



Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply

Vandana Shiva

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In Stolen Harvest, Vandana Shiva describes how industrial agriculture steals food from nature and poor people. She urges us to reclaim our right to protect the earth and her diverse species. Food democracy, she says, is the new agenda for ecological sustainability and social justice.

Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply Details

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Author : Vandana Shiva

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From Reader Review Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply for online ebook

Melissa says

Vandana Shiva is an amazing woman to take on such an imposing mission - exposing and halting the globalization of food and the genetic engineering of seed. Her book could have easily been 3" thick, but in keeping with her 'get to the point' style, she keeps it short. The book is loaded with facts and figures with footnotes, and references at the end of each chapter for further scrutiny or investigation, at the reader's discretion. I thought I was aware of the dangers of what corporations are doing to the ecosystem, but I had no idea how it impacted so many of the lives of the poor they are supposedly trying to "feed" and in so many ways. She packs a lot of punch in this small book, and will bring many more loyal followers to the bija satyagraha....

Eoin Flynn says

Content related to globalisation, monocultures, etc. is excellent. 5 stars for that alone.

The 3 star rating was for the following complaints...

The sections detailing Indian religion were tedious and uninteresting to me personally, and seemed barely relevant. In fact, it seemed shoehorned a little. It is likely though, that they would be major plus points of the book for others.

I felt the writing was ok, not great.

I like the concept of ecological feminism - deploying the inherently less aggressive and more nurturing traits of women (in contrast to male aggression, dominance, utilitarianism, etc.) to cultivate greater ecological and environmental consideration. However, as a piece of branding I think it will alienate more people than it will encourage to such action. A sensible nurturing environmentalism could be encouraged on its own. By hitching its wagon to the feminist train I think it will simply slow both down. This would be a tragedy, as the plight of women and human change to the environment are the two greatest human made issues of our time.

Overall, as information I thought it should be read by everyone. As prose I thought it was nothing special.

Rachel says

Vandana Shiva is amazing. The book is a slap in the face: so much information about all the things we never knew was wrong with the global food supply. It's very fact-filled, and very interesting.

Hadrian says

In reading this short work of Dr. Vandana Shiva, I'm reminded of the best and worst aspects of the environmental movement. Her best point is that she is eloquent, passionate, and able to mobilize thousands or millions against corporate overreach; her worst is that she is easily capable of speaking without any backing by scientific truth.

To take one example, her total rejection of genetically modified crops as seen in Chapters 5 and 6 is absurd. Her assertion that a GM cotton crop is responsible for a wave of suicides among Indian farmers is false. Her statement that genetically modified 'Golden Rice' is nutritionally insufficient is false. Her assertion that the Green Revolution of new fertilizers and treatments has brought nothing but woe is false. And so on. And so on.

Now I should add that she is not always wrong. Aquaculture, as promising as it is in food yields, is has multiple serious faults. The Green Revolution, as massively helpful as it was to crop yields and improving the basic livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people, has seen serious side effects in terms of fertilizer use and chemical pollution.

Industrial agriculture is not a dominating evil trying to destroy the poor defenseless peasant farmer. Instead I might characterize it as an awful tightrope act of balancing food production, environmental impacts, and profitability. Even if we disregard profitability, we still have to consider yields vs. pollution, and how these have to be managed before some more efficient strain is developed, by 'natural' modification or otherwise. But to continually follow someone so profoundly uninformed would just lead us straight off the cliff.

Ronald Chan says

Using India as a case study, the author dives into the topic of how the Global Food Chain is being hijacked away from small farmers. Nice short read for academic research

Tamara says

This is a book that everyone should read. It is an education about our food; what is happening around the world as we walk through ample grocery store aisles. Shiva is an environmentalist, and food activist and we have a responsibility to pay attention.

Dan says

My opinion of Dr. Shiva and her work has been on something of a roller coaster since I first discovered her over a decade ago - or perhaps 'on a log flume' is a better analogy. I have gone from deeply admiring Dr. Shiva, to being troubled by her lack of academic rigor, citations, or corroborating evidence, to feeling she is doing more harm than good for the environmental movement, through her hyperbolic and frankly sensationalist claims, her aforementioned lack of rigor, and her outright falsifications.

Transgenics is an important and controversial field, and we have to accept that a certain amount of fear and uncertainty will accompany any new technology. However, while caution, earnest discussion, and vigilance are healthy and wise, recidivism and Luddism must be resisted and countered. Having read a large portion of

Dr. Shiva's work, I am forced to conclude she will not be happy in any world that has not been rolled back to an pre-industrial, agrarian society, and preferably one that mimics pre-modern India as closely as possible.

I understand her fears. But I will not accept profiteering, nor baseless claims, such as the implied accusation that international agribusinesses have been responsible for mustard seed oil adulteration in India. This claim is preposterous and substantiated by nothing. Her claims regarding the ecological impact of transgenics are little better, and her many, many lengthy passages regarding biopiracy are overwrought or misstate the case[1].

We must have this conversation, and we must have it publicly. But the conversation must be had with facts, not innuendo, suspicion and fear. Dr. Shiva seems to have no interest in being a part of such a dialogue.

