit, small farmers worldwide are being dispossessed in an unprecedented global land grab, over a billion people are going hungry, and agriculture’s contributions to climate change are increasing. It’s not just that change is slow, but we actually seem to be moving in the opposite direction than alternative food movements are trying to take us.

If the local, fair trade, and organic food movements are growing so fast, why do agriculture and land use policies continue to move in the wrong direction? (Credit: Food Sovereignty Campaign)

What is going on? How are we to understand this apparent paradox, and the seeming failure of our food activism? While the answers are not clear or easy, we can start by considering the main form our political action is taking, and where it is (and isn’t) getting us.

The slogan “vote with your fork” has become the hallmark of food movements. From Michael Pollan and *Food Inc.* to the vast majority of non-profit materials circulating on the internet and in grocery stores, we are empowered by the belief that we can change the world every time we take a bite. This idea of “ethical consumption” stems from classical market fundamentalism, which tells us that the market is a democracy where every dollar gives the right to vote. According to this logic, the social makeup is a result of interactions between billions of individual decisions, where markets simply respond to consumer desires and consumption is the primary arena of citizenship. Thus, to consume is to be political -- to be good, participatory citizens.

Yet, buying “ethical” food does nothing to address the basic political economic structures that underly the destructive global food system. It doesn’t challenge corporate power, just re-orient it towards new niche markets. It doesn’t address the trade and subsidy policies that create inequality and hunger, or the privatization of our common genetic wealth, or the massive wave of farmland enclosures. While it may be an attempt to opt-out of supporting that food system, our vote of no confidence doesn’t do much to actually change that system. To illustrate further -- even if we tripled the purchase of organics overnight, we will have done nothing to address the industrialization and corporatization of organics, or the erosion of standards to allow for all sorts of ecologically destructive practices in what is supposed to be a sustainable form of agriculture. Further, the majority of farmworkers will still be exposed to agricultural chemicals that we know are sentencing them to cancer, as we all continue to drink those chemicals in our water.

The logic of market fundamentalism that underlies much food activism essentially obscures socioeconomic structures and deflects responsibility away from the state and other regulatory institutions. Furthermore, it individualizes activism by making it about personal consumer choices. This can have the dangerous effect of starving collective political action and identities built upon common struggle.

In its worst forms, the idea of ethical consumption renders the unjustifiable gluttony of developed-world consumerism justifiable. It’s OK that we drive hummers, because we

are driving to the farmers market! People can continue to consume with pleasure from a “guilt-free menu”, leaving untouched uncomfortable questions about how our lifestyles contribute more broadly to vast inequalities. In some instances, the idea of ethical consumerism does more to comfort and accommodate the individual eater, and thus solidify the structures of the current food system, than to actually challenge it.

"...if we confine our action to the small-scale, the most we can hope to achieve is small isolated ponds of fresh food for privileged consumers in an ocean of food injustices."

Most of us are aware that alternative food movements have created a plethora of niche marketing opportunities that have been skillfully capitalized on by corporate food giants -- that organics and fair trade have been largely coopted (often to the detriment of more pure organic farming and small-scale direct fair-trade schemes), and that even Wal-Mart is profiting from “local” branding. But we still seem to be relying on the mechanisms and logics that are implicated in the problems we are trying to correct -- namely, markets and capitalism.

Capitalism prevents corporations from prioritizing anything above profit. Capitalism always tends towards the concentration of wealth and power. It requires dispossession and ever-expanding markets, and the subordination of all aspects of life to capital. While our efforts to develop local economy alternatives may be based on a desire to re-embed economies in systems of social and moral relations, we need to remember that exploitation is the prevailing logic of capitalism. Until we start actually talking about capitalism, and defining and creating alternatives that directly confront its logics, our alternatives will always be constrained and shaped by it. Let me re-state this a little differently -- while we need to imagine and build alternative ways of producing and distributing food, if they do not subvert the logics of capitalism, they will be subsumed by them.

This necessarily means challenging structures and forces that do not reside at the local level. The local has become the predominant space of action in alternative food movements largely because it is seen as the site to try alternatives, and to counter trends towards globalized, industrialized, commodity-trade oriented agriculture. While this is an important aspect of resistance, we also need to be mindful of tendencies to use questions of scale to sidestep the more fundamental matters of power and capital. Further, if we confine our action to the small-scale, the most we can hope to achieve is small isolated ponds of fresh food for privileged consumers in an ocean of food injustices.

