

# Investigating Sustainable Agriculture and Concepts to Encourage Sustainable Food Systems

Jimmy Shue

## Bibliography

Allen, P., FitzSimmons, M., Goodman, M., & Warner, K. (2003). Shifting plates in the agrifood landscape:

the tectonics of alternative agrifood initiatives in California, *19*, 61–75.

This paper examines agrifood initiatives in California. The goal is to understand whether the initiatives are oppositional, or merely alternative. There is a distinction in that oppositional initiatives are active in changing the root causes. Often these roots causes are more complex and difficult to address; issues such as income and wealth distribution.

Armstrong, D. (2000). A survey of community gardens in upstate New York: Implications for health

promotion and community development, *6*(4), 319–327. [http://doi.org/10.1016/S1353-8292\(00\)00013-7](http://doi.org/10.1016/S1353-8292(00)00013-7)

Donna Armstrong is an Associate Professor Emeritus at the University at Albany SUNY. In this paper, she outlines methods and findings from surveying community gardens in upstate New York. In general, this paper indicates many positive benefits that community gardens can provide. These benefits range from improved psychological health, physical health, better food, and increased community development. However, this is qualified with the fact that not all communities experienced these benefits from having community gardens.

Ashe, M., Feldstein, L. M., Graff, S., Kline, R., Pinkas, D., & Zellers, L. (2007). Local Venues for Change:

Legal Strategies for Healthy Environments.

The authors are program, policy, and legal directors; several are also staff attorneys. This article examines five areas of local policy that can be changed to build healthier environments. These policy recommendations are in light of major health problems in the U.S. such as obesity and diabetes. Several policy topics of relevance to this paper include earmarking taxes, zoning, and establishment of FMs and community gardens.

Cameron, J., & Wright, S. (2014). Researching diverse food initiatives: from backyard and community

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gardens to international markets, 9(1), 1–9. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2013.835096>

This editorial provides insight into researching about diverse food initiatives. The author states that the current capital-centric paradigm is flawed, and that “alternative” is a limited term. The basis is that global and local are not black and white. There are various complexities and nuances that should not be simplified. Researching and writing on food initiatives in the context of diversity allows a holistic approach. Overall, both global and local food systems can work together towards a sustainable future.

DeLind, L. B., & Bingen, J. (2008). Place and Civic Culture: Re-thinking the Context for Local Agriculture, 21(2), 127–151. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-007-9066-5>.

This paper critiques the concept of civic agriculture. The authors state that the concept cannot be meaningful without understanding the importance of place. A big problem is that civic agriculture has been reduced to a local commercial enterprise. A robust sense of civic engagement can only arise from an understanding of place. The paper expounds on the idea of place, and argue that place is not defined by occasional relationships. It involves ongoing building and restructuring of identities and values. Further, places provide physical and emotional grounding. Many of these concepts are mentioned in papers that discuss social capital and embeddedness. Clearly, social relationships define and influence economic relationships.

Ecologist. (1994). Whose common future: reclaiming the commons, 6(1), 106–130.

<http://doi.org/10.1177/095624789400600110>

This paper is an excerpt from *Whose Common Future*, a book written by the Ecologist. This paper describes what a commons is, how enclosure has negatively impacted society, and what is being done to reclaim the commons. The overarching message of this segment is that restoring the commons involves the average person. It is through the day-to-day lives of the ordinary

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people that allows for local change and opening of the commons. It is important that economists, politicians, and environmentalists do not impose their form of the commons onto the people. The process has to be organic and be accomplished with the community.

Hess, D., & Winner, L. (2007). Enhancing Justice and Sustainability at the Local Level: Affordable Policies for Urban Governments, *12*(4), 379–395. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13549830701412489>

This article addresses the notion that many policies seeking to enhance sustainability and help low-income communities are too expensive. The authors discuss four ventures that governments can support without much cost. One of these includes community gardens and other urban agriculture projects. The paper cites the environmental and social benefits of community gardens, and argues that governments only have to act as catalysts. In fact, the most successful efforts are multi-organizational. This works because, local governments can leverage resources and work with nonprofits or other community organizations to jumpstart projects. The article indicates that governments can use block-grant funds, form a food policy council, offer public land, and encourage development of nonprofit urban farms.

