When you go out to get some potato chips or soda, check the ingredients. The ingredients - corn syrup, wheat starch, soybean -won't seem detrimental at all, right? However, they make up the fundamental reason for the problems all around us.

Ultra-processed food is not only destroying people but is also devastating the world. This sort of food is the cause of petrifying statistics which are about heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. And The guilt for these problems lies in the large volume of CO2 being emitted in the world.

Why is there a huge drop in honey bee numbers? Or why do we not see butterflies during the summer months? Your answer is correct. The intensive agriculture that is necessary to provide us with the junk food we eat is destroying the nature and expediting climate change.

The despondency and doom intensely affect you, don't they? No worries, there's been some positive news. Through this summary, you'll discover the path forward. You'll discover which foods are to be evaded, what the governments' actions should be like, and through which solutions farmers can create a sustainable future.

Chapter 1 - The most ominous issues we encounter as mankind can be associated with one explanation: our food.

Occasionally, we get this feeling that everything is about to end. Look, ng at the news, you'll face new crises that are developing, the increasing number of death cases, and new wars. Famine emerges in somewhere. The number of people who die of cancer is rising. The ice caps in the northern and southern poles are vanishing. Bees are going extinct.

Posed the question regarding the reason behind the enormous amount of distressing news, you won't most likely respond to the question with "food". But, food is located in the epicenter of these problems.

Think about several of the gravest crises expecting us and the earth.

Primarily, our health is under risk. Much as it sounds horrifying, the things we eat are the principal reason for mortality, physical dysfunctions, and misery on this planet. In the last four decades, our diet has undergone such a transition that it has become something entirely distinct. Our consumption of ultra-processed and sugary foods is continually increasing, which has played a role in a drastic rise in heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, all of which are responsible for the death of approximately 50 million people per year. They kill twice as many people as infectious diseases. It was possible to completely preclude this health crisis; however, its costs have exceeded trillion dollars.

Next: inequality. In the children who are brought up with ultra-processed and sugary foods, these foods cause malnutrition, which hampers their intellectual growth. Children, as a result, can be underachieving, driven into poverty, homeless, and criminal. Unhealthy food causes the entire cycle of inequality to be even more critical.

Next, let’s examine people living in medium-industrialized countries. They are afflicted with problems caused by large agribusinesses and companies which are called by the writer Big Food. These huge businesses impel people to abandon their land and cause their homes and cultures to vanish. Doing all these, they also continue to promote detrimental eating habits and farming practices.

Finally, how we produce food is jeopardizing the world. Big agribusiness plays the greatest role in aggravating climate change. It removes important CO2-absorbing natural environment and damages fruitful land. The harmful impact it has on the climate exceeds all the fossil-fuel producing corporations. Intensive farming techniques drown the planet in perilous fertilizers and pesticides, exterminating immense numbers of our wildlife and generating tremendous “dead zones” in the oceans.

Conventionally, we view these issues separately and we think of “bad diet” and “climate change” as if they aren't intertwined. However, there is one thing they have in common: food. To overcome them, we have to adopt a comprehensive, holistic viewpoint. First, we'll go over these issues in-depth and then proceed to present the viewpoint.

Chapter 2 - Bad food's financial cost is petrifying.

Many people are aware that the consumption of plenty of ultra-processed and sugary food induces severe health issues. Wherever we turn our heads, there is a recently-emerged healthy-eating craze and cautions regarding junk food.

However, the cost of having an unhealthy body is frightening.

Let's examine the USA, for instance.

Scientists in the US prepared in 2018 two significant reports, whose names were “The Cost of Chronic Diseases in the US” and “America’s Obesity Crisis: The Health and Economic Costs of Excess Weight”. It was stated in the reports that in 2016, the direct cost of treating people with chronic health issues was more than $1 trillion. Why do these problems exist? Usually, it is due to bad food.

