

OneEarth Jubilee Covenant Guide

Thinking and Acting Together to Strengthen the OneEarth Food System

The Covenant recognizes that food is tightly connected with water use, land use, and over-population. Even so, emphasizing all four at once quickly overloads us. So we'll emphasize food first, even as our thought and action will often overlap with water and land use as well as over-population.

The Covenant says:

Food, Land, Water Structures and Over-population Eating—In a global, unstable, industrial food supply system, and recognizing that what and where I eat is a strong lever for system change...

_____ I will buy from the most local suppliers, from local growers, from farmers markets, and grow some of what I eat.

_____ I will eat a largely plant-based diet, low-meat, avoid sodas, and drink clean, unbottled water. All I eat and drink will be as local as possible.

_____ I will eat organic because it assures healthy soils without chemical toxins added to the land and animals are treated humanely instead of the factory farm industry that supplies nearly all meats as they devastate soils and water at devastating speeds.

TOP PRIORITY: If you can focus on only one component in the Covenant, focus on this one. How we eat is likely the action of greatest impact that we, of ordinary means and power, can take. Nothing else we do gets at the structures that need changing quite as effectively as how we eat throughout a day. The majority of our food decisions make a difference. Each decision is either for our planet's OneEarth ways or against them, and in support of industry's MultiEarth ways. Acting jointly with others exponentially increases your impact. So, organize.

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1. Food Choices Are Made Clear by Two Paradigms

The Structures and Choices Presented by the Two Paradigms

Key to all our actions to building a stronger OneEarth food system is being guided by the OneEarth Paradigm. **Do our food decisions strengthen the OneEarth agriculture paradigm?** The more times we can answer “Yes,” the more our actions are making a difference for Earth’s benefit and ours. Every time we need to answer “No,” we are reminded that we need to look for a different choice. That said, sometimes our choices are not cleanly in one or the other, but on a continuum. When that is the case, let’s move as close to OneEarth agriculture as we can.

Agri-business is much more profitable than agri-culture. -- Wendell Berry

Lee, there is a world of difference between agri-business and agri-culture.
— spoken to me by Bert Evans (1921-1971), former agronomy professor at University of Nebraska, Lincoln, farmer, cattle breeder

OneEarth agriculture

MultiEarth industrial agribusiness

Partnership

hierarchy of actualization
Earth community
all land is sacred and revered as holy

Domination

hierarchy of control
empire, superpower, transnational
land is for our use, not for reverence

Specific to Food

Post-industrial agri-culture

little government support
low-access to gov’t policy

Industrialized agri-business

biggest government support
high access to gov’t policy

Distribution & Purchase of food

cooperatives
farmers markets, cooperatives
local preferences
low packaging preferences
local economy primary
shareholder in a CSA
(community supported agriculture)
restaurants that serve local, organic
slow food movement

corporate chains
supermarkets
national & global markets
packaging for competitive advantage
global economy primary
shareholder in a food corporation
restaurant chains that serve global
fast food movement

Processing of food

health priorities
nutritional factors
homemade and small batches

shelf-life priorities
convenience factors
mass produced

Production of food

smaller farms, urban farming
low industrialization
local food sovereignty
soil is a treasure to be enhanced
roaming animals

huge farms
high industrialization
import-export model
soil is a medium to be used
confinement of animals

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natural fertilizers	chemical fertilizers
pesticide free	pesticide dependent
traditional farming (organic, regenerative)	green revolution
seed preserved as commonwealth	seed patenting for private wealth
intentional biodiversity	monoculture “efficiency”
labor intensive	machine intensive

CAUTIONS in using this chart:

- 1) Use it for learning, not for judging yourself or others. But when a poor decision is made, consider if there are ways to act in the future that are more aligned with OneEarth ways.
- 2) Recognize that no matter how you reconfigure your personal lifestyle, it is virtually impossible to achieve an ecological footprint that uses only the resources of one planet. Reason? Because the U.S. has created an infrastructure that supports MultiEarth living and needs to undergo radical transformation before OneEarth living is personally possible. Nonetheless, reducing our ecological footprints as low as we can has enormous impact on our souls, communities, and the planet.
See <https://www.footprintnetwork.org/footprint-calculator-faq/#gen6> For example, mine is currently just over 2 planets.

