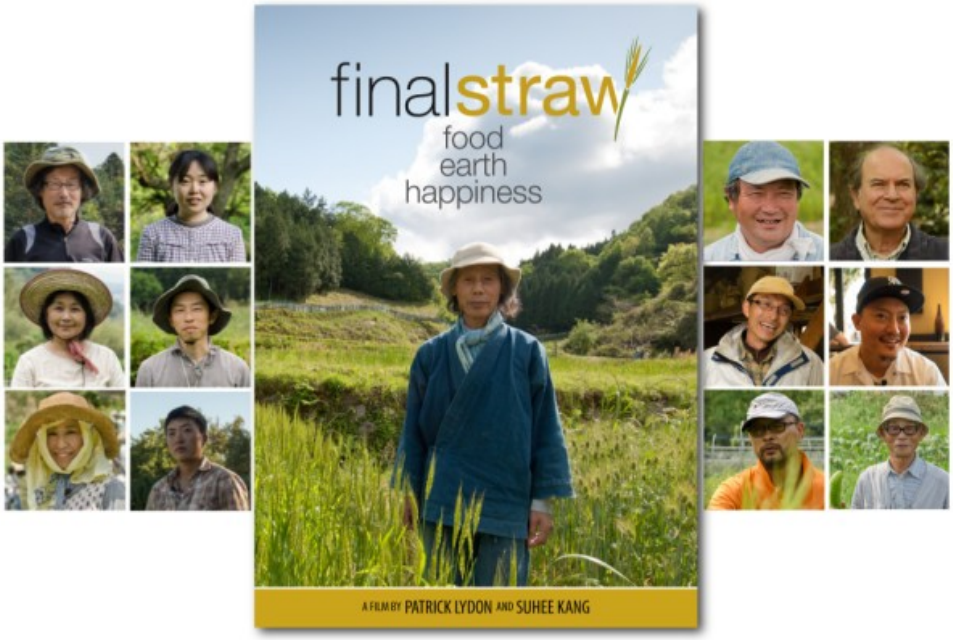
finalstraw
food / earth / happiness

a documentary film by
Patrick M. Lydon and **Suhee Kang**



Solutions for our ecological, economic, and social crises come from unexpected places on a thought-provoking journey through Japan, Korea, and the United States that turns our perceptions of food and life upside down in an amazingly simple and poetic way.

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updated: 20 September 2015

50 Word Synopsis

Solutions for our most pressing social and ecological issues come from unexpected places on a meditative and artfully-executed journey through Japan, Korea, and the United States. Armed with a camera and determination, the film's directors turn our perceptions of food and life upside down in an amazingly simple and poetic way.

200 Words

Solutions for our most pressing global issues come from unexpected places on this majestic and thought-provoking journey through Japan, Korea, and the United States, turning our perceptions of food and life upside down in an amazingly simple and poetic way.

Called “a beautiful film … both art and documentary” by New York Times bestselling author Alicia Bay Laurel, *Final Straw: Food, Earth, Happiness* weaves breathtaking landscapes and an eclectic original soundtrack together with philosophical insights from a glowing cast of natural farmers, chefs, authors, and teachers.

Together, their stories illuminate a brilliant yet maddeningly simple path to sustainability and well being for people and the environment, centered around the philosophies of the late Masanobu Fukuoka and his seminal environmental book *One Straw Revolution.*

A tremendous four-year undertaking by two first time filmmakers, co-directors Patrick Lydon (San Jose/Silicon Valley, USA) and Suhee Kang (Seoul, South Korea) brought together hundreds of volunteer translators, hosts, coordinators, artists, and musicians from over a dozen countries to make *Final Straw: Food, Earth, Happiness.*

Today the film is leaving audiences around the world inspired, happier, and motivated to make changes in their own lives. In 2015/2016, the directors completed a 110-date screening tour of Japan and Korea to much celebration, and the film's grassroots popularity doesn't seem to be slowing down any time soon!

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350 Words

During the process of making this film, the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) released a report which made clear to the world that we only have 60 years of farming left if we continue our ecologically destructive ways of growing food. Add to this, issues of social and economic inequality, resource depletion, and a changing climate that threatens our very existence, and the path forward seems daunting at the least.

