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[Food & Diet, Organic Food](#)



Analyzing the Sustainability of the Organic Food Movement on a Global Scale: An Analysis of Rhetoric and Research

The rhetoric surrounding food supply and preparation is varied, and at times, heated. Scientific breakthroughs in seed development and farming methodology promise to reduce international food insecurity, but critics argue that the new developments in farming may pose environmental and health risks not detected during trials. With all of the information about the food industry available, it is difficult to separate heated opinion from hard fact. With the highly contested topic of organic versus conventional farming methods and the role which they play in the alleviation of global food insecurity, it is important to consider the rhetoric tactics of the author, in addition to reviewing literature from a variety of sources. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the rhetoric and intent of the article *Attention Whole Foods Shoppers* and then compare this article from *Foreign Policy* against existing literature from peer-reviewed journals.

Robert Paarlberg argues in his article *Attention Whole Food Shoppers* that the scientific advances in agriculture outweigh the purported benefits of the “slow food movement”. Paarlberg suggests that the strict rules against the use of pesticides and conventional farming methods will do nothing to decrease the international hunger issues, and instead, will increase the gap between those who have plenty of food and those who are food insecure. Paarlberg then goes on to explain how advances in agriculture have helped to alleviate food issues in the international community, and, how continued advancements will be the only way to continue to make leeway in reducing global poverty. Paarlberg also rails against the idea that organic food is safer

for both the environment and the human body. Instead, the author points out the decrease in food borne illnesses as a reason to continue with the science based agriculture.

Paarlberg uses an authoritative tone in order to drive home his point. He is quick to point out points that he disagrees with, without apology. When he does come to a point he disagrees with, he is able to point out why he disagrees with the argument by employing the use of anecdotes from the international community that support his claims. The diction of this article is composed of academic word choices and complex sentence structures. The article is clearly intended for a college-educated individual who is able to comprehend complex ideas. Interestingly enough, Paarlberg does not highlight his credentials related to the food movement in the article to back up his claims.

This article is directed towards the readers of Foreign Policy, who are, for the most part, affluent, business-minded individuals, and also tend to have more disposable income which would allow them to shop at a place such as Whole Foods. The use of complex sentence structures and ideas, coupled with the reference to various political conflicts that have taken place over the past fifty years imply that the readers come into this article with enough background knowledge to sufficiently understand the author's anecdotes and feel moved by them.

The existing body of literature on the arguments for the slow food movement is expansive. While Paarlberg wrote that organic farming was not sustainable for the international community at large, other academic sources suggest that organic farming is the best option in building resilient agriculture

practices, particularly in the wake of climate change. Climate change is shifting the weather patterns all over the nation, forcing farmers to adapt to new rainfall and temperature patterns, while still providing enough food for their communities (Borron, 2006). Organic agriculture allows for farmers to be more flexible with the changing environment by modeling the natural ecosystem through the promotion of biodiversity, soil health and minimizing the environmental impact of agriculture. This argument counters Paarlberg's, as this study suggests that organic agriculture is sustainable, and beneficial, on a global scale. Borron's research suggests that by using organic farming methods, crop loss due to natural disasters will be mitigated and the farmers will be able to become more self-reliant.

Organic farming is a broad term which encompasses a set of strict guidelines (Paarlberg, 2010), however, if the international community is willing to bend some of the organic farming rules to allow for more flexibility in the international community, the results could be powerful. By reducing the reliance on chemical pesticides, the environmental impact of farming can be reduced (Rigby & Caceres, 2001). Even if farmers do not follow the strict organic farming guidelines, the environmental and health impacts can be mitigated, which is an improvement over the chemical laden farming methods that are currently so prominent in the international global community. By taking this information into account, it would be interesting to see if Paarlberg would be willing to change his stance against the organic farming movement if the definition of organic farming was allowed to become more flexible. One such idea that allows for a more flexible approach to organic farming is the idea of agroecology, or sustainable

agriculture (Alteri, 1995). Agroecology includes ideas about mimicking the natural ecosystem, crop rotation, natural weed management, integrative pest management and cover-cropping. Paarlberg suggests that some of the ideas have validity, therefore, it would be interesting to see if extended research in this field would change his position on sustainable agriculture. Sifting through the existing research surrounding the debate between organic and conventional farming methods and their impact on global hunger must take into account an analysis of the author's intent and language. Food production has become a contested topic in recent years with many people weighing in. In order to form a valid opinion on this topic, it is important to consider the author and their credentials, the rhetoric used and the source of the facts.

Works Cited

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