Apart from the direct costs, indirect costs also exist. In 2016, due to loss in income, productivity diminished and employing caregivers resulted in $2.6 trillion for the USA.

In the long term, over three-and-a-half decades, ill-health has cost $95 trillion in the USA. This tremendous amount essentially follows from the combined impacts of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, mental illness, and other chronic health issues. Bad food is mostly responsible for them.

There is one other thing in the reports that is petrifying: three-fifth of the US citizens have one chronic condition and two-fifth of Americans have two or more chronic conditions.

After having information about these figures, you can, maybe, start to comprehend the scope of the issue only one country confronts.

How is the situation globally? We can make a guess about the bad food's worldwide effect should we raise the figures in the data from these reports. Diet in the USA, known as "industrial diet" that consist of burgers, corn snacks, candy, and soda, has scattered all around the planet. The financial loss could go beyond the quadrillions of dollars.

For you, these numbers might seem a lot; however, they are of minimal importance to me. World Bank says were we to spend this amount differently, we could live in a totally different world.

Everyone could benefit from free-of-charge education and health care; it would be possible to do away with poverty, put an end to food insecurity and starvation; extirpate discrepancies in social justice, income, and health; eradicate unemployment; reconstruct infrastructure and transportation systems; change to renewable energy; change our industrial agricultural system with an entirely sustainable one.

Do all these not worth consideration?

Chapter 3 - Big agribusiness makes the ground ready for an environmental catastrophe.

As you buy a burger from a drive-thru or snacks from a gas station, you most likely don’t think about the process by which they end up in your stomach. Were you to know it, you’d most likely want to go back in time so as not to buy these foods right out of that drive-thru or gas station.

Why would you do that? The reason follows from the fact that big agribusinesses responsible for the burger or the constituents of your snack are destroying the world in a swift pace.

We'll tackle soil first – one of the most important elements of our world's ecosystem. Soil is a delicate, environment that is alive. There are microorganisms, fungi, and worms in it. Those creatures obtain beneficial food from lifeless matter and nurture the plants. Absent soil in good condition, there is no way of farming or feeding livestock.

But, due to intensive farming, this healthy environment that is alive is dying because of harmful pesticides and fertilizers soaking into the soil. Consequently, we will probably have no more than 60 harvests left.

Soil is the best carbon sink in the world, too. However, causing erosion on it due to intensive farming, all CO_2 in the soil mixes into the atmosphere. What happens then? Global warming worsens.

The more we transform nutrient-abundant soil in good form into desert-like soil, the more we apply nitrogen fertilizer to the soil. Absent nitrogen fertilizer, we couldn't cultivate anything anymore. What is even worse is that nitrogen fertilizer pours into rivers, lakes, and eventually into the ocean from huge megafarms.

After mixing in the water, it causes an increase in the algae population, which causes marine life to suffocate and toxic drinking water. Lake Erie in Cleveland suffered lately from fertilizer which mixed up into the lake, the result of which was a soaring number of algae, which gave rise to an extensive dead zone and toxic drinking water in Toledo, Ohio.

Consider the oceans. Dead zones might reach 8,000 square miles wide – as large as New Jersey – with countless tons of lifeless fish and marine life.

Fertilizer isn't the only thing required for intensive agriculture – there is also a need for a large number of pesticides to preserve big harvests. These chemicals give rise to cancer and are detrimental to human fertility. However, they disturb natural ecosystems and eradicate whole species, too.

The pollinators, such as honey bees and butterflies, are affected terribly. Were they not to exist, there would be no crops. Without crops, we wouldn't have any food, and consequently, mankind wouldn't exist.

Everything seems rather depressing, no? However, we can revert all these should we take action. There is one choice before us: we can change quickly to more sustainable farming techniques and eating habits – or we will die.

Chapter 4 - The systems that we used to surmount mass starvation are today breaking down.

In around the 1950s, new farming technologies and agricultural chemicals gave hope that they would generate a profusion of crops. There would be no longer such a thing as world starvation, which was called the Green Revolution.

