

One planet: one health

Our toxic food system must not survive this crisis, writes **Vandana Shiva**

We are one Earth family on one planet, healthy in our diversity and interconnectedness. The planet's health and our health are non-separable.

We can be linked worldwide through the spread of disease like the coronavirus when we invade the homes of other species, manipulate plants and animals for commercial profit and greed, and spread monocultures. Or we can be connected through health and wellbeing for all by protecting the diversity of ecosystems and protecting the biodiversity, integrity and self-organisation (*autopoiesis*) of all living beings, including humans.

New diseases are being created because a globalised, industrialised, inefficient food and agriculture model is invading the ecological habitat of other species and manipulating animals and plants with no respect for their integrity and their health. The illusion of the Earth and her beings as raw material to be exploited for profit is creating a world connected through disease.

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The health emergency that the coronavirus is waking us up to is connected to the emergency of extinction and disappearance of species, and it is connected to the climate emergency. All emergencies are rooted in a mechanistic, militaristic, anthropocentric worldview of humans as separate from and superior to other beings we can own, manipulate and control. They are also rooted in an economic model based on the illusion of limitless growth and limitless greed, which systematically violates planetary boundaries and ecosystem and species integrity.

As forests are destroyed, as our farms become industrial monocultures producing toxic, nutritionally empty commodities, and as our diets become degraded through industrial processing with synthetic chemicals and genetic engineering in labs, instead of being connected through biodiversity we become connected through disease.

Systems approach

With the health emergency engendered by the coronavirus, we need to look at the systems that spread disease and the systems that create health in a holistic approach.

A systems approach to healthcare in the current crisis would address not just the virus, but also how new epidemics are spreading as we invade the homes of other beings. It also needs to address the comorbidity conditions and related non-communicable chronic diseases that are spreading due to unsustainable, anti-Nature, unhealthy industrial food systems. We must now deglobalise the food system, which is driving climate change, disappearance of species and a systemic health emergency.

Globalised, industrialised food systems spread disease. Monocultures spread disease. Deforestation is spreading disease.

The health emergency is forcing us to deglobalise. We can do it when there is the political will. Let us make this deglobalisation permanent. Let us make a transition to localisation. Localisation of biodiverse agriculture and food systems grows health and reduces the ecological footprint. Localisation leaves space for diverse species, diverse cultures and diverse local living economies to thrive.

Biodiversity richness in our forests, our farms, our food and our gut microbiome makes the planet and her diverse species, including humans, healthier and more resilient to pests and diseases.

Ecosystem invasion

Over the past 50 years, at least 300 new pathogens have emerged as a result of our destructive, invasive practices in the name of profit. Zoonotic diseases are moving from non-human animals to the human animal as we destroy the habitat and homes of wild species and violate the integrity of species by manipulating animals in factory farms and manipulating plants through genetic engineering with viral promoters and antibiotic-resistance markers.

According to the World Health Organization, the Ebola virus moved from wild animals to humans. The epidemic, which killed more than 11,000 people across West Africa, was reported to be linked to rapid