



THINK GREEN



EAT GREEN

Sustainable Eating

What does it mean to eat sustainably? Previous newsletters have offered suggestions for ways to eat (and for ways we should not eat!) to improve both our health and that of our planet. Let's consider what sustainable eating is all about.

Sustainability.

The term is widely used, but what does it mean? This time-tested definition was first used by the United Nations Brundtland Commission on Sustainable Development in 1987: "Sustainable development [meets] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This affirmation to meet current needs *without jeopardizing* the resource needs of future generations is echoed in many interpretations of sustainability.

It's easy to transfer this description to **sustainable eating**. A good definition comes from ToTaste.com, A Culinary Nutrition Experience: "For a diet to be considered sustainable, food should be produced in a way that protects the environment and has a low impact on biodiversity, ecosystems, and natural resources." A sustainable diet should also be "nutritionally



adequate, safe, healthy, culturally acceptable and economically affordable.” Here is their list of 10 tips for sustainable eating.



How can we eat sustainably?

We are fortunate in Harford and Cecil counties to have a number of small farmers producing food with organic methods. Many of these farms offer CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture) memberships -- and some have winter shares. We also have several vibrant farmers markets, some operating nearly year-round, providing us with locally-produced, nutritious foods.

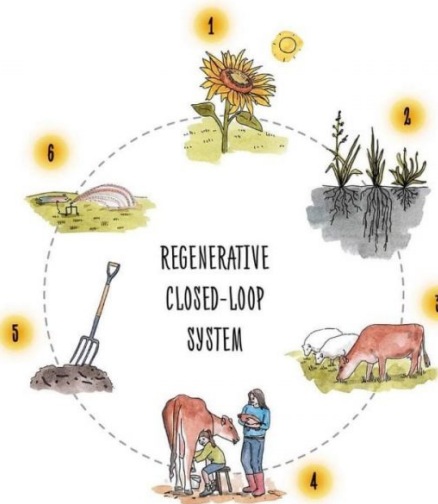
What can we do as individuals?

- We can choose to purchase our food from organic growers.
- We can decide to “eat seasonally,” when crops in our area are harvested at peak nutrition.
- We can purchase our food locally, thus avoiding transportation costs and greenhouse gas emissions.
- We can prepare our meals using whole foods, a good way to avoid unhealthy oils and excess sugars found in processed foods.
- Lastly, we can choose to eat less meat. If we look at food production's requirements for land use, water needs, fossil fuel consumption, and animal feed requirements, we find

animal agriculture to be the world's largest consumer of these resources, as well as the world's largest producer of waste and greenhouse gas emissions. Statistics supporting these well-recognized facts are included in a 2022 [report](#) from the University of Colorado Boulder Environmental Center as well as Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health nutrition [newsletter](#) published this year.



There are of course many farmers who choose to use regenerative and restorative agriculture methods, nourishing the soil and boosting its nutrients, and raising grass-fed animals in a closed-loop agriculture system. This method of farming involves recycling organic matter back into the soil where it was grown, adding animal waste, and maintaining nutrient and carbon levels in the soil. A definition of sustainable farming! Here is a [report](#) published by **Resilience.org** comparing closed loop agriculture with current traditional farming practices.

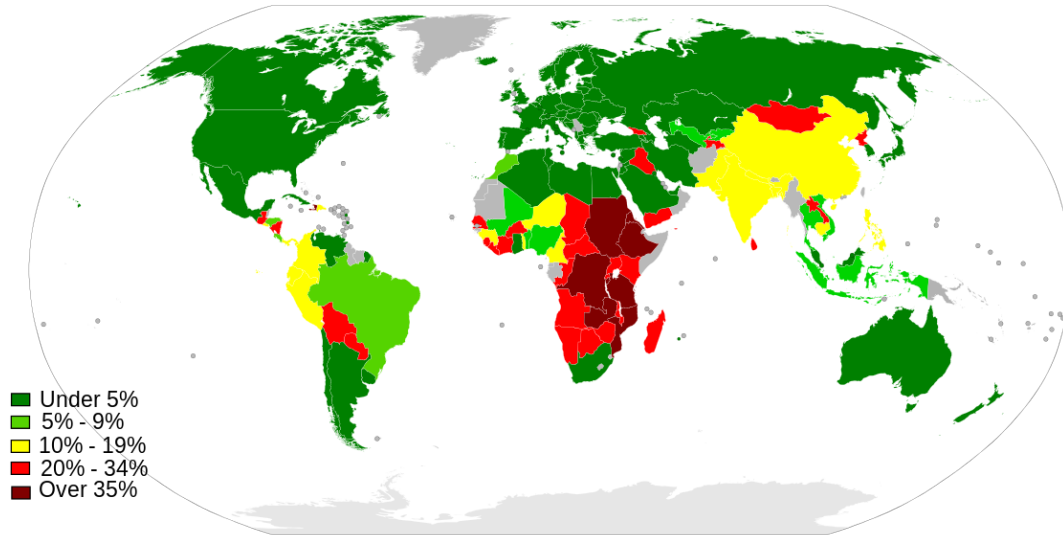


But what about the global food system?

