

# Green Mission News

February 2015

## What's in the News...

### **SEEDY BUSINESS**

#### **Executive Summary**

**Since 2012, the agrichemical and food** industries have mounted a complex, multifaceted public relations, advertising, lobbying and political campaign in the United States, costing more than \$100 million, to defend genetically engineered food and crops and the pesticides that accompany them.

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## **SEEDY BUSINESS:**

What Big Food is hiding with its slick PR campaign on GMOs



By Gary Ruskin  
**US RTK**  
U.S. Right to Know  
January 2015

External Links:

- Seedy Business: What Big Food is hiding with its slick PR campaign on GMOs

<http://usrtk.org/seedybusiness.pdf>

**- Project MainStream – a global collaboration to accelerate the transition towards the circular economy**

<http://www.weforum.org/reports/project-mainstream-global-collaboration-accelerate-transition-towards-circular-economy>

**- Designing Cradle to Cradle Certified Products for the Circular Economy**

<http://www.pddnet.com/news/2015/01/designing-cradle-cradle-certified-products-circular-economy>

## **- Organic Farming and Permaculture**

[www.idealists.org/view/volop/w75Zxj5sbcxd/](http://www.idealists.org/view/volop/w75Zxj5sbcxd/)

## **- All's Natural At Durgas Den Farm**

<http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20150131/life/life1.html>

## **- Tom Remfry's career as organic gardener in Croydon takes root**

[www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/east/tom-remfrys-career-as-organic-gardener-in-croydon-takes-root/story-fngnvlxu-1227202030228?nk=61bbea845022b6fcb92ba4ed655b6cc5](http://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/east/tom-remfrys-career-as-organic-gardener-in-croydon-takes-root/story-fngnvlxu-1227202030228?nk=61bbea845022b6fcb92ba4ed655b6cc5)

## **- Portland's College of Natural Medicine's 20-year master plan includes 'outdoor library' with permaculture**

[www.bizjournals.com/portland/blog/health-care-inc/2015/01/portlands-college-of-natural-medicine-eyes-outdoor.html](http://www.bizjournals.com/portland/blog/health-care-inc/2015/01/portlands-college-of-natural-medicine-eyes-outdoor.html)

## **- BAE Systems Applied Intelligence Reveals Top Five Predictions for 2015**

[www.bobsguide.com/guide/news/2014/Dec/22/bae-systems-applied-intelligence-reveals-top-five-predictions-for-2015.html](http://www.bobsguide.com/guide/news/2014/Dec/22/bae-systems-applied-intelligence-reveals-top-five-predictions-for-2015.html)

## **- 3 Hot Technologies Fueling The Internet Of Things Revolution**

<http://www.fool.com/investing/general/2015/01/10/3-hot-technologies-fueling-the-internet-of-things.aspx>

## **- Distributed manufacturing can be next disruptive technology**

[http://www.business-standard.com/content/b2b-manufacturing-industry/distributed-manufacturing-can-be-next-disruptive-technology-115011200236\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/content/b2b-manufacturing-industry/distributed-manufacturing-can-be-next-disruptive-technology-115011200236_1.html)

**- Regenerative Agriculture helps improve soil heal**

[www.swbooster.com/Business/2015-01-26/article-4021008/Regenerative-Agriculture-helps-improve-soil-health/1](http://www.swbooster.com/Business/2015-01-26/article-4021008/Regenerative-Agriculture-helps-improve-soil-health/1)

**- German Grocery Store Doesn't Waste, Rest of Food Industry Should Follow Suit**

[http://www.bgnews.com/forum/german-grocery-store-doesn-t-waste-rest-of-food-industry/article\\_0cb807c2-a833-11e4-a947-db0e13a557cc.html](http://www.bgnews.com/forum/german-grocery-store-doesn-t-waste-rest-of-food-industry/article_0cb807c2-a833-11e4-a947-db0e13a557cc.html)

**- What plastic can learn from steel in a circular economy**

<http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/jan/29/plastic-industry-recycling-learn-from-steel-circular-economy>

**- ZERO WASTE SPOTLIGHT: Landfills are Not a Long Term Solution to Waste**

[http://fremonttribune.com/cass-news/community/zero-waste-spotlight-landfills-are-not-a-long-term-solution/article\\_bcd4bfc8-bab1-50c7-bb1a-d45bd60ac7d8.html](http://fremonttribune.com/cass-news/community/zero-waste-spotlight-landfills-are-not-a-long-term-solution/article_bcd4bfc8-bab1-50c7-bb1a-d45bd60ac7d8.html)

