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INTERVIEW WITH DR. RICHARD OPPENLANDER



Dr. Richard Oppenlander, author of *Comfortably Unaware*, is a leading expert on the effect of our food choices on our environment. Noted for his compelling lectures, and a featured guest on radio and TV, he is the founder of an organic food production company.

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FOOD CHOICE AND SUSTAINABILITY: WHY BUYING LOCAL, EATING LESS MEAT, AND TAKING BABY STEPS WON'T WORK

DR. WILL TUTTLE: Welcome to Veganpalooza 2013. This is Dr. Will Tuttle, and I am delighted to have with us Dr. Richard Oppenlander, who is a well-known voice in the vegan and animal rights movement. He's the author of the award-winning book *Comfortably Unaware*. He's a consultant, researcher, and lecturer on topics of food choice and sustainability. He has started an organic food production company, operates an animal rescue sanctuary, and is the founder and president of Inspire Awareness Now. Dr. Oppenlander has written numerous articles and serves as an advisor for organizations, municipalities, and institutions, and his new book *Food Choice and Sustainability* is set for release in September. He's also a doctor of dental surgery, and the basic focus of our time together is going to be on food choice and sustainability and why buying local, eating less meat, and taking baby steps will not work. I love that title. So Dr. Oppenlander, thank you for joining us on Veganpalooza 2013, and we have a huge amount of material that I think we would like to talk about here. You're one of the people that we're interviewing on Veganpalooza 2013 that really focuses on the big picture of our mistreatment of animals for food and especially how it affects ecology and environment. So I'd like to just go ahead and jump in here with some questions. The first one I'd like to see if you can just share with our listeners some insight about is having to do with oceans and the devastation of sea life. How unhealthy are our oceans, and why shouldn't we all be eating certified sustainable sea food, which is, as I think people probably know, a popular thing to do? Would that help or not?

DR. RICHARD OPPENLANDER: That's a great question, and thanks for the introduction. I do want to take just a quick second to personally thank you, Dr. Tuttle, Will, and Steve, and actually all those involved with the orchestration of this Vegan World Summit. I think it's a wonderful opportunity to advance knowledge about this critical topic, and you've got a great lineup of speakers, and I'm excited to be here. So a special thanks to you and thanks to the audience for taking the time to tune in.

That's a wonderful question for a number of reasons, principally because the oceans are what sustains all of us, and they're not healthy at all. They're becoming warmer, more acidic, species of sea life are dying, coral reefs are in real danger, and there's rampant pollution. Now, I feel like the real issue isn't so much with the current state of our oceans. That's bad enough in terms of their health in a static sense, but for me it's more of a problem of why they're so unhealthy from a dynamic standpoint and then what we're doing about it as individuals and a global community. I think that the three principal ways our oceans are being destroyed, all three of them are caused, or at least heavily affected, by our food choices. For instance, I think any meaningful discussion about the state of our oceans has to first begin with what we're doing on land. That seems like an odd statement, but essentially climate change is causing warming and acidification of our oceans, and the principal culprit of climate change is the land-based animal agriculture that we're seeing. Our choice to each livestock, essentially, on land is causing this warming and acidification of our oceans. It's also causing pollution of our oceans. Pollution's caused in other ways, but it's caused by what's occurring on land in terms of some of the dead zones that are occurring. There are more than 500 nitrogen-flooded dead zones around the world right now in our oceans which are completely devoid of life. But then also the third area is fishing itself, which most people associate with why our oceans are in such poor shape.

DR. TUTTLE: Overfishing, really, I think we can say, because there's a huge demand for fish not only for people but to feed to livestock.

DR. OPPENLANDER: There is, but you have to be careful, and I'm going to try to use my words real carefully here because I've been real picky with my previous book, my lectures as well as this book, but I don't like calling it overfishing. I think that's a term that allows for fishing to continue. I feel like it's more of a fishing issue. In other words, this is one of the reasons that we're in such a difficult state with our oceans is because the definition of what is being destroyed and how badly it's being destroyed has been placed in the hands of certified organizations such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch and the Marine Stewardship Council. They're using the term "overfishing" and therefore they're applying it through their definitions, and they're unable to really know at what level does a number of species, are they able to come back. So we have to be really careful with that. I think it's more of a problem of just fishing, period.

