

*Food as a Measure of Our Values*

by Kenneth J. Taylor

*Ken Taylor, was the founder of the Minnesota Food Association, and ensured the success of the Minnesota Project, as a Board member from 1986 to 1994. As we launch the Heartland Food Network, we reflect on how far we have come, how far we have to go, and acknowledge our debt to him.*

*Taken from the MFA Digest, August 1992.*



**I** BELIEVE THAT THE FOOD WE EAT carries within it, in some form or another, the values that dominate the system which produced it. Our food is a good measure of how we do business as a society — what there is to like and what needs to change.

Many ask what is wrong with bio-technology that will provide us with good tasting foods that keep longer, are lower in fat, and perhaps

of California’s and Mexico’s agribusiness production systems and feedback from your taste buds, you might conclude that your fruit’s tough skin, woody interior and flat flavor are characteristics selected to serve some other purpose than meeting your nutritional needs. You might conclude that it was designed to support a system that thrives on uniformity and large scale, creating the illusion of quality, efficiency, and sustainable abundance and delivering none of these.

*“In the final analysis, a sustainable food system depends upon the qualitative aspects of the relationships involved in it.”*

even improve consumer resistance to disease. To answer that, we have to consider the values we wish to support and strengthen in our community.

We must take a deeper look at the meaning of our food, to consider it as more than a periodic nutrient uptake process that fills the emptiness in our bellies. We need to look at food in terms of the cultural information embedded in what we take into our bodies. As we gain in our awareness of what goes on in the world, we become more knowledgeable about the relationships involved in our eating practices. If we can learn to pay attention to this knowledge, we can then learn to listen with a different set of ears to the messages brought to us by the food we consume.

For example, when we buy fresh fruit out of season for our climate, what does its flavor and texture tell us about the system that brings it to us? Armed with some knowledge

Or take that lean pork chop provided to us in response to our concern about the relationship between animal fat and human disease. Does this pork chop come to us compliments of a carefully nurtured animal having enjoyed its sojourn in the fresh air and a lush pasture managed by a family farmer? Or is it the remains of one of those genetically uniform residents of a mass-scale, vertically integrated, groundwater-threatening confinement operation in which the labor is provided under contract with a large corporation?

It’s probably true that most of us do not take the time to think through the full range of social and economic consequences every time we take a product off the shelf. But some people do pay attention to these things, many more than just a few short years ago. The more aware people become, the more likely they are to start this examination process.

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# Viewpoint

**A** CRISIS MOMENT. It knocks, nudges, and at times takes the wind right out of me — the feeling we must act. You know the feeling: the green tinge to the heated heavy sky that signals a tornado, a sudden silence in the woods, the siren's wail way too close to home. You don't need anyone to tell you what you already know.

I have that feeling about our world. I am not alone. For a while, some fine folks have been telling us that as a society, as a culture, as a world, we have been borrowing from the future. Sometimes it is monetary (the obscene deficit) sometimes it is the bounty of the earth. We impoverish our soils, pave our landscapes, pollute our waters, foul our air, and use up our forests, minerals, or energy sources. We know how to make the great turn, and it has begun. Indeed this is what Minnesota Project and many others work daily to turn around.

It is like telling a scary story and getting scared yourself. I can find evidence of good works everywhere, but it is getting hotter. The oil is peaking. The forests are shrinking. This is not a vast global problem that somebody should solve. This is a crisis moment in which each of us must act quickly and decisively. You know what to do, and if not, it is easy enough to find out. Call us. Go out on the web. Use your own common sense.

If your leaders tell you it is too hard, don't give them your vote this fall. If a business does not offer a better choice—renewable energy, local food, recycled goods, better mileage — then take your business elsewhere. We have a choice. Let's act. ●

  
Diane Jensen, Executive Director

## Dear Readers...

WITHOUT A GARDEN this year, I'm relegated to inspiration from words. The morning finally brings a hard rain after that horrible HOT week that we all somehow survived. A tired gray squirrel just walked slowly down the alleyway and stopped to sip at a puddle. The cool breezes of September will feel wonderful — to animal and human alike.

