

What alternatives are consistent with Friends' values?

- ❖ Learning more about the consequences of our own food choices and encouraging others to do so.
- ❖ Eating lower on the food chain to promote energy efficiency in agriculture, as well as for our health. Grain-based diets generally require fewer natural resources and have less saturated fat.
- ❖ Encouraging healthy and Earth-friendly potlucks in our Meetings and communities.
- ❖ Recycling food waste by composting or using worm beds.
- ❖ Buying from local farmers using organic methods, integrated pest management (IPM), and humane livestock practices.
- ❖ Buying from farmers markets and community supported agriculture (CSAs).
- ❖ Avoiding highly processed and over-packaged foods.
- ❖ Buying "Fair Trade" products.
- ❖ Supporting local, state, national, and international policies to improve food and land equity (e.g. living wages, farmland preservation, research on agricultural practices).
- ❖ Supporting organizations working on sustainable agriculture, such as the Consortium for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education and the Pesticide Action Network.

The earth is generous in her bounties and deserves our thanks and care.



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Quaker Earthcare Witness

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QEW's Vision

WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God's Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth's ecological integrity.

Simplicity as Spiritual Exercise series

Healthy Food



Healthy Planet

*Do our eating habits and
choices support our values
and visions as Friends?*

Quaker Earthcare Witness

Healthy Food, Healthy Planet

Do our eating habits and choices support our values and visions as Friends?



WHEN we pause to give thanks before a meal, we are acknowledging that the food we eat is integral to our spiritual journey. It is also communion with the body and blood of the Earth. What we eat and how we produce it are fundamental ways that we demonstrate, or fail to demonstrate, right relationships with the natural world.

As Kathleen Plunkett-Black of Northern YM notes, abused land, broken families, poisoned water, and miles and miles of highways paved are part of what makes most meals possible. (The food on most dinner tables travels an average of 1,500 miles.) Can we see the paths by which food comes to us and ask how things might be different?

Everyone is affected by agriculture because everybody eats, yet currently the power over food decisions is distributed very unequally. At the same time, we affect agriculture: We send powerful messages through our food purchases about what we want produced and how. Jeremy Rifkin says, "Eating is the ultimate political act."

Why should we be concerned about current food production practices?

The food we eat may cause:

- ❖ Soil erosion, overgrazing, chemical contamination. (Wendell Berry says that in the past two centuries North American farms have lost half their topsoil.)

- ❖ Degradation of fresh water.
- ❖ Degradation of oceans (overfishing and contamination).
- ❖ Global climate change and ozone depletion through agricultural practices, especially excessive energy use in production, processing, packaging, and transport.
- ❖ Loss of biodiversity through habitat loss, genetic degradation, and poisoning by agricultural chemicals.

We may be eating food that:

- ❖ Is contaminated by bacteria and molds, due to current food production and processing methods, which can promote antibiotic resistance.
- ❖ Exposes farmers, farmworkers, and farmworkers' families (including infants via breast milk) to known carcinogens and endocrine system disruptors.
- ❖ Is causing birth defects and "blue baby syndrome" from nitrate contamination of groundwater.

Our food choices may contribute to:

- ❖ Imbalance of power over food supply by corporations.
- ❖ Violence within and between countries because of scarcity of food or unequal access to means of food production.
- ❖ Inefficient use of land due to trends toward meat-intensive diets in industrialized and developing societies.

John Woolman asked Friends to consider whether the seeds of war might be found among their possessions. Today he might also ask us to consider whether the seeds of injustice and environmental destruction might be found on our dining tables.

Some things to consider before our next meal are:

- ❖ Human-caused environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity violate the rights of other species.
- ❖ The right to adequate food is denied for at least 1.2 billion people; food security needs are unmet for millions more.
- ❖ Access to land on which to grow food is an issue both in subsistence societies and more affluent societies.
- ❖ Many farm animals suffer greatly.
- ❖ Increasing loss of control over food choices deprives us of autonomy.
- ❖ The use of new agricultural technology and the race to "own" genetic resources is driven by profits for private companies, not by democratic decisions.

The testimony of simplicity calls us to a life filled with the spirit, rather than things. Though food can be a joyful community experience, too much and too rich food, and food which is potentially dangerous to our bodies and to our planet may be a barrier to a spirit-filled life.

(Over ➡)