**- Heed Pope Francis' appeal to end culture of waste**

<http://rp2.abs-cbnnews.com/blogs/opinions/01/15/15/heed-pope-francis-appeal-end-culture-waste>

**- Brooklyn Environmentalist Refuses To Contribute To City's Ubiquitous Trash Piles**

[newyork.cbslocal.com/2015/01/08/brooklyn-environmentalist-refuses-to-contribute-to-citys-ubiquitous-trash-piles/](http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2015/01/08/brooklyn-environmentalist-refuses-to-contribute-to-citys-ubiquitous-trash-piles/)

**Multifamily Recycling: An Opportunity to Reach Zero Waste**

[waste360.com/business/multifamily-recycling-opportunity-reach-zero-waste](http://waste360.com/business/multifamily-recycling-opportunity-reach-zero-waste)

**- US waste giant sets out circular economy vision**

[acre.com/news/article/2015/01/us-waste-giant-sets-out-circular-economy-vision](http://acre.com/news/article/2015/01/us-waste-giant-sets-out-circular-economy-vision)

- Explore cross sector opportunities in sustainable packaging  
[www.packagingdigest.com/sustainable-packaging/explore-cross-sector-opportunities-in-sustainable-packaging150109](http://www.packagingdigest.com/sustainable-packaging/explore-cross-sector-opportunities-in-sustainable-packaging150109)

## **- Innovation and circular economy are the future of successful business**

[www.eco-business.com/press-releases/innovation-and-circular-economy-are-the-future-of-successful-business/](http://www.eco-business.com/press-releases/innovation-and-circular-economy-are-the-future-of-successful-business/)

## **- Monarch butterfly protections could restrict GMO**

[www.capitalpress.com/Nation\\_World/Nation/20150112/monarch-butterfly-protections-could-restrict-gmos](http://www.capitalpress.com/Nation_World/Nation/20150112/monarch-butterfly-protections-could-restrict-gmos)

## **- CHINESE PUBLIC NOW LEGALLY REQUIRED TO RECYCLE**

[http://www.rebnews.com/news/recycling/chinese\\_public\\_legally\\_required\\_recycle.html](http://www.rebnews.com/news/recycling/chinese_public_legally_required_recycle.html)

## **- The meat industry's worst nightmare could soon become a reality**

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2015/01/07/why-the-governments-new-dietary-guidelines-could-be-a-nightmare-for-the-meat-industry/>

## **- Planetary Boundaries 2.0 – new and improved As Science publishes the updated research, four of nine planetary boundaries have been crossed**

[www.stockholmresilience.org/21/research/research-news/1-15-2015-planetary-boundaries-2.0---new-and-improved.html](http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/research/research-news/1-15-2015-planetary-boundaries-2.0---new-and-improved.html)

- Neil Dennis, one of the Saskatchewan graziers who is featured in the film "[Soil Carbon Cowboys](#)," has used high stock density and recovery periods of 80 days or longer for years on his pastures of brome and bluegrass. "As your land gets healthier, your recovery time should get longer. Everything starts changing when you get healthier land—the health of the animals, and the response of the grass. My brome hasn't set seed in a year."

See plot summary graphs here:  
<http://soilcarboncoalition.org/data/challengecharts.htm>

as well as on the map:  
<http://soilcarboncoalition.org/changemap.htm>

## **- Stanford faculty members call for fossil fuel divestment**

[www.theguardian.com/environment/interactive/2015/jan/11/stanford-fossil-fuel-divestment-letter](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/interactive/2015/jan/11/stanford-fossil-fuel-divestment-letter)

## **Two Full Length Articles**

### **1. How the People Can Outwit the Global Domination Plans of Agribusiness**

by Common Dreams  
Jonathan Latham

Published on  
Sunday, January 18, 2015

<http://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/01/18/how-people-can-outwit-global-domination-plans-agribusiness>

In Texas, large fields are prepared for the next year's corn crop. (Photo: Daniel James/flickr/cc)

The strategic centerpiece of Monsanto PR is to focus on the promotion of one single compelling idea. The idea that they want you to believe in is that only they can produce enough for the future population. They wish you to therefore believe that non-industrial systems of farming, such as all those which use agroecological methods, or SRI, or are localised and family-oriented, or which use organic methods, or non-GMO seeds, cannot feed the world. This same PR strategy is followed by every major commercial participant in the industrial food system.

To be sure, agribusiness has a few other PR strategies. Agribusiness is "pro-science", its opponents are "anti-science", and so on. But the main plank has for decades been to create a cast-iron moral framing around the need to produce more.

