

# It Starts with the Soil and Organic Agriculture can Help<sup>1</sup>

Kirschenmann, F.

## Abstract

*The decades ahead may prove increasingly challenging for our modern industrial agriculture system. This system which follows the principles of the industrial economy, namely specialization, simplification and concentration, requires intensive energy inputs, large quantities of water and stable climates to maintain productivity. These resources have generally been available during the past half-century or more. But future energy, water and climate scenarios suggest that energy costs will rise substantially as we go beyond peak oil, fresh water resources are being depleted throughout the world, and stable climates may rapidly become a thing of the past. Accordingly we will need to rethink our food and agriculture system and design a post-industrial system that performs well with much less energy and water and that is resilient in unstable climates. There is good reason to believe that healthy soil and a new generation of biodiversity may be critical to productivity in this post-industrial future. The historic principles of soil management and biodiversity embedded in the writings of organic agriculture visionaries like Sir Albert Howard can serve as foundational insights for designing this agriculture of the future. This paper attempts to point out the challenges and how these principles of soil management and biodiversity can guide our future research and farming system design.*

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