

Commentary and Responses

Editors' Preface

As the Editor-in-Chief of *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems (RAFS)*, I received an e-mail from Alex Avery, Director of Research at the Center for Global Food Issues on 10 September 2007. It read, 'Dr. Doran, as a non-subscriber to *RAFS* I do not know where to submit the following set of misrepresentations and errors in the paper published in July in *RAFS* by Badgley et al. from the University of Michigan. Thus, I am sending it directly to you.'

In response, I stated that his 'critique' of the Badgley et al. paper entitled 'Organic agriculture and the global food supply', which was actually published in June (not July), would be presented as a Commentary critique together with an editorial response from the authors, and those involved in the peer-review process in an upcoming issue of *RAFS*.

The Editorial staff has decided to publish the Avery 'critique' as a Commentary in the Journal with responses from the authors, Catherine Badgley and her co-authors, and William Liebhardt, who were the main subjects of

Avery's criticism. Publication of the Commentary and responses is done in the interest of fair play and a desire to provide all viewpoints on the important issue of meeting future food and resource needs as indicated by the Editorial in the June, Vol. 22(2), issue of *RAFS* entitled 'Balancing food, environmental, and resource needs'.

In that Editorial, a paraphrased quote has particular relevance to the current debate: 'Ultimate success in alleviating hunger, malnutrition, poverty and global resource degradation in the technically complex 21st Century will not come solely from intensive input or organic agriculture but rather a hybridization of both approaches.' It is my hope that we can move forward as a civilization as we LISTEN and LEARN from each other with the primary goal of achieving a more sustainable and equitable agriculture, whatever the approach taken.

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'Organic abundance' report: fatally flawed

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Commentary

Abstract

Fatal flaws in the recent report from Badgley et al. claiming that organic agriculture 'could produce enough food on a global per capita basis to sustain the current human population, and potentially an even larger population, without increasing the agricultural land base'. Among the serious problems identified: over 100 non-organic yield studies were claimed as organic; organic yields were misreported; false comparisons were made to unrepresentative low non-organic yields; high organic yields were counted 2, 3, even 5 times by citing different papers that referenced the same data; favorable and unverifiable 'studies' from biased sources were given equal weight to rigorous university studies. This report is being submitted to the Editor of the journal, *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, for publication and response. It is only being released in the interest of public debate and discussion during the much-touted 'organic fortnight'.

The recent report from Catherine Badgley et al. at the University of Michigan (*Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, June 2007) claimed that 'organic agriculture has the potential to contribute quite substantially to the global

food supply' and said, 'organic methods could produce enough food on a global per capita basis to sustain the current human population, and potentially an even larger population, without increasing the agricultural land base'.

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