The above chart shows how truly different the agri-business and agri-culture paradigms are. Which one we choose is now a moral and spiritual choice, and our choices make real differences in peoples’ lives. Our choices end or continue hunger and malnutrition, and decrease or increase ecological wellbeing of oceans, rivers, soils, and air.

The Cost—Sometimes there is a definite cost to choosing the low industry agri-culture way. Sometimes the cost can feel like sacrifice. The cost can be in convenience, time, or money. But, resisting the ways of domination has always cost those who do it. In some cases we may not be able to pay the price. Conversion costs us something and is challenging. German martyr in WWII wrote the book, *The Cost of Discipleship*. And, as I write this, people of Ukraine are paying with their own lives in order to resist the powers of domination.

However, greater than the cost of supporting agri-culture is supporting agri-business. Agri-business’ costs are beyond ecological reparation and certainly beyond the political will of those in power. Food supplied by agri-business is cheaper at the checkout only because of the expertise these structures have developed at externalizing true costs. We don’t pay at check-out for the damage industrial farming does to the air we breathe, the soils, and waterways. We’ve become accustomed to cheap food with choices galore. But we don’t pay the real cost at the checkout. Plus, many, if not most of the options, fill and fatten people, shorten lives, raise prices on healthcare, and steal from the wealth of nature. The wellbeing of all species is sacrificed for cheap food. The agri-business food ways are ill-equipped to heal the climate breakdown. They are contributing to it. The advertising that makes it sound like the green revolution’s

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industrialization has increased production and is feeding a growing world. But after a few years when production increased, it is now going down. The soil has gone dead. Topsoil has been lost. Industrial agribusiness is now contributing to food shortages, malnutrition, and hunger.

Food literacy—Despite its hidden costs, food illiteracy among the populace still seeks “cheap.” One must be able to recognize how cleverly agribusiness corporations have gotten other industries, nature, government, and our health to pay the true costs of the industrial agriculture food supply in order to know that the checkout is only part of the price. By this deception, food corporations have made it possible for us consumers to stay within our food budgets. Most consumers don’t factor in the health costs, environmental losses in their neighborhood, or the impacts of our moral choices on larger society. Until we connect the dots, we will, as if asleep, continue to go through the lines of fast food and supermarket chains. We’ll ask doctors for pills instead of doing the harder work of changing our diets, lifestyles, and educating ourselves. But once we make the connections, the shift of consciousness impels us to new choices. By connecting use of pesticides and herbicides in growing, depletion of soils, abuse of farm workers, long-distance transportation, and the low paid workers putting it all on the shelf of supermarkets, we become aware of the morality of our food choices. The illusion of “cheap food” is ending—quite likely within this decade.

Meanwhile, the paradigm of regenerative agriculture is proving itself despite the enormous difficulty of competing in the marketplace. OneEarth agriculture does little advertising in comparison to Big Food. But more structures expressing regenerative agriculture are evolving weekly as people are waking up to the great choices it offers. Some chefs link up with local, regenerative farmers to see what will be harvested in the week ahead before planning their menus. Some school lunch programs and many universities and institutional cafeterias are offering health, organic options. As we help one another learn about these developments, we generate the excitement and can-do energy that comes when we see how to live aligned with creation. The choices we make about food every day determine how quickly those structures expand. Because of the enormous ecological impact of the food supply chain, we need to evangelistically appeal for commitments to using the structures of post-industrial agriculture. The re-tooling of our country during the early 1940s to meet the requirements of war against fascism are often cited to show what we can do when we set our minds to it. Surely cooperating with the cosmos in its story of life is more important than the imperial stories of the wars of civilization.

Actions for Groups and Individuals

Discuss together the following “Avoid” and “Do” actions. Then decide which one you will do together or individually.

1. Avoid using the products of industrial farming in every way we can. Why? Because agri-business...

- ... contributes 24% of the greenhouse gases to the atmosphere

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- ... eviscerates the soil of minerals and nutrients which means the food produced in that dirt does not have the minerals and nutrients we all need for healthy bodies. Healthy bodies increase energy and reduce healthcare costs.
- ... sends runoff of fertilizers and pesticides into the water ways, which, in turn, carry it as far as the Gulf of Mexico and create large dead zones that kill fish, plankton (fish food), and ocean plant life.
- ... farms in monocultures shunning the value and necessity of biodiversity.
- ... does not leave areas for wildlife

2. Eat products grown by farmers—especially small farmers—who grow their food organically and regeneratively. Why? Because such farmers ...

