Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

August 14-15, 2015

Silent Spring #5- Reflections on the Precautionary Principle

by Sarah Janes Ugoretz

After spending the last several weeks exploring the implications that pesticides like neonicotinoids and glyphosate have on our pollinators and other beneficials, this week we bring the precautionary principle into the conversation. Now more than ever, we can be brutally honest and ask ourselves: how did we get here?

The precautionary principle (PP) was first formulated and invoked in the 1980s, primarily through the implementation of the Montreal Protocol. Its basic tenant mandates that: "When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically" (Raffensperger, 1998). In the event that this is true, the burden of proof falls to those who endorse and promote the activity, not the general public. For example, in accordance with the PP, instead of waiting until people become sick, the responsibility of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is to extend to the public a reasonable expectation that we are shielded from danger. An informed, transparent, and democratic process must accompany the application of the PP, and the possibility of taking no action (as in, not moving forward with the marketing, sale, and widespread use of a potentially harmful pesticide) must be given equal weight when considering the range of alternatives (Raffensperger, 1998).

Unfortunately, as we touched on in our earlier conversation about glyphosate, the FDA is often presented with industry studies—studies that are conducted entirely by corporations like Monsanto and Dow Chemical Company and that are, apart from FDA review, classified. By attaching a commercial-in-confidence label to these reports, corporations manage to side step having to offer up their studies for review and assessment by external scientists, researchers or even the general public—groups who are less likely to be burdened by any conflicts of interest (Leu, 2014). As the Union of Concerned Scientists has noted, "By creating obstacles to independent research on its products, [corporations like] Monsanto make it harder for farmers and policy makers to make informed decisions that can lead to more sustainable agriculture" (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2012).

In the U.S., we depart starkly from Europeans, Canadians, Australians and others who tend to subscribe to the notion that it is better to prevent damage than to repair it. As Mark Bittman has commented, "We ask not whether a given chemical might cause cancer but whether we're certain that it does" (Bittman, 2015). For an interesting contrast, let's take the European Commission, which, in 2013, voted to impose a two-year ban on

This Week's Box

PORCELAIN OR ITALIAN GARLIC: Did you know that you can freeze garlic to preserve it? Simply peel the cloves and place them in freezer bags in the freezer.

SWEET SPANISH ONIONS: These onions have a mild, sweet taste and can be sliced and eaten raw in salads. They are also delicious when baked, sautéed or fried.

ZUCCHINI: Cooking finely grated zucchini in butter and garlic turns it into a soft, melty, delicious spread for bread or anything else you can think of. It's also a great twist on pizza sauce. Check out food52's tutorial on how to make your own Zucchini Butter.

ORANGE CARROTS: Carrots make a great snack sliced raw & served with your favorite dip. You could also steam them and drizzle them with olive oil, salt & pepper and a squeeze of lemon juice.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS: Cut them in chunks and put them on kabobs along with chunks of sweet onion, zucchini and grape or sungold tomatoes. Marinate them in a simple red wine vinaigrette and pop them on the grill!

ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS: These long green peppers are sweet & tender and have a thin skin. You can stuff them with sausage, bread crumbs, garlic and olives and roast them in the oven.

VARIETY OF LARGE TOMATOES: It's finally tomato season! You can use these tomatoes to make a delicious Caprese salad complete with fresh basil from your garden or the Choice Box!

SWEET CORN: The key to "sweet" corn is to keep it cold and eat it soon after you receive it. The longer you store it the starchier it will become. Enjoy it on the cob, or cut if off the cob and use it in a corn & tomatillo salsa.

SUN JEWEL OR FRENCH ORANGE OR SWEET SARAH MELONS: For a delicious summer salad, cube cantaloupe and combine with diced cucumber for a nice crunch. Toss with basil, feta, olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

BABY KALE MIX: Make a baby kale salad tossed with lemon juice, Parmesan, olive oil, pine nuts and salt & pepper. You can also add it soups & risottos for a nice touch of green & flavor.

JALAPEÑOS: Use them to top a pizza, add them to a grilled cheese sandwich, use them to spice up your enchiladas or make jalapeño margaritas.

CAULIFLOWER: Roasting cauliflower brings out a nutty, sweet flavor. Make cauliflower "steaks" for even roasting and beautiful presentation. Cut the cauliflower from to base into ¾ inch thick steaks. Sear them in olive oil, then transfer to a baking sheet with your favorite seasonings and roast for about 15 minutes.

EDAMAME: See this week's Vegetable Feature for more information.

GREEN OR SILVER SLICER CUCUMBERS: Try making a cucumber salsa for a refreshing summer treat. Simply mix together diced cucumbers, tomatoes, bell pepper, jalapeños, lime juice, and fresh cilantro.

CHOICE ITEM: ITALIAN BASIL-Please only take small handful of basil per household.

