



The way I see it...

BY PAUL KINDINGER

He is entitled to his opinion

An article written by Bryan Walsh entitled “*Getting Real About the High Price of Cheap Food*,” recently appeared in *Time* magazine (August 21, 2009). The assertion of the article was basically twofold: that there are many hidden costs to “cheap” food and, I quote, “And perhaps worst of all, our food is increasingly bad for us, even dangerous.” The author goes on to promote a “transition to more sustainable, smaller-scale production methods...” and organic food. He even goes so far as to state, “Our expanding girth is just one consequence of mainstream farming.”

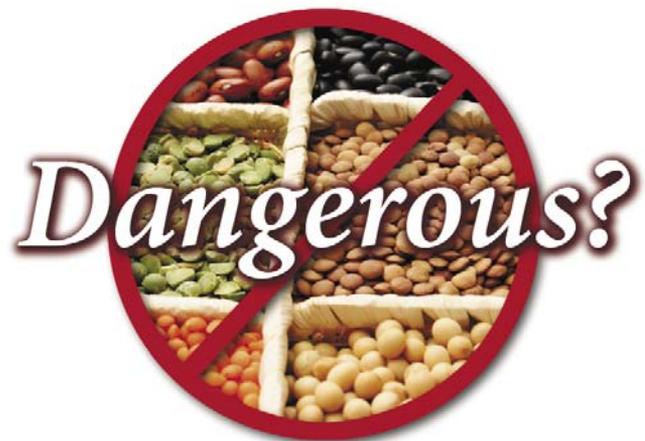
In my humble opinion, this article is a thinly veiled attack on modern agriculture. Anyone who does not believe that agriculture is under attack these days should not only read this article, but also look at some of the regulatory concepts proposed recently, including concepts that on face value would limit our access to the water necessary to raise our crops and feed our livestock. They would take away our capability of controlling pests that reduce potential yields in a world where demand is expanding at a surprising pace. Couple that with the fact that it would make food more expensive, not less. I see that as a real threat to people around the globe.

Thank God for technology that offers us the hope of increased yields, more efficient production, lower cost food and feed, and the improved ability to feed a hungry world. We should be thankful that nearly 98 percent of the population in the U.S. and Canada can pursue some profession of their dreams and not have to concern themselves with eking out a living every day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

I grew up on a farm. I am proud of my heritage and wouldn't trade the experience for the world. Would I advocate that we adopt a system that reduces yields, is less efficient and sends more people “back to their roots,” so to speak? The answer is NO. Unlike the author of the *Time* article, I believe “mainstream” agriculture is doing just fine. I have no bones to pick with the producers and consumers of “organic” foods either. I like the idea of choice, options that allow us as consumers to eat in accordance with the lifestyle we select.

I also feel it is harsh and undeserved to call “mainstream” agriculture “dangerous.” What *is* dangerous is how we blame the lack of personal responsibility and accountability for our actions on someone else. The reason for our “expanding girth” is not because of “mainstream” agriculture any more than it is from “organic” agriculture. If my girth is expanding, it's the result of the choices I make, the food I chose to put in my body and the quantities I chose to consume on a regular basis.

In other words, if I shove too much food in my mouth, drink a lot of beer or consume too much alcohol, don't exercise, etc., whose fault is that? It's my fault! It's not my wife's fault, or the kids, the dog, my neighbors, or anyone else – it is my responsibility unless,



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of course, I have a medical condition that is beyond my control. Put the responsibility where it belongs, but don't cast aspersions at decent hard working farmers and ranchers.

Recently, Dr. Norman Borlaug died. I had the honor of spending some time with him one evening over dinner and presenting him with the World Food Prize. What a delightful evening. I had read a lot of his work and followed his efforts to develop new varieties of wheat and other crops that could help feed an expanding and often hungry world. I would have certainly liked to get Dr. Borlaug's take on this *Time* article. My sense is he would not have been very impressed by the arguments offered by the author. In my opinion, we need more Dr. Borlaugs in this world and fewer people who spend their time on earth biting the hand that feeds them.

If you haven't done so, read the *Time* article. See if you think I am misguided. But, like I said earlier, I grew up on a farm and anyone who suggests that I need to go back to one in order to raise my food according to their standards and fulfill their concept of how I should live my life is crazy! I feel that Bryan Walsh is entitled to his opinion. But in my opinion, he is very wrong and very misguided – and that's the way I see it. ■

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