

THE FAMILY FARM

A mass migration back to the family farm is coming !

How will the family farm again become home to millions now living in urban areas? What will be the benefits of such a massive change from the way families are living today?

In his article “The decline of the small American family farm in one chart,” Robert A. Ferdman writes, “Today’s farms are fewer and bigger.” Citing the latest Census of Agriculture published by the US Department of Agriculture, Ferdman reports the number of farms has fallen from more than 6 million in 1935 to about 2 million in 2012 (*The Washington Post*, September 16, 2014 www.washingtonpost.com).

Small family farms are vanishing

Due to long hours of hard work, decreasing income and increasing expenses, very few family members are willing to take on the responsibilities of operating the family farm. With family farms dwindling, Carolyn Fortuna enumerates its impact on the family. “As small family farms vanish, so, too, do infrastructures that lead to healthy communities. An agricultural lifestyle presents wonderful conditions for children due to the variety of stimuli, allowing them to channel energy into animal care, egg collection, vegetable growing, and harvesting. For adults, farm life provides time to think, a healthy diet, and a built-in workout routine” (“Economic and social impact of family farms—and their loss.” *Inspired Economist*, inspiredeconomist.com).

A few farms today still reflect the mixed family farm of the 1900s: raising multiple crops, cattle, sheep, fowl (such as chickens and turkeys) and also growing vegetables. However, many farms are now large commercial operations with basically one or two crops, and no animals or poultry.

Frank Viviano, a foreign correspondent based in Italy, wrote how the Netherlands has emerged as an agricultural giant, showing us

what the future of the farm could be like. Jacob van den Borne is a Dutch potato farmer, utilizing two drones “that provide detailed readings on soil chemistry, water content, nutrients, and growth, measuring the progress of every plant down to the individual potato” (“A Tiny Country Feeds The World,” *National Geographic*, September 2017, p. 83).

Known as “recision farming,” Van den Borne’s fields reliably produce 20 tons of potatoes, over twice the global average.

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the minor prophets, were given a vision thousands of years ago of what the world in general and farming in particular would be like after the second coming of Jesus Christ. This period is generally referred to as the Millennium—one thousand years of peace on the earth. That vision is of farmers and their families living on what is now called the family farm. And others living in cities will have spacious lots, which will give them opportunity to do some farming on a smaller scale. “They shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them” (Amos 9:14). “But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth” (Zech. 13:5). “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks... But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree” (Mic. 4:3-4). The vine and fig tree picture peace, prosperity and farming!

The story of a wealthy father and his son illustrate the beauty of the family farm. “One day, the father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the express purpose of showing him how poor people live. They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family. On their return from their trip, the father asked his son, ‘How was the trip?’ ‘It was great, Dad!’ ‘Did you see how poor people live?’ the father asked, ‘Oh yeah!’ said the son. ‘So tell me what did you learn from the trip?’ asked the father. The son answered: ‘I saw that we have one dog, and they had four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported

lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night! Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon. We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight, we have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us, they have friends to protect them!’ The boy’s father was speechless! Then his son added: ‘Thanks dad for showing me how poor we are’” (Bigg Success Staff, “Rich Dad, Wise Son” www.biggsuccess.com).

Pets are always a big part of the family farm. It is the perfect place for a dog, cat, horse, etc. It is also the perfect place for family, friends and neighbors to get together for sports activities, picnics, an anniversary, or graduation. And the list could go on and on!

This kind of farming operation will be a privately run business to provide a home for the family and also a place of employment for them—a place where every member of the family can contribute to the success of every project. Just like a sports team, each individual doing his or her best. And this is where the beauty, the benefits and the rewards will come to fruition—a daily fulfilling of the basic human urge to be creative. New experiences, increased confidence, hope and a genuine environment of love and purpose will abound on the family farm.

As we can plainly see, the farm was and will again be a wonderful and exciting place to live, where parents and children will be able to spend lots of time together learning by doing and then seeing the results. Imagine children completing the process of making cottage cheese from the milk they brought into the kitchen. Think of parental feelings of joy in children who are able to help with all of the daily chores. Consider the excitement the children will have the next day when the evening meal is served, by seeing something their own hands have produced as part of the meal.

The family farm in the World Tomorrow

When fully understood the farm is an amazing place for learning, by actually doing and then enjoying the fruit of that effort. This principle was recorded by the prophet Isaiah: “And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (Isa. 65:21-22). What a wonderful picture of the soon coming reign and rule of Jesus Christ! Think what it means to “long enjoy the work of their hands.” They won’t build, and another person live there! A well-built house can be lived in for hundreds of years! They shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

Just picture families planting grape vines and fruit trees. First, they will have to decide where the best location is for grape vines and various trees, keeping in mind they will be there for a long time! Then comes watching and waiting for the blossoms and then the fruit.

“The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it” (James 5:7). He and his family develop long patience. And here we find what the true beauty of the family farm is. The family has worked hard, following the work ethic and team spirit. The love and joy of being free to live a full life with a deep profound purpose, and of enjoying the work of their hands while developing real lasting character—this will all be experienced on the family farm.

It is a place to grow crops, such as wheat, corn, barley, oats, and flax. It is also a place to plant a garden and grow vegetables. Rich fertile soil is full of life! Often people think that soil is just dead matter, but healthy soil is vibrantly “alive” and dynamic. The families of the future will learn how to care for the soil by following the natural laws that result in the soil becoming balanced, rich and fertile. And the weather will be perfect farming weather. Today the upset seasons and catastrophic, unprecedented storms can wipe out a whole year’s farm work in a matter of a few hours. All that work, hope and anticipation gone! No crop, no income and often no future on the farm.

But the time is coming when the weather will be predictable and dependable. Planting and harvesting will flourish in favorable seasons and perfect conditions. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.” (Amos 9:13). “Melt” means flow with it.

Chemical fertilizers will be a thing of the past! Natural fertilizers, crop rotation and giving the land a rest every seventh year combined with soft gentle rainfall will result in rich fertile soil that will produce healthy crops. And healthy grains and vegetables will result in healthy animals and well-nourished vibrant people!

There will be a mass return to the family farm in the World Tomorrow, and the benefits will be far beyond what we can fully grasp now! Working closely around the creation tends to focus our attention more and more on the Creator! This will be key to learning creative expression and a sense of purpose, all the while developing character traits that will prepare families for yet greater opportunities in the future, when... “This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden” (Ezek. 36:35).