David Korten, author of *When Corporations Rule the World*, brings us another and even more hopeful text called *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*. Korten sets up two contrasting models for organizing human relationships. They are 'Empire,' which is the world view that sets up competition, fear of flaws, hierarchy, and individualism; and "Earth Community," which stands for cooperation, openness to possibility, rights of all, gender balance, and partnership. It's renewed language for what we already know, but his 400 pages go on to support the dramatic shift in world power and in world view that have taken place even in the last five years.

The hopeful side of all this is where Korten quotes a number of U.S. surveys that show that a growing segment of our country's population embraces a new culture that values social inclusion, environmental stewardship, and spiritual practice. He believes more are recognizing that — "The world's people are one people sharing a common destiny on a solitary living spaceship alone in the vast darkness of space."

Toward the end, Korten talks about how we each might find our place. "Keep three things in mind," he says.

"Millions are engaged in this good work. Every contribution, no matter how seemingly insignificant, helps shift the balance. And third, we each can do no more than our individual best." Those are the real questions — is this my best and am I doing it?

Korten quotes Vandana Shiva, who shares her thoughts on this question. "It's always a mystery, because you don't know why you get depleted or recharged. But this much I know. I do not allow myself to be overcome by hopelessness, no matter the situation... I've learned from the Bhagavad Gita and other teachings to detach myself from the results of what I do because they are not in my hands... You want it to lead to a better world, and you shape your actions and take full responsibility for them, but then you have detachment."

I have often believed that we hitch ourselves to the values that feed the earth and our souls and then we work hard. This reminder of detachment from the final results is a good one. I must simply encourage myself to accept being a small part of something good, something that's right.

The work of the Minnesota Project is something right. I knew it back in the 1990s, back when Ken Taylor was still guiding our Board of Directors. I know it now with the natural shift toward the Heartland Food Network and the steadfast foci on renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. We each just keep doing our individual best, and yes—we intend to be part of the Great Turning. Indeed, we already are.

— Beth E. Waterhouse, Editor,  
Community Connections, since 1992  
[beth@bethwaterhouse.com](mailto:beth@bethwaterhouse.com)

## Support the Minnesota Project in Your Workplace

You can support the Minnesota Project in your workplace by giving through Minnesota Environmental Fund, a coalition of twenty environmental Minnesota organizations offering a workplace giving option to make our communities better places to live. For more

information call 651.645.6159 or email Kris Weber at [kweber@mnproject.org](mailto:kweber@mnproject.org).



# Eating Is an Agricultural Act

by Toby Pearson, Food Program Director

SUMMER IS a wonderful time. As a youngster, I remember corn de-tassling, walking beans and helping my dad with our half-acre garden that a farmer friend “let us” work. I am not able to give my children those same experiences. As a parent living in the city, it is not always easy to teach these lessons on the importance of connection to our food. Still, at my house, my little girls, Grace and Lily, started to learn where food comes from in the work we did to cultivate the garden, plant seeds, weed and care for the garden, and watch it all grow: cucumbers, tomatoes, and beans.



some of the Charter Members of Heartland Food Network: Chef Jim Kynndberg (The Bayport Cookery), Dave Vierling (Bix Produce Co.), Jeff Larson (Sysco MN), Chef Paul Gordon (Café Minnesota), Duane Pfeleger (Bix), Chef J.D. Fratzke (Muffulatta).

Wendell Berry, when asked “What can city people do?” often responds “Eat responsibly.” He goes on to say, “Eaters must understand that eating takes place inescapably in the world, that it is inescapably an agricultural act, and that how we eat determines, to a considerable extent, how the world is used. This is a simple way of describing a relationship that is inexpressibly complex. To eat responsibly is to understand and enact, so far as one can, this complex relationship.”

The Minnesota Project develops this complex relationship through the Heartland Food Network Project. Heartland Food Network seeks to facilitate the application of the “eat responsibly” lesson. Heartland Food seeks to facilitate people eating responsibly when they choose to dine out, by connecting the producers, processors, distributors, and chefs in a web that emphasizes locally grown, sustainably produced food. As consumers, we only need to look for the Heartland Food Network seal to know that the chef and the establishment are committed to quality, and responsible, local food.