A final note, regarding rigor: it's unseemly to cite oneself repeatedly and blatantly in a book intended for mass consumption. Surely, if the matters discussed are as serious and insidious as Dr. Shiva claims, she could have found third party corroboration.

[1] - *Global Biopiracy: Patents, Plants and Indigenous Knowledge*, Ikeji Mgbeoji

Mountainman says

Shiva begins to tell the story of how corporate control of food and globalization of agriculture are robbing millions of their livelihoods and their right to food. With her emphasis on Indian agriculture, she begins to say that farming is the main source of life for 75% of all Indians. The increased use of agricultural farming is felt in every society, as small farms and farmers are forced to extinction, monocultures are replacing biodiverse crops, and farming is transformed from the production of nourishing and diverse foods into the creation of markets for genetically engineered seeds, herbicides, and pesticides. Markets are destroyed locally and nationally but expanded globally and the myth of "free trade" and the global economy becomes a means for the rich to rob the poor of their rights to food and even their right to life. Shiva stresses that 70% of the world's people makes their livelihoods by producing food.

While Shiva does a fantastic job of explaining the role of industrialized and globalized agriculture has within globalization, she fails to touch upon an important topic. What can individuals do to help stop the corporate takeover of the world's food supply? If we were to take action against the corporate control of food and globalization, it would be an enormous undertaking similar to mobilizing for World War II.

Stolen Harvest refers to the corporate control over global food, primarily in India. The presence of globalized industrial farms in India caused the food grains to be appropriated and exported forcefully. The export of food grains continued in spite of the fact that people were going hungry. New intellectual-property-rights regimes, which are being universalized through the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO), allow corporations to usurp the knowledge of the seed and monopolize it by claiming it as their private property. This monopolistic control over agricultural production, along with structural adjustment policies that brutally favor exports, results in floods of exports of foods from the United States and Europe to the Third World. Over time, this results in corporate monopolies over the seeds and thus robs the farmers of seeds, and the people of their harvest. Eating more cheaply on imports is not eating at all for the poor.

This book is slim, but does a fantastic job at explaining the role of industrial agricultural in a globalized world. This book is for the person eager to learn about industrialized agriculture. If you already know a lot about this topic, then skip this one.

Po-Tau says

The main idea of the book is that factoring all the negative externalities of making transgenic crops a viable option in the long run, it simply doesn't make economic or environmental sense. Shiva suggests that one way biotech companies like Monsanto make profits is by letting ordinary citizens and farmers shouldering these hidden costs that cannot be easily assessed by short-term epidemiological or environmental studies. By the time anything close to definitive is made public, most farmers and growers would have been tied down by contractual obligations and financial burdens that the trend would be nearly impossible to reverse.

It is disconcerting to think that all this started only thirty years and we are arrogant enough to think that the science is mature enough to be applied globally to the things we eat and drink. I find Chapter 6 extremely useful in its debunking of some of the myths associated with genetic engineering. To be fair though, I think GMO crops have their place, such as making local varieties more nutritious to improve the overall health of impoverished villages and reduce occurrences of preventable birth defects. It must be resorted to as a short-term solution however and administered as a government programme.

Chapter 4 "Mad Cows and Scared Cows" is the most enlightening chapter. It explains the gist of why industrial scale farming and animal husbandry are unsustainable and why they should not be decoupled and be kept small scale. The cost of neglecting the sustainable ways of nature often has to be made up with exploitation and abuse, of the growers, the animals and ultimately us the consumers. The documentary "Food Inc." has many scenes depicting what was recounted in this chapter and I highly recommend watching it afterwards.

Monsanto and its business practices exhibit that strand of America which is righteous in tone yet pharisaical in practice, highly idealistic in proclamation yet ruthlessly pragmatic in execution ??? in essence, the worst of what the country is. It should not be this way. Shiva at the end offers us some hope and optimism and at the same time reminds us that change will not come without a fight.

Bridget Fletcher says

Amazing and completely scary. Shiva does a great job of breaking down all the ways the US has ruined global agriculture. Everyone who eats should read this book!

Wrdwrrior says

Somewhat dated but stunning information on the global food supply.

Carroll says

I highly recommend reading/seeing Shiva. She has a PhD in physics, has done the research, and has effective

arguments to counter the lies of transnational corporations.

Charles Henri says

A must. Tried to read it years ago. I was in shock and got depressed. Time has passed. I now knew most of what's inside this book by having read and watch stuff on the subject. It's the kind of book that should be a prerequisite at school to wake people up.

Roger says

I valued learning about instances where feminist approaches can alter our understandings of environmental destruction, monocultures, and global hunger. These approaches and ideas hold up in ways statistical data of the 1990s of course does not.

Chris Cook says

Vandana Shiva is an eco-feminist. This book is about the ways in which big corporate interests in the food industry are undermining and monopolizing the food supplies around the world. Some of this book terrifies me. A lot of it saddens me. And I am left feeling--well, hell, NOW what can I eat? This should probably be required reading for everyone.