So where do we go from here? *Final Straw: Food, Earth, Happiness* offers a compelling direction.

Solutions for these global issues come from unexpected places on this majestic and thought-provoking journey through Japan, Korea, and the United States, turning our perceptions of food and life upside down in an amazingly simple and poetic way.

Called "a beautiful film … both art and documentary" by New York Times bestselling author Alicia Bay Laurel, *Final Straw: Food, Earth, Happiness* weaves breathtaking landscapes and an eclectic original soundtrack together with philosophical insights from a glowing cast of natural farmers, chefs, authors, and teachers.

Current-day leaders in the natural farming movement are featured, including Yoshikazu Kawaguchi (Japan), Seonghyun Choi (Korea), and Larry Korn (United States), as well as a dozen others from farmers to chefs to urbanites. Together, their stories illuminate a brilliant yet maddeningly simple path to sustainability and well being for people and the environment, centered around the philosophies of the late Masanobu Fukuoka and his seminal environmental book *One Straw Revolution.*

A tremendous four-year undertaking by two first time filmmakers, co-directors Patrick Lydon (San Jose/Silicon Valley, USA) and Suhee Kang (Seoul, South Korea) brought together hundreds of volunteer translators, hosts, coordinators, artists, and musicians from over a dozen countries to make *Final Straw: Food, Earth, Happiness.*

The film is introduced with a delicate and moving hand-drawn animated short – created by animator Heeyoung Park, who spent an immersive year with the directors and on natural farms in preparation to draw the first frame.

Today the film is leaving audiences around the world inspired, happier, and motivated to make changes in their own lives. In 2015/2016, the directors completed a 110-date screening tour of Japan and Korea to much celebration, and the film's grassroots popularity doesn't seem to be slowing down any time soon!

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Final Straw Documentary
Food | Earth | Happiness
a film by **Patrick M. Lydon** and **Suhee Kang**

visit www.finalstraw.org

Directors' Statement

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 in 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 the people around us.

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.

We realized that his way of natural farming was not simply about a method of farming to sustain our environment, it was about a way of thinking and being to sustain and nourish all human relationships, ecological and social.

A short time later, the two of us decided to cash in our meager life savings and have since led a nomadic life with no home and few belongings, putting our backgrounds in photography and publishing together to tell a story that we saw was greatly needed in our world.

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: Food, Earth, Happiness* 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

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updated: 10 August 2016

More than a Film: Our Actions

More than just a film, *Final Straw* is a cultural movement for social and ecological well being that uses nature, food, and art to reconnect people and communities with our environment.

The directors have worked internationally through film, art, nature experiences, urban gardening, educational programming, and community oriented projects to catalyze ways of thinking and being that sustain and nurture all human relationships, social and ecological, having founded the *SocieCity* collective as a springboard for these extended works.

During the process of creating the film, we have simultaneously produced ecological art exhibitions, lecture events, and built urban art farms. We have worked with local groups of eco-conscious individuals, disadvantaged youth groups, K-12 schools, universities, and leading ecological institutions to create activities and interventions aimed at developing simple solutions for a more sustainable life.

The documentary film, as well as our related events all explore solutions for social and ecological well being and are driven by a holistic view of nature and humanity, gained from our studies of 'natural farming' lifestyles around the world.

Deeply-rooted in the exploration of the art of natural farming, these events teach us as much about how to live as they do about growing sustainable food.

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updated: 10 August 2016

Director Bios

Patrick M. Lydon (San Jose, United States) is an internationally exhibited artist and writer working to ignite unconventional and critical dialogues on humanity's relationship with the natural world. His interdisciplinary work involves diverse casts of people; from farmers, to city planners, to artists, rural and urban community organizations, and educational institutions. In addition he curates content for a collective called SocieCity.org, and is a regular contributing writer to the Sustainable Cities Collective and Nature of Cities. Patrick holds an MFA with distinction in "Art, Space & Nature" from the University of Edinburgh (Scotland) and previously studied at San Jose State University (USA) and Aichi University of the Arts (Japan).

