

Legalize Ag

Agriculture Reform Now!

www.legalize.ag

Led by prominent voices of seed, chemical and processing corporations, an agri-industrialist movement is jeopardizing food security and food sovereignty.



Michael Mack
CEO
Syngenta AG
Seed/Chemical Corporation
2008 Total Compensation
\$7.5 million



Greg Page
CEO
Cargill
Processing Corporation
2008 Total Compensation
\$ data not available



Patricia A. Woertz
CEO
Archer Daniels Midland
Processing Corporation
2008 Total Compensation
\$17.5 million



Charles O. Holliday Jr.
CEO
Dupont
Chemical Corporation
2007 Total Compensation
\$10.1 million



Hugh Grant
CEO
Monsanto
Seed/Chemical Corporation
2008 Total Compensation
\$35.8 million

Food Dependence: Access to food is solely by purchase.

The Peril of Industrial Agriculture

Industrial agriculture is devastating our land, water, and air, and is now threatening the sustainability of the biosphere. Its massive chemical and biological inputs cause widespread environmental havoc as well as human disease and death. Its monoculturing reduces the diversity of our plants and animals. Its habitat destruction endangers wildlife. Its factory farming practices cause untold animal suffering. Its centralized corporate ownership destroys farm communities around the world, leading to mass poverty and hunger. The industrial agriculture system is clearly unsustainable.

Myth: Industrial agriculture will feed the world.

Truth: World hunger is not created by lack of food but by poverty and landlessness, which deny people access to food. Industrial agriculture actually increases hunger by raising the cost of farming, by forcing tens of millions of farmers off the land, and by primarily growing commodity crops such as corn, cotton, wheat, soy and rice destined for livestock feed, processing or biofuel.



“Food is a weapon. It is now one of the principal tools in our negotiating kit.”

**-Earl Butz,
U.S. Secretary
of Agriculture
January 21, 1971 to
October 4, 1976**

Monsanto's Pledge

“We want to make the world a better place for future generations. As an agricultural company, Monsanto can do this best by providing value through the products and systems we offer to farmers. With the growth of modern agricultural practices and crops that generate ever-increasing yields, we are helping farmers around the world to create a better future for human beings, the environment, and local economies.”

Truth: Monsanto and other seed and chemical corporations use a form of emotional blackmail to persuade people to accept their biotechnology. They claim modern genetically modified crops will be a savior and fix many of the very real and pressing problems that they created in the first place.

Apologists of agricultural biotechnology insist that genetic engineering is a faster, more precise way to improve crops than traditional plant breeding methods, when the reality is genetic engineering has not been proven safe due to the fact that it takes genes from a species such as a fish or a virus and places them into an entirely different species, such as a tomato.

Furthermore, genetic engineering also turns seeds themselves into “intellectual property,” so farmers using genetically modified seeds do not legally own them. This new ownership arrangement makes it illegal to engage in the time-honored tradition of saving seeds. In the United States and Canada, Monsanto even pressed this concept to the point of hiring private investigators to swipe plants from farmers they suspected didn't buy their seeds, and they sued an elderly Canadian farmer for “patent infringement” because his fields became contaminated with their genetically modified canola.

The genetic engineering and patenting of living organisms give corporations, such as Monsanto, radical new powers with unpredictable consequences.

21st Century U.S. Slavery: Immigrant Farmworkers

The idea that in the year 2008, in the United States of America, people are being indicted for slavery is almost beyond comprehension. Yet this indictment sheds a light on the kind of conditions tomato workers in Florida are forced to live in.

Those who work in the tomato fields throughout Florida earn subpoverty wages and have no health care coverage or freedom to form unions. Growers have paid the farmworkers in that state roughly the same wages for the past 30 years.

Some people might say, "Well, I don't pick tomatoes why do I have to worry about it?" And the answer is that so long as these types of abysmal working conditions exist in the U.S., they create a culture which leads us to the race to the bottom.

Taking a stand against the beating, threatening and restraining of employees, the act of locking them in trucks to force them to work, should be among the easiest calls a politician ever makes.



Politics of the Plate: Florida's Slave Trade

A little slavery is ok, just not too much of it...that appears to be the official government position in the state of Florida, and it could explain why the fields of the Sunshine State provide such fertile ground for modern-day slavery. In the past dozen years, police have broken up and prosecuted seven slave operations there, freeing more than 1,000 men and women who were kept captive and forced to work for little or no money and threatened with death if they tried to escape.



"If you've lost the capacity to be outraged by what's outrageous, you're dead. Somebody ought to come and haul you off."

-Wendell Berry, farmer/author

The average age of the American farmer is 57.

Serve Your Country Food Manifesto

Coast to coast, thousands of people are inspired to dig in and grow food! Yet access to the land, capital, market savvy, and skills required for successful farming is available only to a dauntless few. Those few are brave, strong, and delightful advocates of the purposeful life, but it will take more than a few to reclaim a food system of industrial monocultures, labor abuse, and toxic factory conditions. This is the injustice our movement seeks to repair.

