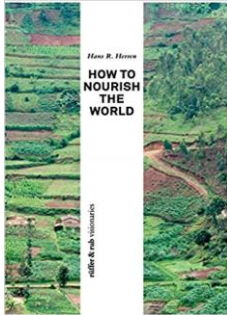


**A review of the small compendium “*How to Nourish the World*”
written by Hans R. Herren, published by Rüffer & Rub Sachbuchverlag**

Author: Kris Schürch



“A world free from hunger and misery, where everyone enjoys the same right to live in freedom with one another and in harmony with nature. A world where the boundaries of Planet Earth are respected and violence and war are outlawed. Where the needs of future generations are at the very top of the political agenda; natural resources are regenerated and preserved on their behalf. A world where energy supplies are based 100% on renewable energy resources.” That is the ambitious vision of Hans R. Herren and his foundation Biovision.

Hans R. Herren is a Swiss entomologist, agro- and development specialist, notorious in the scientific arena as a pioneer of biological pest management, largely due to successfully fighting the Cassava mealybug in Africa and preventing a devastating food crisis that could have claimed 20 million lives. As he accounts in his book, *How to Nourish the World*, Herren is an outspoken proponent of agro-ecology, as well as organic and sustainable agriculture.

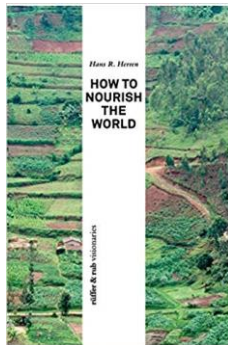
Herren initiates his book by discussing the various consequences of our current food system, describing the risks of hunger to global health, the inadequate allocation, or distribution of food for humans, lackluster waste management systems, and the high externalities of cheap meat (“cheap meat is in fact expensive”). The unsuitable nature of reductionist policies inherent in industrial agriculture stimulates incessant deforestation for arable land, preventing any escape from the vicious, negative feedback cycles that continuously degrade land. A paradigm shift towards a sustainable food system would stifle future exacerbations in land erosion, salination, compaction, acidification, pollution, and most importantly loss of biodiversity.

Agriculture directly and indirectly is one of the main contributors to the biodiversity crisis. Excessive deforestation and pesticide use, with a sole aim to produce as much as possible for the lowest cost possible creates a vast number of ecological problems and aggravates climate change. The current food system predominantly outsources various ecological costs, allowing cheap prices for consumers, yet the winner of the Right Livelihood Award of 2015, widely referred to as the Alternative Nobel Prize, makes it very clear *“it is we and our descendants who will end up paying those costs in some form or another”*. Particularly the poorest will bear the greatest burdens of climate change.

Hans Herren does not only talk, he walks the walk. He draws on prior experiences, provides examples of success and best practices to elaborate how his vision may come to be. He discusses interesting concepts such as agricultural safety nets, GMO's and energy crops, with interesting facts about ploughing and cow urine. His style is effective, engaging and powerful, and he explains his arguments well, particularly the role of consumer lifestyles.

I hoped that Herren would have discussed the role of the textile industry more thoroughly. They facilitate the continuous production of “cash crops,” such as cotton, which suck dry the land on which it is grown, while providing minimal relief to food insecurity. It would have been interesting to know how we may shift the production of natural fibres for textiles down a more sustainable path. His accounts are limited to agriculture and livestock reforms related to production on land however and he only briefly touches on sustainable natural resource management.

All in all, *How to Nourish the World* is an interesting read which ignites a flame of hope that positive, grassroot changes are present and spreading. The book shows that even in the most difficult situations, food sovereignty is being promoted and that by striving towards the universal Sustainable Development Goals, we may do something right for future generations.



How to Nourish the World, by Hans R. Herren

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