

Industrial Agriculture

How do we define industrial agriculture?

Eco Ruralis defines industrial agriculture as agriculture which is done by agricultural businesses rather than families; which is reliant on man-made chemical inputs for its production and growth; which has as its main focus agricultural productivity and takes little or no efforts to maintain sustainability; and which is done on a large scale in order to maximize profits.

What negative effects and side effects does it have?

Social

- It increases the effects of landlessness – “food dependence” makes peasants move off the land and forces them to rely on others to provide them with a living rather than using their own skills to feed themselves
- It lowers wages of individual farmers by driving down prices through overproduction using unsustainable practices.
- It focuses on export and luxury crops, increasing food prices – land taken from peasants is then used to grow things like flowers and coffee for export rather than food for locals
- It produces less healthy food because it focuses on cheaper-to-produce alternatives such as corn syrup

Environmental

- Industrial agriculture is petroleum-based – using oil for transporting food over long distances, as well as using almost exclusively petroleum-based pesticides and herbicides
- It focuses on production of only the most profitable strains, meaning that it shrinks the genetic pool in our agriculture, making our entire food system and habitat less biodiverse.
- It is focused on production, not conservation or sustainability. When food is produced with profit as the whole motive, it will never be sustainable. GMOs, pesticides and herbicides all may allow stockholders of agricultural companies to realize a profit in the short term, but they threaten our long-term ability to produce food for future generations.
- Pollution from inputs such as fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides destroys waterways and habitats for

Political

- Industrial agriculture places food production in the hands of corporations, who then pay for expensive lobbyists to convince politicians to support them. Politicians respond to this by drafting and passing laws which are beneficial to industrial agriculture, at the expense of organic and traditional farmers.

How can we preserve and develop alternatives?

-We support focusing on small-scale family based farming, where individuals have the right to produce food for themselves and can manage the environment around them in a healthy way. This alternative seems impossible now because a set of policies has been in place for generations which are designed to destroy this farming structure. However, it is not impossible. Anything that can be done in a structure can also be undone within the same structure. We support a new direction, focused on family farms. Luckily for Romania, this direction already exists and only needs to be supported, unlike the United States, which will have to completely rebuild its destroyed family farm system.

Organic and traditional agriculture

Environmentalists and supporters of small scale agriculture are often accused of being regressive or not modern. We wholeheartedly disagree. Organic and traditional agriculture are not focused on regressing, but rather using modern knowledge and low impact techniques to produce the best, most sustainable agriculture possible. We feel that in fifty years people will see industrial agriculture for what it is, a wasteful, unsustainable form of agriculture which has been relegated to the dustbin of history – where it belongs.