More at:

www.pmlydon.com & www.sociecity.org

Suhee Kang (Seoul, South Korea) is a photographer and social and ecological activist. She has worked as an Editor of books on ecology and sociology topics, and has served as a volunteer for many like-minded organizations including the 'Dumulmeori' organic farming struggle, and 'Rogpa' organization for Tibetan refugees. Suhee has traveled throughout the Middle-East, Europe and Asia to engage with the traditional way of living, for which she won the grand prize in the traveling photography contest by Istanbul Cultural Center. Solo and group shows of Suhee's work have taken place in Seoul, Kwangju, and Yangpyeong. Suhee graduated from Sungkyunkwan University in 2007 with a degree in Journalism.

More at:

suheekang.tistory.com & vertciel.blog.me

Contact Information

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Reviews and Feedback

"Wow!! A great film … both art and documentary."
– Alicia Bay Laurel | author of 'Living on the Earth'

"Thought-provoking and inspiring … a powerful call to action"
– Clean Eating Magazine

"Meditative, mindful … a beautiful film."
– Barbara Baker / BBC, mindful pie

"Loved it so much … filled with TLC"
– Keibo Oiwa / author of 'Slow is Beautiful'

"A film with a very big heart … the world needs such films now more than ever."
– Brian Covert / journalist based in Japan

"The film filled me up with great joy and inspiration...I knew it was going to uplift and give a new perspective to my soul, but I didn't know how deeply it would do those things! I'm going to watch the film today... for the 8th time."
– Rafayah Uzzyah, Philadelphia, USA

"Your film enables us to catch a glimpse of the people and things which society can not ordinarily grasp or see... thank you for your beautiful work"
– Kim JaeHyung / Korean philosopher and activist

"Full of beautiful moments and messages that inspired and brought tears to my eyes..."
– Rena Komatsu, Tokyo, Japan

Anonymous written feedback from screenings...

It's Fantasia-meets-farming // Therapy and purpose, all in one // Every human being should see this film

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Final Straw Documentary
Food | Earth | Happiness
a film by **Patrick M. Lydon** and **Suhee Kang**

visit www.finalstraw.org

Images

High-resolution production images are available at http://www.finalstraw.org/press-media/
or by contacting patrick@finalstraw.org

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updated: 10 August 2016

The Animation "A Little Light" by Heeyoung Park

The *Final Straw: Food, Earth, Happiness* film is introduced with a delicate and moving animated short by Heeyoung Park. The animation is hand drawn, and took two years to complete.

The process was intense and immersive; in order to prepare for drawing the first frame, Heeyoung spent an entire year studying with the directors, going over ideas and sketches, and working on natural farms. Heeyoung also chose to work specifically with Japanese composer ZML to create the soundtrack for her short.

The result is a deeply personal and introspective work of animation.

A Soundtrack from Three Countries

As with the filming, the soundtrack was recorded in Japan, South Korea, and the United States. Having studied music since childhood, Patrick undertook the work of music direction, working with professional musicians who volunteered their time to support the film. These musicians are impressive not only musically, but in the mindset of how they make and share their work. The musicians are:

Wind Sync | United States | Houston, Texas | www.windsync.org
Much of the soundtrack is improvised by this group, a revolutionary wind quintet who are internationally recognized for their dramatic and engaging performances. These five virtuoso players tour regularly, inspiring audiences of all ages.

Bomnoonbyul | South Korea | Seoul |
South Korea's most recognized kalimba and native american flute player, his performances touch the souls of audiences during frequent tours around East Asia.

Joyful Island | South Korea | Seoul | http://cafe.naver.com/joyfulisland
An eclectic group of musicians well known for their dynamic and upbeat world-folk sound, the five member group brings their original compositions to concert stages around the world.

Youji Kohno and **Ben Nakamura** | Japan | Kagawa | http://ipppen.bandcamp.com
Experimental musicians known for live performances using direct electrical current and analog instruments to produce soundscapes.

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Frequently Asked Questions

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. We put a lot of work into these, and we hope they help guide you to a more productive understanding of the film, natural farming, and possible actions which can spur from this way of thinking...

