

A-05 Com-Ag Impact on Food and Nutrition

The siren song of commercial food supply is oh-so strong. Just stop by the store and there it is. No work, no sweat, no angst—just buy it and the problem is solved. Or is it? Getting lazy is incredibly easy yet this pushes the homesteader farther and farther from the high-quality food that makes all the difference in a high-quality life. It takes work—the right kind of work—but the results are incalculable.

When the first bountiful harvest comes in, the millstone of commercial agriculture that hangs on so many necks is broken. Those in com-ag today are no longer farmers—they are diesel mechanics driving big machines. To grow real food for real humans on a sustainable scale is becoming lost knowledge. We in the homestead community are changing this scenario. We know where our food comes from because we nurture it from seed to consumption to seed again.

But all may not be lost. Many lessons are being learned in European agriculture—Netherlands, France, Spain, Germany—that are emerging in the United States. It's not perfect, but massive volumes are being grown in limited space. Food farmers of the future will know aquaculture, composting, and closed-loop systems. But much more will be required to feed the masses of ignorant urban people who still think science will save them in the face of inevitable climate change.

This begs the major question of com-ag production for animal feed instead of human food and changing dietary habits toward less meat and much less sugar. Those big diesel machines working in corn and soybean fields are already relics of agriculture gone wrong. It's all over the news—the com-ag farmers of today have run out of time. Knowing the true source of food has become more important than ever and CV-19 seems to have awakened this reality. Change is coming—homesteaders are at the forefront.

2023 Update – The hoped-for bonanza from indoors hydroponic growing in America has fizzled and is in the process of failure. The companies have run into financing issues. Primarily, they attracted the wrong kind of investors—those who anticipated typical 150% returns like they had experienced in tech. When it didn't happen and the companies still needed financing to stay afloat, indoor growing of veggies suddenly shut down. Once again, Americans are beholden to com-ag and the so-called food they are peddling.

2025 Update – At least one enterprise is bootstrapping its growth in targeted Midwest markets.

Ultra-Processed So-Called “Food”

How These Products are Manufactured – When products are presented through com-ag to grocery stores to consumers, these so-called foods have been manufactured. To a very great degree what is presented results from breaking down original ingredients for mass production and shelf-life longevity—from the factory to trucks to storage to more trucks to grocery stores. The whole point to ultra-processed foods is to minimize financial loss to the manufacturers through spoilage. It has nothing to do with nutrition or the quality of what is being sold to consumers.

How This Happened – It began with the consolidation of farming into large corporations. This created long supply chains with distribution across thousands of miles instead of simply down the road. As urban consumers became accustomed to any-time-of-the-year availability of food products, com-ag sought out means for minimizing loss and maximizing profit. This led to demands for convenience which resulted in wholly prepared meal products, such as frozen pizza, pasta, and canned baked beans. Today, every time any of us purchases and consumes ultra-processed food—everything from bread to juice—it has been manufactured in a factory for the profit of com-ag.

Wisdom – The Past is Now

The following is some interesting insight and forethought that was published in 1975 by Bernard Commoner, a professor at Washington University in St. Louis at the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems and was found via Wendell Berry in *The Unsettling of America*. It's part of a study on early organic farming called *A Comparison of the Production, Economic Returns, and Energy Intensiveness of Corn Belt Farms That Do and Do Not Use Inorganic Fertilizers and Pesticides*. Alright, that's quite a title but as extracted by Wendell Berry verbatim from this report, the following indictment on com-ag and the petrochemical industry is even more appropriate today, 50 years later:

Bernard Commoner "One can almost admire the enterprise and clever salesmanship of the petrochemical industry. Somehow it has managed to convince the farmer that he should give up the free solar energy that drives the natural cycles and, instead, buy the needed energy—in the form of fertilizer and fuel—from the petrochemical industry. Not content with that commercial coup, these industrial giants have completed their conquest of the farmer by going into competition with what the farm produces. They have introduced in the market a series of competing synthetics: synthetic fiber, which competes with cotton and wool; detergents, which compete with soap made of natural oils and fat; plastics, which compete with wood; and pesticides that compete with birds and ladybugs, which used to be free. The giant corporations have made a colony out of rural America."

Wendell Berry "The large organic farms studied used only 6,800 BTU to produce a dollar of output, while the [com-ag] farms used 18,400 BTU. Thus, organic farms appear to yield about the same economic returns as [com-ag] farms, but do so by using one-third less energy. This puts large organic farms in direct competition with the petrochemical industry."

Comment – So, what happens when big diesel machines of com-ag go silent as petrochemicals become too expensive to produce or become too scarce from limited reserves? How will you get food?

Where This Puts Us

As homesteaders, be it your backyard or in the country, you are correcting this dangerous trend through industrialized agriculture. You are bringing farming back to the earth, with your own hands and your own work. You are competing with com-ag and the petrochemical industries and you are winning, every day with every effort, no matter how small or how grand. You are taking control of your life, your health, and your soil. There is no price that can be put on what this means and there is nothing that the com-ag and petrochemical industries can offer to counter these important benefits.