Therefore, if you go to the websites of Monsanto and Cargill and Syngenta and Bayer, and their bedfellows: the US Farm Bureau, the UK National Farmers Union, and the American Soybean Association, and CropLife International, or The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, USAID, or now even NASA, they will raise the "urgent problem" of who will feed the expected global population of 9 or 10 billion in 2050.

Likewise, whenever these same organisations compose speeches or press releases, or videos, they devote precious space to the same urgent problem. It is even in their job advertisements. It is their Golden Fact. And as far as neutrals are concerned it wins the food system debate hands down, because it says, if any other farming system cannot feed the world, it is irrelevant. Only agribusiness can do that.

The real food crisis is of overproduction

Yet this strategy has a disastrous weakness. There is no global or regional shortage of food. There never has been and nor is there ever likely to be. India has a superabundance of food. (Continued on next page)

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South America is swamped in food. The US, Australia, New Zealand and Europe are swamped in food. In Britain, like in many wealthy countries, nearly half of all row crop food production now goes to biofuels, which at bottom are an attempt to dispose of surplus agricultural products. China isn't quite swamped but it still exports food (see Fig 1.); and it grows 30% of the world's cotton. No foodpocalypse there either.

Even in Bangladesh the farmers do not produce the rice they could because prices are low, because of persistent gluts.

Even some establishment institutions will occasionally admit that the food shortage concept – now and in any reasonably conceivable future – is bankrupt. According to experts consulted by the World Bank Institute there is already sufficient food production for 14 billion people – more food than will ever be needed. The Golden Fact of agribusiness is therefore a lie.

Truth restoration

So, if the agribusiness PR experts are correct that food crisis fears are pivotal to their industry, then it follows that those who oppose the industrialization of food and agriculture should make dismantling that lie their number one priority.

Anyone who wants a sustainable, pesticide-free, or non-GMO food future, or wants to avoid climate chaos, needs to know this weakness. They should take every possible opportunity to point out the evidence that refutes it. Granaries are bulging, crops are being burned as biofuels or dumped, prices are low, farmers are abandoning farming for slums and cities, all because of massive oversupply.

The project to fully industrialise global food production is far from complete, yet already it is responsible for most deforestation, most marine pollution, most coral reef destruction, much of greenhouse gas emissions, most habitat loss, most of the degradation of streams and rivers, most food insecurity, most immigration, most water depletion, massive human health problems, and so on. Our planet is becoming literally uninhabitable solely as a result of the social and ecological consequences of industrialising agriculture. All these problems are without even mentioning thetrillions of dollars in annual externalised costs and subsidies.

So, if one were to devise a strategy for the food movement, it would be this. The public already knows (mostly) that pesticides are dangerous. They also know that organic food is higher quality, and is far more environmentally friendly. It knows that GMOs should be labeled, are largely untested, and may be harmful. That is why the leaders of most major countries, including China, dine on organic food. The immense scale of the problems created by industrial agriculture should, of course, be understood better, but the main facts are hardly in dispute.

But what industry understands, and the food movement does not, is that what prevents total rejection of bland, industrialised, pesticide-laden, GMO food is the standard acceptance, especially in Western countries, of the overarching agribusiness argument that such food is necessary. It is necessary to feed the world.

So, if the food movement could show that famine is an empty threat then it would also have shown, by clear implication, that the chemical health risks and the ecological devastation that these technologies represent are what is unnecessary. The movement would have shown that pesticides and GMOs exist solely to extract profit from the food chain. They have no other purpose. Therefore, every project of the food movement should aim to spread the truth of oversupply, until mention of the Golden Fact invites ridicule and embarrassment in the population, rather than fear.

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## Divide and Confuse

Food campaigners might also consider that a strategy to combat the food scarcity myth can unite a potent mix of causes. Just as an understanding of food abundance destroys the argument for pesticide use and GMOs simultaneously, it also creates the potential for common ground within and between constituencies that do not currently associate much: health advocates, food system workers, climate campaigners, wildlife conservationists and international development campaigners. None of these constituencies inherently like chemical poisons, and they are hardly natural allies of agribusiness, but the pressure of the food crisis lie has driven many of them to ignore what could be the best solution to their mutual problems: small scale farming and pesticide-free agriculture. This is exactly what the companies intended.

So divisive has the Golden Fact been that some non-profits have entered into perverse partnerships with agribusiness and others support inadequate or positively fraudulent sustainability labels. Another consequence has been mass confusion over the observation that almost all the threats to the food supply (salinisation, water depletion, soil erosion, climate change and chemical pollution) come from the supposed solution--the industrialisation of food production. These contradictions are not real. When the smoke is blown away and the mirrors are taken down the choices within the food system become crystal clear. They fall broadly into two camps.

