

## A Quality Agriculture Newsletter

**A Call to Farms****Local and/or Global Agriculture?**

The 6-7 June weekend Financial Times edition provided an example of the conflicting trends that exist today. On the one hand the *How to Spend It* magazine section (assuming anyone still has "it" to spend, you can find more details at [www.ft.com/howtospendit](http://www.ft.com/howtospendit)) contained an article entitled *You Can Crush at My Pad*. The article describes new full service vineyard "time share" schemes that allow wine lovers to purchase the right to make their own wine and participate in the process as much or as little as they like. It focused on new offerings in Argentina and California and noted that they have attracted individual investors from as far away as China and northern Europe.

On the other hand, the newspaper featured a review of a new book entitled *Why Your World is About to Get a Whole Lot Smaller* (see here for a different review of the same book [www.1800blogger.com/2009/05/24/book-review-why-your-world-is-about-to-get-a-whole-lot-smaller/](http://www.1800blogger.com/2009/05/24/book-review-why-your-world-is-about-to-get-a-whole-lot-smaller/)). The book, written by a research economist from a Canadian bank, makes the argument that the rise in oil and energy prices will ultimately force the economy to return to a more local footing.



This argument fits with the movement I highlighted last month called Slow Money. The book suggests that mass luxury travel, out of season fruits and vegetables, and inexpensive quality coffee and fish from Latin America and Asia are destined to be a thing of the past or at least to get much more exclusive and expensive in the future.

Reconciling the two trends is difficult. Perhaps it is a future world where the locally produced is globally available but only at a price - a price that recognizes the unique value of the local and compensates the producer for it. This could be a bright future with a more balanced world economy in which agriculture is a key development mechanism. The more pessimistic view is one where Ireland returns to a diet based on potatoes and root vegetables. That is, until climate change takes hold and the Emerald Isle becomes the Amazonian Isle.

In either case there are changes ahead and this is all part of the fundamental shifts in the economy that will occur over the coming decade or two. Agriculture, like politics, ultimately is a local activity to someone and eating is not only an agricultural act but also a political act. Increased support for local and quality agriculture is an idea whose time has come. Whether for health reasons, energy reasons, economic development reasons, or just to enjoy a fresh peach picked from a farm that you have visited, local food is a trend that is growing. It is our future to make and uncertainty is no excuse for inaction. Comments to [judson.berkey@ubs.com](mailto:judson.berkey@ubs.com)

## News

French President Sarkozy launched a number of Mediterranean-focused initiatives in his 2008 turn as President of the EU Council. One of them was the *Mediterranean Study Days upon Quality and Food Safety*. These are a series of conferences focused on different aspects of agriculture in the med region. The meetings will span 2008-2010 and culminate in something called ENJOY MED. This will start as a cultural fair in Barcelona in the spring of 2010 and then become a touring caravan that travels in Northern European countries to highlight Mediterranean food products, food habits, cooking, and cultures.

The most recent study days meeting took place in Cairo at the end of May. A particular focus was on organic and geographical indications labelling role in encouraging local and quality production. The next study days will be held in Istanbul in November 2009. Information on the first study days in Rome and the most recent Cairo event can be found from RIFOSAL – the program organiser [www.rifosal.it/pagina04.html](http://www.rifosal.it/pagina04.html)

## Resources

In the UK, a coalition of government (DEFRA – the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), retailers (e.g., Sainsbury's, Tesco, Marks & Spencers), NGOs (e.g. Royal Horticultural Society, National Trust, Soil Association) and celebrity chefs launched a campaign called *Eat Seasonably* to promote consumption of in season foods. Supported by a website [www.eatseasonably.co.uk/](http://www.eatseasonably.co.uk/) the goal is provide information on what to eat or grown now and other tips for increasing local consumption. The website includes an interactive calendar to illustrate what is best to eat each month.

At the Third China International Organic Trade Fair and Conference, the Chinese Director General of Agricultural Product

Quality Safety Supervision announced that China seeks to have a 5% share of the world organic market. China also is expected to soon become the fourth largest consumer of organic foods. Some more details here <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90778/90857/90860/6668499.html>

Sustainable development often involves agriculture in some form. The Working Group on Development and Environment in the Americas is a group of researchers focused on the social and environmental impacts of liberalization. The Working Group published a series of documents examining the effects of foreign direct investment on sustainable development available with other documents [http://ase.tufts.edu/gdae/WorkingGroup\\_FDI.htm](http://ase.tufts.edu/gdae/WorkingGroup_FDI.htm) At the same time the group Bioversity is calling for G8 leaders to focus on investment in agriculture as a means of development [www.bioversityinternational.org/news\\_and\\_events/news/press\\_releases.html](http://www.bioversityinternational.org/news_and_events/news/press_releases.html)

Although just a short comment, this article provides a concise explanation of why technology will have a role in helping shift to more sustainable form of agriculture. <http://civileats.com/2009/06/09/sustainable-ag-is-pro-technology-within-a-cyclical-model/>

As noted last month, oriGIn, the international Geographical Indications network held its biennial general assembly in Teruel, Spain on 24-26 June. The meeting results are here <http://origin.technomind.be/465.0.html>

## Upcoming Events

**10-11 Sep:** The Sustainability Forum holds its annual conference outside Zurich, Switzerland. The theme this year is Restoring Trust in the Financial Markets. While not specifically focused on agriculture there are many overlaps. Last year the conference focused exclusively on natural resources. Materials are still available here [www.sustainability-zurich.org/restoring-trust](http://www.sustainability-zurich.org/restoring-trust)

