finalstraw
food / earth / happiness

COMMUNITY SCREENING AND ACTION KIT

BY PATRICK LYDON & SUHEE KANG

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About the Film

Solutions for our ecological, economic, and social crises come from unexpected places, as two cultural explorers take us on a journey through Japan, Korea, and the United States, turning our perceptions of food and life upside down in an amazingly simple and poetic way.

A meditative yet stunning survey of age-old ideas about food, ecological connectedness, and personal happiness, this deeply touching film weaves together insightful interviews and majestic landscapes with an eclectic original soundtrack.

The warm cast of natural farmers, chefs, and teachers together illuminate a brilliant yet maddeningly simple path to sustainability and well being for people and the environment, centered around the philosophies of Masanobu Fukuoka's seminal book One Straw Revolution.

Four years in the making, Final Straw is a film that will leave you inspired, happier, and perhaps even motivated to make a few changes in your own lifestyle.

Director's Note

Four years ago, my partner and I lived and worked in the middle of two of the biggest, most fast-paced economies in the world. We watched each day as a culture centered around monetary wealth, illness, and environmental destruction took its toll on our friends, families, and the environment around us, and we knew very deeply that the story of society that we were living wasn't working out so well.

We decided to find a better story, one that was about the kind of social and ecological well being that we knew was possible, yet which we saw constantly slipping out of reach of our urban counterparts.

It was during this time that we visited a secluded natural farm in the mountains of South Korea, and what the farmer told us changed our lives forever. Shortly after this meeting, the two of us cashed in our meager life savings and have since led a nomadic life with no home and few belongings.

We have traveled through East Asia, Europe, and North America, researching, filming, and working with individuals who have dedicated their lives to living with the earth, instead of against it.

The culmination of this work, Final Straw is a film gives us the beginnings of a new foundation, one on which social and ecological well-being can be built for everyone, whether we live in the city or in the countryside. We believe it is a film that will leave you inspired, happier, and perhaps even motivated to make a few changes in your own lifestyle.

P.M. Lydon 강수희

Patrick Lydon + Suhee Kang

Final Straw Directors

Step 1: Before you Start

Watch the Film

If you haven't yet seen it, the film is available at FinalStraw.org as a digital download. Keep this file handy, as you'll also use it for the screening!

download the film at: http://www.finalstraw.org

What is My Goal?

Set some realistic goals and aims for your event, including:

- Who is your target audience
- How many people do you want to reach
- What is your desired end result or action
- How do you envision facilitating actions after the film

Who Should be Involved?

Think about working closely with figures who would be good speakers if you plan to have an outside facilitator, and work to connect with:

- Community Organizations
- Local/Regional Government Officials
- Academic Leaders / Professors
- Local chefs, organic food cooperatives, farmers markets

Where is the Screening

It is easiest to hold your screening in a publiclly accessible space that is already prepared to screen films, a theater, public library, university lecture hall or classroom, or even a living room depending on how intimate you want the screening to be. Check that the venue:

- Is the right size for your anticipated audience
- Is capable of screening a digital video (MP4 / h.264) file
  (Most decent laptop computers can handle this job)
- Has audio and video projection equipment that is compatible with the laptop
- Can be reserved for 3+ hours
  (74 min film + 30 min discussion + 60 min setup and clean up)

Step 2: Preparing the Event

Promote Your Event

It is important not to be afraid to reach out to like-minded organizations and people in your area to promote your event. Here are some suggestions:

- **Contact local organizations** who are interested in food, agriculture, or sustainability issues, they might want to promote your event or even co-host it with you.
- **Invite guests** using whatever means you have, email, facebook, listserv, phone, and especially when you are out and about meeting people face to face

- **Link to FinalStraw.org** so guests can learn more about the film
- **Create an event poster** for sharing on the internet and printing.*
- **Send a press release** to local newspapers and media, look to send this out about 3-4 weeks before the event, and don't be afraid to follow up with a phone call to see if it was received.*
- **Finally... Email us** at director@finalstraw.org with the city, venue, date, time and any special guests you've invited so we can add it to the official event calender.

*We have free resources available at www.finalstraw.org/kit/

Aim for a Sustainable Event

No screening event can be perfectly eco-friendly; but we should be aware of our impact and work towards being friendly to our environment by aiming for:

- **ZERO Waste**, avoid using single-use cups, plates, utensils, or plastic bottles. Ask visitors to help with this, for instance, by bringing their own cups, or by running a volunteer dish washing station.
- **Home Made and Local**, use locally-sourced snacks or foods, and support local businesses (or your friends' kitchens) as much as is possible.
- **Promote Sustainable Transportation** by including bus, rail, bike, or carpool options. Think about the proximity of your audience to the event space.
- **Face to Face**, save paper by using face to face communication and internet as PR tools, and placing posters strategically (for instance, in a cafe where you talk with the owner about the event) instead of posting them everywhere.