Heartland Food Network had its kickoff at the Firelake Grill on June 19th. This kickoff featured producer representatives, chefs, and distributors who are teaming up to launch this network.

Ultimately it is the public that is demanding local food, and they who will harvest the benefits of the work by choosing restaurants and caterers, schools, and hospitals that serve locally grown foods.

I seek local foods when I eat out, and I serve very local foods at home to Grace and Lily. Recently, before the salad was made, the girls took the produce, arranged it in a face and laughed and

laughed. Then they washed the lettuce and the vegetables and sat down to eat.

One daughter commented, “Wow, so we planted a seed in the spring, and now we get to eat even more and better food.” With its launch, Heartland Food Network has planted its seed and we, too, can look forward to even more and better food. 🍀

## BLT Bites

*Bushel Boy Cherry Tomatoes Stuffed with Pastures-A-Plenty Bacon, Stickney Hill Chevre, Minnesota Valley Salad & Herb Company Chives, and Arugula*

*These flavorful mouthfuls will be the talk of the party, so don't skimp or they will be gone before the chef gets any!*

### INGREDIENTS:

40–50 cherry tomatoes (Baby Boys), seeded from the bottom, not the stem side  
1-1/4 pounds bacon, cooked and crumbled  
3/8 cup mayonnaise  
1/4 cup Stickney Hills Peppercorn Chevre  
3/8 cup chives, cut thin, bias  
5/8 cup Parmesan cheese, grated  
2-5/8 tablespoons arugula, stems removed and chopped

### METHOD:

1. Hollow out the tomatoes.
2. Mix all other ingredients and stuff tomatoes with mixture.
3. Refrigerate at least one hour.

### SOURCES:

MN Valley Salad and Herb Company  
507.934.4650

Pastures-A-Plenty 320.367.2061

Bushel Boy Tomatoes — found easily at most Cub Food Stores

Stickney Hill Chevre — found easily at most Cub Food Stores (the Tomato Basil would be a great variation!)

*Recipe compliments of Chef Paul Gordon, Café Minnesota, Minnesota History Center 651.297.2031.*

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Toby Pearson is a new staff person working with the Heartland Food Network. He has moved his family including Grace, (2nd grade) and Lily, (Kindergarten) from a much cooler Duluth to the fast pace of St. Paul, saying he thinks everybody will adjust fine. Toby has dedicated his work life to the issue of sustainability and food for the past seven years. When asked why, he explains, “This is the intersection of care for creation, earth’s need for sustainability, and my personal take — that food grown sustainably tastes better. Plus it simply IS better for my girls. With kids, it is exponentially true that ‘You are what you eat.’”*

## CHANGE A LIGHT, CHANGE THE WORLD

Energy efficiency in each home is a large part of the solution to our planet's global warming. It's also very easy. Energy Star's annual Change a Light, Change the World campaign is coming up again in October. Visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) and take the pledge to switch to energy efficient light bulbs in your home. Choose Energy Star qualified for three good reasons: it uses only a third as much energy as standard lighting, generates 70% less heat, and lasts ten times longer. Find energy efficient lighting in a store near you by visiting [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov). 🐼



## *It's About Energy Efficiency* *CERTs Reaches Out to Schools and Local Government*

by Kari Rudd, Energy Intern

**T**HE CLEAN ENERGY RESOURCE TEAMS have partnered with the Minnesota Department of Commerce and utilities across the state to put on free Energy Efficiency workshops for school and local government building operators. The workshops are geared toward those building operators who have not had prior training in the area of energy efficiency, because their districts will benefit the most from the low cost and no cost energy-saving strategies that will be highlighted in the workshops.

The Minnesota Project has contracted with Eugene Scales, owner and principal of Eugene A. Scales & Associates Inc., to present the workshops. Eugene has worked many times with the Department of Commerce and various Minnesota utilities to teach a certification course for building operators and to lead seminars on energy conservation.

The four half-day workshops will be held in Owatonna, Marshall, Duluth, and Thief River Falls in early October. A complimentary lunch will follow each workshop, giving attendees the opportunity to meet and chat with local utility representatives, building operators, and other energy efficiency experts in their region.

