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From the editor

In the late summer-early fall of 2006, the US had another food scare. Packaged spinach was found to contain a mutant strain of *E. coli* – O157:H7 – that caused hundreds of consumers to become ill and three to die in some 26 states. Much was written about the incident, which was domestic in origin despite the nation's well-developed fears of bioterrorism. We had poisoned ourselves. Considerable time and newsprint were devoted to pinpointing the source of the problem (and assigning blame). There was no end of possibilities, wild pigs, deer, cattle manure, poor worker hygiene, flooding, irrigation, organic production methods. As it became clear, however, that the problem did not have an easily identifiable cause or solution but was systemic in nature (that it had something to do with scale, nearby concentrated animal confinement operations, contaminated water, and extended distribution systems), two things seemed to happen. First, much was made of the "unprecedented development in scientific investigation of food-born illness" (Sander, 2006). In the midst of our (i.e., US) distress, we took time to congratulate ourselves on having the ability to identify unique bacterial strains and trace them from a contaminated food back to their source. Far less was said about the paradox that "We don't see this disease [*E. coli* O157:H7] in India, Africa, China. We only see it in highly technologically advanced countries, and the reason is because of this highly centralized food processing system" (Lee Riles quoted in Finz and Allday, 2006). New scientific remedies were also discussed – vaccinations to rid feedlot cattle of O157:H7; irradiation to serve as the 20th century's version of pasteurization; hypersensitive food testing equipment – all, quite fortuitously, boons to the companies developing and marketing them.

Second there was a call for "more stringent regulations" and "a more rigorous monitoring system" to protect the populace. Consumer advocacy organizations, editorials, and food system experts argued that it was the government's responsibility to ensure food safety and the *E. coli* outbreak in spinach exposed some major cracks in the existing monitoring system. We were told that our national food safety protocols and practices were both inadequate and disjointed. "Oversight in this area is shared largely between two agencies, the UDSA for food animals and the FDA for food plants. Neither has much jurisdiction over farms. The FDA in particular has little enforcement authority" (Nestle, 2006). What was needed, many felt, was a single agency and a "coordinated farm-to-table safety system" (Nestle, 2006). Farms, as sites of food production, had somehow escaped scrutiny but, like food processing, needed to conform to strict and enforceable standards. Legislation to this effect was proposed (Safe Food Action of 2005 – S729; HR 1507) and as one proponent argued, its passage "Is critical to the future of California agriculture" (Nestle, 2006).

This was (and is) the popular solution – a uniform set of standards and a centralized authority to enforce them – for addressing most, if not all, of the health and safety problems that plague the industrial food system. And yet, such a solution – the wholesale tightening of federal regulation – needs far more consideration than it seems to be receiving. Will the streamlining of authority and the creation of a one-size-fits-all solution really protect us; will it keep us safe? If the US food system is dangerously flawed and increasingly unstable, why are we only concerned about protecting California-style agriculture? Is it not worth noting that the spinach from my homegarden, from my farmers market, from my local food coop, from my region was not (and never has been) contaminated by mutant *E. coli*? Is it also not worth noting that national organic standards (in terms of its rules, materials, and enforcement) hardly provide the unbreachable protection many farmers and consumers originally hoped for? Similarly, what will happen when a nationally orchestrated campaign successfully preempts, and ultimately prohibits, local governments from passing ordinances related to seed use (or non-use) (see http://www.environmentalcommons.org/gmo-tracker.html)? Why are we so determined to "save" ourselves through the application of increasingly external and restrictive measures?

I don't have definitive answers to these large and troubling questions. At the same time, they warrant our critical attention for many of the reasons that Ponte and Kleinman (this issue) make clear in their respective papers. It is also possible that, if we look carefully, partial answers may be found in the struggles and strategies of real people. To this end, I offer yet another recent news item; this one a tragically powerful and powerfully instructive story.

On October 2, 2006 a milkman shot and killed five little Amish girls and critically injured five others in their schoolhouse in Lancaster, PA. The reasons for this assault are still largely unknown and for our purposes unimportant. What is important is that in this close, private, and devout agrarian community, no one person, no family, was untouched by the horror of these brutal

slayings; no one was exempt from personal loss or collective grief. This was truly a breach of safety and security. And yet, the Amish community responded in a way that stunned the nation. Instead of anger or retribution, they forgave their attacker and embraced his wife and family. As Chittister (2006) wrote in a superb commentary, "No, it was not the murders, not the violence, that shocked us; it was the forgiveness that followed it for which we were unprepared."

Let me be clear. I am not suggesting that we forgive industrial agriculture or the conditions that gave rise to the outbreak of O157:H7 poisoning. They are closely allied. They are dangerous, and they need federal oversight and regulation. Rather, what I am suggesting is that we compare these two troubling incidents and perhaps learn something from the Amish response - specifically that it is not possible to survive only through resistance and defensive action and that it is necessary to know what we must keep and what we can safely give up. This, in turn, requires knowing who we are; something that cannot be mandated.

The ability of the Amish to turn the other cheek, the refusal "to hate what hurt them," certainly stems from deep religious conviction, but we do not have to be deeply religious ourselves to see that such behavior is of great value. As numerous accounts point out, "the Amish are not strangers to violence." They are a people who have been persecuted and who have chosen to remain apart. Yet, they also seem to know that apart is never absolute and security is never guaranteed. "My mom and dad taught me, and now we teach our children the same, to forgive people if they hurt us or wrong us. ... Things are going to happen in life. We're going to get hurt. But ... we have to forgive ... If we give it to God, he'll take it and make something good out of it" (as quoted in McCaffrey and Ruane, 2006). Indeed, the milkman who had become a familiar and trusted figure – the very source of the tragedy – was present in the community precisely because they had adopted federal standards and modern, capital-intensive technologies for milk production and marketing. The Amish are deliberately and carefully managing within the global system. They also are deliberately and carefully maintaining their sense of themselves and their collective limits.