See the third page for the vegetable feature and recipes.

the use of certain neonics. Faced with incomplete data and uncertainty as to whether neonics are irrefutably related to the decline of bee populations, the European Commission erred on the side of caution in imposing the ban. The U.S., on the other hand, is still reviewing the evidence. According to Jim Jones, Assistant Administrator for Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the EPA is allowing science to inform the regulatory actions they do and do not take. Operating in this manner allows them to "make sure that [they] make accurate and appropriate regulatory decisions as opposed to [doing] things that could lead to meaningful societal cost without any benefit whatsoever" (Plumer, 2013). As Plumer has commented, where the European Commission is siding with the environment on this one, the U.S. is clearly letting economic considerations take center stage. "It's still not clear that neonicotinoids are to blame, and pesticides are a billion-dollar industry, so regulators are moving slowly in setting restrictions" (Plumer, 2013).

Unsurprisingly, there are many in the U.S. who question the usefulness

and the practicality of the PP. These critiques primarily fall in line with the question of weighing risks. Michael Specter, longtime staff writer at The New Yorker, insists that we "…have to be aware of blindly invoking the 'precautionary principle'" (Specter, 2015). After all, risk is subjective and safety is difficult to prove. But when we really get down to it, what truly needs protecting here? The economy, silly! As we know (and as we can deduce from Mr. Jones' comment above), the pesticide industry is a billion-dollar entity and in the U.S., we're hooked on industrial agriculture, quick fixes and cheap food. All of these things are intimately tied to the convenience that comes with agro-chemicals. To move away from pesticides like neonics and glyphosate would be to unravel the model of agriculture we've worked so diligently to put in place since chemical fertilizers first appeared on the scene after World War II and Earl Butz so tenderly cooed, "Get big or get out" (Philpott, 2008).

Over 20 years ago, Farmer Richard spent some time in Holland. During this time, he met with several Dutch farmers, a majority of whom grew vegetables in greenhouses using hydroponic methods. They recounted to Richard that some months before, they had noticed a decline in the aquatic life and, by extension, the water birds that lived near and fed from the canals that traversed their region. The farmers quickly traced the problem back to their hydroponic systems—the water that was being discharged was making its way into the canals, and it was taking the farmers' fertilizer and other chemicals along for the ride.

Despite being competitors in the same marketplace, these farmers came together to collectively recognize the problem and identify a solution. Though the cost was considerable, the farmers decided that the most effective solution would be to install recycling systems, which would work to clean the discharged water. Driven by the conviction that making this change was the right thing to do, and having faith that consumers would be willing to pay a few cents more for their produce, the farmers invested in the necessary infrastructure. Before long they began to notice that, in the absence of polluted water, the canals' rich aquatic life had begun to rebound, along with other valuable species like birds.

This "do the right thing" mentality and attitude made a lasting impression on Farmer Richard—one that he has carried with him over his many years of farming. Where the Dutch farmers recognized the need for and ultimately embraced change, many farmers in our country tend to stick to the status quo—despite the fact that we need to adjust the overarching principles that drive large-scale conventional agriculture. As Farmer Richard has noted, here we are more likely to see farmers banning together in opposition to change. In advocating for "right to farm" laws (often with backing from the Farm Bureau), it becomes less likely that farmers will have to take a serious look at and acknowledge the detrimental impacts some of their farming practices are having on the health of their families and friends, employees, pollinator helpers and their own land.

In reflecting on our current state of affairs—our country's ongoing dependence on pesticides and our populace's relegation by the FDA to the de facto status of guinea pigs—I found this commentary by Mark Bittman (2015) particularly appropriate: "We don't need better, smarter chemicals along with crops that can tolerate them." Rather, Bittman argues that what we truly need is fewer chemicals and a heavy infusion of agroecology—intercropping, crop rotation, organic fertilizers, cover crops and other methods that are ecologically informed, environmentally safe, and demonstrated to be economically beneficial.

We should hold tightly to this image, as a future reality to strive for. In the meantime, however, at a time when our regulatory bodies are slow to take preventative, protective action on our behalf, we can use our own knowledge and understanding in deciding whether or not to apply the precautionary principle on a personal level, a household level or, as we'll see next week, on a city-wide level….because it's the right thing to do.

All references may be found on our blog at www.harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com

Produce Plus

Produce Plus is a benefit of CSA membership, allowing you to buy some of your favorite items in bulk to put up (can, freeze, preserve) for later use.

Produce Plus Current Offers

Roma Tomatoes, 25 pounds-$38.00
Sweet Spanish Onions, 10 pounds-$24.00
Tomatillos, 10 pounds-$35.00
Jalapeños, 5 pounds-$18.00

Cross Plains, Mazo, Strathfield, Argyle & Local customers -order by 5pm on Wednesday, August 19th for delivery to your pick-up site on **August 21st-22nd** Please mail your payment the same day as placing your order.

Madison customers -order by 5pm on Wednesday, August 19th for delivery to our farmers' market stand on **August 22nd.** Please pay for your order at the stand.

To order, please call 608-483-2143 x2 or email *csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com*
Please be sure to include your name, telephone number and pick-up location with your order!