On the topic of capitalist exploitation, something needs to be said about food system workers -- the people who grow, process, transport, sell and serve our food -- and their striking invisibility in alternative food movements. While we talk a lot about “supporting farmers”, we rarely ask questions about farmworkers, and much less about the people working in dangerous and sweat-shop like food processing factories or the underpaid grocery clerks. It’s estimated that 86 percent of food system workers in the US don’t make enough to live, and that they use food stamps at double the rate of the rest of the country’s workforce. By failing to put food system workers at the center of the

conversation about sustainability and justice in the food system, the movement effectively marginalizes working-class, non-white and immigrant groups, as well as the half of humanity that produces 70 percent of the world's food through "peasant agriculture".

"If justice and sustainability are truly our priorities, then we need to start having conversations about capital, individual rights and property relations that challenge our very core beliefs. We need to de-naturalize and cease to tolerate extreme power and wealth inequities. We need to get beyond the idea that politics is what we choose to put in our mouths."

Of course, there are strands of the food movement that are clearly challenging the logics of capitalism, and that have put workers, justice and equality at the forefront of the political struggle. Some excellent examples include Via Campesina's articulation of the connection between food sovereignty and land rights, trade regimes, and gender relations; consumer-labor alliances based in struggles for worker justice like the Immokalee Workers Coalition; Food Not Bombs example that large networks of people can work cooperatively by consensus and without leadership to provide essential needs; and the occupation of Gill Tract in Berkeley, which is calling attention to the need for direct action to reclaim space for urban agriculture. Even "ethical consumption" is a response to feeling implicated in ecosystem crisis and networks of exploitation, and more importantly, a desire to contribute to something different. In a culture that preaches self-interest, this in itself is hopeful. Furthermore, there is a tremendous amount of creativity and energy behind the countless emerging experiments to "re-embed" agriculture, and the movement has done a lot to present positive and pleasurable alternative visions of the future. Along with other social movements, we are part of a re-orientation of values that sees joy and satisfaction in greater connection to both other people and the non-human world, implicitly or explicitly questioning the fulfillment of consumption-driven lifestyles.

But we can't stop here. When we fail to position our strategies in a larger project of transforming the capitalist food system, we risk erecting new barriers of privilege and inequality. If justice and sustainability are truly our priorities, then we need to start having conversations about capital, individual rights and property relations that challenge our very core beliefs. We need to de-naturalize and cease to tolerate extreme power and wealth inequities. We need to get beyond the idea that politics is what we choose to put in our mouths. And we need collective action for a collective world. Our reality is not made in an individual bubble contained within the market -- we are shaped by our social relations, and must change them in order to change the world.

Do I still buy local and have a garden -- absolutely! I'm just not under the illusion that these actions alone will change the food system. And I am not disheartened by this either, because the hope for me lies in what we have so far failed to imagine -- in the possibilities of a radically fairer, more democratic and truly sustainable world.

Andrea Brower is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Auckland. She has been very active in alternative food and global social justice movements, and spent several years co-directing the non-profit Malama Kauai in Hawaii, where she is originally from.

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Genetically engineered plants threaten health, economy

By Eli Dumitru

June 24, 2012 2:00 AM

www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20120624/OPINION/206240318/-1/NEWSMAP

GMO-Free Jackson County strongly disagrees with Ron Bjork's guest opinion of June 10, representing the Farm Bureau. Mr. Bjork claimed that genetic engineering "... has already resulted in the creation of crops that are pest and herbicide resistant, reducing the use of pesticides."

What part of this is true? Some genetically engineered crops, such as Bt corn, have been engineered so that the plant is creating insecticide within every cell of the plant. So it's true that you don't need to spray as much insecticide on the outside of the plant. Which would you prefer, normal produce that you can wash the insecticide off of, or GE produce that has insecticide in every cell?

What is not true is that herbicide-resistant plants are sprayed with less herbicide. "Herbicide resistant" means the plants were genetically engineered to survive being sprayed with more herbicide. According to a 2009 study by the Center for Food Safety, biotech crops caused a big jump in pesticide use, an overall increase on U.S. farm fields of 318 million pounds of pesticides over the first 13 years.

Then why would the Farm Bureau make such a statement? There is a lot of money behind the new genetically engineered plants. The corporations who profit from them are the main source for misinformation about them.

The fact is, the majority of genetically engineered plants contain genes from completely unrelated species and result in creations that could not occur in nature. These artificial organisms are foreign to the human digestive system.

There are no peer-reviewed studies published proving the safety of genetically engineered food for human or animal consumption. The government doesn't study or test GE plants for food safety.

Lobbyists for the corporations that sell GE seeds have been appointed to the regulatory agencies that are supposed to ensure the safety of our food. There are no government regulations that require GE foods to be proven safe to eat. The Farm Bureau says government agencies claim GE foods are safe, but fails to point out that there is no basis for that claim.

Reports of human and animal health problems related to genetically engineered plants need to be investigated. We are all part of the biggest biological experiment in history, with no one tracking the results.

