

A HEALTHY SOIL IS FULL OF LIFE

A living soil is home to a multitude of micro-organisms, bacteria and fungi which work on plant and animal residues to create the humus which gives soil its fertility, stability, structure and its essential water-holding capacity. While farmers were practising The Law of Nature and returning all wastes to the land, fertility was maintained and plants grown in it and animals grazed on its pasture thrived. There is a VITAL LINK BETWEEN THE HEALTH OF SOIL, PLANT, ANIMAL AND HUMAN: the nutrition cycle is not merely a transfer of nutrients from one form of life to another, but also a circuit of energy. Humanity has co-evolved for aeons with plants and grazing animals and our bodies are adapted to be nourished by food in its natural state: they are not adapted to the refined foods available today which are the cause of over-consumption and degenerative disease.

All life on earth is an interconnected and interdependent WEB OF LIFE: what damages one area, damages the whole. The use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides in farming has changed the countryside dramatically leading to industrial farming of enormous fields devoid of hedgerows where birds nested and many small animals lived. The birds ate the insects that settled on the crop and Nature was in balance when conditions were good. Nowhere in Nature do you get monoculture: there is always diversity of plant and animal, and never bare soil.

'My subject is food, which concerns everyone; it is health, which concerns everyone; and it is the soil which concerns everyone although they may not realise it'. These words were spoken by Lady Eve Balfour, whose book, THE LIVING SOIL, was published in 1943, and was the catalyst for the founding of the SOIL ASSOCIATION in 1946. I had the great good fortune to meet her in Wye in 1979 at a conference at the College, Organic Husbandry, where about 60 of us aged from 18 to 80 agreed it had been 'a fabulous four days' of inspiration. Since then I have been passionate about the health of the soil from which life derives its nourishment.

Farmers all over the world have seen their incomes drop, their land degrade and their animals lose health. They have acknowledged that maybe Nature knows best and are turning to REGENERATIVE FARMING. Now they do not plough to disturb the soil structure and use cover crops to protect and nourish it. And a great bonus has been realised: healthy soil and pasture is a great sequestrator of carbon and when livestock are managed regeneratively methane emissions are minimal - IT'S NOT THE COW, IT'S THE HOW.

The challenge is to everyone to walk more lightly on the earth, buying food that has been grown in healthy soil and encouraging farmers to change to Nature-friendly farming, which the Government has pledged to give payments for and which WE MUST HOLD THEM TO. But don't forget to smell the roses!

www.soilassociation.org

Www.sustainable food trust.org

Www.pasture for life.org

Www.savoury.global/Tedx-bobby-gill/.