- ... tend to soils to make sure their healthy. Healthy soils produce food rich with nutrients and minerals, The soils must be regenerated after going dead through the chemicals that are poured into them by the depleting methods of industrial agriculture.
- ... raise grass-fed beef, pork, mutton, and poultry. Grass-fed animals are happy animals roaming in natural, organic, nurturing settings and eating the grasses there.
- ... fish in the waters of sustainable fisheries. The fish are wild-caught, not farmed. Such fishing proceeds with commitment to assure marine life into the future and provide the best nourishment now while avoiding many of the contaminants (mercury and other metals) hidden in many fish.

3. After listing 5 destructive impacts of industrial farming, what can you do not to participate with these and use alternatives?

4. For people for whom the costs are too great even though they deeply want to pursue OneEarth living, how can your group empower them?

2. Why Our Food Choices Matter So Much

Food is a huge component in any economy – local, regional, and global! And because we make daily choices about it, food is a very strategic and fruitful place for us to contribute to a new economy, frustrating the current one as we do so. In other words, food choices do nothing in an economy than decide if food supply will be primarily local or dependent on global sourcing. The pandemic and climate changes have revealed the instabilities inherent in the globalization of the food supply.

The local economy is helped by those crying for food democracy. It is a grassroots initiative wanting a whole new food industry. “Democracy” means that workers want control over what they produce and consumers want control over what they eat. Both of these are currently heavily controlled by agri-business, in which the continuing evolution is toward domination in every part of the market, field to fork. The totalitarian ways of

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huge corporations has taken over the food industry and shows little sign of slowing. Governments still bless this totalitarian control as the model of choice by giving huge subsidies to these corporations and inside positions to their officers in food-farm policy-making. In the U.S., the Department of Agriculture continues to promote the agri-business paradigm.

Despite control over food and farming by agri-business corporations and government agencies, food supplies are rapidly dwindling. Those in charge will soon have to confess to a colossal failure. The reasons are evident throughout this guide, but let me summarize them here.

1. Two/sixths of Earth's human population is malnourished or starving despite the fact that enough food is being produced for all. That includes 20,000-30,000 human deaths daily from food deficiency.
2. The food being produced is unhealthy enough that diet-related diseases of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease alone are financially overloading health care systems. The foods are depleted in vital minerals because the soils in which they grow no longer have these minerals.
3. Beyond what's happening to humans, the food supply for animals and plants is being so distorted that the very community of life on which we all depend is under stress with species extinction happening at an unsustainable rate. Seeds, the very kernels of life itself, are taken over by major corporations, genetically modified, and then patented. Life itself is becoming privately, corporately owned. This sharply reduces the healthier food options for regenerative farmers.
4. The farming methods of industrial farming are devastating the soil, killing millions of microbes with chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. The air and water are similarly being loaded beyond capacity with toxins. and poisoning water supplies. Topsoil is eroding rapidly, removing the minerals that give our food nutrition. Some farming regions have no topsoil left, and current depletion rates through industrial farming will erode all topsoils in the next decades. Water is also being depleted as irrigation lowers aquifers faster than they are replenished and dead zones in oceans below river deltas are the repositories of toxic, chemical runoff from industrial agriculture.
5. The export-import economy of globalization has dismantled local production and distribution infrastructures. As a result, food insecurity is increasing and transportation costs, environmentally and financially, increase the prices on what we eat.

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During this next decade we need transformational change of epic proportion. Our eating habits can change much of this devastation. So can lobbying to shift government subsidies for industrial agri-business and the entire industrial food supply system to local agriculture, small farms, and non-fossil fuel energy.

Dirt loves to regenerate when we cooperate with Nature's organic wisdom instead of imposing industrial ways upon her.

