



Introduction

The world's population is increasing, while areas for productive farming and water supplies are diminishing or already utilized. Thus, intensification of existing systems and new systems (ocean or factory based) are needed. However, what existing farming system can intensify without harming the environment or increasing cost of production? Perhaps the oldest systems may need to be revisited. Early land-based farming systems in Asia and Native North America relied on polycultures and integrated systems. Chemical use for pests and fertilizer was not needed, provided by natural pest inhibitions and recycling. Western systems that followed in North America used slash (clear) and burn and plowing virgin land for short term productivity. Once soil fertility was exhausted, farms moved on to new sites, and eventually chemical additions were needed in the form of fertilizers and pesticides. Polluting runoff and unintended targets, including humans, resulted. But family-run farms were small and to a degree integrated. Monocultures, often involving international agribusinesses, became the norm by replacing labor with machinery, and by engineering systems and cultured species for maximum production. The "organic" food movement which did not allow non-natural components resulted from questions about the safety and quality of such production. And budget and profit projections did not factor in the social costs (e.g. rising prices reducing demand and unemployed farm communities), unforeseen climate extremes, new epizootic diseases, and environmental costs. Agroecology is the term given to the movement to utilize ecological

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*Corresponding author: Perschbacher PW, Retired Associate Professor, Department of Aquaculture and Fisheries, University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff, Arkansas, USA, Tel: (870) 329-0513; E-mail: pwpersch@gmail.com

Received December 10, 2016; Accepted December 11, 2016; Published December 20, 2016

Citation: Perschbacher P (2016) Is Reexamining the Roots of Agriculture Needed? J Fisheries Livest Prod 4: 208 doi: [10.4172/2332-2608.1000208](https://doi.org/10.4172/2332-2608.1000208)

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