Likewise, this care and forgiveness are a lesson in rethinking security. As the Amish of Lancaster, PA know, there can never be absolute security, any more than there can be absolute fairness. Both are contradictions in terms; figments of an overly scientized, mechanized, and legalized approach to problem solving. Moreover, they are antithetical to living systems. Certainly, our food system must be safe and secure. You'll get no argument from me there. But we must also understand that we cannot legislate our way out of all danger and insecurity, not without strangling ourselves to death. The best we can do is to make sure that there is sufficient diversity and flexibility within our food system to continually cope with insecurity and occasional tragedy. This is the closest we can come to success.

There is a role for the State in all of this – a very critical role – and that is to protect the integrity and the possibility of diverse scales of operation and forms of expression (biological and cultural). It is a matter of upholding the inalienable rights of all citizens and disrupting the processes and power relationships that threaten them. It is a matter of constructing mechanisms to accommodate difference, not regularize (bureaucratize) its expression.

Our strength, our power to protect ourselves, lies in making distinctions, having options, being flexible. By focusing so perversely on the loudest voice, the worst offender, and/or the most sensational offense, we risk overlooking and disappearing more nuanced and equitably structured (and derived) solutions. As Philpott (2006) argues in the context of the spinach scare, instead of a single, "industrial-strength" solution, how about federal legislation and food safety guidelines that enable small and family-scale producers to manage with tools, genetic varieties, production practices, and processing facilities commensurate, at least, with their size and the nature of their markets. How about taking the time to rethink the HAACP model, to evaluate what it can and cannot do – and for whom. How about recognizing that mandatory and rigidly prescriptive legislation has already hobbled small and family-scale animal production, processing, and marketing and will likely do the same for small and family-scale raw vegetable producers?

Do we really want to live in a world without the Amish or any other group of people, agrarian or otherwise, who approach their lives and livelihoods differently, manage their soils and landscapes differently, and have lessons, both good and bad, to teach us? It seems ironic that the Amish – a people known for their austerity and constancy – have something so profound to tell us about flexibility (and survival). But, is it any less ironic that we, who place such value in sovereignty and choice, are so willing to legislate them both out of existence?

This is my last issue as editor-in-chief of *Agriculture and Human Values*. It has been an intense and rewarding 3 years. While I have made some hard decisions and done some heavy-duty editing, I also have become increasingly aware of (and dependent on) the wisdom and energy of my colleagues – hundreds and hundreds of them. I now recognize in a way I hadn't before, just how much a journal like *AHV*, and scholarship generally, is a collective and selfless enterprise. I have tapped the talents of many people, most of whom remain anonymous, and they, in turn, have helped me shape the papers that ultimately have been published. The journal is decidedly a group effort and I am sincerely thankful for both the guidance and assistance I have received.

Harvey James, an agricultural economist from the University of Missouri–Columbia, will assume my duties as of January 1, 2007, though you will find that the Spring and Summer 2007 issues (24-1 and 24-2) were produced under my editorship (we work a full 6 months ahead of ourselves). Being wiser than I (and in keeping with the multidisciplinary nature of *AHV*), he will be assisted by Nancy Grudens-Schuck (Department of Agricultural Education & Studies, Iowa State University) and Jeffrey Cole (Department of Anthropology, Dowling College). Harvey introduces himself and his plans for the journal below.

From the new editor-in-chief, Harvey S. James, Jr.

The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus is known to have taught the universality of change. "Everything flows and nothing stays," he said. What he said is true about many things, including the editorship at *Agriculture and Human Values*. Laura B. DeLind's term as editor-in-chief ends with this issue. I have been asked by the Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society to become the new editor-in-chief. It is a responsibility I am honored to accept. The journal is widely respected within academic and policy circles. I believe this is not only due to its subject matter, but also because of the effective leadership of Laura B. DeLind, a scholar who has done much to advance our understanding of agriculture as a human endeavor.

A little background about myself: I am an agricultural economist at the University of Missouri–Columbia. My academic training is in economics and sociology, with degrees from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. My research interests include business ethics, trust, the organizational structure of the agrifood sector, agricultural cooperatives, family firms, and biotechnology. My research has been theoretical, empirical, and policy-oriented and is multidisciplinary by intent, involving economics, sociology, psychology, and philosophy. I have conducted surveys, experiments, and ethnographic work. Bottom line: I have a great appreciation for the interdisciplinary scholarship that underlies the success of *Agriculture and Human Values*.

In order to continue producing the quality research readers of *Agriculture and Human Values* expect, I will retain the system of double-blind reviews and utilize both leading scholars and members of the editorial board to review manuscripts submitted for publication. Furthermore, I recognize that there is a passivity that often underlies research published in academic journals, in the sense that the editor receives manuscripts on topics submitters want to see published in the journal. Although this will continue – I encourage scholars to submit papers on topics that fall within the aims and scope of the journal – I will also regularly issue calls for papers dealing with questions or topics I or members of the editorial board believe to be of contemporary or academic importance. Although I cannot guarantee that papers submitted in response to these questions will be accepted for publication, I will be more willing to work with authors who respond to these calls.

Of course, running an academic journal is not a solo act. The journal boasts a highly competent group of scholars who serve as the journal's editorial board. I am also pleased that Nancy Grudens-Schuck and Jeffrey Cole have agreed to serve as assistant editors and that Doug Constance will continue as the book review editor. I am confident that with this editorial team *Agriculture and Human Values* will remain the premier academic publication dealing with the human and ecological side of agricultural and food system issues.

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Laura B. DeLind and Harvey James Jr