

SUSTAINABLE VS. INDUSTRIAL

Have you ever wondered exactly how sustainable agriculture is better than industrial agriculture? Read on to learn some of the major differences.

HEALTH

Sustainable farms produce foods without excessive use of pesticides, hormones, antibiotics or petroleum-based fertilizers. This practice encourages short and long term health benefits and lessens the likelihood of certain diseases.

Industrial agriculture maximizes production and profits by using excessive amounts of chemical pesticides, herbicides and hormones that end up in what we eat, drink and breathe, endangering our health. Unsanitary conditions at factory farms and industrial slaughterhouses also cause food contamination, which sickens 76 million people in the United States each year.

ENVIRONMENT

Sustainable farmers protect the environment by managing their farms in a responsible manner, maintaining the fertility of the land without the use of toxic chemicals and preserving natural resources, including soil and water, for future generations.

Industrial agriculture causes massive topsoil erosion and aquifer depletion, undermines genetic diversity, and pollutes air, water, and soil with toxic chemicals, causing \$34.7 billion worth of environmental damage annually in the United States alone.

ANIMAL WASTE

Sustainable farms do not raise more animals than the land is capable of supporting. Farmers use composted manure as food for their crops, eliminating the need for chemical fertilizers. In turn, the crops that were fertilized by the manure provide healthy food for the animals.

Factory farms concentrate enormous numbers of animals in small areas, storing their waste in huge lagoons. It is then sprayed on surrounding fields, contaminating soil and water with pathogens, heavy metals, and excess nutrients, creating an overwhelming stench, and releasing hazardous gases that often sicken neighboring residents.

WATER

Sustainable farms conserve scarce water resources through practices such as drip irrigation and planting regionally-appropriate crops. By not using harmful pollutants, they protect local aquifers from contamination.

Industrial agriculture contaminates ground and surface water with toxic pesticide and fertilizer runoff, hormone and antibiotics residue, heavy metals and harmful pathogens contained in manure that seep into our water supply.

SOIL

Sustainable farming promotes soil fertility and land conservation through methods including crop rotation, planting of cover crops, and continual addition of organic matter. Efforts are currently in progress to perfect no-tillage techniques.

Industrial farming causes chronic erosion and depletion of nutrients due to extensive plowing, constant planting and reliance on toxic chemical pesticides and fertilizers that result in dead soil.

PESTICIDES

Sustainable farms minimize the use of pesticides and rely on alternative forms of pest control whenever possible. One such method, integrated pest management, involves carefully assessing the overall environment of a farm and using techniques including mechanical pest traps, predatory insects, and insect-repelling plants to control pests.

Industrial agriculture relies on the routine use of toxic pesticides applied to both crops and animals. These chemicals are known to pollute air, soil and water, and to damage human health.

ANTIBIOTICS

Sustainably raised meat and dairy animals are given antibiotics only to treat them when sick or, if in the case of organic certification, are not given antibiotics at all. Meat or dairy from animals that have been treated for an illness with antibiotics cannot be sold as organic, but may be labeled "no routine antibiotic use."

Industrially raised animals are regularly fed antibiotics to pro-

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SUSTAINABLE VS. INDUSTRIAL (CONT.)

mote growth and keep them alive in the unsanitary conditions in which they live. Federal legislation has been introduced that would ban this practice, which contributes to creation of antibiotic resistant bacteria that increasingly threaten human health.

HORMONES

Sustainable Farms do not give animals hormones. Due to health and safety concerns, the European Union and other nations have longstanding bans on meat from livestock raised with hormones.

Factory Farms routinely give hormones to livestock to speed up their growth, a practice that affects two-thirds of American cattle. Industrial dairy farms also use a hormone called rBGH to increase milk production. These hormones have been linked to illness in animals and humans.

BIODIVERSITY

Sustainable farms help preserve biodiversity by raising a wide range of animal and plant breeds that are adapted to their environment. This helps farmers avoid reliance on chemical pesticides, since a diversity of crops helps keep pests in check. Biodiversity also helps maintain healthy soil.

Industrial farms rely upon monoculture crop systems, which are usually genetically engineered, and a few selected animal breeds. This system drains nutrients from the land, allowing pests and disease to flourish. Genetically engineered crops further undermine genetic diversity.

FOSSIL FUELS

Sustainable farms minimize fossil fuel consumption by using manure and other organic matter as fertilizer. Many also market their food locally, thus expending less fuel for transportation. Small-scale organic farming operations have been shown to use 60 percent less fossil fuel per unit of food produced than industrial farms.

Industrial farms use energy-intensive production meth-

ods as the norm. Large amounts of fossil fuel are required to plow fields, transport foods over long distances, and produce fertilizers.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Sustainably raised animals are treated humanely and are provided proper shelter and food. They are allowed to carry out natural behaviors such as rooting in the dirt and pecking the ground.

Factory farmed animals are crammed together in confined areas without access to sunlight, fresh air, open pasture, or, in many cases, even enough room to spread their wings or turn around. Unsanitary conditions cause widespread disease and aggressive behavior. Animals are often deliberately mutilated to keep them in check.

ECONOMICS

Sustainable farms support local economies by providing jobs for members of the community and purchasing supplies from local businesses. A University of Minnesota study showed that small farms made almost 95 percent of farm-related expenditures within their local communities.

Factory farms hire as few workers as possible and purchase equipment, supplies, and animal feed from the same agricultural conglomerates they produce their products for, further stagnating struggling rural communities. A University of Minnesota study showed that large farms made less than 20 percent of farm-related expenditures locally.

WORKERS

Sustainable farms treat farm workers with respect, pay them a fair wage, and protect them from unnecessary dangers.

Industrial and factory farm laborers often endure unhealthy and dangerous working conditions and are not only paid unlivable wages, but are denied access to unions, overtime pay, safety training and worker compensation.

To learn more about sustainable local food, visit Sustainable Table at www.sustainabletable.org