From many aspects, it worked well. Large-scale agriculture surely contributed to a decline in starvation in almost every corner of the planet. But, this idealistic vision has confronted the earnest problem.

The intentions for the Green Revolution might have been good. However, today we have to deal with many issues because of the Green revolution.

In the preceding chapter, we talked about the harm it has made to soils, water, biodiversity, and the climate. However, the farming revolution was beneficial in the excess of processed food, which is calorie-rich but nutrition-poor.

Unfortunately, the Green Revolution couldn't fulfill its main principal. It couldn't eradicate starvation on the planet. In theory, we generated ample food for the world today. However, almost a billion people have to go to bed without a full belly, which is due to the fact that a lot of crops are reserved as animal feed in the profitable beef industry, used as biofuel, or aren't used at all. The world’s starvation cannot be resolved as the food is not used for this purpose.

One other result of the Green Revolution is the emergence of genetically modified foods, also known as GMO foods. Though numerous scientists state they are totally harmless, there is no consensus on GMO foods. But GMO foods have certainly a negative side, which is their excessive dependence on pesticides and herbicides. These chemicals have led to the rise of ‘superbugs’ and ‘superweeds’ that are resilient to such chemicals.

There is one other failure that concerns farmers. Farmers were assured their earnings would be secured; however, the revolution did never fulfill this promise. Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, who led India's Green Revolution, has confessed there's been a failure in his scientific reports.

What is the reason behind all these? The answer is easy: big agribusiness and their desire to gain more. Countless farmers have had to take loans, which causes them a debt burden, due to the expensiveness of fertilizers, seeds, and pesticides – commodities that they purchase from the huge companies.

The situation is particularly terrible in India. Unfortunately, from the 1990s onwards, many farmers with a debt burden committed suicides. In a heartbreaking complication that arises due to the Green Revolution and underscores the gruesome human-induced repercussions of big agribusiness, numerous people committed suicide via pesticides.

Here is the terrible account of what's going on.

How can we make things different? We’ll search for solutions in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5 - Food that doesn’t damage you isn't harmful to the world.

Being a consumer, we use our forks to speak. By consuming specific food varieties and not others, we can coerce the big agribusinesses and food businesses to transform their approach.

Fortunately, it’s feasible to develop an eating habit that's both nutrient-rich and good for the environment.

Initially, consume huge amounts of greens and whole foods that are produced through sustainable farming. Ensure that the carrots you consume aren't full of glyphosate herbicide

and deleterious pesticides. Ensure that the farming of your grains is soil-friendly and freshwater resources aren't exploited.

As for meat, fish, and dairy, let's examine them thoroughly.

We'll examine meat first. Many dieticians advise that we stay away from it. Usually, reducing meat intake is a great recommendation. Meat should never be the main dish but can be included in a plate where vegetables make up more than ½ of the plate. But, it’s easier said than done, “Consume meat to protect the world”. Actually, meat produced by means of the right methods can be helpful in climate change. Bringing grazing and organic vegetable farming together, you can get great results. The natural fertilizer received from dungs of grazing animals improves the soil in a natural way, making the use of chemicals redundant. Consuming meat produced through this method can partly contribute to the creation of a more sustainable agricultural system – if meat continues to make up just a small portion of your eating habit.

Next, fish. Consume only omega-3-rich, and mercury-low fish which are sustainably hunted. Stay away from big, unsustainable kinds of fish that are mercury-rich, such as tuna, swordfish, and halibut. Alternatively, consume more anchovies, mackerel, and salmon caught in nature.

Finally, dairy. It is usually great if we stay away from it. However, if dairy is indispensable for you, ensure your dairy product is fully grass-fed and natural. If possible, consume goods produced from sheep and goats, instead of cows. This follows mostly from the fact that how cattle are raised has adverse impacts on cows, the environment, and us.