Step 3: The Screening Event

Pay What You Can

Instead of charging a set 'ticket' price for your event, offer a 'sliding scale' suggest a payment at the door, such as:

Unemployed: Free
Student: $5 suggested donation
Employed: $10 -$20 suggested donation

You should adjust accordingly to cover the costs of putting on the event. **The important point is that the screening should be accessible to anyone.** If someone doesn't have a job or can't afford to pay, let them know that you appreciate them coming, ask them if they would like to help set up or clean up for the event, and happily welcome them to enter without payment.

Event Pre-Flight Check

There are a few common mis-steps that can be prevented by doing a pre-flight check of your equipment and event setup:

- **Power** - Make sure there is a power drop for your equipment and that the line is taped down well if it is crossing the room.
- **Laptop Quality** - Test the film file on the laptop before the screening to make sure it plays back without issue. Sometimes even a new laptop can have issues smoothly playing a full screen HD video file.
- **Screen Height** - There are subtitles in this film. A good lot of them. Make sure that the bottom portion of the screen can be seen from multiple vantage points in the room. In some venues, this means the screen will need to be projected a bit higher than you would think!
- **Sound** - For a screening with a few friends, small computer speakers might be enough, but if you're showing to more than a few people, bring in speakers that a) work with your laptop, and b) provide enough loudness to fill a room of people who might be shuffling, sneezing, or otherwise!

Introduce the Film

Before the film begins, it's nice to let the audience know what you like so much about the film and why it inspired you enough to host a screening. Keep this relatively short and to the point!

Group Discussion After the Screening

The discussion should allow us to search for deeper meaning and to suggest actions based on this deeper meaning. It is up to you how you approach the discussion, but for your reference, here are some suggested talking points to get discussion started after the film.

It's okay if you don't have an experienced facilitator to help with your screening, just make sure to keep an open and positive attitude, and have fun with it. Here are some tips for those taking on the role...

- **Be Knowledgable** - You should watch the film yourself at least once before your screening event. Keep in mind that you do not need to be an expert on the issues, but you should have a basic understanding in order to help keep the discussion on track.

- **Remember Your Role** - Being a facilitator is not the same as being a teacher or lecturer. Rather than teaching, your job as a facilitator is simply to be a neutral figure, and to help move the discussion in the right direction without imposing your own views on the discussion.

- **Keep a Positive Tone** - If the tone begins to get too negative (eg: people only complaining about what is wrong), kindly remind the audience that we are here to focus on what we CAN do. The idea is not to ignore problems, but to acknowledge them and focus on opportunities for solutions. What can we learn from the stories of the farmers, cooks, and parents in the film?

- **Focus on Actions** - The purpose of the discussion is not to approve or disapprove of the farmers or their ideas, but to learn from their experiences and to help build your own actions from these experiences.

- **Encourage a Dialogue Rather than a Debate** - People engaged in a debate try to convince others that they are right. People engaged in a dialogue try to expand their personal views by actively listening and working to understand each other. Remind the audience to work towards the latter!

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Step 4: Take Actions

Commit to Taking Ongoing Actions

For real sustained change to occur our actions must be continuous. To help keep momentum in your own local movement, aim to form small focused 'local action' groups which meet and act regularly. In these action groups:

- Focus on what you can do now ... and do it now
- Support and work with other like minded groups instead of competing
- Keep your actions positive
- Keep the public informed; blog, talk, write to politicians and newspapers
- Schedule meetings with local politicians and figure heads to talk about issues
- Do the right thing for social and ecological well being. Not the easy thing, not the economic thing, not the socially acceptable thing. The right thing.

All Actions Matter

Whatever you come up with, remember that:

- The options are only limited to your imagination
- Every action, even the smallest action (or 'non-action' like a decision to stop doing something) is worth a great deal, especially if you commit as a group to follow through with it.

Step 5: Support Final Straw

We are not wealthy people. Your directors Patrick and Suhee are two human beings who quit our jobs, became vagabonds, and spent four years and our entire life savings in order to bring this film to you.

