

Written Impressions

Business & Marketing Communications

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I believe we are entering a new era in agriculture that will in many ways take us on a giant step backwards. I like to call it "Historic Sustainability." While many folks are lamenting the conventional food supply, I believe the organic farming community is perfectly positioned to come to the rescue. The current 2,000-mile food infrastructure is in a state of self-destruction. When – not if – oil prices skyrocket, our nation will be forced to rely on a local/regional food chain, just like our great-grandfathers did. The classic organic distribution model will be a key to the sustainability of our nation's food supply, and we need to take a giant step backwards and look at how our great-grandfathers made it work on a broad scale. It won't be long before food will be the "gold standard," and we need to feed the goose that lays the golden egg.

At the turn of the 20th Century, our country had a primarily rural population. The farmer's paradigm was focused on how he could provide a good living for his family and preserve the farm for future generations. Farmers used everything on the farm for the farm, and they even collected their own seeds in many cases. This was primarily a paradigm of sustainability, although it wasn't recognized as such. It was simply the way that things had been done for generations. Rather than a "grocery store," the "general store" carried all of the necessary staples for the household kitchen. If it wasn't on the shelf, on the local farm, or in the garden – you didn't need it.

After WWII our nation's population quickly changed to a primarily urban population, and the farmer's paradigm shifted to a production-related focus. This era introduced the "Super-market" to meet the needs of the changing population. Unfortunately, this era also ushered in the use of synthetic chemicals to increase and enhance production, along with the use of GMO seeds to the same end. Our nation's agricultural community has sacrificed quality for production in a very dramatic and harmful way.

We need to take a huge lesson from our great-grandfathers. We have researched many of the farming journals from the turn of the 20th Century, and we have found that many of the farming methods our great-grandfathers used were designed to foster sustainability with simple common sense. Much of this has been thrown aside in the name of production since WWII. I remember my grandfather always planting winter squash in the corn. That's the way his dad did it, and that's the way his grand-dad did it. In my research, I learned that there were multiple reasons for this practice.

1. Raccoons, in particular, do not like the feel of the squash leaves on their feet,
2. The squash naturally discourage weed growth,
3. The squash do not "compete" heavily with the corn,
4. And probably several more reasons we haven't found yet.

There are countless historical examples such as this, and I believe we can learn most of what we need to know if we closely examine our agricultural history and glean the wisdom of past generations. There is nothing new under the sun. I am working with Pigeon River Farm near Clintonville, WI to promote Historic Sustainability. We are using this theme in all of our operations, and we are documenting our journey backwards in time and forward again to 2011. We are also using renewable energy technologies in our design to create a working model of a closed-loop sustainable farming operation with as much self-sufficiency as possible.

Specializing in Grants for Renewable Energies and Sustainable Agriculture

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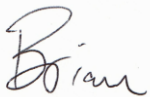
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I believe renewable energy is also a vital component to the sustainability of our nation's food supply, and we are facing many challenges in this area. Most of the time, we are dealing with an extremely small sub-culture of citizens who even care about where their energy comes from, as long as it is available and affordable. To promote renewable energies, we need to work with the social, political and economic conditions that prevail, whether or not we agree with the mainstream. Sustainability and environmental correctness will always be a hard sell unless or until it affects the current or short-term pocketbook or food supply. All of us like to be able to hit the light switch and have power when we need it, and very few of us have taken the steps to abandon the grid.

In the large scheme of things, our personal philosophy or conviction on environmental issues is a moot point. None of the steps that are being taken in this area will be significant without a wholesale buy-in from the public. Even at the federal level or the Wisconsin State Office of Energy Independence level, the things that are being done right now are relatively insignificant. It's a political game, and a "feel good" gesture for PR. On the flip-side, the "green" movement has created economic opportunity, and there are many organizations that have done a great job of reaping some of the harvest. We all have bills to pay. If the money was not there, I have to wonder if some of these organizations would exist.

The steadily decreasing number of American Farmers have accepted the responsibility of feeding our nation, and most farmers I know take that responsibility very seriously. There will soon come a time when the food supply will take the visible lead in our economy. The infrastructure that we rely on currently is fragile and extremely unsustainable. While organics have been on the rise, the underlying nutritional deficiencies of our conventional food supply are relatively insignificant compared to the logistics.

It took many decades to get where we are at today. While we won't be able to change things overnight, our hand will soon be forced due to the impending spike in oil prices. The bottom line is that people need to eat. I believe the key to success and ultimate survival will be in the sustainability of agriculture and the availability of a local or regional food supply. This is why I have chosen to focus my business on being a part of the long-term solution for renewable energies and sustainable farming operations. My goal is to provide my clients with viable, practical solutions for complete sustainability.



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