On the one side lie family farms and ecological methods. These support farmer and consumer health, resilience, financial and democratic independence, community, cultural and biological diversity, and long term sustainability. Opposing them is control of the food system by corporate agribusiness. Agribusiness domination leads invariably to dependence, uniformity, poisoning and ecological degradation, inequality, land grabbing, and, not so far off, to climate chaos.

One is a vision, the other is a nightmare: in every single case where industrial agriculture is implemented it leaves landscapes progressively emptier of life. Eventually, because it vaporizes the carbon, the soil turns either into mud that washes into the rivers or into dust that blows away on the wind. Industrial agriculture has no long term future; it is ecological suicide. But for obvious reasons those who profit from it cannot allow all this to become broadly understood. That is why the food scarcity lie is so fundamental to them. They absolutely depend on it, since it alone can camouflage the underlying issues.

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## 2. Researchers Propose Earth's 'Anthropocene' Age of Humans Began With Fallout and Plastics

By [ANDREW C. REVKIN](#)

New York Times  
JANUARY 15, 2015

### [ANTHROPOCENE](#)

A research team assessing when a new geological epoch shaped by humans began has settled on the mid-20th century. Two markers are carbon isotopes from nuclear explosions and plastics, here seen in the remains of a dead albatross.

Credit Left, U.S. Air Force Photo; right, Chris Jordan, [midwayfilm.com](#)

As many readers are aware, I've been [writing since 1992](#) about the notion that we've left the [Holocene](#) behind — that's the geological epoch since the end of the last ice age — and entered “a post-Holocene...geological age of our own making,” now best known as the [Anthropocene](#).

That idea has [gained a lot of traction](#), but a formal decision by the International Commission on Stratigraphy is years away. In the meantime, a subsidiary body, the [Anthropocene Working Group](#) (because of my early writings, I'm a lay member), has moved substantially from asking *whether* such a transition has occurred to deciding *when*.

In a paper published online this week by the journal *Quaternary International*, 26 members of the working group point roughly to 1950 as the starting point, indicated by a variety of markers, including the [global spread of carbon isotopes](#) from nuclear weapon detonations starting in 1945 and the mass production and disposal of plastics. (About six billion tons have been made, with a billion of those tons dumped and [a substantial amount spread](#) around the world's.)

You can learn much more in a short, wide-ranging Skype chat I had on Wednesday with the leader of this effort, [Jan Zalasiewicz](#), a geologist at the University of Leicester, who is also lead author on the new paper:

One thing is certain, he told me. There's little predictability in how things will play out after this anthropogenic jolt, especially in the living world. [More on the “[great acceleration](#)” behind the jolt is here.] He alluded to one of the last great junctures in Earth's history, 65 million years ago, to make the point:

Once you begin to get the many feedbacks bouncing off each other and bouncing off the Earth system, it's going to be very hard to follow what's going to happen, particularly biologically.... One could not imagine, at the very end of the Cretaceous, the beginning of the Tertiary, that the mammals — these itty-bitty little squeaky furry things, would take over — effectively taking the position that the dinosaurs held for so long. All we can say is that, for sure, it will be different. We're going down a different trouser leg of history.

I hope you'll listen. I apologize for not having time to transcribe the full interview. Perhaps you can add passages that catch your attention in the comment thread.

The group's paper is posted here (sadly behind a subscription wall except for the abstract): “[When did the Anthropocene begin? A mid-twentieth century boundary level is stratigraphically optimal.](#)”

Here's a short press summary of the paper, and next steps, written for the journal by Zalasiewicz:  
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Did the Anthropocene begin with the nuclear age?

*Scientists identify July 16, 1945, as key time boundary in Earth history*

An international group of scientists has proposed the date of the dawn of a new geological age in Earth history – the Age of the Anthropocene.

Humans are having such a marked impact on the Earth that they are changing its geology, creating new and distinctive strata that will persist far into the future. This is the idea behind the Anthropocene, a new epoch in Earth history proposed by the Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen just 15 years ago. Since then the idea has spread widely through both the sciences and humanities.

But if the Anthropocene is to be a geological epoch – when should it begin? Humans have long affected the environment, and ideas as to when the Anthropocene might start range from the thousands of years ago with the dawn of agriculture, to the Industrial Revolution – and even to the future (for the greatest human-made changes could still be to come).

Now, members of the international working group formally analyzing the Anthropocene suggest that the key turning point happened in the mid-twentieth century. This was when humans did not just leave traces of their actions, but began to alter the whole Earth system. There was a ‘Great Acceleration’ of population, of carbon emissions, of species invasions and extinctions, of earth moving, of the production of concrete, plastics and metals.