The claim that GE crops can co-exist with nonGE crops is based on the theory that pollen travels less than four miles. Dr. Carol Mallory-Smith of Oregon State University

stated: "I don't think it is possible to prevent gene movement with the technology the way it is" In 1998, genetically engineered papaya was planted in Hawaii. By 2004, 50 percent of the nonGE papaya in Hawaii was contaminated, including the organic papaya. With wind and insects carrying GE pollen far and wide, it has not stayed contained to a 4-mile radius of where it's planted.

When GE pollen contaminates organic crops, those crops are no longer organic, by definition. That is why "co-existence" with GE plants is unrealistic. The Farm Bureau claims that: "... the unintentional presence of GE traits does not take away the USDA Organic Certification for a crop." Actually, USDA regulations state that: "Organic food is produced without ... bioengineering." Is it the Farm Bureau's position that it's fine to sell genetically engineered food labeled as "organic" as long as the contamination was unintentional?

Economic damage from GE crops isn't limited to organic farmers. Plants engineered to be resistant to herbicides have themselves become weeds. Imagine being a conventional farmer growing strawberries and having your fields infested with GE sugar beets that herbicides can't kill. GE sugar beets, GE bentgrass and GE canola plants have all become herbicide-resistant weeds that have infested other crops.

We agree with the Farm Bureau that: "Our crop diversity is a strength." However, genetically engineered crops have greatly accelerated the reduction of crop diversity. In 2011, 94 percent of the soybeans and 73 percent of the corn planted in the U.S. were genetically engineered.

Three counties in California have already banned growing genetically engineered plants, as early as 2004. Their unique position in the agricultural market has benefited their farmers, as more and more consumers look for safe, natural foods. "Grown in GMO-Free Jackson County, Oregon" can become a desirable, safe and trusted agricultural brand, if we pass our proposed ban on growing GE crops. For more information, see www.gmofreejacksoncounty.org/.

Eli Dumitru is a founding member and on the steering committee of GMO-Free Jackson County. He has lived in Oregon for 27 years, 11 of those in Jackson County.

###

EcoTeas wins packaging honor

By [Greg Stiles](#)

Mail Tribune

June 07, 2012 2:00 AM

ASHLAND — EcoTeas long ago staked out its reputation as a fair trade company, friend of farmers and the Earth. The Rogue Valley tea and yerba mate purveyor has tacked on another component to live up to its name, converting to waste-free packaging

for its products sold at 3,000 retail outlets across the country.

EcoTeas' Zero-Waste Tea Bag Line earned it the 2012 Responsible Packaging Award from the Responsible Packaging Project, which annually recognizes organic and natural industry achievements and innovations in green packaging.

EcoTeas ships 300,000 tea bags monthly — 3.6 million annually — to retailers and online customers. It's the top-selling yerba mate nationwide, and it's also the No. 1 fair trade tea.

"We've been working on this seven or eight years," said Joseph Chermesino, who co-owns the company with Stefan Schachter and Brendan Girard. "Because we started on a shoestring our interim packaging was based on whatever we could get our hands on. Slowly, our packaging evolved into a more professional-looking product and became more aligned with our values."

EcoTeas' crew gradually increased recycled content into its packaging until it reached 100 percent post-consumer material.

"Then we switched to a material that didn't even exist when we started," Chermesino said. "Basically, it's an all-natural cellophane made from trees called biofilm and it's totally compostable. I put it in my compost pile with other scraps and the chickens peck away at it; in a few weeks it disappears."

Its tea bags contain no chlorine bleach, staples or glue and its tea is certified organic, fair trade and doesn't contain genetically modified organisms.

When the biofilm packaging took hold, the Responsible Packaging Project took notice. The nonprofit collaboration of the Sustainable Food Trade Association, Independent Natural Foods Retailers Association, National Cooperative Grocers Association, Organic Trade Association, United Natural Foods and Whole Foods Market's Green Mission, decided EcoTea's innovation was right on the money.

"Basically there's nothing wasteful in the whole box off the shelf," Chermesino said. "It's cool technology The funny thing is that when we switched from foil wrappers to biofilm, we actually saved money."

The company acquires about 75 percent of its tea product from Argentina, where it developed a fruitful relationship several years ago. Another 20 percent comes from South Africa and 5 percent comes from India. There are five employees in Ashland, and three or four, depending on the season, at the company's warehouse in Montague, Calif.

"Our growth has been slow and steady," Chermesino said. "Every month we see small year-over-year increases."

The economic downturn may have stunted EcoTea's expansion, but it also produced a more efficient company.

"It forced us to develop better business practices, becoming more efficient with our packing and shipping," Chermesino said. "Now that the things are picking up, we're a better business for it."