If you the film had some positive effect on you, we ask that you show your support by donating. All donations go directly to supporting our ongoing advocacy work, which can be seen at www.finalstraw.org

Share Proceeds with the Final Straw Organization

Instead of requiring a 'screening fee' from community groups, as most documentary makers to, **we trust that you will donate a percentage of your event's proceeds to Final Straw**. Many donate 100% of their proceeds, but we'll leave that up to you.

Send Your Donation to Final Straw:
www.finalstraw.org/screening-donate/

Every donation we get goes to supporting our ongoing advocacy work!

Say Hello to Us!

Finally, let us know how it all went! Share reviews, thoughts, actions, and pictures with us at director@finalstraw.org. We love hearing about (and sharing) all of the screenings that happen and the actions that are being inspired in cities around the world.

A project for social and ecological well being by

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Top Questions Answered

During the touring of our film Final Straw: Food, Earth, Happiness, and our interactions with press and audiences, we've come upon some questions that repeat themselves often. Here, you'll find a list of these questions and some answers. The answers are generalized a bit, but we hope they help guide you to a productive understanding of the film, natural farming, and possible actions which can spur from this way of thinking.

What is Natural Farming

Natural farming can be thought of as 'farming with nature'. The modern version of this way of farming was developed in middle of the 20th century by Masanobu Fukuoka and Mokichi Okada, two Japanese farmers who, independent of each other, came to the realization that there was something terribly wrong with the way the modern world was growing food. Yet, it's not so much of an 'invention' as it is a re-discovery of our human ability to connect in a deep and meaningful way with the earth. Similar movements in agriculture happened not only in Japan, but India, Australia, Germany, and the United States, all independently of each other, and all around the same time.

As opposed to our standard top-down view of agricultural production, natural farming is a horizontal system, placing humans and nature on equal footing. That is to say, neither humans nor plants nor animals are higher or lower than one another in terms of importance/value, as we are all part of a system which must work together in order to thrive. This view allows us to be thankful and respectful in ways which are similar to those of the native North Americans, or other native peoples who lived with the land as a partner.

As practiced in Japan, Korea, and throughout the world, this way of producing food helps the immediate and surrounding environment become enriched instead of depleted. It's worth noting that no form of industrial agriculture can claim to be 'sustainable' in this sense.

Natural farming is an amazingly ecologically beneficial way of farming. A recent study by Rodale Institute showed that if natural farming were implemented on a global scale, could "sequester more than 100% of current [global] annual CO2 emissions".[1]

1 http://rodaleinstitute.org/reversing-climate-change-achievable-by-farming-organically/

Natural farming depends distinctly on cultivating a relationship with your individual plot of land, and using this relationship to inform how you grow food. In this respect, natural farming is more a 'way of seeing' nature, rather than a 'method of farming' however, natural farmer, Yoshikazu Kawaguchi gives some main "ideas" to be mindful of:

- There is no need to till the soil
- Bugs and weeds are not your enemies
- There is no need to make prepared compost
- Do not bring any inputs from outside the farm (eg: pesticide, herbicide, fertilizer)
- Respond to nature, weather, and the specific conditions of your location

Again, these are Kawaguchi's thoughts, and they are based on his relationship with the land, but they are not a "natural farming" bible. We must allow ourselves to come into a working relationship with our land, and to have a respect for the land and for other people, and from this working relationship we can develop our own way of natural farming.

Isn't this the same thing as "Organic" farming?

Organic farming is a big category which includes everything from small family farms to large-scale industrial farms. While some organic farmers do indeed practice farming in a way similar to Japanese natural farming, many 'certified organic' farms are also unfortunately bound to government mandates which are not always healthy for the environment, let alone healthy for the food or the farmers who make it.

An example which may surprise many is that USDA Certified organic food allows for the use of pesticides and chemicals; while natural farmers use zero pesticides or chemicals. It's a good reason why we would benefit from getting produce directly from a local farmer we trust.[2]

Other permissible practices in "organic" farming are fertilizers – which are often heavily used and can cause serious environmental issues – and the use of "tilling" or turning over the soil, a practice which Natural Farmers see as a destruction of the natural, physical, and biological components which make up the soil, and a major factor in our current global issues with soil degradation and desertification.

2 http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5068682

In the end, Natural Farming is not a methodology, but really more of an idea of how to live as as equals with nature. Thinking of it this way, it is technically impossible to imprint any kind of certification on this way of farming. But then again, if certification exists to establish trust, the better way to establish that trust is to form a relationship with the people who produce your food and this, indeed, is something that natural farming is excellent at facilitating.