Visit [www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org](http://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org) for more information! 🐼

*This project was made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy and the Minnesota Department of Commerce.*



### CLEAN ENERGY RESOURCE TEAMS

## Local Energy / Local Opportunities

January 17, 2007 / All Day Conference / St. Cloud Civic Center

January 16 / Pre-Conference Workshops and Reception / Kelly Inn, St. Cloud

You can be part of getting renewable energy and energy efficiency projects up and running. Come learn about successful projects and get connected to the ideas, resources, and expertise you need to bring clean energy to your community. Don't miss this opportunity to help shape Minnesota's energy future!

To find out more, contact The Minnesota Project at 651-645-6159, ext. 6, or visit [www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org](http://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org). *See you there!*

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CERTs Partners: Minnesota Department of Commerce, University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, The Minnesota Project, Rural Minnesota Energy Board, Resource Conservation and Development Councils  
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To sponsor, please contact Diane Jensen at The Minnesota Project 651-645-6159



Photo of strip crops courtesy of USDA-NRCS.

## Now or Later? Outdated Farm Policy Awaits Action

by Loni Kemp, Senior Policy Analyst

**E**XCITEMENT IS building across the nation as people of varied outlooks become aware that agriculture has the potential to be at the center of solving many of our most pressing problems. It shouldn't come as a surprise that sustainable solutions have to arise in concert with nature. Plus, if we're looking for home-grown solutions to our food, fiber, energy, and environmental needs, obviously we must work within biological systems on the fifty percent of the nation's land that is in farmers' hands. Farmers and ranchers are the land managers who can both produce what the nation needs, and still profit from their hard work.

Current farm policies, however, were mostly designed for yesterday's problems. They cannot serve to bring about the opportunities so desperately needed by a nation struggling with polluted waters, a deep oil addiction, and growing obesity along with other diet-related health problems.

New policies are being explored to bring about a national farm renaissance early in the twenty-first century. Agricultural reforms are needed to proceed down the path to the kind of agriculture we envision for our children and their children. If we invest in the right

combination of incentives, research, development, and a fair farmer safety net, we can create a world of opportunity for today's farmers and for the influx of new farmers we need in the future.

With the right policies, these farmers will diversify the landscape, raising more fresh and specialty foods for local markets and restaurants. They will figure out how to grow the crops and build the refineries needed to turn biomass into bio-based products, including energy as liquid fuels, heat, or electricity — or even industrial materials. Most importantly, farmers will be able to make the transition to growing these products in ways that are kinder to the land they care for. With conservation right at the heart of agriculture's future vision, we will select the pathways that can bring clean water, landscape diversity, and wildlife habitat. Our children will inherit a better world if we create better farm policies today.

All this will naturally put farmers in opportunity's way, so that they can make changes carefully but quickly and earn the profits that they deserve for providing what the nation needs. Besides all the direct benefits of home-grown foods and energy, a grateful

nation could also realize the true national security of increased energy independence.

But not everyone is ready for a change, and when someone wants to avoid a subject, the talk often turns instead to the timing of the debate. Indeed, some groups are calling for an extension of the current farm bill for another year or more. Set to expire at the end of next year, the farm bill would normally be rewritten and passed some time during 2007. Citing a need to send a tough message to other countries in the World Trade Organization, some farm groups

*continued on page 6*

### A NOTE TO THE READER

What you have just read is a message that accurately summarizes the goals and values of the Minnesota Project. It also reflects the hard work we have done to tell our story in a way that people can understand and support. We hope it talks about complex policy issues in a way that you, our reader, can take hold of and relate to.

Most news stories relating to agriculture are of two general types. Either they tell a clichéd story of one lonely farmer and a dying rural town, or they focus on what consumers should do about some food problem. Both stories are dead ends in terms of linking the reader to political and policy changes that can make a difference. We are trying to communicate different stories that help readers see themselves as responsible citizens with voices in the matter.

