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https://www.100test.com/kao_ti2020/176/2021_2022_2004_E5_B9_B41_E6_9C_c6_176237.htm Industrial Agriculture Must Give Way

to Sustainable Farming From Agribusiness Examiner #297

10/29/03 By Al Krebs THAYNE COZART: The proclaimed economic and societal benefits of a worldwide industrial agriculture system wouldnt measure up very well when compared to a sustainable agriculture system if an evaluation of the industrial system honestly measured all of its "external costs" against its claimed benefits. That was the primary point driven home by Jules Pretty, professor and director of the Centre for Environment and Society at the University of Essex in England, during a seminar to students and faculty who packed a classroom at Iowa State University October 20. The topic of Prettys seminar was "Rethinking Agri-Culture as if the Real World Matters." The seminar was sponsored by the Energy Initiative of ISUs Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the ISU bioethics program. Pretty, who also is editor of the Journal of Sustainability, contended that "those who support industrialized agriculture measure its success in narrow economic terms of food price and availability and tend to ignore its costly unintended consequences to society and the environment." He added, "They are not being seriously challenged to give a full accounting. We are trying at the Centre to change that by scientifically measuring or estimating in Britain what we call the externalities of industrialized agriculture and also the full benefits of a sustainable ag system." In the British

study, some of those industrial ag externalities evaluated were: water pollution from farm waste, soil nutrients, erosion, and pesticides. loss of landscape and biodiversity. food-borne diseases. air pollution from gaseous emissions. unnecessary transportation costs of food. human dislocation from rural to urban. rural community decline. poor human diets and obesity, and cost of direct government subsidies. In his study, the annual costs of these externalities during the 1990s totaled 1.54 billion pounds (approximately U.S. \$2.6 billion). "Britain had to spend this to deal with the effects of industrial ag, so this cost is a hidden subsidy from the public to polluters," Pretty emphasized. Some of the sustainable ag benefits he tried to evaluate were: landscape aesthetics, biodiversity, clean water, flood protection, carbon sequestration, rural economy, and community cohesion. The largest value ascribed to a positive benefit from sustainable ag practices was 14 billion pounds (U.S. \$23.7 billion) for rural landscape services (tourism). In Britain, the annual value for rural tourism outstripped the total value of all the food produced nearly 10-fold. Harder to measure, but valuable none-the-less, according to Pretty, were wetland benefits for flood protection, waste treatment, and wildlife habitats. energy savings on transportation, and carbon sequestration to reduce global warming. "In determining future world agriculture policies, the keys," said Pretty, "are finding ways to encourage polluters to reduce or pay for the costs of the negative aspects of their system, while also finding ways to reward farmers for the positive aspects of a sustainable system. I think a carrot may work better than a stick in many cases." Pretty sees hope for a gradually

shifting world food-production systems from industrialized to sustainable and multifunctional. "It's a myth that the world can't produce enough food from sustainable, local food systems for its population --- just like it's a myth that hunger and starvation are based on world food shortages, when the truth is hunger is based on poverty and the inequities and economies of food distribution," he said. He bases his hope on his group's study of 208 sustainable ag projects in 52 nations around the globe. He said nearly nine million farmers --- most in Africa, Asia and Latin America --- have adopted sustainable ag practices and technologies on nearly 30 million hectares (70 million acres), an increase of 56% in three years. He claimed that in most of these projects, both the quantity and quality of food increased, as well as local economies. To keep increasing sustainable food systems around the world, Pretty listed five key principles: Substitute management skills and knowledge for costly inputs. build on-farm biodiversity and soil health. organize into like-minded groups. add value to commodities, and sell directly to consumers. "We also need to re-establish our connections to the land and between producers and consumers," he summarized. "We need to rebuild a land and food ethic. And, remember, our choices as consumers make differences to people, nature and communities. The most political decision you make as a consumer is now how you vote, but how and where you buy food." He concluded by stating that so-called "cheap food" is very expensive because it's paid for in many ways: (1) at the market. (2) through taxes for subsidies. (3) through environmental cleanup costs. (4) through treating diet-based

human health concerns, and (5) through economically diminished rural communities.