

Food, Forests, and Farmers *Finding Sustainable Pathways for the Future*



ABSTRACT

Righting our relationships to food, to people, and to the planet will require both courage and humility

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We have come a long way in a relatively short amount of time. In just the last century, the global economic growth, the technological and scientific advances, and the mobility we have acquired have become normal to us. To a certain degree we have also seen advances in recognizing the human rights of discriminated groups and an end to such aberrations as institutionalized slavery and apartheid. But how did we get here? It was not necessarily a clean path. When we look at the road we have traveled, we notice how we have also trampled on the land and stolen it from the people who inhabited it, and disrupted and uprooted the plant and animal life that once flourished there. We see the cultures erased, the knowledge and expertise lost or forgotten, and we are faced with the very high price paid for the luxuries and way of life we are now accustomed to. Too many relationships have been broken or wounded on this journey and we are at a critical point in history, surrounded by the terrifying noise of the multiple crises we have created or exacerbated: ecological, health (mental and physical), social, economic, humanitarian, cultural, and of course political. How we respond, how we choose to act now, will have an impact on the generations to come. What guides our decisions will influence the outcomes of our efforts. Can we be inspired into action and choices out of love, solidarity, courage, caring, and hope? Can we choose this path rather than profit, fear, anger, indifference, and disillusionment? What concrete values and principles can help us frame our path towards a more just, inclusive, and sustainable relationship to food, to land, to forests, and to people? Let us draw lessons from our own collective experiences and let us put forward the wisdom, the voices, and the knowledge and practices that have already demonstrated their worth and feasibility. Real solutions will not come from the same systems that have brought us to this point. We must be prepared to listen with humility and then act with courage and creativity.