Actions for Groups and Individuals

1. How do you explain that there is so much hunger in the U.S. and globally even though more than enough food is being produced to feed everyone?
2. What are the most effective actions you can take to address or remove hunger and malnutrition? Name no more than two that are most effective.
3. What are the primary causes of food production that is unhealthy when it is possible to produce food that is almost all healthy?
4. What options do you have as a group or individually for eating food produced in ways that also care for Earth?
5. How dependent is your diet on meat? Discuss in the group the role of meat in your menus past or present.
6. Can you avoid fast foods? If so, what has helped you learn to do so?

3. Epic Change Means Learning and Embracing the Ancient-Modern Food Story

The prevailing food story arose 12,000 years ago in the Sumerian region between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The Neolithic or Agricultural Revolution began in that region. It evolved and spread with civilization. European versions traveled to the U.S. in 1600s. When settlers reached the Great Plains, the story describes how farmers made these great prairies of the U.S. into farmland with the use of the plow. More recently, the "green revolution" brought farming into the industrial age. The story continues with the globalization of the food supply so that crops growing best in some parts of the world became specialties of those regions and countries, increasing their cash through exports and allowing them to import what grows better in other regions. Technologies conquered problems of water supply through dams and irrigation systems. Powerful agri-business corporations promised to end hunger by marshaling the financial muscles and technological advancement that would promote efficiency of production. They see hunger as an issue of production, so they must produce more and increase yields. This story portrays itself as the hope for the world through progress and growth. It maximizes the economic power of the market to achieve the best possible food supply. It has integrated sophisticated business practices with farming, bringing new possibilities to farmers and the entire food supply chain. It works with governments to write their food policies, presenting themselves as the experts. Small farmers have been told for the last

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few decades to get big or get out. Promoters of this story say that there is no alternative. And most people, consciously or unconsciously, make their food choices as part of this story.

But there's another story. It tells how people throughout its food supply chain have come to a new consciousness about the industrial farming story, most especially that it is ecologically unsustainable and that it repeatedly fails to deliver on its promises to everyone—the hungry, the growers, the healthy diet-seekers, the farmers, the soil's fertility, or the sustainability of species and better seeds. Tellers of this story speak of organic, biodynamic, and regenerative methods—of working with Nature instead of imposing upon her. Regional food supplies often called “food-sheds” increase food sovereignty and food security. This story connects with herding and gathering cultures prior to the Neolithic/Agricultural Revolution. It continues through Indigenous peoples everywhere up to the present. It promises sufficiency, sustainability, and democracy because it adapts to each region's culture and needs. All who live by this story understand hunger can be solved by laying aside supply and demand in favor of better distribution and decentralized structures of production. This story is not about maximizing profits. Its practitioners know that they are choosing a way of life rooted in an Earth-based paradigm, instead of bigger incomes. Even as they shun business models vigorously promoted to farmers, they testify to feeling happier. Restoration comes to them working close to the soils and in the love of joining Nature in making healthy dirt. They value aligning themselves with the sacred powers of nature rather than conquering them. They constantly create infrastructures and processes together to create soil, species, communities, and people experiencing well-being. This story is under-represented at the tables of policymakers—indeed, I would be more honest to say that it is entirely excluded from the tables where food industry decisions are made. Despite the lack of government favors, it feels its deep connection with Earth and all life. Practitioners believe in this story even more deeply than they feel pain from the other story. They know their story is simultaneously ancient and modern.

These two stories express different values. They help us see that eating is a moral choice, a choice that has to do with life and death, not only our own, but of the entire community of life.

When our eyes open to the mega-morality of our food choices, we can feel pretty overwhelmed. But it isn't as difficult as at first we fear. Truth is, these two stories get acted out in real life through two different sets of structures—the paradigm of agri-business and the paradigm of agri-culture. Agri-culture is the most proven food supply practices known on our planet.

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So, making a huge economic and ecological difference is easier than we may have thought. We don't need to become the Secretary of Agriculture or get a position at the United Nations. We only need to get as much consciousness as possible about how the structures of agri-culture differ from those of agri-business and then participate in every local expression of agri-culture that we can. It is the way our households and institutions can deliver a new economy.