Holland, L. (2011). Diversity and connections in community gardens: a contribution to local sustainability, *9*(3), 285–305. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1354983042000219388>

Holland is optimistic of the impact community gardens can have on social, ecological, and economic sustainability within communities. The article points to the various benefits that community gardens and other urban agricultural activities provide. The surveys and interviews conducted in this research reveal that community gardens are diverse and address a variety of needs. It's obvious that community schemes are developed to meet community needs. Thus, any local project requires and understanding of local needs and the culture(s) involved. Similar to other papers, Holland emphasizes the value of local and urban agricultural initiatives. More important, however, is understanding the human dimension or place.

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Horrigan, L., Lawrence, R. S., & Walker, P. (2002). How Sustainable Agriculture Can Address the Environmental and Human Health Harms of Industrial Agriculture, *110*(5), 445–456.

The authors are from the Center for a Livable Future at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. This is a review and overview of the various harms that industrial agriculture has on environmental and human health. The paper also provides a summary of how sustainable agriculture can mitigate and address those issues. Here, the authors recognize that there is no single solution, and that sustainable agriculture is not a set of prescribed methods. Solving problems related to agriculture involves changing the paradigm of how humans interact with the environment. They call for people to recognize resource constraints, think ecologically, and to be stewards.

ICLEI. (1996). *The Local Agenda 21 Planning Guide*. The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives.

This document was prepared by the ICLEI. Many of the concepts are derived from the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit. This guide provides a framework for local governments to develop action plans that address complex problems at the local level. It addresses issues of sustainability, and provides useful aspects of policy implementation.

Irvine, S., Johnson, L., & Peters, K. (1999). Community Gardens and Sustainable Land Use Planning: a case-study of the Alex Wilson Community Garden, *4*(1).

<http://doi.org/10.1080/13549839908725579>

The three authors are from The Earth Council Institute in Canada. They write an analytical and historical account of the Alex Wilson Community Garden, which was established to address community gardening and ecological restoration. Wilson's vision was to restore the connection between urban and natural environments, and to connect people to nature. It is clear that the AWCG engages a diverse community, and has worked to reestablish a sense of place for urban

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residents, whether rich or poor. This case study also offers valuable insight on how to launch an effective community garden, which will address sustainability issues holistically.

Kenner, R. (2009). *Food, Inc.* Documentary. Retrieved from <http://www.takepart.com/foodinc/film>

This documentary is directed by Kenner, and features Eric Schlosser, Michael Pollan, and others. It is a critique of the current food system within the United States, which is controlled by a few major corporations. The film also seeks to shed light on the negative practices and consequences of the industrialized agricultural system. At the same time, the film offers some innovative approaches taken by farmers such as Joel Salatin of Polyface Farm.

Kloppenburg Jr., J., Hendrickson, J., & Stevenson, G. W. (1996). Coming into the Foodshed, *13*(3), 33–42.

The authors are affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This paper examines the concept of the foodshed. For these authors, the foodshed encompasses the social, biological, physical, and intellectual components of the space in which we live and eat. The author make criticism of the global food system, and outline key concepts of what a foodshed is. There is an emphasis on the concept of place, the moral economy, community, and proximity (rather than local or regional). Ultimately, there is call for global change in order to usher in greater sustainability.

Lamine, C. (2015). Sustainability and Resilience in Agrifood Systems: Reconnecting Agriculture, Food and the Environment. *European Society for Rural Sociology*, *55*(1).

<http://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12061>

The author critiques the current relocalization paradigm, because it fails to reconnect agriculture and food issues. Going local is not enough, and there needs to be consideration of the diverse stakeholders involved. Through examples of agro-ecology in France and Brazil, Lamine indicates that there are instances of local policies involving both conventional and alternative agents. Overall, relocalization approaches have been good at addressing the

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agriculture-environment connection, but fails to consider the complex interactions between institutions and the social dynamics.

Metcalfe, S. S., & Widener, M. J. (2011). Growing Buffalo's capacity for local food: A systems framework for sustainable agriculture, *31*(4), 1242–1251.

This article examines local food in Buffalo, NY through a systems framework. By understanding feedback relationships within a food system, planners and activists can shape the foodshed to provide for the food insecure, while restoring ecosystem functions. The article uses examples of urban agriculture projects and reveals the various social issues that arise. To be successful at addressing the core problems, the authors argue that effective food policy must focus on improving decision-making processes. Thus, defining feedback relationships is key. Ultimately, it is vital to cultivate an environment and culture for citizen engagement. Their involvement will catalyze changes in behavior that will lead to greater resilience within the community.

Moskow, A. (1999). Havana's self-provision gardens, *11*(2), 127–134.