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Q) Should we all just live in the forest and ignore technology?....17

Q) You haven't defined natural farming for me. I want a definition....18

Q) These natural farmers are wrong! (aka: my way is the only way!)....18

Q) I'm not a farmer. I live in the city. What can I do?....19

Q) Individual people can't change the world....20

Q) I want to support local, but I can't afford good food, handmade goods, ect....20

Q: What prompted you to begin exploring natural farming?....21

Q: I don't know what problem you are trying to solve! Is it social? Ecological?....22

Q: Why/How does natural farming (or the idea of it) help with the above issues?....22

Q) Are you rich? Who funds you? How did you afford to make this film?....23

Q) Doesn't This Only Work in Japan? Who Can Benefit?....23

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Q) What is Natural Farming

A) 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”. [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:

1. There is no need to till the soil

2. Bugs and weeds are not your enemies

3. There is no need to make prepared compost

4. Do not bring any inputs from outside the farm (eg: pesticide, herbicide, fertilizer)

5. 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.

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

A) 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.

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.

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.

Q) Natural Farming sounds nice, but … (insert excuse of why it's not possible)

(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.)

A) 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... which leads us to the following

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:

1) 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.

2) 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.

Q) Natural Farming Doesn't Seem Realistic

A) 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.

Q) How Do they Control Weeds and Pests?

A) Keep in mind that the worst pest and weed issues we are seeing today, are a direct result of large scale industrial mono-crop farming. Industrial practices encourage weed growth and widespread damage by pests, and so they have a more difficult time to start off with.

Natural farmers do have 'pests' and 'weeds' of course, but they mitigate these threats with nature's tools, using biodiversity to their advantage, maintaining a natural balance where it becomes nearly impossible for pests to cause the kind of large scale damage that we would see if an industrial farm stopped using pesticides.

Natural farming does not 'eliminate' pests, but creates a balanced environment where, not only do pests and weeds not pose major threats, but they are appreciated for the benefits the provide to the soil and ecosystem of the farm itself.

Q) How can you make a living with Natural Farming?

A) 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.

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

A) 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.

Q) Is it possible to feed the world with natural farming?

A) 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.

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

1. Predominantly Small-Scale / Local / Regional
2. Biodiverse in nature, incorporating many kinds and varieties of plants
3. Solar-based, not reliant on external inputs and petroleum-based chemicals
4. Regenerative for the environment instead of extractive (destructive)
5. 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.

Q) But don't we need chemicals, pesticides, GMOs, to feed the world?

A) 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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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

A) 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.

I bring this up because it relates to the fact that the technology implemented in our current way of industrial farming takes all 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!

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

A) 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:

1. There is no need to till the soil

2. Bugs and weeds are not your enemies

3. There is no need to make prepared compost

4. Do not bring any inputs from outside the farm (eg: pesticide, herbicide, fertilizer)

5. 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.

Q) These natural farmers are wrong! (aka: my way is the only way!)

A) You are welcome to share how you do natural farming, or chemical farming, or any other kind of farming. Indeed, we need others to share their experiences and what they've learned, and we need to share ideas and to inspire innovations that help us find our own way of doing things.

What we don't need however, is for individuals to dictate how other people should do natural

farming. This is impossible. It absolutely goes against the entire premise of natural farming.

We ask that everyone involved in this conversation keep their minds open to the multitude of ways of farming and living in harmony with nature that are succeeding all around the world, instead of sticking to a single doctrine or view on how things should be done.

Natural farming is about you and your relationship with the land, and that's it. From there, it's up to you to create a good working relationship and to kindly and openly (not forcefully) share your successes and failures with others.

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

A) 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.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/farmersmarkets | www.etsy.com

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!

Q) Individual people can't change the world.

A) History shows us the opposite is true. Such a negative narrative (that we don't have power to change the world) 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 that extract money, resources, and life from the world around them. The narrative that the individual can not change the world is a narrative which serves only the wealthy and the powerful to keep their wealth and their power.