Indeed, it will take the muscle and heart of a large-scale, young-farmers movement: thousands upon thousands of hands on the land — the hands of women and immigrants, the hands of fourth-generation farm kids, the hands of college graduates and former farmworkers-turned-farmers. It will take thousands of new growers of fruits, nuts, vegetables, grains, dairy, and livestock to transform the landscape of sprawling development and corporate control into a dignified, livable, and culturally rich mosaic of ecological farming.

The young farmers now emerging onto the land seek to reclaim, restore, and resettle the deserted rural towns of America. We are similarly poised to revive the fabric of urban life with markets, gardens, bees, corn patches and waterways. Motivated by a force of intention that cannot be rationalized economically, with lives driven by an instinct for direct action and stewardship that honors the planet, people, and place, we are the allies of every American. Our instincts are emboldened by the mercury shatter of dew on the broccoli plants at dawn, by the roar of pollinators in a flowering crop of buckwheat, and by the river of neighbors streaming through the farm-gate clamoring for “real” tomatoes and happy chickens. The hands of young farmers on the land seek to push forward an agenda of sustainability on a human scale.

There is much to learn, and there is much, as a culture, that we risk forgetting. We need these bodies, we need their work, we need their food and their protagonism. We need young farmers to succeed and we need that success to be rewarded.

And what is success? Success is an edible future, when local populations are fed by local fields and sensible nutrition is affordable and accessible. Where we address poverty and hunger, not with biotechnology, but with long-term access to the means of production, and with proximity to that productive plenty which we can achieve only with careful stewardship of our soil and land base — a wealth immeasurable in dollars. Success is a smooth energy transition, a satisfying daily bread, a culture in which we have restored honor, and respect to the profession of farming.

www.serveyourcountryfood.net

In 1900, nearly 40% of Americans farmed full time. Today, only about 1% are actively engaged in raising the food we eat, and food imports are at an all time high. But as rising fuel costs, resource depletion, and the unprecedented challenges of climate change make industrial farming and long distance food transportation impractical and unsustainable, how will we feed ourselves and who will grow our food? If we follow the farming patterns of 1900, we will need 50,000,000 new farmers — experienced, healthy, intelligent, good-humored, committed individuals with exquisite ecological literacy — to provide the food we need for our current population. Where will they come from, how will we educate them, and how will the farms of the very near future be different from those we know today?



“The real arsenal of Democracy is a fertile soil, the fresh produce of which is the birthright of nations.” -Sir Albert Howard, botanist/organic farming pioneer

New Blood for the Old Body

Many of us never meant to become farmers. We had ambitions to enter the world as accountants or lawyers or teachers or some other clean, respectable professional. We never really thought about the origins of our food; we always knew that the supermarket shelves would fill themselves, that food came in boxes or cans ready to serve and that farmers were simply one dimensional photographs in the mix of a hot new marketing campaign.

Farming was at best some idyllic retirement scheme, never a seriously considered career possibility. But then something happened. In the previously steady route of our lives, a shift occurred. The soil moved under us somehow, got stuck in the creases of our pants, in the ridges of our shoes, in the lines of our palms. Suddenly white picket fences, situation comedies and mutual fund returns didn't seem so interesting anymore. The big ball game and the driving range became distractions from the reality of a new love affair. We got hooked on the possibilities of growing our own food and also providing that food to others.

The epiphany was likely different for many of us. Maybe a friend took us to a farmers' market. Maybe someone had a plate of local hamburgers or collards at a picnic. Maybe the news of some global food disaster made us question the monocultures piled high on our plates. Maybe a real life farmer entered our life.

For a few of us, those with farming in our past — a childhood spent in the fields of the big farms or the family plots, throwing rocks into the hedgerows for little or no pay or watching over milking machines in the stench of industrial sized barns — there was no love, no kind of encouragement, no appreciation for our part in the dynamics of food production. We were simply limbs and calluses then, small gears in a giant cranking clock. We left the farm to pursue something else only to be pulled back hard when it became apparent that we could abandon everything that farming once meant to us. We could make it ours.

Still others came to farming from DIY and anti-authoritarian backgrounds, building urban community gardens or putting up food in anarchist collectives. Gardening always had a community aspect to it, but we wanted something more. We knew that we could do the work, that we had the right vision and skills. We just needed the access and the resources to get started.

Regardless of how we arrived at this point, here we are; we will call ourselves farmers from now on. Our new loves — with their sharp hooves and unfamiliar odors, bright green leaves and bee-covered flowers — give all the confidence to continue and pursue every goal we can imagine. Our new hates — hail, crop failures and rain on market days — fully test our tolerance and keep those same goals in the territory of attainability. Throughout all the highs and lows we can look at ourselves over and over again, knowing that, if we stick to our ideals, we can do noble and appropriate work no matter what happens.

Local and sustainable farmers are our peers and our heroes, the most supportive, loving and steadfast community we could ever hope for.

We young and new farmers have the opportunity to change the features of the agricultural systems we have come to inherit. Through the way we speak, act and work we can change the old infrastructure, market by market and county by county. We have the time and ability to influence extension agents, educational systems and other institutions to make them function the way we need them to function in order to attain a sane and purposeful community based food system.

We are the new blood in the old body.

www.cricketbread.com