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"Agriculture, Health, Environment: Interview with Piero Bevilacqua," interview by Idamaria Fusco

Bevilacqua, Piero

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This interview with Piero Bevilacqua, professor of contemporary history at "La Sapienza" University in Rome and a scholar with multiple interests, focuses on agriculture, health and the environment: three aspects which today, even more than in the past, are closely intertwined, since improper farming methods can seriously damage our environment and, hence, our health. The interview touches on a broad range of subjects: from the use of pesticides, which poison the soil and pollute underground water, to the "Green Revolution", that is, technical innovation based on so-called "improved" seeds, and on chemical fertilizing, weed killers, and a very high consumption of water and energy; from GMOs to biodynamic and biological agriculture, and the respect of biodiversity; from modern farming's wasteful use of water, a scarce resource today, to Common Agricultural Policy, which is presently striving to limit food overproduction and, hence, nonsustainable exploitation of farmland. Bevilacqua looks at these themes in a long-term perspective, since the present deterioration of world agriculture, and of the environment with it, is a process whose roots reach far back into time. In this interview, the scholar auspicates restoring old farming wisdom, setting back in motion the "virtuous circle" on which agriculture was formerly based, which reused all production waste, and giving up on the notion of agriculture as just any branch of capitalist production—an activity, that is aimed at meeting a commercial demand rather than actual needs. The conclusions we can draw from Bevilacqua's words are, all in all, positive. All this deterioration around us, he assures us, is not irreversible, and in the Western world there is an increasingly strong drive towards quality, towards an agriculture making the most of typical products, biodiversity, and the old traditions of places and landscapes. A drive, that is, towards an agriculture where true wealth resides in the diversity and different identities of peoples.

— Text from The White Horse Press website

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