



Strengthening global food system: ‘Food Citizenship’ tackles important topic

Ray Goldberg, a North Dakota native and Harvard professor emeritus, has written a new book, **“Food Citizenship.”**

By **Jonathan Knutson / Agweek Staff Writer**

“Food Citizenship, Food System Advocates in an Era of Distrust,” written by Ray A. Goldberg and published in 2018 by Oxford University Press. Reviewed by Jonathan Knutson, Agweek Staff Writer.

Ray Goldberg tackles the fundamental issue in his introduction:

“Perhaps no economic system is viewed with suspicion by so many people around the world as the food system,” he writes.

In his new book, “Food Citizenship, Food System Advocates in an Era of Distrust,” Goldberg, a North Dakota native, Harvard professor emeritus and agribusiness-studies pioneer, examines the need to address that suspicion and how food-system decision-makers worldwide are working, in his words, “to create both economic value and social value.”

The book features Goldberg’s own insights, as well interviews with 47 global food-system leaders. They range from farm labor organizers and supporters of small-scale farming to leaders of some of the world’s largest agribusinesses.

Some Agweek readers have met — and many more know by reputation — three of the people Goldberg interviewed for the book: Greg Page, past president and CEO of Cargill, John Johnson, past president and CEO of CHS; and Ron Offutt, leader of RDO Co., which is headquartered in Fargo, N.D. Page and Johnson are North Dakota natives, Offutt is a graduate of Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn.

In his interview, Page says Cargill’s mission is “to nourish the world.”

If you think Goldberg, now 92, might be too sympathetic to big agribusiness, he notes in his introduction that he “wrote my undergraduate thesis (at Harvard) on a farmers’ revolt in 1915

against the grain elevators, banks, and railroads they they felt had treated them unfairly. ... Writing this thesis and visiting most of the original organizers (of the revolt) gave me an understanding of the plight of those who were taken advantage of.”

In all the interviews, Goldberg exhibits the civility and respect that sometimes are in short supply, or even non-existent, in the often passionate public debate over the food we eat and where it comes from.

He uses “agricultural system” to describe the modern global food system, which “has become more complicated as food, health, energy and the environment have become more interrelated, and the whole system has become more consumer-oriented.”

Despite the challenges facing the global food system, Goldberg sees hope for the future. That’s partly because the people he interviewed have the ability “to recognize the changes in the food system and the extent to which they have reinvented their companies, institutions and advocacy organizations — changes that it took guts to make.”

Angry critics of our global food system — people who believe it’s fundamentally flawed and unfair — probably won’t be interested in this book. Nor will people, at the other end of the spectrum, who equate any criticism of our current food system as high treason against farmers and ranchers

But Goldberg’s should appeal to agriculturalists and others who want to understand and strengthen this exceptionally important and complicated industry.

“**Food Citizenship**” can be ordered at www.amazon.com/Food-Citizenship-System-Advocates-Distrust/dp/019087180.