DR. TUTTLE: Just fishing at all. I think as you're saying, our listeners are probably aware of this, but just to underline what you said about the pollution of the oceans, this nutrient-rich so-called runoff, there's a gigantic amount of fertilizer that's needed to grow genetically engineered corn and soybeans to feed to livestock. Everything ends up eventually in the ocean, doesn't it? So it's devastating the health of the ecosystems and the ocean is really suffering.

DR. OPPENLANDER: Yeah, if you can kind of picture what you said, that's basically coming from land-based animal agriculture. So to emphasize that, what we're doing on land, you can be concerned about the oceans, but we really shouldn't be focused on just fish. It's a combination. What you're seeing on your plate, if it's derived from livestock on land, it's essentially affecting both by runoff and pollution, as you said, as well as from the climate change or atmospheric change. It's a double-edged sword, essentially. Now, that's in addition, too, just the fishing, just flat-out fishing, which is causing a tremendous amount of loss of species directly, but also indirectly.

DR. TUTTLE: So the most powerful thing anyone can do would be to reduce not only the fish they're eating but the chickens, pigs, and cows, and everything else that they're eating.

DR. OPPENLANDER: That's right, and as I said at the onset, any meaningful discussion about the poor state of our oceans really has to begin with dairy and the livestock operations that are on land. Then we can turn and look at the more obvious concerns about pure numbers of fish species that are being devastated.

DR. TUTTLE: I know for me, and I'm sure for you too, it's really frustrating to see documentaries done on the problems with our oceans, and they talk all about things and how we should have sanctuaries where there's no fishing allowed. They never mention one word about the fact that people are eating so much fish and are feeding so much fish to animals that they're eating. People don't know, really.

DR. OPPENLANDER: Right, and even what you just said there, let's split that out a little bit. Right now there's only 1.1% of our oceans being protected in areas called marine protected areas, MPAs. A couple things about that. At the most recent convention on biological diversity in Nagoya, Japan, in 2010 where researchers come together and try to solve the situations like this, exactly what you said, they ignored completely livestock operations on land in terms of its impact on the oceans, but they only agreed to protect 10% of our oceans by the year 2020. Even if those areas were protected, you want to go back to what we've been emphasizing thus far, which is they're protecting areas of oceans that are now also becoming acidified. Oceans have been decreased their pH levels by more than 30% in the last 50 years, from the operations on land. So even if you have 10% or 20% or 30% or even 50% that were protected, you still are protecting them in a growing acidified environment.

DR. TUTTLE: The whole ocean, right, is becoming devastated. I see what you're saying. So you're protecting an area but it's not going to be healthy protected area.

DR. OPPENLANDER: It's almost like you really need to view this in terms of protection in two ways. One is that there's too little of our oceans. They said only 1% now and it's going to grow to only 10% over the next seven years. But in addition to that, it's what you're protecting. The oceans themselves are great moderators of what we're doing wrong on the planet, so they're taking the excess of heat, and also the excess of greenhouse gas emissions, and they're basically absorbing those for us, trying to protect us. In the process, the ocean waters are overheating and they're becoming acidified, both. So no matter what the percentage is that's being protected, it's water that's being destroyed, which is obviously running havoc with various species.

DR. TUTTLE: It's really the foundation of all life on planet Earth is the oceans, obviously. So let's move along. I just want to underline this for everyone who's listening. This is a subject that's so near and dear to my heart, what we're doing to the oceans and to aquatic animals. There's a connection, I think, that would be good to make also between our food choices and human hunger and poverty. I was wondering if you could address that a little. Why haven't the ways we've been addressing hunger and poverty, like giving care packages and so forth, just giving people grain that would go to our livestock. Why aren't things working, and what's the approach do you think would work?

DR. OPPENLANDER: Just an incredibly important question with even more important answers. Let's first of all, let's just go over very, very quickly some basics because most people wouldn't have a clue to how serious it is or how possible, whatever they do, would the decisions they make have any impact on world hunger, as you said, or even poverty. But there are about 900 million people, 879 million people, actually, in the world that suffer daily from hunger. This year there's a predicted six million children will die from starvation. Now, more than two-thirds of all those hunger victims are found in developing countries, so the countries that are not industrialized. They're affected by many other issues: poverty, lack of education, 60-70% of a lot of these individuals are illiterate, they have poor human health, many of them are suffering from HIV, they have social inequities, political instability, of course. But at the heart of all this is depletion of their natural resources. They've lost, in some countries, two-thirds of their topsoil, and the rest of their topsoil is being lost faster than it can be replaced. So at the heart of this cycle, this vicious cycle of hunger and poverty and these other issues that are thrown and the other complexity of issues, is food choice, both local there in those regions as well as global.

