

## HIGHLIGHTS

- God created us to cultivate plant life.
- After sin, animal farming was introduced.
- The first family feud began between a shepherd and a plant farmer.
- The symbol of the sacrificial lamb represents the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.
- Early civilizations used simple implements and used animals to power heavy farm equipment.
- In ancient times, inorganic chemicals were used to control pests.
- In the 1940's synthetic chemical production increased.
- Through hybridization and selective breeding, people have manipulated the genetic expression of plants and animals.
- Scientists can now use specific genetic manipulation.

# MODERN AGRICULTURE

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## IN THE BEGINNING

Back when the first man and first woman were created, the human management of Earth's lifeforms began. In Genesis 2:15 the Bible says "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." One of our first duties was to manage and take care of the plant life around us. Eventually our farming repertoire grew to include managing animals. After sin had entered the world by Eve's disobedience and Adam's subsequent transgression, two farmers were born. In Genesis 4:2 the Bible says "And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." Abel farmed sheep because a lamb had to be offered as a sacrifice to atone for sin. The sacrifice pointed to the only Lamb of God which took away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Jesus Christ alone could only make an atonement for our sins. Cain, on the other hand, thought he could merit his own salvation by offering what he cultivated from the ground. We read in Genesis 4:3, 5 "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." Sadly, we read later on in Genesis that Cain killed Abel. Clearly, agriculture has played an important part in human history.

## THINGS CERTAINLY HAVE CHANGED

Looking back at early societies, typical farming involved the use of simple implements and using animals to do the heavy work. Once the internal combustion engine was developed, tractors, combines and other heavy machinery could be used to complete work in hours rather than days. In ancient times many inorganic chemicals were used to control pests. In the 1940's, the production of synthetic pesticides accelerated. Chemicals like DDT, BHC, Aldrin and others were found to be dangerous for human health. Up until recent history, humans could not drastically modify plants and animals at the genetic level. Through hybridization and selective breeding, people could superficially manipulate the genetics of plants and animals. Now scientists are able to genetically engineer crops so that their characteristics are more favorable for food production. Things certainly have changed, but has it been for the better or for the worse?

- Since the industrialization of agriculture, food borne illnesses have increased more than tenfold.
- Many common pesticides used today are carcinogenic to humans.
- Many animals live in inhumane and overcrowded conditions.
- Radiation is being used to control bacterial growth.
- Factory farms feed animals antibiotic laden feed.
- Antibiotic use is contributing to the rise of antibiotic resistant bacteria.
- We should have sufficient land for producing our own food.

## INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SAFETY

Although all sorts of food safety measures have been put in place since 1970, food borne illnesses have increased more than tenfold. Industry believes that pesticides are important for ensuring good food production; however, many of these pesticides that are applied to common crops are known to be carcinogenic. Since 1989, the application of pesticides has risen approximately eight percent which is equal to sixty million pounds of pesticides. Many animals, which are farmed for their meat, are confined in industrialized animal farms. Conditions such as inhumane living conditions and overcrowding are contributing to the rise and spread of infectious bacteria, viruses and fungi. These organisms contaminate meat products which are eventually consumed and sicken consumers. In response to food contamination, food processing plants have turned to using radiation to reduce the number of living pathogenic organisms on food. However, the amount of radiation used can be equivalent to receiving millions of chest X-rays. Studies have shown that consuming irradiated meat can cause DNA damage.

## WHAT'S IN YOUR ANIMAL FEED?

In factory farms, operators manage what animals eat so that they grow larger and stay healthy until they are ready for slaughter. Factory farms introduce low doses of antibiotics into animal feed. They do this to preempt outbreaks of disease in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. The problem with this is that when bacteria are repeatedly introduced to low doses of antibiotics, they develop resistance to the drugs. As a result, new antibiotic resistant bacteria are introduced. As more bacteria become resistant, bacterial infections may become more severe and lethal because common antibiotics may exhibit little to no effect in controlling and eliminating bacterial growth.

## AN INDUSTRIOUS AND SELF-SUPPORTING LIFE

A famous American writer, named Ellen White, wrote “In God’s plan for Israel every family had a home on the land, with sufficient ground for tilling. Thus were provided both the means and the incentive for a useful, industrious, and self-supporting life. And no devising of men has ever improved upon that plan. To the world’s departure from it is owing, to a large degree, the poverty and wretchedness that exist today.” {MH 183.3} By going back to a simpler and more humble life, we may reap the benefits of working the ground and producing our own organically produced food. Food free from industrially produced contaminants would be food we could most readily enjoy.

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**Readings for this Article:**

Food Inc. by Karl Weber

The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture by Andrew Kimbrell

Unsworth, J., (10, May 2010). *History of Pesticide Use*. IUPAC.

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