You can change the world. The biggest changes in the history of our society have been spurred by the actions of individuals who inspired and later worked with yet more individuals. One of our main mental blocks is that we know the right thing to do, but we are afraid to step in a different direction than the majority. We are afraid to ride a bike instead of a car, afraid to have an old phone instead of the newest one, afraid to fix our own clothes instead of buying new ones, afraid to stick up for people who are marginalized, afraid to carry our cup and bottle with us instead of using disposable ones, afraid to talk and share with our neighbors; what will society think of us!?

In the film, Kawaguchi Yoshikazu gives a straight answer, saying that "the government won't change for us, other people won't change for us, society won't change for us" he points out that 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. In the end, 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.

Q) I want to support local, but I can't afford good food, handmade goods, ect...

A) 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 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 probably sounds a bit radical, but it's also an adventure in finding freedom to live as simply as possible. 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 is due to our attempts to fight our way out of 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, to release ourselves from a system which is not working in our best interests.

In order to be truly 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. Is it expensive because the person selling it lives in a giant villa and has a collection of 10 ferraris? Well, perhaps you don't want to support that. Is it expensive because the person selling it lives a simple life but works diligently and carefully at crafting something good, true, and beautiful? Is it worth it to support such a crafts-person?

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, and your engagement in activities that support what you believe in.

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.

Q: What prompted you to begin exploring natural farming?

Suhee Kang: I was afraid that our Earth is getting sick, also strongly agreed with natural farming's main concept which we should respect our mother nature, and wanted to share the idea with the others.

Patrick Lydon: My interest initially was in looking at culture, nature, and cities, and how we can unite these three areas of knowledge to create better ways of living, that is to say, not 'bigger, more fabulous' ways, but more 'socially and ecologically just' ways of living. Natural farming provided a way to do that brilliantly, not just through the farming bit, but through adapting their mindset to how we go about doing everything from building cities to our everyday social interactions.

Q: I don't know what problem you are trying to solve! Is it social? Ecological?

Suhee: Firstly, all the problems in modern agriculture, for example, soil erosion, habitat and water pollution, desertification by monoculture, and the seemingly endless list of effects from industrial agriculture. In looking to solve the problem, we always find some new way in our human point of view, a new chemical compound, a new GMO something. But these can't be true answers. Albert Einstein once said that "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." I thought we can find the answer in natural farming's view, because it operates at another level, it is a fundamental way of thinking... a different level of consciousness.

Secondly, I think the root of both social and ecological problems are from our disrespectful attitude to nature. Modern society doesn't take care of nature at all, but just uses the natural resources for profit. If we all think about nature more deeply, then our way of thinking and living can be changed.

Patrick: Adding to what Suhee said, we can look at the problem as being cultural at its root – a culture of apathy for life – which has branches into all kinds of ecological welfare issues... and when I say 'ecological' I include humans as a part of that ecosystem, which is to say, ecological issues by their nature, are also social issues. When our earth hurts, we humans hurt too, and when we are ignorant of the part we play in this earth, it leads not only to the earth hurting more, but rather ironically, to our hurting ourselves even more through the same strain of apathy.

Q: Why/How does natural farming (or the idea of it) help with the above issues?

Suhee: Natural farming's main concept is respecting nature. In the natural farmer's view, we should be cautious and careful in how we treat nature, with us included as a part of nature.

Patrick: We have developed a culture of disconnection, ignorance, and apathy towards the environment, yet all of the issues which stem from this apathy are righted when you begin thinking of yourself as a part of the environment, when you see it as a support system for yourself and everything around you. That is essentially the way in which natural farmers think. Now, apply that thinking to any social problem, and you have a way to fix that social problem at its root; apply that thinking to any ecological problem, and you have a way to fix that ecological

problem at its root; apply that thinking to any economic problem and you have a way to fix that economic problem at its root.

By cultivating a culture of understanding and connection with our environment, natural farming helps us look at the root of our issues instead of the surface where we are constantly adding patches and band-aids to problems which will not heal themselves, but will actually just compound and make the problem worse as time goes on, as we tend to do today.

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

A) Since 2011, Suhee and Patrick have lived 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!

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

A) 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.

Q) Who is Masanobu Fukuoka?

A) 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.

Q) 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.