It included the start, too, of the nuclear age, when artificial radionuclides were scattered across the Earth, from the poles to the Equator, to leave a detectable signal in modern strata virtually everywhere.

The proposal, signed up to by 26 members of the working group, including lead author Dr Jan Zalasiewicz, who also chairs the working group, and Dr Mark Williams of the University of Leicester’s Department of Geology, is that the beginning of the Anthropocene could be considered to be drawn at the moment of detonation of the world’s first nuclear test: on July 16th 1945. The beginning of the nuclear age, it marks the historic turning point when humans first accessed an enormous new energy source – and is also a time level that can be effectively tracked within geological strata, using a variety of geological clues.

Dr Zalasiewicz said: “Like any geological boundary, it is not a perfect marker – levels of global radiation really rose in the early 1950s, as salvos of bomb tests took place. But it may be the optimal way to resolve the multiple lines of evidence on human-driven planetary change. Time – and much more discussion- will tell.”

This year, the Anthropocene Working Group will put together more evidence on the Anthropocene, including discussion of possible alternative time boundaries. In 2016, the group hopes to make recommendations on whether this new time unit should be formalized and, if so, how it might be defined and characterized.

Authors: Zalasiewicz, J., Waters, C.N., Williams, M., Barnosky, A.D., Cerreata, A., Crutzen, P., Ellis, E., Ellis, M.E., Fairchild, I.J., Grinevald, J., Haff, P.K., Hajdas, I., Leinfelder, R., McNeill, J., Odada, E.O., Poirier, C., Richter, D., Steffen, W., Summerhayes, C., Syvitski, J.P.M., Vidas, D., Wagreich, M., Wing, S.L., Wolfe, A.P., An, Z. & Oreskes, N.

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I'd like to close by reprising the tail end of a post from 2011, called "[Embracing the Anthropocene](#)." It's more relevant than ever, and relates to my recent exchanges with [Clive Hamilton](#), the Australian ethicist, and Elizabeth Kolbert, author of "[The Sixth Extinction](#)," on whether it's possible to have a "[good Anthropocene](#)." Kolbert's Twitter post last spring nicely captured their view:

Here's the end of my 2011 piece laying out my take on this issue:

Taking full ownership of the Anthropocene won't be easy. The necessary feeling is a queasy mix of excitement and unease. I've compared it to waking up in the first car on the first run of a new roller coaster that hasn't been examined fully by engineers.

That's a very different sensation than, say, mourning [the end of nature](#).

It's more a celebration, in a way — a deeper acceptance of our place on the planet, with all of our synthetic trappings, and our faults, as fundamentally natural.

In fact, in the broadest sense we have to embrace the characteristics, good and bad, that make humans such a rare thing — a species that has become a planet-scale force. Cyanobacteria also were a planet-scale force, oxygenating the atmosphere some two billion years ago. The difference is that cyanobacteria weren't *aware* of their potency, while we are at least starting to absorb that reality.

It's a slow process. That's why I liked the proposition laid out by someone at Arizona State University after [my recent onstage conversation with Braden Allenby](#)....: "The way I would like to see it is in, say, 100 years in the future the London Geological Society will look back and consider this period...a transition from the lesser Anthropocene to the greater Anthropocene."

That has a nice feel to it. Fully integrating this awareness into our personal choices and societal norms and policies will take time. It is "[the great work](#)," as Thomas Berry put it. [Technology alone](#) will not do the trick. Another keystone to better meshing humanity's infinite aspirations with life on a finite planet will be slowly shifting value systems from the foundation up, not through some Beltway debate.

Bhutan's experiment with "[gross national happiness](#)," along with other countries' more formal efforts to develop indices of wellbeing to complement strict economic metrics, are a step in that direction.

Edward O. Wilson's "[Biophilia](#)" was a powerful look outward at the characteristics of the natural world that we inherently cherish.

Now we need a dose of what I've taken to calling [anthropophilia](#), as well.

We have to accept ourselves, flaws and all, in order to move beyond what has been something of an unconscious, [species-scale pubescent growth spurt](#), enabled by fossil fuels in place of testosterone.

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In “[The World Without Us](#),” Alan Weisman created a haunting thought experiment – imagining a planet awakening after the vanishing of its human tormentor.

The challenge is that there is a real experiment well under way, and we’re all in the test tube.

We’re stuck with “The World *With* Us.”

It’s time to grasp that uncomfortable, but ultimately hopeful, idea.

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