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“There is no sense and no sanity in objecting to the desecration of the flag while tolerating and justifying and encouraging as a daily business the desecration of the country for which it stands.”

WASTE

By Wendell Berry

As a country person, I often feel that I am on the bottom end of the waste problem. I live on the Kentucky River about ten miles from its entrance into the Ohio. The Kentucky, in many ways a lovely river, receives an abundance of pollution from the Eastern Kentucky coal mines and the central Kentucky cities. When the river rises, it carries a continuous raft of cans, bottles, plastic jugs, chunks of styrofoam, and other imperishable trash. After the floods subside, I, like many other farmers, must pick up the trash before I can use my bottomland fields. I have seen the Ohio, whose name (Oyo in Iroquois) means “beautiful river,” so choked with this manufactured filth that an ant could crawl dry-footed from Kentucky to Indiana. The air of both river valleys is seriously polluted. Our roadsides and roadside fields lie under a constant precipitation of cans, bottles, the plasticware of fast food joints, soiled plastic diapers, and sometimes whole bags of garbage.

In our county we now have a “sanitary landfill” which daily receives, in addition to our local production, fifty to sixty large truckloads of garbage from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York.

Moreover, a close inspection of our countryside would reveal, strewn over it from one end to the other, thousands of derelict and worthless automobiles, house trailers, refrigerators, stoves, freezers, washing machines, and dryers; as well as thousands of unregulated dumps in hollows and sink holes, on streambanks and roadsides, filled not only with “disposable” containers but also with broken toasters, television sets, toys of all kinds, furniture, lamps, stereos, radios, scales, coffee makers, mixers, blenders, corn poppers, hair dryers, and microwave ovens.

Much of our waste problem is to be accounted for by the intentional flimsiness and unrepairability of the labor-saving devices and gadgets that we have become addicted to. Of course, my sometimes impression that we live on the receiving end of this problem is false, for country people contribute their full share.

The truth is that we Americans, all of us, have become a kind of human trash, living our lives in the midst of a ubiquitous damned mess of which we are at once the victims and the perpetrators. We are all unwilling victims, perhaps; and some of us even are unwilling perpetrators, but we must count ourselves among the guilty nonetheless. In my household we produce much of our own food and try to do without as many frivolous “necessities” as possible — and yet, like everyone else, we must shop, and when we shop we must bring home a load of plastic, aluminum, and glass containers designed to be thrown away, and “appliances” designed to wear out quickly and be thrown away.

confess that I am angry at the manufacturers who make these things. There are days when I would be delighted if certain corporation executives could somehow be obliged to eat their products. I know of no good reason why these containers and all other forms of manufactured “waste”— solid, liquid, toxic, or whatever — should not be outlawed. There is no sense and no sanity in objecting to the desecration of the flag while tolerating and justifying and encouraging as a daily business the desecration of the country for which it stands.

But our waste problem is not the fault only of producers. It is the fault of an economy that is wasteful from top to bottom —a symbiosis of an unlimited greed at the top and a lazy, passive, and self-indulgent consumptiveness at the bottom — and all of us are involved in it. If we wish to correct this economy, we must be careful to understand and to demonstrate how much waste of human life is involved in our waste of the material goods of Creation.

For example, much of the litter that now defaces our country is fairly directly caused by the massive secession or exclusion of most of our people from active participation in the food economy. We have made a social ideal of minimal involvement in the growing and cooking of food. This is one of the dearest ‘liberations’ of our affluence. Nevertheless, the more dependent we become on the industries of eating and drinking, the more waste we are going to produce. The mess that surrounds us, then, must be understood not just as a problem in itself but as a symptom of a greater and graver problem the centralization of our economy — the gathering of the productive property and power into fewer and fewer hands, and the consequent destruction, everywhere, of the local economies of household, neighborhood, and corn - mutiny.

This is the source of our unemployment problem, and I am not talking just about the unemployment of eligible members of the “labor force.” I mean also the unemployment of children and old people, who, in viable household and local economies, would have work to do by which they would be useful to themselves and to others. The ecological damage of centralization and waste is thus inextricably involved with human damage. For we have, as a result, not only a desecrated, ugly, and dangerous country in which to live until we are in some manner poisoned by it, and a constant and now generally accepted problem of unemployed or unemployable workers, but also classrooms full of children who lack the experience and discipline of fundamental human tasks, and various institutions full of still capable old people who are useless and lonely.

I think that we must learn to see the trash on our streets and roadsides, in our rivers, and in our woods and fields, not as the side effects of “more jobs” as its manufacturers invariably insist that it is, but as evidence of good work not done by people able to do it.

From What Are People For?, by Wendell Berry, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1990.