

From: Marlena Hirsch <marlenahirsch@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, January 18, 2010 12:26 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>; ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: concerns about farming in the USA

Hi

I am glad you are hosting these workshops. I am very concerned about the state of farming in the US. For one thing the farm subsidies are from a older different era and no longer applicable. We need to be promoting sustainable agriculture that does not pollute the planet or our bodies. There is much that needs to be changed.

As you know, methane accounts for 26% of global warming and half of the methane comes from big agriculture. Chemical fertilizers also contribute to Global warming. We need to include the cost to the environment in all calculations so that our decisions can be realistic.

It is time to embrace local organic farming of all kinds. The first step would be to phase out government subsidies of agriculture that is favoring a two or three crops like corn and soybeans. The corn is being taken apart and put back into junk foods that then can be sold inexpensively. No wonder we have obesity.

Organic farming works. I do it in my back yard. I don't have problems with insects as I have a fairly balanced ecosystem where the different types of insects are in balance to each other.

The public can be educated to understand and appreciate organic food. The tastes can be richer when a crop is not over fertilized and watered. This makes organic farming a wonderful thing to get used to. For example, working with school children so that they garden and enjoy the tastes of what they grow serves a purpose in our urban and suburban society. As good education seeks to show our youth the world and its wonders, our youth need to get reconnected to the Earth in a hands-on way. Gardening does this. Perhaps a child in a developing country needs more computer lab time, but our youth need to get their hands in the soil. Good education seeds to fill in what is needed to give youth a full exposure to Earth's wonders.

As far as our health, there is interesting evidence that needs more research about the ratio of omega fatty acids. It seems like grass fed animals produce fatty acids with a healthier ratio than corn fed animals. Has anyone driven by a feed lot for cattle where they are fed corn. They are giant manure piles that the animals live on. The stench blows for miles. Is this humane?

I know we can promote great agriculture that can be sustained far into the future. Organic farming actually puts carbon back into the soil and out of our atmosphere. This is a win-win situation.

Marlena Hirsch
Making Plants Rejoice
Helping Youth Enjoy Learning
Finding Grace in Daily Living
<http://harvestpeace.blogspot.com>