

As the human population continues to increase we are putting more and more land under the plough either to feed ourselves or the livestock we consequently consume. Mono-culture requires the removal of native vegetation and often the introduction of artificial fertilizers to increase yields from poor soils which have not previously been consider viable for agriculture. This inevitably creates green deserts where native wildlife is either unwelcome of cannot find suitable food. It increases the production of CO2 as industrial scale food production relies heavily on agricultural and commercial machinery. Moreover in the very long term we are heading towards a situation where there simple will be more viable land available. But are we missing the obvious?

Our landmass only actually occupies 29.2% of the surface area of the planet. In actual fact the correct name for our planet should be Ocean and not Earth. Wherever the water is relatively shallow seaweeds of numerous varieties thrive. They require no fertilizers, do not compete for land space and naturally reduce CO2 in their surroundings and assist in cleaning the waters of the Oceans. The Chinese and more often the Japanese use limited amounts of seaweed for culinary purposes. Seaweed is also farming commercially for constituents used in pharmaceutical products, cosmetics and various industrial applications. There have also been experiments conducted in its use to manufacture bio-diesel and petrol substitutes. There is nothing new about obtaining fuel from seaweed. In the 1960s and 1970s, American researchers showed methane could be extracted. However, their experiments were abandoned because of problems with growing the plant off the Californian coast. But little research has been undertaken in the use of seaweed as a commercial foodstuff. After all seaweed has some obvious advantages. Unlike terrestrial plants the poisons arms race has not been embarked upon by oceanic plants, there are no known species which are poisonous. In the simplest form a commercial seaweed farm needs nothing more than a few weights, some old rope and some floats. Additionally a seaweed farm is essentially a three dimensional use of space. You can't stack field one on pop of another on land....

In it's raw untreated form most seaweed looks relatively unappealing, but so does a great deal of

what we already eat. A bowl of unmilled wheat is pretty hard going on your teeth and is aesthetically unappealing as a snack, but a few thousand years of practice has resulted in our ability to produce soft white bread from it, amongst a plethora of other products. With their appealing eyes and perpetual grass chewing young bullocks don't send most people looking for a steak knife etc... So processing would be required to produce tasty and appealing food stuffs.

I'm sure we have the technology available already to produce perfectly acceptable breakfast non-cerials, ocean grown pasta shells and our Celtic cousins already have the Laverbread market cornered. Who know is years to come your salted deep fried cabbage might actually be seaweed, a bit of a reversal for the Chinese restaurants.....

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