

son **ERIC HERM**
of a
Farmer

**A Path
to Agriculture's
Higher
Consciousness**

child
of the
Earth

**dreamriver
press**

Prologue

THE PROVERBIAL FORK IN THE ROAD A Road Less Traveled

The key to change is to let go of fear.

ROSEANNE CASH

*I do not feel obligated to believe
that the same god who has endowed us
with sense, reason and intellect
has intended us to forgo their use.*

GALILEO GALILEI

Point of Recognition

Before I begin, you must know this—I don't know all the answers. What I do have are ideas in the form of a new direction that will better serve us, our purpose, and our posterity. This book is about trying to provide some healthy solutions to many problems we are currently faced with not only in agriculture, but also in life in general. Hopefully the content will stimulate your conscience regarding the unthinkable challenges our children will be faced with in the years to come if we continue our current destructive methods.

Unfortunately, over these next few years a significant portion of commercial farmers will suffer or fail along with consumer retail, fiat currency, the automobile industry, commercial real estate, affordable fuel, and inefficient urban living. Shortly after the Civil War, farmers represented 67% of America's population—145 years later we are less than 1%. In 1935, the U.S. peaked at more than 6.8 million farms and 30 million farmers out of 127

million American citizens.¹ In 2009, there were approximately 960,000 farmers out of 300 million American people.² Of the 2,064,700 remaining American farms, only 38.2% are financially profitable.

Farm Type	Number of Farms	Percent of Farms
Non-family farms	42,300	2.0
Farming sales > \$500,000	61,300	3.0
\$250,000 - \$499,999	91,900	4.5
Limited resource	150,300	7.3
\$100,000 - \$249,999	171,500	8.3
Retirement	290,900	14.1
Farming sales < \$100,000	422,200	20.4
Residential/Lifestyle	834,300	40.4
TOTAL	2,064,700	100.0

(Statistics according to the Federal Department of Agriculture)

This vanishing act of farmers isn't happening solely in America, it is a global issue. In 1985 there were more than 28,000 dairy farmers in England and Wales, and only 11,551 in November of 2009.³ In January of 2010, farmers in Greece continued to hold up traffic on major roads for more than one month straight with blockades, protesting higher tax rates and demanding more subsidies to survive economically. Thousands of farmers barricaded

1. <http://www.epa.gov>.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Olga Craig, "The Dairy Farmer Reduced to Tears", *The Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/agriculture/farming/6958013/The-dairy-farmer-reduced-to-tears.html>. January 9, 2010.

some 23 highway junctions across northern and central Greece with their tractors, losing more than \$25 million a day for the Greek economy.⁴ With Indian farmers continuing to diminish at their current rate, there will be 400 million “agriculture refugees” in that country alone by 2020.⁵

If we persist in following the model of commercial agriculture, we are destined to fail. Perhaps commercial farming, as designed, must die in order for Nature and humanity to fully recover and *real* farming to begin anew. Most likely the only method of farming that will survive is the one focused on a healthy, organic operation supporting local families, friends, communities, towns, and cities. The era of the 3,000+ acre family farm will soon be a thing of the past. Will we choose eradication because we blindly refuse to change or will we survive by evolving into a smaller, stronger, and healthier vocation that the rest of humanity and all living creatures can depend upon? Now is the time to answer that question as we stand at the proverbial fork in the road.

By 2007, there were more prisoners in this country than farmers. So, I write this with full awareness that I am an endangered species—a young farmer. I’m fully aware of the tenacity which exists in a man, particularly the breed that are farmers. Despite our stubbornness, we can no longer deny the inevitable—we are in the final days of a broken system. The statistics, research, and analysis within this book form a story that must be told to ensure we know not only what we’ve become but where we are headed. Our ability to survive relies solely on our ability to change and our ability to unite. We’re going to need more farmers...and fast to feed and clothe this world.

4. Helena Smith, “Greek Economy Worsens with Farmers Refusing to Back Down”, *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/jan/31/greek-farmers-blockade-impasse>, January 31, 2010.

5. Devinder Sharma, “Displacing Farmers: India Will Have 400 Million Agricultural Refugees”, Share the World’s Resources, <http://www.stwr.org/food-security-agriculture/displacing-farmers-india-will-have-400-million-agricultural-refugees.html>, June 22, 2007.

It is time for a new breed of farmer to step forward. I believe many young people are looking to return to the land, to work with Nature and all living things. I sense a movement which will return young men and women with their families back to country living from metropolitan and suburban lifestyles. Perhaps it is the young farmer, the novice, the rural revolutionary, the re-beginners who will hear the truth and walk the path we must follow in order to create a healthier world.

As farmers, we've transformed into part of the problem rather than the solution. Without immediate and radical changes in our mentality and agricultural practices, nobody should pity us. Fueled by desire, we are fully capable of getting ourselves out of the mess we've helped create. Our problems cannot all be blamed on governments and corporations. We have allowed this hostile takeover. Without a change in direction toward an organic, sustainable agricultural system based on a local economy and fair trade we will perish along with the banking and automobile industries. Food and clothing (which we produce) are much more of a necessity than money and cars. Herein lies our conundrum as a nation of corporate co-dependents.

