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Review: Rebuilding the Foodshed: How to Create Local, Sustainable, and Secure Food Systems

By Philip Ackerman-Leist

Reviewed by Byron Anderson
DeKalb, Illinois

Ackerman-Leist, Philip. *Rebuilding the Foodshed: How to Create Local, Sustainable, and Secure Food Systems*. Santa Rosa, CA: Post Carbon Institute; White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2013. xxxiii, 321 pp. ISBN: 9781603584234, paper, US\$19.95; 9781603584241 e-book. Printed on FSC-certified paper.

Before reaching your home, a food item in the United States will travel on average approximately 1500 miles. Food waste comprises one-third of all material sent to landfills. Approximately one in seven American households is food insecure, that is, households that lack access to foods of appropriate nutritional value. The above are just a few of the issues that revolve around the development of local, sustainable, and secure food systems. Among other issues related to local and regional food systems are issues of energy, the environment, food justice, cultural and biological diversity, the marketplace, obesity, and poverty.

A recent surge of interest has been noted in locally grown foods. This effort is evolving to rebuild local food systems to include all those who lack access to nutritional food. The book, *Rebuilding the Foodshed: How to Create Local, Sustainable, and Secure Food Systems*, redefines our food systems, explains how to reconnect people to their food supply, and introduces helpful procedures, such as, microbe management, including composting, anaerobic digestion, and ecological sanitation. A number of proposals are made, for example, bringing human excreta back into the local food system, and reserving and revitalizing vacant lots, underutilized city lots, and rooftops for urban agricultural use.

Refrigeration is singled out as the most prominent game changer in causing the demise of local food systems, replacing local food with a national and international supply-and-demand food system. A series of color-coded maps show how the food system has become more consolidated and concentrated geographically over time. Organizations involved with food security take the long view in recognizing that rebuilding smaller-scale, locally oriented food systems will take generations to accomplish. In proposing new directions, the author suggests the need to get past the issue of distance and recognize the limitations of being local. Food miles need to be reframed “in terms of supporting local economies, creating jobs, [and] educating about food, health, and nutrition” (p. 290). This will help allow a progression from local food systems to community-based food systems.

Ackerman-Leist is professor and director of the Green Mountain College Farm and Food Project and directs the college’s Master in Sustainable Food Systems. Recent books on food insecurity are primarily international in scope and deal mostly with the global food crisis. *Rebuilding the Foodshed* is focused on the United States, and represents a

comprehensive guide to understanding secure food systems. The book is part of *The Community Resilience Guide Series*, publications that respond to the complex economic, energy, and environmental challenges we face by building community resilience. Related governmental and non-profit workers, locavores, community organizers, and lay readers with an interest in or wanting to know more about local, sustainable and secure food systems will benefit from the book. This title is recommended for personal collections and general collections in public and academic libraries.

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