

# Alternative Agriculture

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### Problems in U.S. Agriculture

**T**HE U.S. AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM has been beset by numerous economic and environmental problems in the 1980s. In the economic sphere, with storage facilities filled with surplus crops, the cost of federal farm support programs skyrocketed from \$3.5 billion in 1978 to a peak of \$25.8 billion in 1986, falling to \$22 billion in 1987 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1988f). Financial stress hit tens of thousands of farmers and many rural communities. Some farmers still find it difficult to pay debt accumulated during the prosperous 1970s. Many U.S. products are no longer competitive in world markets. From 1981 through 1986, the United States' agricultural trade surplus declined substantially. Although agricultural trade performance has improved since then, this has come at considerable expense to U.S. taxpayers. Competition among nations for worldwide markets is fierce and volatile.

Agriculture is also causing serious environmental problems. Agriculture is the largest single nonpoint source of water pollutants, including sediments, salts, fertilizers, pesticides, and manures. Nonpoint pollutants account for an estimated 50 percent of all surface water pollution (Chesters and Schierow, 1985; Myers et al., 1985). Salinization of soils and irrigation water from irrigated agriculture is a growing problem in the arid West. In at least 26 states, some pesticides have found their way into groundwater as a result of normal agricultural practice. In California alone, 22 different pesticides have been detected in groundwater as a result of normal agricultural practices. Nitrate from agricultural sources (principally manures and synthetic fertilizers) is found in drinking water wells in levels above safety standards in many locations in several states.

Agriculture presents other environmental problems. Major aquifers in California and the Great Plains have been depleted because withdrawals

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What's Alternative Agriculture? The Grange School is unique among farmer training programs in providing intensive introductions to livestock. Transition to agricultural sustainability is a major challenge and requires that alternative agricultural practices are scientifically analyzed to provide a sufficiently informative knowledge base in favor of alternative farming practices. Efficient use of inputs. Many inputs and practices used by conventional farmers are also used in sustainable agriculture. Sustainable farmers, however, maximize reliance on natural, renewable, and on-farm inputs. Equally important are the environmental, social, and economic impacts of a particular strategy. Alternatives to conventional farming should be embraced to improve Permaculture, a contraction of permanent agriculture, is a promising. Anderson, J. Farm programs and alternative agriculture. In Proposed Farm Bill Changes: Taking the Bias Out of Farm Policy. The debate over genetically engineered crops rages on, but other technologies offer new hope for sustainable farming. In agriculture, sustainability is a complex idea with many facets, including the economic (a sustainable farm should be a profitable business that contributes to a. The Alternative Agriculture in Iowa website is designed to assist producers, processors, marketers, business owners, policy makers, researchers and the general. "Alternative" agriculture is more loosely defined than is sustainable agriculture, and it generally refers to agricultural practices that are different. Alternative-Sustainable Agriculture Related Links. Abstract Bulletin on Sustainable Agriculture (ABSTRECO) Current bibliography of articles, reports, books and. Sustainable agriculture takes many forms, but at its core is a rejection of the industrial approach to food production developed during the 20th century. Provides materials on efforts to ensure access to healthy food and to promote agriculture through research, education, and communication. Sustainable Table: .Sustainable Agriculture Organizations and Information Providers. Compiled by: Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC) National Agricultural. In , the National Academies of Science updated its seminal publication Alternative Agriculture with a fresh look at the state of food. 40% of today's global population works in agriculture, making it the single largest employer in the world. Sustainable agriculture is the rejection of the industrial.

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