See the third page for this week's feature about edamame and delicious recipes! Available on our blog at www.harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com or on our website

Vegetable Feature: Edamame

by Andrea Yoder

This week's featured vegetable is edamame, otherwise known as fresh soybeans. Edamame is a favorite summer-time vegetable that's gained popularity over the years. You may associate soybeans with other soy foods such as tofu, tempeh and soymilk, but fresh edamame is much different. We've carefully selected the variety of edamame we grow and have chosen a variety that originated in Japan where it is grown specifically for fresh eating. Most varieties of edamame available commercially are also used for making tofu. These varieties do not have the sweet flavor of the edamame we grow and have much more of that "beany" characteristic. Tofu beans also often have darker "hairs" on their pods which give them a dirty appearance. The edamame we grow has light colored "hair" which makes them much more attractive.

Edamame should be stored in the refrigerator to preserve the sweetness of the bean. While they can be stored and cooked in their pod, the pod is not edible. The easiest way to extract the bean from the pod is to cook it first. One method is to bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Add the edamame and cook for 3-4 minutes or until the beans are tender. Drain the water off the beans and run cold water over them to stop the cooking. Now you can easily pop the beans out of the pods.

Once cooked, the fresh soybeans inside can be eaten raw as a snack or added to other preparations including fresh salads, summer vegetable sautes, or dishes such as the fried rice recipe in this week's newsletter. Edamame is often served in its pod as a snack. In addition to boiling, you can also roast edamame. If you are roasting it, first toss the edamame with a bit of oil and salt or your favorite seasoning. Roast in the oven until the beans are tender, then serve hot. When you eat them, you can put the whole pod in your mouth and then pull it out between your teeth to extract the beans from inside the pod as well as the seasoning from the outside of the pod. If you'd like to preserve edamame, simply follow the procedure above for blanching or boiling them. Once you've cooled them, put in freezer bags and pop them in the freezer.

Edamame and Sea Salt

Recipe featured in *Japanese Farm Food* by Nancy Singleton Hachisu.

Yield: 3-4 servings
1 ⅓ pounds edamame
1 ½ tsp sea salt

1. Fill a large stockpot with water and bring to a boil over high heat. Boil the edamame about 3 to 4 minutes, depending on the size of the beans. Scoop out with a strainer into a medium-sized crockery bowl and toss with sea salt. Serve immediately. The edamame should be so hot you can barely touch them.
2. Grab a handful and eat quickly because they cool quickly (and are particularly good burning hot). Don't forget to prepare the cold beer (if you like) and a bowl for the empty pods. Boil in batches for a big crowd so you can keep serving them hot. If you have any left over, save the pods in a resealable plastic bag, then pop the beans out the next day and fold into a vegetable salad, or any curry or stewlike dish.

VARIATION: Heat an iron wok over high heat and throw in a couple of handfuls of raw edamame pods. You want to make sure that each pod is in direct contact with the surface of the pan. Toss with two flat-edged wooden spoons to ensure even heat distribution. Cook until the skins are blistered and a little juice runs out. Taste to check for doneness. Sprinkle with sea salt, toss once or twice, and serve hot.

Fried Rice with Edamame and Corn

by Andrea Yoder

Yield: 4-6 servings
3-4 Tbsp vegetable oil, divided
4 eggs
¼ tsp salt plus more to taste
8 ounces ground pork (optional)
1-2 clove garlic, minced
1 Tbsp minced fresh ginger
1 medium onion, small diced
1 cup small diced carrot
1 Italian frying pepper, diced
½ pound fresh edamame in the pod, blanched
½ cup fresh corn kernels (cut from 1-2 cobs)
3 cups cooked rice
3-4 Tbsp soy sauce
Freshly ground black pepper

1. First, heat a medium skillet over medium heat and add 1 tsp of oil. When the pan and oil are hot, add the beaten eggs and ¼ tsp salt. Scramble the eggs until they are cooked through, yet soft. Remove from the heat and set aside.
2. In a large skillet or wok, heat ½-1 Tbsp oil over medium heat. If you are using ground pork, add the pork now and cook until browned. If you are omitting the pork, go on to the next step.
3. Next, add the garlic, ginger and onion. Increase the heat to medium high and continually stir the mixture to prevent the ginger and garlic from getting to brown. Stir-fry for 1-2 minutes or until the onions are softened. Next add the carrots and the frying pepper and continue to cook for another 2-3 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the corn and cook for an additional minute.
4. Add 2 more Tbsps of oil to the pan and tip the pan to distribute the oil evenly. Next, add the rice and continue to move the rice so it is evenly distributed in the pan. Continue to stir-fry the mixture until the rice is thoroughly heated, 3-5 minutes.
5. Next, add 3 Tbsps of soy sauce, the fresh edamame, and freshly ground pepper. Reduce the heat to low and cook for a few more minutes. Adjust the seasoning with more soy sauce if you like and additional salt if needed. Stir in the scrambled egg and serve hot.