

One Size Fits None: A Farm Girl's Search for the Promise of Regenerative Agriculture

Stephanie Anderson

University of Nebraska Press (Jan 1, 2019)

Softcover \$21.95 (312pp)

978-1-4962-0505-6

Thomas Jefferson thought of farmers as the nation's MVPs. He called them "the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous" of our citizens. But Jefferson didn't live in this time, when 95% of the food and commodities grown in the US come from high-tech growers who plant, tend, and harvest their massive fields without ever touching soil, and Jefferson never could have anticipated that the use of insecticides and fertilizers would deplete that soil to near infertility.

Let's play fair and acknowledge that modern farms produce far more food per acre than their predecessors, and worldwide levels of poverty and starvation are at the lowest levels ever. But the methods they use aren't sustainable. For reasons of public health and in the interest of a healthy planet, our corporate food system badly needs to be repaired.

In *One Size Fits None*, Stephanie Anderson crisscrosses the country, visiting the intrepid farmers who practice exactly the sort of farming techniques that will serve as models for that needed reform. Raised on a ranch in South Dakota, she knows all the arguments that conventional farmers use to convince themselves that a switch to more enlightened techniques would be too difficult, too expensive, and too little too late.

At first, Anderson was skeptical herself. But then she discovered farms with soil that regenerates each season and farmers revitalized by newfound success. In the Dakotas, Anderson met Phil and Jill Jerde and learned how their Great Plains Buffalo Company succeeds without the brutal practices of an industrial feed lot. With a herd of one thousand bison and ten children under their keep, the Jerdes are prime examples of farmers actively pursuing a regenerative agricultural ideal.

MATT SUTHERLAND (January/February 2019)

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