Actions for Groups and Individuals

1. Discuss: What is most important to you in thinking of our food decisions as moral decisions?
2. Discuss: How can we speak about the morality of our food decisions in ways that are not judging ourselves or others harshly, but connect that understanding the morality of food decisions as a means of empowering greater justice and health?
3. Practice pushing your shopping cart with the prayerful mantra: I want to do justice with my decisions on this shopping experience. Then, report back to the group on your experience.

4. Sacred texts

A. The Cosmic Food Supply Story

The emerging economy of the 21st century recognizes Creation, or cosmology, as our container, not our adversary. We do not need to conquer nature, we need to copy her.

You may be familiar with bio-mimicry, the concept of mimicking or copying nature in creating practical products like velcro copying the stickers on plants that stick to our pants or leggings if we walk through them. That's using biomimicry for inventions that are then patented by inventors. its most restrictive use, biomimicry refers to products that have been developed by seeing it work first in nature. Some corporations have people researching the animal and plant communities to see what is already known there that has an applicable use in the human community. A product is then engineered and patented using nature's millions of years of research and development -- all part of the wealth of the commons. The commonwealth is copied into private wealth, bypassing the research costs that would have been spent in discovering it. Velcro fasteners are one example of such products, copying one of the ways plant seeds stick to animals and people moving by, assuring that their seeds will be scattered throughout the community of life.

But I am most interested in a larger use of bio-mimicry. Let's let nature teach us the best story for us to live by. Since we are part of nature, it should come naturally to us. But when we think of ourselves outside of nature, making her an object of our experiments rather than the teacher, we have a tragic experiment underway aiming to improve on nature. Better to recognize nature and the cosmos for the living, evolutionary story that

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they are. When we understand ourselves to be part of that story, we eagerly watch what she does and copy her every way we can. We know her story is the mighty story of life itself. Every day she gives us so much, yet we live with astonishing unconsciousness about it. We have created an industrial system that depends on ancient sunlight stored in fossils to fuel the industrialized world even though the cosmos has arranged the sun to send us fresh energy everyday—more than enough in one day to fuel the engines of life for a year. Our unconsciousness is to our detriment, and to the death of all life. It is the cosmic story, not the story of human civilization, that tells us where everything is heading.

The cosmic food supply story has evolved over billions of years, creating the necessary interdependent, democratic community of infrastructure with such patience and imagination that, when we see it, we are in awe. Such wisdom! Such mystery! Such complexity, balance, and diversity!

We don't need to create a new food supply system. We need to copy, or just be part of, the ancient-modern system developed by our cosmos. We will want to learn from the plants and animals themselves. We will study the interdependence of predators with their prey, and the healthy balance engendered by the plant and animal diversity of a region. We will read the sky for rain and sun. We will honor the seasons and eat in their rhythms. All this and more we will seek to replicate rather than control. Every human system gives profit and plenty to some, but too little and starvation to others.

Putting our full faith in the cosmic system, we embody ourselves in nature. No human will take more than what the region can grow, copying the animals and plants in how much is enough. Bio-diversity will be valued displacing all tendencies to create monocultures of crops in the name of efficiency or convenience or economy of scale. Surplus for profit becomes secondary; abundance or sufficiency for all is the highest prize. Any business model that cannot express this revealed wisdom of the cosmos will be considered suspiciously and regarded as hostile to the real story of life.

This leads me to address one of the very important, basic changes that congregations need to make in their understanding of sacred texts. In religions of the world, "sacred text" means a collection of written words that is understood as special, holy, a bible. I am not taking from that understanding, but adding to it. I want to emphasize that before humans ever knew how to write, or even to tell their stories or create their mythic explanations of how things are as the are, there was already a sacred text. It is the text of the cosmos. From this text people experienced the sacred. They felt awe and wonder. They felt its almighty powers, both as provision and as danger. To respect it was, they knew, the beginning of wisdom. It still is. Creation was and is the container of life.

The new economy makes Creation its container—not human civilization with its scenarios of progress, but creation with its evolutionary processes. In this it departs from the old economy of the industrial era culminating in the 20th century. That

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economy, still prevailing today among the world's leaders, regards Creation as something to be overcome or as a supplier of resources to be commoditized.

But here's an example of seeing and listening to the sacred text of creation.

What if, instead of asking "How shall I live my life?" people were to ask the land where they live, the land that supports them, "What can and must I do to become your ally, to help protect you from this culture? What can we do together to stop this culture from killing you?" If you ask that question, and you listen, the land will tell you what it needs. And then the only real question is: are you willing to do it?

