

How will we feed world's growing population?

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May 23, 2012

Environment

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May 24, 2012

44min 17sec



Field of corn MPR Photo/Nikki Tundel

Guests

Jonathan Foley: [Director](#) of the Institute on the Environment, ecology, evolution and behavior professor and McKnight Presidential chair, head of Ione's Global Landscapes Initiative at the University of the Minnesota

Pamela Ronald: [Professor](#) of plant pathology at the University of California and director of grass genetics at the Joint Bioenergy Institute, co-author of "Tomorrow's Table: Organic Farming, Genetic and the Future of Food"

The world's population is projected to reach more than 9 billion by 2050. More people and rising living standards mean that global agriculture will have to double food production by mid-century.

Yet farming and ranching already exact a daunting toll on the environment: burn down rain forests to create more arable land, dump fertilizers onto fields that run off and choke life in rivers and oceans, emit volumes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, use up vast stores of freshwater for irrigation.

How can we produce enough food to feed everyone without wrecking the land, water and air needed to grow that food? We wanted to talk about this topic after reading Jonathan Foley's article in Nature about organic versus traditional agriculture. Foley is the director of the Institute on the Environment and he'll join The Daily Circuit Thursday to talk about sustainable agriculture.

"It took 11,000 years for us to get where we are today," he said. "Now we have to double it in 38 years. That's an extraordinary challenge that we won't be able to meet unless we make some dramatic changes."

Pamela Ronald, professor of plant pathology at the University of California, will also join the discussion.

"The worst thing for the environment is farming," she said. "It doesn't matter if it is organic. You have to go in and destroy

everything. So let's be efficient. Let's conserve. Let's be smart about it."

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VIDEO: Jonathan Foley on the other inconvenient truth

VIDEO: Pamela Ronald on sustainable agriculture

 **GALLERY**



Field of corn *MPR Photo/Nikki Tundel*

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The Daily Circuit

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