Of the 7.8 *billion* people on our planet, there are many populations unable to provide for their own nutritional needs. A global food supply system is essential to feed the world's population, and a *sustainable* food supply is critical to the survival of our planet's environment. Achieving a sustainable global food system - with all populations having access to enough healthy and nutritious food - is an intimidating goal. It will require international cooperation: a major shift in food production from massive monocultures to sustainable agriculture production of nutritious foods, a tremendous decrease in

global meat consumption, and the cessation of deforestation and the resultant destruction of animal habitat and species diversification.

This map shows percentages of the world's populations that are undernourished.



The above-mentioned Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health nutrition [newsletter](#) contains this message:

The Bottom Line: Achieving a healthy and sustainable food system is an urgent matter that depends on collaborative efforts from governments, the private and public sectors, as well as individuals. Supply and demand work both ways—a shift in the food production landscape depends on a shift in our diets. We must be aware that our food choices ultimately impact more than just ourselves, and primarily plant-based diets are best for both health outcomes and the environment.

In the end, what's good for the planet is good for us too.

“Think Globally, Act Locally”

This phrase came into popular use in the 1970s, advocating that we consider the global environment as we take individual actions.

Each of us can make choices every day that promote sustainable eating and sustainable living.

Several ideas have been presented in this space. We invite you to review past [Think Green Eat Green](#) newsletters, all of which are posted on our website hdgreen.org

SOME GREEN THOUGHTS



"We spend a trillion dollars a year on food, but it's only 9.4 percent of our expendable income, the lowest percentage of any country on record."

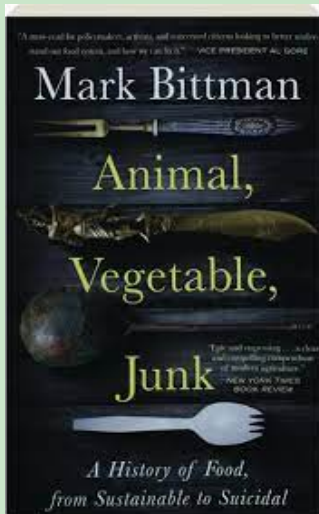
-Mark Bittman, author, food journalist, and former New York Times columnist

"My motto: choose organic always, local when possible, and pick animal products from cruelty-free producers who commit to the care of the animals who give their life for us to eat."

- Kristina Todini, registered dietitian nutrition (RDN) and founder of plant-rich food blog "Fork in the Road."

"One synonym of **sustain** is **nourish**."

-Anonymous



BOOK RECOMMENDATION

Animal, Vegetable, Junk : a history of food, from sustainable to suicidal by Mark Bittman.

From hunting and gathering to GMOs and ultra-processed foods, this expansive tour of human history rewrites the story of our species--and points the way to a better future.

Available at Harford County Public Library.

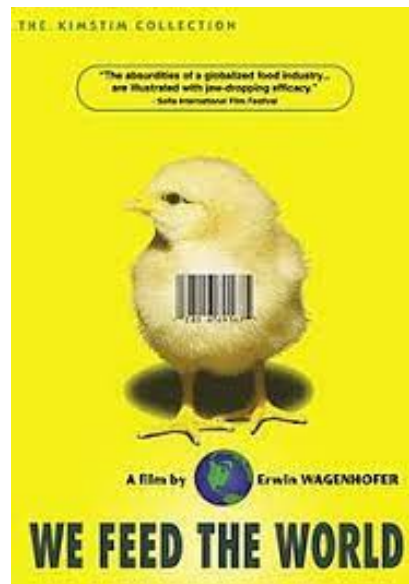


FILM RECOMMENDATION

We Feed the World

Reveals the distressing problems of the industrialized global food system and what world hunger has to do with us. Nearly 1 billion of the 7 billion people on Earth are starving, but the total amount of food produced could feed 12 billion people.

Available at Harford County Public Library.



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