Now, in a global sense, which is where most listeners would want to hear, how could they possibly have anything to do with this? Surrounded by other host of factors, I feel there are four primary ways in which food choice globally affects hunger and food security in developing countries. All of them are negatively impacted by the demand to eat animals. This is why. What we choose to eat in the U.S. and other developed countries drives resource use, and it drives food pricing, and it drives policy making on a global basis. Secondly, our food choices impact decision making for these, as you mentioned in the question, the food relief programs, and also investment strategies by big businesses, funders of development projects in developing countries. I'm involved, I'm consulting with a number of non-profit groups right now to try to get this changed. Thirdly is that local and regional food choices, they adhere to these established cultural norms, and so they continue to drive inefficient agricultural practices, misuse of resources, and it undermines any attempt to improve literacy or human welfare. Then lastly, of course, collective worldwide demand to eat animals suppresses any type of education. If everybody in the world essentially, or most people, 98% of people in the world, are eating animals and driving the raising of livestock and the increase in meat and dairy and fishing industries, that's going to suppress, if you think about it, any education to do anything different in these developing countries to improve their own agricultural systems.

DR. TUTTLE: Right, plus the fact is that typically it was the less industrialized nations, it still is, that eat a lot less meat and dairy, but we have the industrialized nations, like the United States especially

and other countries, they're basically promoting projects that encourage people to eat more meat and dairy. We have things like the Heifer Project and we have World Bank and the IMF that very often are supporting, giving funding to projects that actually support American corporations and the pharmaceutical complex, which actually thrives in times where there are people eating more meat and dairy. So there are all these forces that are pushing the Western ways of eating on these people.

DR. OPPENLANDER: That's right. You mentioned a number of multinational companies, and actually there are a few that control over 55% of all the seed and grain and over 80% of all final animal products in the world. So it's a very monopolized production economic system. We're running out of land in developed countries, so they're going to turn to, they already are turning to developing countries for their land and to drop resources. Their now large issue is that I think most people sympathetic to the animal agricultural industry, in terms of sympathetic, meaning we should be lessening that, and that are more understanding of the fact of where grain and food is going and where some of our resources are going, it's been an argument that we produce, for instance in 2011, the last year where the record was kept, that we produced 2.6 billion tons of grain in the world, but nearly half of that, about 43% of that, was given to animals in the meat and dairy industries. Which is, the 2.6 billion tons represents an amount that would feed over two times the amount of people that there are on Earth. So it's silly in terms of...

DR. TUTTLE: We're growing plenty of food, but we're feeding it to animals.

DR. OPPENLANDER: Yeah, exactly, but my thought, I go a bit beyond that. I don't think it's just that that's the problem. It's not as simple as just giving them the grain. For instance, if we could provide for these people, in other words, dropping care packages and, as you alluded to in the question at the onset, dropping care packages in or giving them investment or dropping in investment from big business to put in large industrial agricultural systems, that's not going to really solve world hunger. All this grain really shouldn't go to them. What we need to do is to create sustainability, give them a pattern or blueprint for themselves.

DR. TUTTLE: Right, locally.

DR. OPPENLANDER: Locally, yeah, through and at the nucleus. And if your listeners could project this out, the nucleus is a plant-based agricultural system because it's going to develop a more fertile land, which is what they need, to rebuild their soil. At the same time in a much more efficient manner, it's going to provide health benefits for them, and it's going to be much more productive in terms of the amount, in terms of yield. But you want to be looking at yield not short-term but more long-term, how can they not only grow enough food for themselves but through many, many generations. So it's sort of what I call a multidimensional approach to sustainability while providing them education, inputs, support in transition to them so they can take care of themselves. That's really what's needed in terms of solving world hunger.

DR. TUTTLE: Right. The pressure, I know, for example, a huge amount, some people say about an acre per second, of rainforest is being cut down in the Amazon, and it's primarily to grow soybeans and to clear land to feed animals, and a lot of it's going to China, a lot of it's going to North America, so we're seeing the devastation of ecosystems as well as the local communities, all driven by animal agriculture.

DR. OPPENLANDER: And just what you said, China for the first time last year surpassed us in terms of the amount of pork, the amount of meat that's being produced. And you're exactly right: they're driving production of meat and of land devastation in many of these developing countries, especially in rainforested areas, to produce even crops for their animal industry. So it is a global picture, and our choices themselves are what is driving all this.