With the helpful advice of Action Media and assistance from intern Bridget Holcomb, we produced *Framing: An Introduction for Sustainable Agriculture Advocates*, available at [www.mnproject.org](http://www.mnproject.org). Check it out, and then sit down and write your own letter to the editor. 🐾



## FOOD *from p. 1*

In the final analysis, a sustainable food system depends upon the qualitative aspects of the relationships involved in it, not just its ability to put vast quantities of product on the table. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the ecology of our food system is not in very good shape, qualitatively. The landscape is filled with food safety fears, unhealthy conflict and far too few statespersons providing civil and informed leadership.

Closer to home, we are seeing the emergence of new and hopeful arrangements such as community supported agriculture (CSA) groups in which the relationships involved between growers and eaters, between food and the land, can be made more evident. Let's not let CSA production become about moving products, however fresh and tasty they may be. The community supported agriculture movement should not be allowed to lose its potential for radically reforming our relationships with each other and with the planet. Food for thought. 🍎

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Ken's words nearly always wove values into politics, or values in among scientific findings. Working with Ken in the 1980s, I first began to understand that a tomato is not a tomato — that the manner of food production or distribution is deeply embedded in the*

## NOW OR LATER *from p. 5*

want to hold back on reform of our policies until a new agreement brings reforms from other parts of the world.

After years of discussion with no agreement on which trade barriers to knock down next, agriculture discussions at the World Trade Organization were suspended indefinitely in July. That leaves the current trade agreement in place, with cotton subsidies declared at least partially illegal. Many experts expect successful challenges to other U.S. commodity support programs, including rice, corn, and soybeans. While negotiations could resume at any time, there remains a fundamental disagreement. On the one hand, the U.S. calls for countries to cut tariffs and open their markets to our exports. On the other hand, the world demands that the U.S. cut the subsidies that keep commodity prices so low that farmers from poorer countries can't make a profit on their own products. In a way, it is a classic "you-go-first; no, you-go-first" stalemate.

Meanwhile, almost everybody agrees that some day every country ought to support its farmers in ways that don't distort trade. A formal agreement would have put deadlines and urgency to the point, but there are many compelling reasons to overhaul commodity subsidies and substitute meaningful supports that achieve our nation's goals.

*"We will select the pathways that can bring clean water, landscape diversity, and wildlife habitat. Our children will inherit a better world if we create better farm policies today."*

USDA Secretary Johanns and Congressional Agriculture Committee Chairs Chambliss and Goodlatte all are pressing ahead for

a rewrite of the farm bill in 2007. The leaders recognize that there is little to gain by waiting out an extension and much to be gained by moving forward now.

In fact, a move to extend current farm policy could very well backfire if all the forces demanding change were to jump in and mobilize to massively amend it. Congressman Ron Kind of Wisconsin is already assembling such a bill focusing on conservation and energy incentives, and a variety of other renewable farm energy initiatives are also being drafted.

Whether now or later, unlikely partners are gearing up to work side by side for big change in farm policy. They care about rural communities, global warming, clean rivers, gas prices, healthy food, wildlife — and they want to work with farmers to pass a farm policy to bring us into the next generation. 🍎

*food itself, and that as I shopped there were new questions I had to ask. I have asked them for nearly 15 years since the writing of this article, and whole segments of American society are now asking equally hard questions about the production of their pork, their chicken, their asparagus, their tomatoes... Clearly, each food consumer's dollar — if the consumer is informed and thoughtful — is an important tool in the reformation of our entire food system.*

*The Minnesota Food Association is pleased and honored to continue the legacy of our founder and visionary, Ken Taylor. We are pleased to make some of his writings available as they remain relevant and important in today's conversation. We're happy to share his work with the wider community. Please contact MFA if you have questions about this article. (651) 433-3676.*

## Morning Walk

by Loni Kemp

**W**E RISE EARLY and slip out the door to catch the coolest part of the day. I tug the laces of my shoes, stretch my back, and join my husband on a walk as we follow our new resolution for daily exercise.

Crunching our way down the leafy tunnel that is our gravel driveway, we emerge at the road and choose: left or right today?

A brisk pace ensues. It's going to be another hot day in a long string of them. The air is heavy, misting the hillsides in a fog of humidity. The sun, still low enough in the east to be shaded by the woods along the creek, is beginning its relentless climb into the clear sky. Oh yes, we'll hit ninety today for sure. But for now a slight breeze stirs, and it is lovely.