This is why learning how to grow your own food is more important today than ever. Never has our health been dealt such devastating blows as wrought by com-ag and driven by the petrochemical industries. By taking control of your soil and your food, you will always come out ahead.

Chemicals in Your Food

One day we brought home a loaf of rye bread, prepared without preservatives, from an Amish bakery and nibbled on this bread for about seven weeks. It was held in refrigeration and was still fresh without a hint of mold or degradation in taste. Next to this rye bread were some thin sandwich rounds, loaded with chemicals, as you can see below. This bread was about six weeks in the refrigerator and was equally fresh as the rye bread without chemicals. So, which is better: bread with no chemicals or bread with chemicals?



Amish Bread. Seven weeks old.

Photo 4.1.1-2 (b)



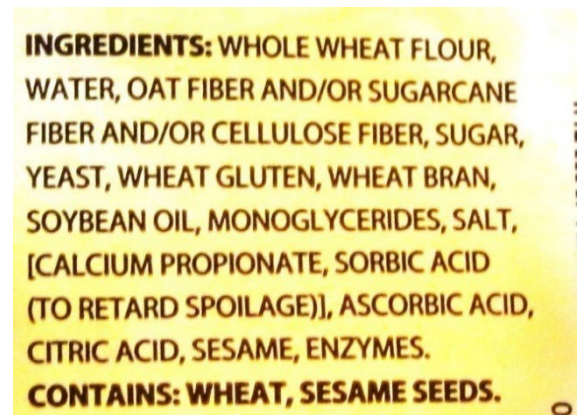
Amish Bread Ingredients

Photo 4.1.1-3 (b)



Com-ag Bread. Six weeks old.

Photo 4.1.1-2 (b)



Com-ag Bread Ingredients

Photo 4.1.1-3 (b)

Life Without Chemicals – As children we recall bread from local bakeries prepared with the good work of a baker's hands—without chemicals, just like the Amish do today. During ensuing years, it is clearly apparent com-ag has foisted chemicals in their food products upon an unwitting public. As the Amish bread proves, chemical preservatives are contrived by com-ag as another way to compete with farmers. And who absorbs the cost of these chemicals? You—by paying com-ag to put chemicals in your food.

Health Through Chemicals – Scientific studies are far from necessary to see the results. Just look around and count the round bodies. You won't see this in other parts of the world that don't have a com-ag food industry. Then count the number of people you know who have suffered or scammed to various diseases. With commonsense and the willingness to accept Occam's Razor, it all comes back to the food you eat.

Selling More Com-Ag Food – Here's another point about the freshness of com-ag bread with all those chemicals. Did you ever notice different colored twist ties and code-stamped tabs on the packages? These are intended for stock rotation. Really? With all those preservatives? This stock rotation is yet another com-ag trick to manufacture and sell more of the same, over and over again.

Processing the Waste – What happens to all that bread returned from stores? First, it goes into day-old sales outlets, run by the same com-ag manufacturers—at steep discounts. After that, it goes to either landfills or to hog farmers. As to the hogs—think about the chemicals these animals have been consuming, how these become part of their bodies, and what you consume with that tasty bacon or pork chop.

Single-Use Plastic – What about all those plastic bags? That’s another part of the com-ag chemical complex—the petrochemical industry with its massive proliferation of single-use plastics. The only reason for plastic packaging on foods is to entice you with visual appearance to buy that product. Again, it all comes back to making profits for com-ag.

Bottom Line – Com-ag chemicals are unnecessary, as witnessed with Amish bread, all for the sake of enriching their profits at the expense of your health. They can run from the truth, but they can’t hide.

How We Got Here with Food and Nutrition

Who is at Fault

The original mandate of the USDA is to protect and promote the interests of commercial agriculture. No matter how this is dressed up to the public, this mandate still holds today.

Politics of Food

You’ve heard this before: Money talks and BS walks. When com-ag comes calling to our elected officials in Washington DC, money to keep the politicians in their jobs is what gets grease on the wheels to get what com-ag wants—ever increasing, or at best maintaining, profits.

Bureaucracy of Food

The same lobbyists who call on politicians also call on those in administrative positions. Politicians allot the money but they listen to bureaucrats from which they seek advice—not on what’s good for you, but what’s good for the politicians and bureaucrats. This machine in Washington DC will only listen to consumers when it directly impacts their interests which follows an old proverb, probably Chinese in origin, of protecting their rice bowls—what feeds them personally. If the rice bowl goes empty, they will resort right back to the bottom tier of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.

Your Impact on Food

Com-ag is a business and all businesses survive and thrive on making a profit. How you decide to utilize your money in the commerce of food is the only way you will ever get the attention of com-ag to make changes in the food you consume. Get smart and buy smart—the changes will follow. Meanwhile, how will you, personally, deal with the bottom tier from the Hierarchy of Needs?

What You Can Do

To the best of your ability and circumstances: grow your own—make your own—consume your own. Otherwise, choose wisely what you purchase and start learning how to feed yourself with the best possible foods. It’s been done before, it’s being done today, and you can do it, too.