DR. TUTTLE: One thing you mentioned, too, maybe if you don't mind, I know this may be opening up a large subject that would take maybe too long, but if you could just maybe briefly address it because I think a lot of people maybe are aware of the recent TED talk by Allan Savory where he's basically talking about what you're saying: in order to have the local people feed themselves, we should have lots of cattle running on the land. So of course, all of the meat-eaters are just licking their chops and saying, "Okay, look, this is just what we wanted to hear." I know it's a big subject, you've written a whole article on it that I saw in your blog, but kind of debunk that for people.

DR. OPPENLANDER: Yeah, actually, you're exactly right. It's a very large topic mainly because the reason that he had spoken, the reason that he was selected, and the reason that he received the standing ovation is because just what you said, is that carnivores, or people who are omnivores throughout the world, are basically just trying to grasp anything they can in terms of justification for furthering their dietary choices. In the midst of all the facts and reality that it's unhealthy for them, it's unhealthy for our planet, it's certainly unhealthy for animals. Now, you're exactly right, and I guess the first thing I'd like to do is because it's such a large topic, and I'm happy you mentioned it because I spent a bit of time trying to not just debunk the myth about his talk but more or less elucidate for the audience in that blog that I wrote all the complexities of about desertification in terms of how it starts first with erosion from deforestation and then it runs its course. I felt it was a fairly enlightening type of article from a lot of different standpoints, so it'd be great if anybody that would want to look further to look up that blog on my Comfortably Unaware website or on a blog website.

Very quickly or briefly to help answer that is that there are a couple different levels to help answer that. Let's just talk about the two most important ones. One is that livestock themselves can actually be better for land in terms of if you've lost topsoil or it's been desertified, loss of all topsoil in particular, that's better than just planting plants or having plant-based agriculture. Which it's not, and there's been just so many, hundreds and hundreds of articles about that. So it's just, and we could go into much more detail about that.

But another most important aspect of that talk which was completely false is that first of all he started in the middle of the process talking about desertification, and that's actually the end of the process. Most of the land that's been desertified, sure, there are some ancient grasslands that have been desertified, but most of them are just what you were alluding to in the beginning of this, which is most of the land have been forests. And in fact, those areas that he highlighted by a NASA photograph were in the Amazon, as you mentioned, they were in Africa, and some in Southeast Asia. All those areas were initially forest, and they were deforested. They were all cut down in order to support animal agriculture. Almost 90% of the deforestation in the Amazon has been placed in cattle or crops to feed cattle. So if you start at the beginning of the process and just change the eating habits so we're not eating meat, the land would be used in a much more efficient fashion. We wouldn't have to be deforesting these areas. It wouldn't be turning them over to cattle. They wouldn't be becoming erosive. We wouldn't be losing topsoil, and therefore they wouldn't be desertified. So he's sort of creating, he's starting the subject at the end instead of at the beginning.

DR. TUTTLE: That's so important for people to understand that. The deserts that he's talking about healing are the ones that were destroyed by animal agriculture to begin with. It's not healing them anyway because plant-based agriculture. Thank you, and I really want to recommend everyone, if you have a chance, go to comfortablyunaware.wordpress.com, and you can look up that article that Dr. Oppenlander wrote. Another thing that I think would be great to kind of shift gears here, talk a little bit about just basically Michael Pollan, maybe before that, this whole idea that we see around us, this very strong movement toward and people promoting permaculture and, as part of that, grass-fed or pastured

animal agriculture and calling this fully sustainable. What are your thoughts on this kind of animal-based permaculture sustainable agriculture?

DR. OPPENLANDER: Well, you mentioned someone's name there at the beginning, and I don't know if you had any other specific question related to Michael Pollan.

DR. TUTTLE: We can go into that. Michael Pollan, it's not just him. It's quite a few other experts that have been promoting eating animal foods or saying eat less meat but keep eating some meat. So that was in a way maybe a little different question I was going to ask about the sort of taking baby steps question. But maybe before that, the whole grass-fed pastured animal agriculture might be interesting.