-- Derrick Jensen in "World at Gunpoint or What's Wrong with the Simplicity Movement", *Orion* magazine, May/June 2009.

B. The Biblical Food Supply Story Emphasizes Paradigm Choice

The biblical economic story includes both narratives—domination and partnership, control and caring. It also chooses one and exposes the faults of the other. Jesus decisively opted for the caring, partnership narrative, making it the standard for all who wished to follow his Way. He emphasized creating and choosing structures for our lives that were different from the structures of Rome and the governing group in Jerusalem and Judea. They had opted for domination.

The caring, partnership paradigm is the Bible's overarching story in the compilation of texts that cover over 1000 years. The paradigm is variously called Jubilee or Kingdom of God. This economic paradigm is not limited to a few texts of the Bible; but once we have eyes to see, then our eyes pop open again and again as we see how the economic structures that were invoked to govern the Hebrew people following Egypt, and the followers of the Way of Jesus, were alternatives to the structures of domination. The exception being the years of the David-Solomon monarchies.

The food stories of the bible are strategic ways to choose life through the paradigm of caring and partnership instead of domination. Start with the manna gathered by people for each day following the exodus from the domination society of Egypt. Leap to the sharing miracles of Jesus in which he showed thousands how to be fed while the model of the Roman empire taught everyone that food and resources were scarce so they'd better look out for themselves. Continue with the banquet and feast stories that Jesus told in which the dominated ones were always partners at the food table. Continue with the Seder meal which annually remembered the liberation from the domination society and economy of Egypt. And, finally, conclude with what followers of Jesus 'Way called Agape meals and the Last Supper or Lord's Supper, a meal of enough for all—radical caring and partnership. These are the stories that comprise the larger food story of biblical economics.

So, once we connect the dots in this way, it becomes impossible for us to be disciples of Jesus 'Way and at the same time to help domination structures supply our food.

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Instead, we must make food choices that help a new economy of caring and partnership. This is not an option, but an imperative in contemporary discipleship.

In the 21st century, the meals served in congregational meetings and in member homes cannot be only about having good fellowship together. The food we serve is a sacrament of the cosmos, not a commodity of agri-business. Our meals are to nourish one another on the journey of resistance to the aggressive corporate structures that continue to destroy Earth's soil and rainforests as well as undermining our health and the safety of its food supply.

Actions for Groups and Individuals

1. Donate to relieve hunger through food banks and reputable service agencies, but understand that our other food supply decisions have greater impact for systemic change! Discuss in the group to whom you make these donations and why you pick that particular entity.

Note: In 2009, the number of hungry people globally has reached a historic high – 1.02 billion people (one in six people) going hungry every day.

Another source asks: How many people are hungry in the world? Globally, about 8.9% of the world's population — 690 million people — go to bed on an empty stomach each night. Since 2014, the number of people affected by hunger has been slowly on the rise. Oct 29, 2020

5 world hunger facts you need to know

World Vision <https://www.worldvision.org/hunger-news-stories/world-hunger-facts>

2. Discuss how your local food bank functions regarding the paradigms of agri-business and agri-culture.

3. Designate different people in the group to report back on one of the three additional resources below. Consider how each can help in our food supply actions.

4. If you've been interested in the Bible, have you read it considering the food stories as teaching about which paradigm is being used. Does it make a difference to you in the significance of that story?

Resources

"Farms at the Breaking Point Worldwide" describes the dangerous tipping point at which industrial agri-business hovers. Read it here:

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/02/05/farms-breaking-point-worldwide> How we choose to eat makes a huge difference in the use of land and water. The farmers can't do it without the urban populations choosing new actions.

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Consumer Reports cover lots of aspects on eating organic.

<https://www.consumerreports.org/organic-foods/what-do-you-really-get-when-you-buy-organic/>When it comes to costs, however, be careful to ask: Does this article factor in health costs, costs to workers, costs to the land?

Read *Grass, Soil, Hope: A Journey through Carbon Country* by Courtney White with a Foreword by Michael Pollan. <https://www.chelseagreen.com/product/grass-soil-hope/>