These rules are all-encompassing. However, people aren't the same as each other. Everyone has individual needs and necessities. Searching for sustainably-produced food, we should also pay attention to the voice of our bodies. Once we manage to find a balance, our diet will be beneficial not only for ourselves but also for the world.

Chapter 6 - Despite the influence of food lobbyists, governments can launch a successful action against evil companies.

One impediment stands in front of us in handling the development of deleterious and unsustainable food is the influence of big business. Lobbyists pull the strings of power and buy government officials to carry out their dirty plans, by giving them everything, either through gifts or donating to their campaign.

Much reformist legislation has been hindered because of lobbyists. But there are some successful cases against corporate power all over the world.

For instance, In 2006, Guido Girardi, a physician from the capital of Chile, became a member of the country's senate. He had directly seen the health crisis and pledged to deal with the food industry and its rapacious marketing strategies.

What ensued after his election to the parliament? He assembled a group of diet specialists and planned a law carrying the name of his choice, “The Food Labeling and Advertising Law.” Notwithstanding persistent resistance from influential food companies, Girardi’s law proposal was ultimately passed.

This law brought some remarkable standards.

Food corporations were required to put cautionary logos on anything rich in sugar, salt, saturated fat, or calories. Then, they were no longer allowed to take advantage of cartoon characters for the promotion of junk food to children. It was forbidden for them to promote junk food on TV from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m., and there was no junk food in the schools. Ultimately, the governmental decree compelled food corporations to alter their ads by adding messages regarding doing physical exercises and consuming wholesome food.

Soon after the law was passed, there were astounding results already. Children started to ask their parents not to purchase junk food. After the data about consumers was prepared, it was seen that the law was four times as fruitful as food taxes or policies introduced before

One other law that was effective was the soda tax proposed in America by economist Larry Summers and former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg. Despite the influential beverage industry's efforts to obstruct it, the tax was in use in Oakland, San Francisco, and Philadelphia, and other cities.

The tax fulfilled its objective, which was to decrease soda consumption, and the money created thanks to the tax was used in constructing public schools and entertainment centers. After seeing the concrete results of the tax - these public schools and entertainment centers - more people backed the tax.

Thus, in spite of the wealth and substantial influence of huge agribusiness and Big Food, governments and legislators can accomplish reform through well-thought arguments that will appeal to people. The following chapter examines the options that lay in front of farmers.

Chapter 7 - Regenerative agriculture is crucial for a robust world and the good-condition of people.

You've been given examples of how governments can change our diet. And farmers? What can they do about it? If we want to prevent health crises and environmental disasters, farmers must reconsider their practices.

To do this, we have to employ a new method called “regenerative agriculture”. Regenerative agriculture is a method whose primary concern is environmental sustainability, healthy and natural food.

The most important thing for regenerative farming is soil.

At the moment, we’re trapped in a lethal cycle. Organic life in healthy soil is damaged because of us. After the damage, to be able to cultivate anything on soil, we refill it with dangerous fertilizers, which causes unsustainability not just for us but also for the world.

What is the way of farming without causing any harm to the soil?

Initially, farmers have to change to so-called “no-till” practices that aren't disruptive for the soil. Instead of turning up the earth and disrupting its sensitive balance, there is another option for farmers, which includes the use of seed drills to keep the harm to the soil at a minimum level. Sea drills can boost soil health and be useful in holding rainwater. Healthy soils are far better in retaining water.

Next, farmers should change crops they're cultivating regularly so that the soil can heal, which will be helpful in the prevention of diseases and pests. Pests are likely to grow on regular, homogenous crops.

Next, as previously mentioned, farmers should reconsider the use of livestock. Let's use cattle on organic farms as ab example. As cattle feed on grass, they fill the soil with manure, urine, and saliva. This invigorates plant development, are beneficial for root structures, and enhances soil productivity. The same way the bison that wandered the US pastures for many, many years, cattle interacts with the earth and the plants through a symbiotic relationship. What is achieved via this practice shows us that pursuing nature’s course is the most assured thing to create healthy and sustainable farming.