Natural Farming sounds nice, but ...

(Excuses might include: It's too idealistic. It's not possible. We need chemicals, tilling, pesticides. These farmers must already be wealthy to afford this.)

There are many variations of this question/criticism, and invariable one comes up at each screening. Someone thinks that natural farming sound nice, but has myriad excuses as to why they can't personally do it, or why they think it's impossible to accomplish in this world.

First, understand that we (and this film) are not here to convert you into natural farmers. We are here because we've spent the past four years of our lives working to open a little window that allows people to see a new way of thinking and doing. This little window into the natural farming mentality is one that shows us how to simultaneously cultivate social and ecological well being, all while feeding people good, healthy food. Is it possible? Yes. But it requires a mindset change and a shift away from the common capitalist focus on competition, wealth, endless growth, and material goods.

In a general way, we can indeed say that natural farming is impossible so long as we continue to operate within the limited way of thinking and doing we call global capitalism. In order to be successful, we need to remove ourselves from the limitation of thinking that our solutions must all fit within the social and economic box of capitalism as we know it today. The box, in fact, is a major part of the problem.

Rather than calling it a 'box' Suhee and I like to visualize capitalism as a train. Picturing this train called capitalism, let's imagine that all of us who are participating in the capitalist system, the workers, the consumers, the owners (eg: most of the population of modern society) are on board this train and conduct their business mostly within the confines of this train.
It's a comfortable place, cushy chairs, all the food and alcohol you could want in the cafe car, a karaoke room, sleeping cars. It's a great place to spend time. The issue with all of this, is that this train is heading for a cliff.

Environmental degradation, rampant inequality, a sociopathic economic system, however you want to spell it, the train we are on is not in it for the long term. The majority of well-grounded economists, scientists, philosophers, or ecologists who are not funded by industry interests will concur with this sentiment, as has most recently, the United Nations and an international coalition of such researchers.

Thinking about the train and natural farming, it's easy to see that natural farming exists pretty well outside of the train. Those of us on board can see it from our window seats, like we did in watching the film, and it looks beautiful to us, but we have mostly come to the conclusion that it is impossible because, well, it won't work on our train!

We're right, of course. Natural farming won't work on the train, and that is a big part of the point. It shouldn't work on the train. If it did work on the train, it would be heading towards the cliff with every other part of our competition-based capitalist society, and that's not where we need our solutions to sit.
The way that natural farmers have made it work, for better or worse, has been to get off the train, to reject the tenets of capitalist economics as we practice them today, and to build their own kind of economic system that suits the well being of society and our earth.
We essentially have two main choices:

» We can stay on this train, and continue working towards the bigger, the faster, the more competitive, the extractive, the global, the endlessly growing wealth, the dishonesty, the inequality.
» We can get off the train and work towards the small-scale, the slow, the cooperative, the regenerative, the local, the sharing of wealth, the honest relationship-based, the communal.

In order to be successful at natural farming – or any of the next-generation people-powered occupations we need in this world – we need to re-invent the economic system to serve our needs as people, and the needs of the environment.

Of course, it is understandable that many people will doubt this is possible because for our entire lives the only way of operating we have known has been capitalism, the pursuit of money as a means and end. We have to remove ourselves from this mindset in order for things like natural farming to work.

Natural farming is a way of working based on relationships, compassion, and regeneration and so it is fundamentally incompatible with an economic system based on scale, competition and extraction.

The farmers who are successful are building new economic systems based on, yes, relationships, compassion, and regeneration.

Natural Farming Doesn't Seem Realistic

If we're speaking about being realistic, let's first question the way we currently live and work and produce.

Looking at our situation realistically as human beings living on planet earth, there is realistically no way for us to continue operating solely within a system that places economic growth and profits ahead of all else. There is also no realistic way for humanity to continue growing food and producing goods on an industrial scale that necessitates continuous extraction of limited resources.

Industrial scale production of anything requires a fundamental separation of ourselves from the reality of the world we live in. Now, as beings who are reliant on the earth and ecological cycle for production and life itself, we might understand that producing and living in a system which disconnects us from the reality of this ecological cycle is not a very wise position to be in.

The global-industrial system of production is anything but realistic and is chronically prone to producing social inequality, environmental destruction, and calamity on many levels. Does this sound familiar?

As opposed to industrial scale farming, natural farming is inherently based on a realistic view of the world simply because it requires constant contact and a relationship with the reality of nature and the earth which supports us. It operates not in a walled-off box, but out in nature where the entire process is visible and connected with reality each and every day.

