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Food, Farming, and Faith

Gary W. Fick
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What kind of food will people eat in the future? Will it be healthful? Will there be enough? Who should be growing the food, and where should it be grown? Is there any difference in the food quality and environmental effects of family farming and industrialized agriculture? Do pesticides and genetically modified organisms only enhance the food supply, or do some practices harm the environment and poison the future?

In his probing book, Fick, a professor of agronomy at Cornell, attempts to answer these and a host of other questions. He begins by exploring the ways people eat and then moves into a discussion of agricultural practices that arise out of the choices people make about foods. Weaving various scripture passages into his study, Fick underscores his argument that agricultural sustainability is a holistic practice that involves spiritual and ethical decisions as well as scientific ones.

"Agricultural sustainability is like a one-legged stool supported by ecological, social-economic, and spiritual-ethical relationships interwoven into a single supporting leg." Fick concludes his argument for a holistic approach to food and farming by listing fifteen "essentials of agriculture" including, "farming must offer an attractive lifestyle and a means of learning how to farm so that future generations will become farmers," and "there is a religious and ethical component of agriculture that calls for all participants to have food that they can celebrate life."

Fick's thoughtful book adds fresh perspectives to the growing number of books about the centrality of food in American culture.

HENRY L. CARRIGAN (November 14, 2008)

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