

Editor's note: This section contains reviews of books, whether brand new or classic, that we hope will be of interest to our readers.

Book Review

Mapping the Pathways to a Better Food System

Nourished Planet: Sustainability in the Global Food System

Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition Foundation

Publisher: Island Press, Washington, DC, 2018

Language: English

Editor: Danielle Nierenberg

ISBN-13: 978-1610918947

ISBN-10: 1610918940

In its 2017 analysis of the relationship between food systems and nutrition, the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Security mapped out the food systems that shape today's world and simultaneously stressed the need to change these radically. "Acting to change systems is never easy," the authors of the report conceded. "Vested interests, technical challenges and human and financial resource constraints all have to be overcome. Effort and focus need to be sustained." The authors continued: "Carrying out superficial repairs to our existing food systems will no longer suffice. We need disruptive change within and across today's varied and complex food systems."¹

Nourished Planet makes the same argument, albeit more concisely and much more graphically.

"It's no exaggeration to say that today's food system is like the Titanic.

Immense.

Complex.

A marvel of engineering.

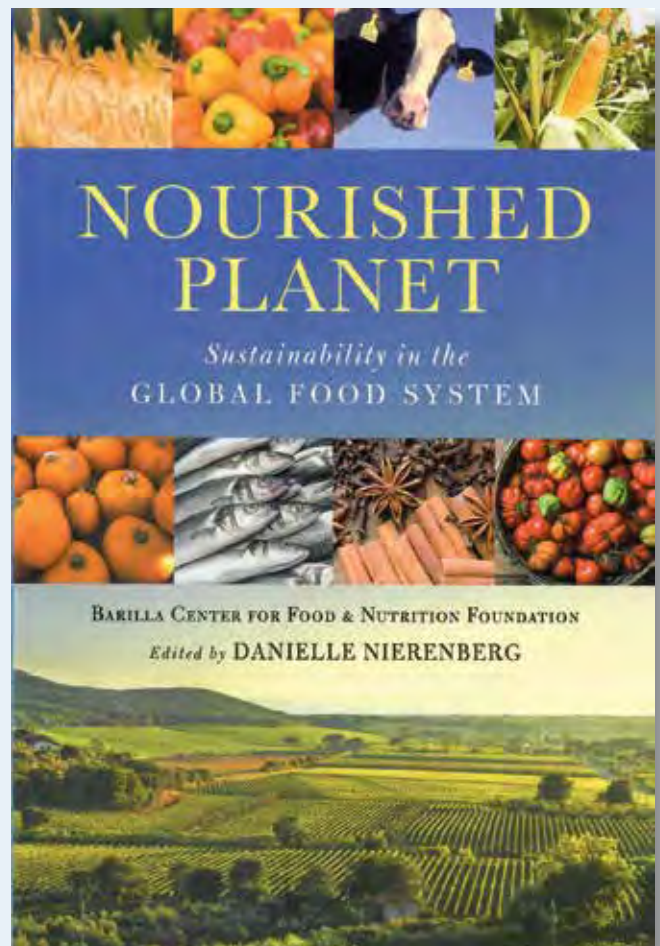
Thought to be invincible.

But racing to its destruction."²

"There is a lot that farmers in the Global North can learn from farmers in the Global South"

In an interview conducted in June 2018, the editor of *Nourished Planet*, Danielle Nierenberg, explains the impulse behind this thought-provoking book:

"Rich and poor countries face many of the same challenges – hunger and obesity are paradoxes that plague both wealthy and developing countries and climate change is impacting



farmers all over the world. What’s exciting to me is that there is a lot of information-sharing that can take place – and it’s not only from the North to the South, but there is a lot of information that can be exchanged South to South as farmers engage with one another on ways to combat pests or drought or find ways to increase equality in fields and businesses. And I think there is a lot that farmers in the Global North can learn from farmers in the Global South around mitigating and adapting to climate change, including growing a diversity of crops instead of relying on monocultures.”³

Information-sharing, engagement, equality, learning and diversity – these are the key themes that underpin this publication. Writing in the Foreword, Pavan Sukhdev and Alexander Müller state that *Nourished Planet* “represents a significant step in the right direction for enlightening policy-makers, businesses and society at large about the many dimensions of our eco-agri-food systems.” Importantly, they go on to emphasize that “this book focuses on not only the problems – of hunger, obesity, climate change and poor nutrition – but also on the solutions.”⁴

The book is structured in four main sections – Food for All, Food for Sustainable Growth, Food for Health and Food for Culture – each of which is accompanied by interviews with ‘Voices from the New Food Movement.’ This simple but highly engaging structure is mirrored by the content, which provides succinct explanations of phenomena such as land grabbing and food deserts but also offers thought-provoking reflections on topics such as ‘Rethinking the Meat that We Eat’ and ‘Tools for Promoting Well-Being.’ Clear infographics underpin the powerful arguments for change.

Asked what she perceived as the single biggest threat to worldwide food security when the book was published, Danielle Nierenberg replied: “Apathy. If we don’t understand the urgency of these issues and take action now, we will continue to have nearly a billion people worldwide who go to bed hungry each night. We need farmers, businesses and governments to invest in the research and education around food and agriculture so that the next generation can live in a world free of hunger and poverty.”⁵

Nourished Planet is an antidote to apathy. Anyone who is motivated to map out the pathways to a better global food system might do well to slip a copy of it in their rucksack.

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