Natural farming (and similar methods such as permaclture, agroecology and regenerative farming) are the most realistic ways of producing food for the population of the earth.

Such ways of producing food not only rely on a connected sense, understanding, and relationship with the real world that we live in, but when approached properly, they can bring dozens of times more food per acre of land than even the best managed industrial-scale farm.

The trade-off, of course, is increased human power. In order to feed the world with natural farming, we need more people involved in the occupation of natural farming. Good thing then, that we have such high unemployment and under-employment rates. Ready to get your hands dirty and fix the system?

How can you make a living with Natural Farming?

There are many small-scale farmers who make a living doing natural farming or permaculture or some similar form of regenerative agriculture. So how do we reconcile this? How is it possible? Surely they must be very special people, talented, or have some kind of funding behind them. This is not really the case.

They are all normal people who have simply released themselves from traditional social and economic thinking, and who have found some creative way of making and selling food that is all based on the cultivation of relationships.
They are people who have decided that doing things at a small scale where they can use their creativity and foster relationships is the healthiest and most sane way of earning a living, and they've found customers who agree with that sentiment.

One farmer is a full time employee of a restaurant who wants to use all naturally farmed ingredients. They asked a farmer to start a natural farm for them and she did, and it works financially for the farmer and the restaurant and the customers.

Many other farmers have a community supported agriculture (CSA) model. The key for this to work, is that they invite the community to their farm to show them the land, to explain the premise of how it works and why it is important and healthy for them and the land. The customers see it, they understand, they become connected, and in most cases, they are customers for life.

But normal people don't like to eat ugly food.

The experience of natural farmers around the world shows otherwise. Consumers will eat aesthetically unappealing food. If they are educated about it.

Natural farmers do not generally sell to supermarkets, who often have high aesthetic requirements for their foods, and more often take too much of a cut for farmers to turn a profit. Instead, they work directly with consumers, face to face in farmers markets, or through a CSA where the customers must visit the farm at least once a year.

In the end, if customers are physically brought to a farm and educated about the foods and processes and benefits, they will not only accept food that is too small or has holes in it, they will often rejoice in it because they know it is a sign of a healthy environment.

Is it possible to feed the world with natural farming?

The more useful way to ask this question, is to look at our current way of producing food and ask:

"Is it possible to continue feeding the world with industrial agriculture?"

The answer to this is an unequivocal no.
Today's best science, along with decades of independent agricultural research tells us that it is absolutely not possible to feed the world past our current generation if we continue industrial-scale farming.

A recent United Nations Report by the Food and Agriculture Organization, gives us 60 years of industrial scale farming before we destroy our environment so irreversibly that the world will enter a period of mass starvation from which it may not be able to recover. [3][4]

Decades of research by the United Nations, along with institutions such as Rodale Institute, give us some important recommendations.[5]

3 http://unctad.org/en/Docs/ditcted200715_en.pdf
4 http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/un-only-small-farmers-and-agroecology-can-feed-the-world
5 http://rodaleinstitute.org/

There is a general agreement by most farmers and researchers who are studying how to feed the population of this growing planet, that the only way to feed the world well into the future is to convert to ways of growing food that are:

» Predominantly Small-Scale / Local / Regional
» Biodiverse in nature, incorporating many kinds and varieties of plants
» 3olar-based, not reliant on external inputs and petroleum-based chemicals
» Regenerative for the environment instead of extractive (destructive)
» Based more on local and seasonal growing and consumer habits

Around the world, millions of Regenerative Farmers, Natural Farmers, and Permaculturists are working today to achieve all of these points ... and they already feed most of the world.[6]

Don't we need chemicals, pesticides, GMOs, to feed the world?

Sure you do … if you want to grow things that aren't meant to grown in the place/season that you are trying to grow them in, or if you are a seed company, or a chemical manufacturer who used to produce chemical weapons and needs to sell their chemicals to someone, or anyone else with a vested interest in making money by supplying farmers things they don't really need.

But you don't unequivocally need any of these things to live and to feed the world, and in nearly all cases, continuing to use them works against the well being of our earth and the future of humanity.

