We are using up the planet’s resources at a terrifying rate. This is a fact that’s often brought out in relation to the energy crisis (‘the oil will all run out by 2050’, for example). I hear it mentioned less in relation to food, but it is equally true: according to the UN, as the matter stands global food production would need to increase by between 70 and 100 per cent from present levels by 2050 in order to feed the world’s growing population (un.org). This is not because enough food isn’t being produced – it is – but because of the huge amount of waste involved in current farming methods. For example, Compassion in World Farming estimates that 1/3 of the world’s cereal crop every year is fed to farm animals reared for meat, eggs and dairy – the majority of them on factory farms – rather than going directly into human stomachs (ciwf.org). These animals are often mistreated or unethically reared, and they also contribute 18% of the greenhouse gases casing climate change (ciwf.org) This demand for animal feed, as well as the demand for biofuel crops, encourages monoculture of one or two commercially viable crops, rather than healthy crop rotation (the ‘three field’ system of medieval England, for example). This lack of a natural balance severely damages the soil’s nutrient levels. It’s one of things which led to the North American ‘dust bowls’ and financial depression during the 1930s. As with crude oil, metals and minerals, when big business farms, it is not putting back into the earth what it takes away.

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Part 1: Introduction
Part 2: Setting the Scene for Food, Farming, and Agriculture: From Field to Plate
Part 3: Green Economics Worldview for All People Everywhere -Nature, Other Species, the Planet and its Sytems. Ground-breaking Ideas to Implement in Food
Part 4: Delicious Experimental and Innovative Recipes to Implement Green Ideas
Part 5: Applying Green ideas and perspectives to food and drink issues
Part 6: Farming and Agriculture : Green Dilemas
Part 7 Nature, Biodiversity and other species
Part 8 Changing the Rules of Engagement for Food, Sustainability and Trade: Human Dwellings and land use
Part 9 Renewable Energy and climate change
Part 10: Green Economics: Changing the Way We See the World, Our Economy and Food

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The Greening of Food, Farming and Agriculture

On a planet with resources which sometimes seem unlimited to us, we are already struggling to feed our population – and it’s an unnecessary struggle. According to the FAO, in 2011, 900 million people in the world were undernourished, even though enough food is produced globally for the Earth’s population (fao.org (2011)). We simply fail, as a global species, to share with each other. It is horrifying to think how often starvation and obesity sit side by side – even in the UK, where problems with obesity are much discussed in the media, the number of food banks is on the rise as organisations and even individuals take on the responsibility of feeding those who, for whatever reason, can no longer always afford to feed themselves.

The “flip-side” of starvation, obesity and its associated problems, also has some of its roots in unsustainable food practices. All the way from field to mouth, most of us don’t know what goes into our food anymore, from the pesticides which permeate some supermarket fruit (foe.co.uk) to horse DNA and drugs in burgers. Mass-produced chicken and pork is fed on fish from already endangered stocks and dependent on antibiotics because they do not have the diet or the exercise necessary to develop a healthy immune system. Colours and chemicals are in our food, and their names on the label mean nothing to most of us. E-numbers, which were introduced as a way of reassuring us that chemicals had been certified by the EU as safe for human consumption, have come to mean almost the opposite, vaguely linked in our minds to cancer and ADHD.

If people don’t know what goes into their food, they can’t make an informed decision about the best diet. The amount of food high in sugar, fat and carbohydrates available in supermarkets fools us into thinking that this represents a normal diet for a human being. It doesn’t – and obesity, among other evils, is the result.

Welcome to the “Age of Global transformation and the Age of Green Economics”

Ban Ki-Moon Head of the United Nations

The Greening of Food, Farming and Agriculture

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