

God Made a Farmer...

The Super Bowl airing of a Dodge Ram commercial in which Paul Harvey described the noble qualities of a farmer is a glamorization of today's typical agro-industrial production. It is not a true representation of the majority of today's farmers.

Decades ago, farmers did possess gentility towards the animals they raised; they were a symbol of land stewardship and environmental awareness. Their passion was to cultivate life for the nourishment of others. The fertility and integrity of the land was a priority; it ensured future success. For the most part, farmers of the past are icons of an era that has been changed as much as the land they plow.

Too many of today's farmers relentlessly sow a single crop in nutritionally barren land and repeatedly spray their yield with poisonous chemicals. Government subsidy checks are the priority instead of nutritious food. Their focus has shifted from sustainability to maximum profitability, resulting in vast fields of single crops and confined animal feeding operations.

Corporations have taken control of production away from the farmers, placing unnatural demands on the land and animals. These modern conventional farming practices have led to the rise in food borne illness; antibiotic, pesticide and herbicide resistance; genetic erosion of species; and a detachment of a people from their food source.

We cannot, however, lay all the blame on the farmer, or even the government. We, the public, the consumers, carry the majority of the responsibility for this dramatic change in our food production. We have sent a loud and clear message to farming companies, telling them that we approve of gluttony and harsh environmental practices, that we tolerate the

plundering of our lands as long as there is a never ending supply of nutritionally substandard food. We tell them this every time we purchase today's quick, prepackaged meals.

The once intimate relationship we had with our food is in the past, but it doesn't need to stay there. For the health of our children, the preservation of our land, and the future of our people, we must rekindle our emotional connection to food: where it comes from, how it is grown, and the bonds that it can create among us. Food can once again become a means for celebration and family togetherness. We can take our first step with a return to purchasing fresh, local, wholesome foods.

Many of the qualities of a farmer mentioned by the Dodge Ram ad are maintained by today's sustainable, heirloom, and organic farmers and ranchers. Their growing ranks are leading a shift back to fresh and local food production. By changing our consumption, we can demand a rise in organic, ethical farming. In turn, this rise in demand will impact food production, driving government policy to provide assistance to alternative, clean, environmentally conscious farmers instead of commodity producers.

God made a farmer, a steward of the land, an advocate for healthy food and humane ranching practices. Across the nation we are seeing a return of this iconic image of the farmer who raises grass fed beef and sheep, free range chickens, and organic crops. We want them to be bold and courageous, to stand against tyrannical corporations that dictate unsound methods of food production. We want them to succeed. But they cannot succeed without our full support—support that comes through our choices each time we buy our food.

Will we continue to use our dollars to support factory farming, GMO foods, and giant food conglomerates? Or will we choose organic? Grass fed? Free range? The choice is ours.