The Myth that We Need Industrial Agriculture has been debunked, and the only ones who are holding onto this myth, are the industry giants who helped create it – as well as the mainstream media who rely on the industry for funding. This partially explains why most people seem to think we need industrial agriculture.[7]

In the United States, 80% of the corn we grow is not used for human consumption — most of it goes to cattle feed or ethanol fuel production (NY Times). If industrial corn crops in the U.S. alone were converted to grow food for human consumption, we could feed 1/2 of the world's starving population. So to begin with, we grow enough food to feed the world already, but we have a giant problem with how we use the food that we do grow.[8]

6 http://newfarm.rodaleinstitute.org/features/0802/regenerative.shtml
7 http://www.resilience.org/stories/2013-09-03/permaculture-and-the-myth-of-scarcity
8 http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/31/opinion/corn-for-food-not-fuel.html

The other part of this myth is that smaller local farms can not match the yield of high-technology industrial farms. This is simply not true, and anyone who has stepped foot on a natural farm can immediately see the truth. Small scale farming operations based on natural farming, regenerative farming, and permaculture can provide yields of 5-10 higher than those of the very best GMO-based conventional industrial farms when growing vegetables, berries, and fruits; and natural grain (rice) farms consistently show yields equal to or better than the most productive conventional farms.[9]

The idea that we don't have enough food to feed the world, the idea that we need technological advances to change this 'food shortage' is completely absurd.

If a proper distribution system alone were put into place, the world would not be hungry. Better yet, if communities were empowered to grow their own food, the world could locally grown foods as a primary source of nourishment, in cooperation with a much smaller regional and global distribution systems that are based on human needs first instead of economic growth.

Even so, this documentary isn't really about converting us all to being natural farmers — although it's a nice sounding dream — it is about the idea that there is something missing from our lives in between the layers of concrete, glass, and

9 http://www.resilience.org/stories/2013-09-03/permaculture-and-the-myth-of-scarcity

asphalt found in our cities. It's about the idea that as human beings, having a deeper connection with nature, and with the sources of our foods, can help us be happier, more aware, and more responsible in the way we go about living our lives.

The reality is that the only way forward for humanity to both ensure ecological well being to support our population, as well as to feed the world, is to move towards regenerative ways of farming that rely more heavily on human power, creativity, and a relationship with our environments.

You haven't defined natural farming for me. I want a definition.

There is no definition.

Indeed, if we could define natural farming, it would mean that we've all missed the point of natural farming.

The closest one might come, is to say that natural farming is about you and your relationship with nature, with the plants, earth, and the people who eat your food. It is about cultivating a compassionate – even empathic – relationship with nature, and allowing this relationship to direct how you work.

There is no such thing as 'the natural farming technique' and beware, anyone who tells you differently might be trying to sell you something. There are various techniques that natual farmers use, yet all of them relate back to the individual's relationship with their land.

Yoshikazu Kawaguchi tells us that there are some main "ideas" to be mindful of:

- There is no need to till the soil
- Bugs and weeds are not your enemies
- There is no need to make prepared compost
- Do not bring any inputs from outside the farm (eg: pesticide, herbicide, fertilizer)
- Respond to nature, weather, and the specific conditions of your location

Again, these are Kawaguchi's thoughts, but they are not a "natural farming" bible. We must allow ourselves to come into a working relationship with our land, and to have a respect for the land and for other people. In the end, it is only you who can define natural farming for yourself.

I'm not a farmer. I live in the city. What can I do?

First, remember that good things begin when you turn off the television and start interacting with the people in your community on a regular basis. Get together. Plan. Talk. Take actions in your community for your community. The city is part of our sustainable future, but only inhabitants like you are leading the way. It's your job to make that change happen, and it starts with your actions.

The natural farming mindset is not just for country people, in fact, it is a mindset that potentially has more to offer to urban city dwellers than anyone!

The easiest way to use the natural farming mentality in your job, in your consumption habits, in your dealings with other people, is just to remember the core idea of natural farming itself -- to cultivate truthful and meaningful relationships with the world around you. Remember this relationship-based mentality, and use it as a frame for your dealings with the world.

We can use this 'relationship-based' mindset whenever we contemplate making a purchase of an object or service. Simply ask ourselves what are possible ways to obtain the products and services we use in our life in a sustainable way that enforces relationships, compassion, and community.