Know this. I am not some "liberal tree hugger". I was born a country boy with a hankerin' for independence and a disdain for authority. I am not a scientist or geneticist. I do not have a Ph.D. in physics, botany, ecology, geology, or biology. While I have no special degree in regards to science, I do possess a very strong connection to Nature. I am a fourth-generation farmer. I am a naturalist and a survivalist. I am redneck and hippie. I am cowboy and Indian. This is my dichotomy. This is the battle waged within me daily, allowing a balanced existence. The redneck tries to kick the hippy's ass. The Indian calmly brings the wild cowboy back to center...when possible. In Nature, I am often in total harmony. With humanity, I am frequently at war. While I'm not currently an organic farmer in our commercial operation, I play one at home—continually experimenting with various projects dealing with making the Earth a better place. Those healthy experi-

ments spill over into our commercial operation, giving me hope that I'll one day buck the entire system of commercial agriculture.

Undeniably, we've followed the wrong lead for too long. The Powers That Be epitomize what ails Mother Earth. We've fallen for the entire pyramid scheme of paper money, basing most of our thoughts, dreams, and goals around scraps of paper with numbers and dead presidents on them.

Not much remains in Nature from what was once there centuries ago. Many resources have been wasted in the last century thanks to deforestation, oil-influenced transportation, increasing populations, and a disregarding attitude of superiority. Not enough minds seem to acknowledge that many of our current agricultural methods involving "modern technology" are simply based on methods destructive to Mother Earth. Our procrastination is inexcusable, and we must begin a healthy transformation. We must change the rules and, if necessary, change the game entirely. Catherine Austin Fitts once said, "Those who win in a rigged game get stupid." Improving should be our goal, not winning.

I am hopeful we will fully recognize the dangers of our current methods and alter our lives accordingly. I am hopeful we will educate ourselves rather than plug our ears and cover our eyes, pretending our destructive practices are harmless. I am hopeful we will unite in purpose before it is too late.

To farmers, may the content inspire you to break free from trends ripping us apart. We must lead an awakening to solve most of these problems if agriculture is to survive. Are there enough farmers remaining? Will our own children or grandchildren ever know the freedoms we once knew? It is my hope they will. But, if we walk farther down the current path we now tread grudgingly upon, I am fearful few of Nature's purities or our Constitution's freedoms will survive. Decades, perhaps centuries from now, Nature will recover. We will not. To younger generations, please learn from the sins of our plundering.

To those who eat food, drink water, and breathe air (which should cover pretty much everybody), may this book motivate you to be farmers in your own right, or in the very least give you reason to learn how to provide for your family in a healthy manner by becoming less dependent on corporations and government for your survival. There is a farmer in each of us. That is to say there exists a portion of us which is connected to all of Nature, a part craving a primordial connection and a kindred relationship with the Earth. May the content educate you on some of the many challenges that farmers face and that prevent agriculture from being as pure as it should be.

Turning blind eyes and deaf ears to our crimes against Nature will not erase them. Pursuing old, tired paths will all but surely seal our doomed fate. This is not an exaggeration. Now is the time for our species to unite and for us to empower ourselves with knowledge and liberate our souls with action. Not later. Now. If we wait, it will be much too late. If we pretend everything is okay, all will be lost. Now is the time for action. It has been said that there are three things you can't hide forever—the sun, the moon, and the truth. Let the truth now rise above these dark, muddied waters. This is no time for egos. This is no time to wait for government bailouts. It is sink or swim. Will we chose life? Or is death too tempting to ignore? It is my hope, plea, and prayer we chose life.

Gone are the dinosaurs that once ruled this Earth. Gone are the Vikings and conquistadors, cowboys and Indians. Gone are generation after generation of heroes and villains, kings and queens, peasants and surfs, and numerous leaders and followers. Gone are so many creatures and kingdoms once plentiful and strong, but they are all now nothing more than historically precious and poetically romantic characters in a very compelling story.

In our quest for conquering more, we cross large oceans in tiny boats to find what? We build walls to protect us from whom? We construct roads and bridges to take us where? We explore the heavens to find why we are here, what we should do, and who we

should become. Yet, after centuries of performing such heroic measures, what have we discovered? Our spiritual destination is determined by our current path of thoughts and actions whether spiritual in concept or not. What have you truly discerned about your own existence?

Now, I hope you will join me...at least in thought, if not also in action. Then, perhaps we can solve some of the many issues at hand. After all, this is the only planet we have, the only soil our feet will walk, the only air our lungs will breathe, the only food our bellies will digest, and the only water to quench our thirst. Let us begin a path to agriculture's higher consciousness.

The Road Back Home

Harvest season was over...finally. Here it was February of 2005, and I could still hear the roar of cotton strippers echoing along the horizon like mechanical herds grazing the prairie's last supper to the bone. Clouds swam slowly and lowly overhead. Winds whispered a stillness the likes of which only the calm of dusk can bring.

I had little, almost nothing to do with the crop until the end—filling in for one worker here and there. Ending a long-term relationship and tired of bouncing from one hapless job to another, I was certain drastic change was needed in my life. This change had to be accompanied with purpose. Through all my days of traveling and philosophizing, the most dominant thoughts which plagued my mind were:

“What a twisted version of life we insisted was the norm.”

“What a strange time to ignore our problems.”

“Why is everything about money?”

“Why does religion build walls rather than bridges?”

“Why are we trying so hard to mess up a perfectly good planet?”

I was 31 years old, and for the first time in my life there resided a sick feeling deep in my gut. I was seriously questioning why I was not a part of the family farm. It had been my decision