DR. OPPENLANDER: Right, and that's why I mentioned that because he's one of the proponents of this movement. In fact, he sort of ultra publicized it when he was on Oprah two years ago and made a statement that grass-fed beef is fully sustainable. Oprah even asked him again to repeat that and the audience, which he did. Then he's, of course, with all of the literature he's written and the books, he's made it very clear that it is a sustainable way to produce food. The issue is, and we'll come back to this if you want to talk more about the platform that some of these authors have, but he really begins from that, in a sense, that what we're hearing is a type of agriculture, or permaculture, first of all, from the words permanent and agriculture, so it does have a lot to do with sustainability. So the issue really is that the people who are proponents of this pretty much eat meat themselves, and they have permaculture systems, grass-fed systems, that they either have their own cows or cattle, as Michael Pollan does, or they just ascribe to it.

But the issue really is this, is that 45% of the entire landmass on Earth is used by and for livestock right now. And that figure actually was substantiated or documented by the International Livestock Research Institute. So if anything, I feel like it's understated. With that in mind, less than 2% of all the animals raised in the U.S. and about 9% worldwide are grazing. All the rest are involved in factory farming. So as we shift, and this is how much land's being used still, even though only 9% are grazing, so as we shift to what they feel is sustainable, grass-fed systems, is we're advocating more and more land occupation because it takes more land to raise cattle, anywhere from 2-35 acres depending on where you are in the world, to support one cow. So the productivity is just a fraction of what it is. Instead of 150-400 pounds of what people call food, which is meat from a carcass from one cow being produced per acre, we can produce somewhere between 5000-50,000 pounds per acre of plant-based foods. So it's an issue of efficiency and productivity. Also, one-third of the world's topsoil has been lost because of the cattle that are using 45% of the landmass. In fact, eating less meat and producing more grass-fed cattle will mean that we'll be using more land, and we're going to be contributing more to climate change because it requires more grass-fed cattle produce somewhere between 50-60% more methane than cattle if they were not on grass-fed than from factory farms. And we'll still be using more water than what we should, between 25,000 gallons all the way up to two million gallons per one cow.

DR. TUTTLE: In their lifetime?

DR. OPPENLANDER: In their lifetime before they're slaughtered. The reason it moves up from one to two million is because in most areas of the world where they feel like they have a highly efficient system, they actually use water to irrigate alfalfa and their pastures, and in many areas, for instance, there's 900,000 acres being irrigated in just California of alfalfa. Every one of those acres is irrigated, and they're irrigated at a rate of about one to two million gallons per season of water per acre. So it becomes an enormous strain on water, on climate change, on land use, and all for the end product that isn't sustainable for us to eat either. So using the word sustainable for grass-fed or placing grass-fed animals into a permaculture environment is nonsensical.

At some point in time, we could discuss more about where permaculture began. It was actually in Austria, and the person who started that, I'm not going to go into too much detail here, he did use animals, but they only used animals to help cultivate or help actually till the soil. They didn't really use them for necessarily to slaughter in large amounts. But that model has been, and it worked well for that person, Sepp Holzer in Austria, worked well for him 50, 60 years ago in that area, but on a worldwide basis, it wouldn't work at all because of all the inefficiencies that we've just talked about. So permaculture as a whole, if it was applied to small-scale single-owner farm operations that only produced plant-based foods, it is probably a wonderful model vs. industrializing everything, but not if they include animals, which are incredibly inefficient.

DR. TUTTLE: It seems like the word permaculture's been somewhat co-opted by the animal agriculturists just to include. So tell me a little bit more now about the so-called food experts, like not only Michael Pollan but Jamie Oliver, Mark Bittman, and others that have a really large-scale platform, lots of people are listening to them, reading what they're writing and so forth. What do you think about their approach? What do you think is wrong with their approach of focusing on how bad processed foods are, how bad high fructose corn syrup is, eat meat but just eat less meat, and so forth?

DR. OPPENLANDER: Just once a week.

DR. TUTTLE: Right, once a week. Or once a week go vegetarian, maybe, these sort of little baby steps. I think our listeners, it's very interesting to look at this more deeply.

DR. OPPENLANDER: That is really, you're tying in a lot of topics actually, directly and indirectly, because this is what we're all hearing and this is what's influencing. This is the core of influence, for at least the United States and most of the world. So here's the way I view this. The people that you mention, including we could even talk about people like Al Gore that did a wonderful thing, winning a Nobel Peace Prize, opening the door up to global warming, as he called it, so these people that you mentioned, these New York Times bestselling authors and lecturers and now are celebrities essentially, they've opened the door. We don't want to detract from one or two things they have done. They've opened the door for many, many people to at least be concerned about their food instead of just eating it and not having a clue to where it came from. That's a good thing.