With this in mind, here's a handy list to go through when making purchasing choices:

» **Can Someone Share it?** – Is there a person near me who can share this tool, space, food, or skills with me so that I don't have to buy something that will be used only for a short time?
See: www.freecycle.org | www.streetbank.com | www.ilovefreegle.org

» **Can I Make it?** – Can I make it, repair it, patch it, up-cycle it, or learn how to do so from someone?
See: www.youtube.com | www.openculture.com

» **Can I Make a new Relationship?** – Can I form a new relationship with someone who makes or sells what I need, instead of buying from a big box store? Can I support a local farmer, craft guild, or craft space, or collective?
See: www.localharvest.org | www.etsy.com | www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/farmersmarkets |

» **Do I Really Need It?** – If you can not get what you want by any of the above means, the last step is to question yourself: do you really need this thing or service that you so desire? Of course, there are times when we really do need it, but you might find that, after going through this list of questions, there are a great many things that you really just don't need, that don't add to your happiness or well being, and that just take money out of your pocket and help line the pockets of the already wealthy. Certainly, we found many many things in this category! This is one of the goals you can work at slowly and gradually, a progression of removing things and habits from your life and filling the space with community, relationships, and compassion.

From this list, you can also start to come up with your own creative solutions. If there are no local farmers in your urban area, or if it is truly too expensive for you, can you appeal to the farmers and perhaps help work with them and learn in exchange for food? Is there vacant land somewhere? Can you form a group of caretakers who want good food to start working with that land? Can you appeal to city or community leaders to start a local food or garden network? Can you innovate and make a box gardens that fit into tight urban spaces? Can you start a local craft sharing and production network?

The opportunities for you to create a local economy based on things like community, relationships, and compassion are endless. The only true limitation is your own creativity and your willingness to get out there and make it happen!

Individual people can't change the world.

This narrative is presented to us by the very people who would be only so happy if individuals continued to do nothing, to take no actions, to put up with the system as it is presented to them, to abide by unjust laws, to continue feeding money into giant corporations. The narrative that the individual can not change the world is a narrative which serves only the wealthy and the powerful.

You can change the world. The biggest changes in the history of our society have been spurred by the actions of one individual who worked with yet another group of individuals. One of our main mental blocks is that we know the right thing to do, but we are afraid to do it. We are afraid to not have a nice car, to not have the newest phone, to fix our own clothes, to stick up for people who are marginalized, to carry our cup and bottle with us; what will society think of us!?

The only way to change the world is for individuals to step up and do the right thing, no matter what the social consequences might be. That is not the role of some far-off hero. That is the role of you.

It is your role to change the world.

Are you ready to step into that role? The world is ready for you to do it.

Should we all just live in the forest and ignore technology?

Absolutely not!

Natural farming has nothing to do with going backwards, and everything to do with finding a way forward. It is about finding a way to live with this earth instead of fighting against it, it is about knowing our home and coming into a close working relationship with it instead of constantly creating devices to distance ourselves from it. It is about a sane economy that works for all people, and about responsible technology that helps the human family and the earth come together instead of separating us.

Technology has a role, but in a scenario that luminary thinkers Mahatma Gandhi and E.F. Schumacher warned us of, technology today has overstepped it's role.

Instead of technology serving mankind, today we have essentially allowed ourselves to become slaves to technology; we have allowed it do destroy social and ecological well being at nearly every turn.

In the view of so-called "appropriate" technology, we need technology that allows human beings to work creatively with their hands and with meaning. Technology that allows us to deepen our connection with others, and to deepen our relationship with this world. Technology that makes work and life easier, yet does not remove our ability to be creative and happy in the work that we do. A recent study by Dr. Iain McGilchrist showed that, while inflation-adjusted wages doubled in America between 1955 and 1999, the percentage of Americans who reported they were very happy with their jobs dropped – from 44% in 1955, to 16% in 1999. Our jobs might be earning us more money, but they are progressively making us less happy.[10]

I bring this up because it relates to the fact that the technology implemented in our current way of industrial farming takes much of the joy and creativity out of the job of farming. Natural farming reinstates this joy and creativity, allowing us to work closer to the land and to our products, to work happily, creatively, and with meaning each day. That's the kind of job and technology we need more of!

I want to support local, but I can't afford farmer's market, handmade goods, ect...

We had this reaction at first. Then we asked ourselves, why can't we afford these things? Why do we think they are too expensive?

In the first case, during the time that I had a salaried job, I took a look at my expenses. I had my own apartment at one point. I went out to eat a few times a week. I had been buying new computer equipment, new things for my kitchen and apartment, new phones every year. I went out for drinks once a week with co-workers or friends. I drove up to the city weekly. All of these were luxuries that I didn't need, many of them were actually causing more harm and stress than good, and all of them were taking away my ability to buy, cook, and appreciate good food.

