Viewpoint: ‘Sure, organic agriculture is sustainable: it sustains poverty and malnutrition’ — Why organic farming is a ‘green’ dead end

It is mystifying to me that organic food is still widely seen as healthier, more sustainable and, most absurdly, safer than non-organic food.

…

The trouble is that scientific evidence indicates that the food safety risks of eating organic food are considerably greater than those of eating non-organic food. This is primarily because organic crop production relies on animal faeces as a fertiliser, an obvious vector for potentially lethal pathogens such as E.coli, but also because organic crops can be prone to harmful mycotoxins as a result of inadequate control of crop pests and diseases.

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Independent research published in Nature has shown that if England and Wales switched 100 per cent to organic it would actually increase the greenhouse gas emissions associated with our food supply because of the greater need for imports. Scaling up organic agriculture might also put at risk the movement’s core values in terms of promoting local, fresh produce and small family farms.

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Surveying the problems of traditional farming in his native India, a friend of mine, Professor Channa Prakash, once remarked: ‘Sure, organic agriculture is sustainable: it sustains poverty and malnutrition.’

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