

Food Systems: Our Bodies & Our Planet



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While initial intentions towards current food systems and agricultural food practices aimed to address starvation, food insecurity, and nutritional deficiencies, these methods now contribute to overconsumption, malnutrition, chronic disease, and destructive agricultural practices that drive climate change and environmental degradation. The goal of American food corporations has become to produce copious amounts of food on limited amounts of land to sell at extremely affordable prices, but detrimental shortcuts are taken to achieve these means. Food has become the top cause of preventable disease, but a widespread ignorance towards food has led experts to proclaim that the American diet is killing us. Due to the large amounts of unsustainable mass-produced foods, first world countries are faced with

various health issues and environmental concerns harming our bodies and our planet.

Our bodies. The government supports the overproduction of top crops such as corn, wheat, and soy which become highly processed into starchy, sugary, and addictive products that provide an abundance of calories but very few nutrients. Food produced in this manner irritates the lining of the gastrointestinal tract leading to increasing rates of physical and psychiatric disorders. New research is revealing how the microbiome is intimately connected to mental well-being via the vagus nerve extending from the brainstem through the digestive tract and various organ systems. This indicates the importance of diet and digestive health on full-body functioning, overall quality of life, and how crucial it is to become educated on what is consumed on a daily basis. More people complain every day about lethargy, brain fog, and how they absolutely need a cup of coffee in the morning just to get through the day, and most often people do not even realize how life-changing diet alterations can be.

Our planet. Current agricultural food practices are the number one cause of climate change. Conventional farming practices damage the environment through deforestation, soil erosion, decreasing biodiversity, depleting water stores, and the utilization of resources for food processing, refrigeration, and transportation. Food waste alone contributes significantly to climate change through decomposition and methane production. The consequences of increasing greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere polluting our planet are evident through fires, floods, hurricanes, and droughts.

The good news, we can fix it. Fortunately, food-related struggles, illness, and environmental effects are often unnecessary and preventable. While current food systems wreak havoc on our health and the environment, shifts in global food policy can support developing agricultural practices, regenerative farming, better quality foods with more diversity and improved

distribution, and redirect subsidies used for GMO seed, pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. To eliminate various issues, turn things around, and become healthier as a society, people must become more informed about the impacts of food systems. Through increasing awareness, we can restore degraded soils, decrease the amount of carbon in the atmosphere, and stall climate change. Invest in your health and your planet by participating in behaviors that encourage change.

- Shop at local farmers' markets.
- Buy regeneratively grown foods.
- Practice composting.
- Cook at home.
- Vote to reform policy to fund and develop agricultural practices.
- Write to your representatives.
- Raise awareness. Speak up in local communities.
- Donate to grassroots movements.

Unhealthy diets and food oversight are having an enormous impact on national well-being and most Americans are vastly unaware. By bringing attention to the magnitude of the problem, we can redirect food systems and the American diet to provide adequate nutrition in a sustainable manner.