So I got rid of them. I moved into a smaller place and shared it. I had my friends over for dinner instead of us going out, and they did the same for me, it was a great adventure in cooking and camaraderie. I stopped buying things that I

10 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXiHStLfjP0

knew would just be toys forgotten in a few months or a year. I gave away a lot of things. Later on, when we decided to make the film, I just up and gave away nearly everything, moved out of having an apartment, and I still don't have a permanent home and I live below the poverty line. That's a bit radical, but you'll find your own balance, I hope.

Of course, there are economic hardships which might seem impossible to get away from. Most of this, however, is because those of us who find ourselves in economic hardship are attempting to fight out of this economic hardship by being successful in the very consumption-based economic system that continues to work against us. In fact, we need to do the opposite.

In order to be successful, we need to step away from that system and understand how to be successful outside of it or regardless of it. Not buying into a consumption-based lifestyle where your consumption level defines you is one great and easy way to independence, to well being, and to success for yourself.

In this way of thinking, you might begin to realize that, if you think something is too expensive, perhaps you can work or talk with the people who make it to understand why it is expensive. Perhaps given time, you can be the one to make it yourself. Your success and ability depends in great part, on your non-compliance with the portions of social and economic structure that work against you and others like you.

Again, a reoccurring theme here is to do the right thing, not the easy thing. Sometimes that might mean changing your social group, sometimes it might mean changing your occupation, where you live, or what you do in your spare time.

The important point is to do it and to listen to your own personal truth rather than the banter of society and the television.

Are you rich? Who funds you? How did you afford to make this film?

Suhee and Patrick have lived the last four years far below the poverty line.

We have very little money, spend very little money, and own very few things, yet we live happily, we eat mostly really good food, and we can do so because we no longer buy into the consumption-based capitalist system.

We don't have a home, or a car, we don't own much of anything that we can't carry with us, we don't have fancy phones, no internet plans, no television. We have our cameras, laptops, and the basics for our personal well being and that's it. Some might call that extreme. We happen to think the modern capitalist lifestyle is extreme. To us, a more simple lifestyle is not only reasonable, it is the only way we could accomplish the making and touring of this film.

The making of this film predominantly consisted of Suhee and Patrick working 16+ hours a day to do all of the jobs that an entire filming and production and distribution and touring crew would normally do. However, we would not have been able to do it if not for the dedication of literally hundreds of volunteers and individuals we met along the way who believed in the project enough to donate their own time, their couches, their expertise, their passion.

During our continuing work, we continue to be supported by such individuals, and we continue to live below the poverty line. Happily!

Doesn't This Only Work in Japan? Who Can Benefit?

The techniques learned in Japan have been practiced with success in varying climates throughout the world and most importantly, in agricultural lands which are struggling with soil management, soil fertility, and general self-sufficiency. But remember, natural farming is not about technique, it is about having the right mindset and relationship with your land, and allowing the technique to come from this mindset and relationship. Most food producing land can benefit greatly through knowledge and understanding of the natural farming ideology.

So, although the 'method' differs in each application, the basics which Fukuoka laid out over 60 years ago, stay the same: no tilling, no chemicals or pesticides, no outside fertilizer, and most importantly, listen to nature and have a respect for the natural system which produces your food.

Who is Masanobu Fukuoka?

Fukuoka is the Japanese agricultural scientist who, in the 1940s, began developing a system of farming, based not on advances in the science which he was trained, but on the seemingly backward process of removing human and scientific intervention.

His master plan was simple: to allow himself to exist and produce food simply, working in harmony with nature instead of against it. Much of his philosophy is detailed in his bestselling book, "The One Straw Revolution," now available widely, having been translated into over 25 languages.

Fukuoka passed away peacefully on his farm in 2008 at the age of 95, but his philosophy of Natural Farming lives on. His "Natural Farming" movement has spawned countless other books, research projects, and a slew of international recognition, yet many are still unaware of his successes to this day.

Where can I learn more about Natural Farming?

There are many great resources in print form. Highly recommended and still in print today is Masanobu Fukuoka's own book The One Straw Revolution and Sowing Seeds in the Desert, both edited and translated by Larry Korn. For an in-depth study examining the differences between natural farming and other ecological farming methods, Larry Korn's latest book, One Straw Revolutionary.[11]

I still have a question

Well, you can write to us at director@finalstraw.org if you like. Or visit us, wherever we are at the moment. Or ask us over for dinner. Or you could find and visit your local natural farmer.

In the end, it's all about cultivating relationships and compassion with nature and the people around you. Most questions can be answered by looking to compassion and relationships at the root, and working from there to see how your problem can be solved or mitigated through this mindset.

11 http://www.chelseagreen.com/one-straw-revolutionary