

Feed yourself first

Somewhere along the line farming became less about the land and more about making money.

To me a lot of this happened during the thirties and forties when more and more books began to talk about making farming more "businesslike". Today most of our Ag schools teach a curriculum simply about the business end of farming. The land itself becomes a means to an end. Similar to the way that college has become a means to an end. Rather than learning for the sake of learning, our children are now taught to learn for a future income.

To me farming must start with the very simple maxim of "Feed yourself first". The growth of the chemical age and the attitudes of business agriculture has allowed farmers to become as distanced from the source of their food as the consumers to whom they sell their chemical laden food. Most farmers, including those in my family buy their food at the grocery store.

The distance from the farmer to his food allows the farmer to more easily ignore what he applies to both his own food, and the consumers he caters to. Secondly, the distance created by chemical agriculture also keeps the farmer from observing in his own crops the results of his use of chemicals. In my orchard, I walk out everyday, and just look at my trees during the growing season. I observe the health of the foliage cover, the presence of pests, the reaction of my trees to drought and wet weather, etc.. I do this, because I can most easily stop trouble before it starts.

However chemical farmers have the magic spray schedule. Rather than seeing their crops, they spray on a schedule. They are unable to see the reasons they have problems. For instance in a sprayed orchard it is likely that bee activity will be greatly reduced. This results in crops becoming smaller and smaller over the years. My grandfather 's orchards have become so denuded of bees, that he arranges to have beemen bring bees to him. Never mind that in a healthy organic orchard, bees will naturally come (assuming that others in the area aren't

killing them).

When we moved onto our place a little over a year ago, it was winter. When spring came I was appalled at how few bees were here. I had lousy crops last year! However, after a year of organic culture, this year I had loads of bees. Of course I didn't spray any poison this last year (I suspect it was used here before) I am also planting a lot wider array of plants with lots of flowers to encourage bee activity, including seeding the orchard with wildflowers this year.

I pray Frank is right about returning to a more agrarian culture, however, I'm not holding my breath. Nevertheless, it is my belief that in the final analysis, change happens one person at a time. So I do everything I can to make my little corner of the world as healthy as I can. I figure with farmers like me and each and everyone of you chipping away at the granite face of chemical farming and gardening, then eventually through sheer tenacity we're bound to make headway. I think that there is ample evidence it is already happening. People are becoming more and more concerned about what goes into their mouths. A very good thing! The biggest thing I know is that when I reach my hand under a little hen for a fresh egg, or drink a glass of our fresh goats milk, or brush a little bee away from the fruit I am about to pick, life is really good! I love to grow things!

Little bit Farm

From: "Dee Ann Guzman"