

Our farm is dependent on the whole world, and probably the universe as well. Starlight and moonshine may contribute something. We share air and water worldwide, and quite a bit of dust flies around, too. I use Japanese vehicles and Arabian oil. My ancestry can be quickly traced back to European peasantry, and our livestock breeds lived on European farms, too.

But our farm is relatively independent regarding its fertilizer needs, and this is important regarding its fertilizer needs, and this is important to me. By composting the excess hay and animal wastes, the soil can both sustain fertility and export crops. Forests, hedgerows and wetland play a role, too, and we love to grow cover crops like buckwheat and clover. I also use excess manure from my neighborhood.

These are not new farming techniques. On the contrary, it's the way folks farmed for centuries. Try to imagine having what you grew each year being your only source of food. Whether your children lived or died depended on what you planted or harvested. Those people loved their land and learned the hard way how to take care of it, or didn't make it.

Farmers were priests, and the most respected people in the community. The farmer/priest knows that crops are grown with forces far beyond their own control. Farming is humbling, to say the least. You walk around the field, take off your hat, and say thank you, Lord.

The magic of photosynthesis and growth instills in us a sense of awe and wonder. We don't understand it. Observation teaches us how to set the conditions for growth, yet it remains a mystery. Soils full of humus and life usually grow pretty good crops, but much of that life is microscopic and unobservable.

So faith is involved. I trust the proper microbes will do their thing if I farm correctly. We hope the weather will be okay, too. And when farming is not a business but a lifestyle, there is love. Deeds are done out of love for the land, the animals and the community which supports the farm. Our farm runs on faith, hope and love. Although our fertilizer comes from within or nearby, the farm is dependent on what is happening worldwide, and maybe beyond.