



Sustaining Life on the Land

Reflections on Rural Life

LAND AND AGRICULTURE

SELECTIVE QUOTES OHIO CATHOLIC BISHOPS'

It is time for us to review the state of agriculture in Ohio and examine what the loss of diversity in production and the loss of productive farmland are costing us. We must listen to the needs and concerns of our state's farmers and ask ourselves the hard questions that will help us assess and better prepare for a new millennium in which food security, environmental stewardship, just treatment of all in the agricultural system and the broadest participation of Ohioans in the agricultural sector is achieved.

LIFE ON THE LAND

Concentration [throughout our food production system] is said to be inevitable, bringing larger economies of scale and higher productivity and profitability. However, our economy remains a human creation, which reflects our choices about what we value. We must not lose sight of the fact that the economy exists to serve the human person, not the other way around. All economic choices and institutions must be judged by how they protect or undermine the life, dignity and fundamental rights of the human person.

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Food, like life itself, is a basic human right. Food is essential for the maintenance of life and an indispensable requirement to maintain our God-given dignity. Food is not simply a commodity among commodities in the marketplace. A just agricultural system will promote food security and food safety. Justice also demands stewardship of the land and resources used in agricultural production and attention to the dignity and fair treatment of all who work in the system.

LIFE ON THE LAND

In these perilous times, we encourage ongoing public support for the hard working and caring individuals who derive their living from the land....Today's transnational food production system places incredible risks and burdens upon these laborers, especially those living on small and moderate sized farms. Fluctuating commodity prices, weather risks, increasing production costs, and the growing market dominance by very large corporations have placed family farmers in a state of "chronic vulnerability."

PARCHED LAND, PERILOUS TIMES

We call upon all persons of good will to stand with and pray for farm families. We recommend that time be set aside for personal and communal prayer. We especially call upon our Catholic parishes to pray for farm families and to educate parishioners about farmers' lives and challenges. As we turn to God in prayer we also petition for the strength and wisdom to pursue needed remedies. May faith triumph over doubts; hope overcome despair; and compassion and justice motivate us to action.

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