Lastly, there is the issue of the freshwater overuse, which constitutes one of the most devastating things for farming today. We don't have to lose our hope, though, as there are farmers who developed a practice, namely “dryland farming”, as a solution for this issue. In dryland farming, crops can be cultivated without irrigation. Rather than plowing the fields when the harvest has been done, these farmers keep the stubble inside the soil and put a new crop inside the stubble. On the condition that no harm is done to the roots and stems, evaporation reduces, and the field will keep more precipitation and snow than an exposed ground.

Through the extensive implementation of these practices, it is possible to change the road on which we walk and to establish a greener, more salubrious future – a future beneficial to people, wildlife, and the world.

Chapter 8 - New farming methods are starting to appear in every corner of the world.

More and more people have become aware of climate change and of the increase in unhealthy diet everywhere in the world, which made some farmers take responsibility. Most people have a lot to learn from these innovative farmers.

A man from Guatemala, Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin, is in the foreground. He’s established a distinct sort of chicken farm whose name is Main Street Project.

Agroforestry is the name given for the method used in the Main Street Project. The project is about raising chickens in a natural environment in forests of hazelnut trees. The project imitates the origins of chicken as jungle fowl. There is a collaboration with nature, instead of a conflict, this system has generated numerous extra advantages and by-products.

First, the trees work as a natural shelter against flying hunters such as hawks and buzzards. The leaves of trees provide protection for the chicken from the sun, too.

Since there is an affluence of organic food in the forest, there is no need to buy feed sources from elsewhere. It is possible to cultivate Legumes and grains while raising the chickens. And as the chickens feed on plenty of insects, they serve as a kind of natural pesticide. So, no need to use pesticides anymore. Then, it is possible to sell the hazelnuts – apart from the eggs or chickens – as additional profit for the farmers.

Lastly, the nuts that dropped to the ground and the chicken droppings enrich the soil and provide nutrients for the other crops.

Farms such as the one founded by the Guatemalan man constitute living ecosystems themselves and these farms are fully sustainable. Farmers do not contribute to the devastating monocultures anymore. Rather, they are more interested in cultivating various crops altogether and generate a vibrant natural ecosystem around them. This is unachievable for any cornfield drained in pesticides or intensive dairy farms.

Farmers should take lessons from the Main Street Project's spirit. Though it brings money in, the poultry farm doesn't involve short-term greed for making more money. Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin and farmers like him know genuinely that absent sustainable farming, we cannot have a habitable world that we can benefit from in the future. Thus, their practices are shaped around a manifesto: agriculture has to comply with three counts – ecologically, financially, and socially.

When the objective is to invigorate our and environmental well-being, instead of only profits, this is a win-win situation for everyone. This method is more suitable for farmers who live in a secure, enjoyable, and productive work environment. It’s more suitable for chickens which have a life similar to that of birds in wildlife. It’s more beneficial to the environment that is able to thrive as no more chemicals soak into it. And, ultimately, it’s more beneficial to mankind itself and to every member of it.

Food Fix: How to Save Our Health, Our Economy, Our Communities, and Our Planet-One Bite at a Time by Mark Hyman Book Review

Eating habits in the West, which involves its ultra-processed food and intensive agriculture, is damaging us and the world. Actually, it rests at the core of a lot of things that we deem wrong about the world today. If we want to overcome the big crisis of our era, we have to start by making our diet and farming more sustainable. To attain this objective, governments can put more stress on big agribusiness by means of reformist legislation, and farmers can embrace innovative and invigorating methods.

Give your support to the allotment farmers in your region.

If there are allotments in the town or city in which you live, you can probably see local farmers who'll gladly provide fresh organic products to your home. Be part of it! Show your solidarity with them! Consume their products!

https://goodbooksummary.com/food-fix-by-mark-hyman-book-summary-review/