<http://doi.org/10.1177/095624789901100211>

Angela Moskow works at the University of California Small Farm Center, University of California Genetic Resources Conservation Program, and works as a consultant. In this paper, the author outlines key historical factors behind the rise of urban agriculture in Havana, Cuba. The interviews conducted reveal that self-provisioning gardens have had many positive benefits. The gardens have contributed to greater food supply, increased economic security, improved public health, and enhanced urban ecology. Overall, gardens have the ability to provide social, economic, and environmental benefits. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that what has occurred in Havana is not replicable in all places, especially in high-density cities.

O'Hara, S. U., & Stagl, S. (2001). Global Food Markets and Their Local Alternatives: A Socio-Ecological Economic Perspective, *22*(6). Retrieved from <http://umaryland.worldcat.org/title/global-food->

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markets-and-their-local-alternatives-a-socio-ecological-economic-  
perspective/oclc/5650296689&referer=brief\_results

This paper discusses the mechanisms degrading local food systems, the negative social and environmental consequences, and the emergence of alternatives such as CSAs. This article points to the limits of a global market, and that the disconnect is catalyzing innovative alternatives. These alternatives will appear to build back trust and confidence in individuals and institutions respectively. Overall, CSAs are alternatives that provide direct relationships between consumers and farmers. Similar to Turner's paper, both authors indicate that new alternatives cause consumers to become active participants in the food system. Further, evidence of physical/temporal embeddedness as the strongest motivator for CSA membership reinforces Schnell's observations.

Schlosser, E. (2001). *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. Mariner Books.

This book provides a compelling argument against fast food. It highlights the negative social, health, and global implications of fast food. It also points towards growing trends towards local and organic food. It is further evidence of the limits of globalized and integrated agriculture.

Schnell, S. M. (2013). Food miles, local eating, and community supported agriculture: putting local food in its place, *30*, 615–628. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-013-9436-8>

The author is a Professor of Geography at Kutztown University. His research focuses on local food systems, local economies, and local identities. In this article, he exposes the lack of research behind an often cited "food mile" figure. He argues that this term is an underestimate, is too difficult to calculate, and has been misused in critiques against local and sustainable agriculture. He criticizes the misunderstandings and critiques of the "food mile". Ultimately, he argues that an understanding of local must acknowledge the complexities, and not rely on simplifications. In his investigation of CSAs in the Pennsylvania-Maryland region, it is clear that

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physical distance is not the main driver behind participation in local agriculture. In fact, as a new wave of research is revealing, it is a connection to place that motivates patrons.

Seyfang, G. (2005). Shopping for Sustainability: Can Sustainable Consumption Promote Ecological Citizenship?, *14*(2), 290–306. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09644010500055209>

Seyfang is a Senior Lecturer in Sustainable Consumption at the University of East Anglia. In this paper, she examines individual consumption choices through the paradigm of ecological citizenship. The paper examines the assumptions made in the mainstream perspective on sustainable consumption. Criticisms are made, and Seyfang points to alternative approaches as ways to compliment and encourage effective sustainable consumption. These solutions are more local, decentralized, and smaller-scale. They redefine wealth and progress, and create economies involving social capital. Ultimately, Seyfang calls for governments to support these efforts through funding and changes in social attitudes, institutions and infrastructure. Similar to other papers, Seyfang discusses elements of ecological economics and points to the need for addressing both human well-being and the environment.

Turner, B. (2011). Embodied connections: sustainability, food systems and community gardens, *16*(6), 509–522. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2011.569537>

Bethaney Turner, a faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra writes an article on how to harness community gardens as an instrument to foster greater sustainability. The emphasis is on creating a culture of embodied sustainability. This embeddedness in place serves as the foundation on which community gardens can strengthen its reach towards addressing ecological, socio-cultural, and economic sustainability. It is all about bridging the disconnect between consumer and food, and making consumers more proactive. Further, the author reveals that motivations need to be investigated; independence rather than community-belonging is a main driver. Overall, community gardens is great institution for fostering place

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and embeddedness.

Turner, B., Henryks, J., & Pearson, D. (2011). Community gardens: sustainability, health and inclusion in the city, *16*(6), 489–492. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2011.595901>

The authors are faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra, Australia. In this editorial, they discuss and summarize the various approaches to gardening, its context, and several important papers presented at the Community Garden Conference. Further, the authors emphasize the importance of research in community gardens to reinforce efforts addressing issues facing our communities and food systems.

World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*.

This is a comprehensive document prepared by the World Commission on Environment and Development. The report discusses common problems the world faces and policies and frameworks that can be applied for solving them. Of critical importance for this paper are topics on sustainable development, food security, managing the commons, and addressing urban challenges.