**Agricultural changes**

[Emily Folk](https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/emily-folk) January 20, 2020

Our current food system isn’t sustainable for growing nutritious crops, raising healthy livestock or feeding billions of people. Industrial livestock farming involves cramped, unclean quarters and stressful living conditions, and farmers inject animals with antibiotics mixtures.

Even natural brands are sometimes participants in greenwashing – putting ‘natural’ labels on foods that aren’t wholesome or chemical-free. The food system has to change in significant ways if it hopes to continue amidst changing climates and disappearing landscapes.

Past farming methods are no longer as lucrative or effective as they once were due to droughts and unpredictable weather. Farmers in areas of southern Europe have already suffered losses from weather events related to climate change.

Researchers expect the production of certain European crops to decline by 50 percent by 2050, which will eliminate a sizable proportion of their agricultural income.

The need for new agricultural methods only increases with our growing population. Growers must be able to provide wholesome, plentiful food for expanding communities.

Doing this can reduce global food insecurity and return farmland to a similar pre-industrial state. Agriculturists must take cues from both the past and future to decide how they can run farms without harming the environment.

Commercial farming carries tremendous responsibility for our current food system. Monocrops have monopolised fields and forests, clearing away vegetation that once supported biodiversity. Millions of people drink coffee and eat corn and rice, but not everyone knows the realities of how growers raise plants.

Other forms of plant life suffer from farmers prioritising one cash crop over the rest. Palm oil exists in everything from shampoo to potato chips, but palm plantations destroy forests and habitats. Mass production doesn’t come without a price.

Land conversion turns woodland areas and rainforests into vast fields and uproots the native animals. Agriculture causes most of the water pollution, overexploitation and biodiversity loss that wildlife environments experience.

Natural resources provide raw materials and goods amounting to $125 trillion per year, and major industries will keep taking more until nothing remains. Many environmentalists are advocating for more renewable sources to avoid depleting finite materials.

Westernised diets – featuring overprocessed and high-fat foods – have spread across numerous countries. Researchers have conducted studies suggesting this eating style negatively affects the immune system and the stomach’s microbiota.

Growers must introduce more varieties of foods into their harvests to resist this oversimplification of diets. Experts have theorised that sorghum could make a practical staple in global food systems due to its versatility.

Excerpted from: ‘Environmental Changes in our Food System’.

Commondreams.org