In late summer, the birds are calmer than they were in June when an almost manic singing filled the morning air. Now we hear an occasional chatter of wrens, squawks from the blue jays, and the wheezing of one phoebe. At a cluster of chokecherry trees, there is a bit of a flurry as dozens of birds of several species feed together on the ripening berries.

*"The smell of corn pollen is in the air, punctuated by the earthy aroma of fresh horse apples left from behind Amish buggies."*

The crops look magnificent, and we think of the parched areas to the north — grateful for our blessed timely rains down here in southeast Minnesota. The smell of corn pollen is in the air, punctuated by the earthy aroma of fresh horse apples left from behind Amish buggies.

Each day the same few vehicles seem to pass us, probably on their way to work, and drivers nod or greet us with a subtle salute of their index finger. When a neighbor chugs by on his backhoe on the way to a job, he pauses to tease us about having time for a leisurely walk, and we tease back about his air conditioning system — open windows in the cab.

The roadside flowers delight me most, and I bite my tongue not to bore my husband by pointing out each and every one. These ditches are rarely mowed, so native species abound. Shades of yellow dominate today, with sunflowers, cup plants, goldenrod and evening primrose. Clumps of lavender wild bergamot complement the color scheme while white clouds of virgin's bower and spikes of Culver's root knit the scene together. Immigrant species like blue chicory and even the invasive wild parsnip look good if you withhold judgment about their fecundity.

At the appointed spot, we turn around and trek on home. I dawdle along the driveway to taste a handful of ripe blackberries. It takes a while to cool down, so I meander through the garden for a while, snipping and inspecting, grateful for the air conditioning I am about to re-enter for another day of work at my home office. 🍓

## PLANTING TIME (A Sestina)

Last night I dreamed my father's dream  
Cultivated the soil, sowed the seed  
Conceived an abundant harvest —  
Golden wheat shimmers in the distance.  
Imagined the ripeness of the south field  
Before me on an August day

Last night I dreamed my father's day  
Awoke to sun from a peaceful dream  
Pictured the serenity of an 80-acre field  
Black, fertile soil ready for seed  
Straight rows of wheat in the distance  
The sweet hope of harvest.

Last night I dreamed of harvest  
Dusty wheat on an August day  
Threshers working in the distance  
Cool of water like a dream  
Promise fulfilled of seed  
Beauty of a perfect field.

Last night I dreamed my father's field  
Stems heavy with harvest  
Green plants stretched from seed  
Ripples in the hot sun of day  
Harvest before him like a dream  
Golden wheat bows in the distance.

Last night I dreamed my father in  
the distance  
Driving his old John Deere through  
the field  
Bounty of fall—a tangible dream  
Sweat of his brow reaping harvest  
Heavy heat of an August day  
Fulfillment of seed.

Last night I dreamed the seed  
A father's vision in the distance  
Welcomed sunshine's day  
Anxious for the rhythmic row of the field  
Dreaming of the fall harvest  
As I live his dream.

Today I plant his harvest, green rows in  
the distance  
Today I sow his field, sweet promise  
of seed  
Today I live his dream, the affirmation of  
a summer day.

— Angela Foster  
Pine City, Minnesota

# the MINNESOTA PROJECT

working for strong local economies,  
vibrant communities, and a healthy environment

*Community Connections* is published by the Minnesota Project. The Minnesota Project connects people with policy to nurture collaborations that build strong local economies, vibrant communities and a healthy environment. For more information visit [www.mnproject.org](http://www.mnproject.org).

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## Spider Money

DONORS DECIDE TO GIVE to the Minnesota Project for many reasons; they also have interesting rationales. Caryl Nelson sent us a note one year to “explain” her contribution.

It went something like this: Each year my neighbors get together to hire an exterminator to go under their porches and kill all the spiders. I decline to participate, so here is my “spider money,” the money I save each year by letting the spiders live.

We thank Caryl for letting the spiders live and for her donation. Next time you send a check, tell us why. We like to get to know you and share your stories too.

– Diane

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