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### Not Your Grandfather's Farm

Imagine a world where the food you ate was secretly replace with a factory created artificial replica. In this world the imitation food looks, smells and tastes like the original, sometimes even better. Most of this fake food including the meat was made up of only a few plant-based materials and a gang of chemicals. ▲Also, imagine it would slowly kill you trough a range of horrible dieses. We currently live in this bizarre world. ▲America's food industry is one of its deepest, darkest, best-kept secrets. When we think of a farm we picture scenes from ~~Orson~~ ~~Wells~~ ~~West~~ ~~Wells~~ ~~West~~. Not warehouses with ten thousand chickens, or dairy cows ankle-deep in ordure, huddled together under tin sheds in blistering heat. We picture the cows grazing on grass. Not eating formulas made of poultry waste and orange peels. The way food is produced is so over looked that it takes an outbreak of some sort to focus our eyes on problems beyond the grocery store shelves.

Naturally, capitalism produces a natural pressure toward efficiency. In the meat industry this has led to the factory farm. Every effort is bent toward maximizing the output of meat and minimizing the cost. ▲As a

result, "The U.S. agricultural industry can now produce unlimited quantities of meat and grains at remarkably cheap prices" (32). The food that factory farms produced is cheap in terms of monetary value. However, it comes at a high cost. The mass production of farm animals effects the environment, economy, and human health.

Inevitably, intensive animal agriculture depletes valuable natural resources. Instead of being eaten by people, the vast majority of grain harvested in the U.S. is fed to farm animals. This wasteful and inefficient practice has forced agribusiness to exploit vast stretches of land. Forests, wetlands, and other natural ecosystems and wildlife habitats have been decimated and turned into crop and grazing land. Scarce fossil fuels, groundwater, and topsoil resources that took millenniums to develop are now disappearing.

In addition, industrialized farms are threatening the well being of rural communities throughout the U.S., and citizens are increasingly working to block their construction in order to prevent pollution and protect the quality of life. Family farms have been the core of agrarian culture for thousands of years, providing the opportunity to connect with the land and to live in tune with the seasons and the weather. Traditional farmers don't produce more than the carrying capacity of the land. They understand the condition of the soil and its ability to sustain various crops from season to season. They commonly produce and save their own

seeds, a practice that has helped small farms maintain the integrity of crops, and allow hardier, diverse strains of plants to prosper. Contrasting this, industrial farms use a few strains of high yielding crops, an approach that threatens genetic diversity and often leads to chemical dependency. Short-term efficiency and profitability, rather than long-term sustainability drives the factory farming model. It externalizes costs, such as pollution clean up and health care services, onto others in the community. Neighbors of industrial operations have experienced health problems ranging from chronic asthma to neurological damage.

Furthermore, the meat, poultry, dairy and egg industries employ technological short cuts to maximize production. Under these conditions, virulent pathogens that are resistant to antibiotics are emerging. These new super germs, whose evolution is traced directly to the overuse of antibiotics in factory farming, have the potential to cause yet unknown human suffering. Millions of Americans are infected, and thousands die every year from contaminated animal food products. Despite repeated warnings from consumer advocates, the United States Department of Agriculture's meat inspection system remains grossly inadequate, and consumers are now being told to expect animal products to be tainted. Meanwhile, the agribusiness industry, rather than advising consumers to curb their intake of animal products, has devised extreme measures of overcooking and antibiotics. This helps consumers avoid the dangers of

animal products and maintain their gross over-consumption of meat and dairy

In conclusion, it seems like some appalling conspiracy straight from the pages of a George Orwell novel. Yet factory farming is not plot to manipulate the masses. It's not only of our making, but it also made us. Cheap food accounts for American prosperity. We spend less of our annual incomes on food than any other nation. According to Walsh, "Americans spend less than 10% of their incomes on food" (33). There are various hazards that stem from our cost efficient food. Consequently, they are the price of the American way of life. Maybe they are telling us that it is time to change.

## Works Cited

Walsh, Bryan. "The Real Cost of Cheap Food." ~~Wine Magazine~~ *Wine Magazine* 31 Aug. 2009: 29-33. Print.