The bad thing is that they know very well that their platform would be diminished if they discussed anything that would be somewhat controversial or going against the grain in terms of what our cultural influences are, or even politically now, what our political and economic influences are from all the billions of dollars that are being spent by the meat and dairy and fishing industry. So they have a different agenda. They're essentially taking the path of least resistance. What Pollan, for instance, and Bittman and Jamie Oliver are talking about in terms of eating less processed foods and dropping off high fructose corn syrup and things like that, or eating what your grandmother ate, things like that, are really nothing new, as you know. These are things that we've heard back in the Pritikin day in 1970s. But they're very eloquent writers. So they're picking up a very, very large audience, and it's what people want to hear. They want to hear, "I want to still eat my meat, so I want to hear reasons. I want to be validated for this." Well, the thing that what's drastically wrong with their approach is that it's taking the focus off of all the proper way to approach eating meat, which is not eating it at all because it's the most important or critical factor in global depletion in terms of depleting all of our resources. It's barely under the energy sector in terms of its effect on climate change and our anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, human-induced. It's equal to, if not more important, and you have a number of other speakers that will talk about this much better than I can, I'm still involved with a number of patients of mine, it's equal to or more involved in terms of all our Western diseases.

So for them to take the approach that we can still eat this product that's devastating our planet and our resources and our own health, not to mention the animals that are affected. When we talk about animals, that's one other thing I want to throw in here real quickly, is that I don't think we should ever separate out. I think that so oftentimes our movement toward a more peaceful lifestyle and eating habits and healthier eating habits are geared towards the animals that are involved that we slaughter, that we eat, and even more so, it's even more focused into factory farms. Well, we're forgetting all the trillions of animals and insects that are slaughtered or lose their habitat each year that are wild, that we aren't eating directly, and I think that's very important not to separate that out. So that's just one other aspect of what they're doing. They're placing all the focus on high fructose corn syrup and things like that, which really are important, but it's just a fragment, a very small fragment, of the picture.

So their solutions of taking baby steps or going meatless on Mondays, their agenda is a completely different than really what the world is on. The world has a different timeline. We have only a very short period of time to reduce greenhouse gases to affect positively our climate change issue, and of course each hour that goes by, we lose another, we slaughter another eight million animals. So I think that if you look at the agenda they're on, it's very easy for them to say, and it's very easy for people to accept, that let's just go meatless on Mondays or take baby steps. But as I've said a number of times, if you're striving to this, this going meatless on Mondays, what you're doing is you're contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and pollution and destruction of, devastation of our planet's resources and your own health on six days of the week. So you're creating a false justification for what you're doing. So we need to do better than that because the world, the planet, the animals, everything living on our planet, we're on a different timeline than what these authors are on that have their own agenda to make sure they keep selling book.

DR. TUTTLE: What you're talking about is a sense of urgency, and also a sense of how this approach really disempowers people from actually working.

DR. OPPENLANDER: It does. One quick thing I have to say about his newest book, Michael Pollan's newest book, which is *Cooked*, and it's everywhere. He has audiences of over 20, 30 million people at a time listening to him during a one week period of time. With that book, it's eloquently written. He compels everyone to relish the act of cooking. So that's great. But I think the audience and the world needs to hear, though, and certainly for me, it's not at all an issue, and I know you know this, Will, but it's not an issue at all of how a particular food item is cooked or even if it is cooked. What's most important is where that food came from, what story it tells, what resources it took to produce it, and if an animal's life had to be sacrificed in order to get to our plate, that's infinitely more concerning as an individual or a component of a world community, global community, than how an item happens to be cooked.

DR. TUTTLE: Can you talk a little bit now, we're kind of moving toward the end of our time here, but can you talk a little bit about some of the food movements that are very strong, the slow food movement, the local food movement, the organic, the real food, the sustainable food, the humanely raised food, all these things, are these really a great thing that's happening? What do you think about all that?

DR. OPPENLANDER: No, not at all. It's kind of the same thing. What it is is there are movements that are heavily garnered, they garner heavy support from the media and from these well-known individuals, so that's a nice segue into this question to answer it better. But the problem is that they're all based on an improper definition of the word "healthy." I think the one type of food, the two types of food I can pull out of those movements, the two types of movements that I think best represent this, are local and real food, both because they're growing, most people can identify themselves with those, and they're the most I guess blatant in terms of how they're not healthy.

So let's take real food, just very quickly. Real food, the real food movement, is based on Jamie Oliver's movement and now it's another group has taken it up, and it's actually the quickest growing food movement amongst college campuses. I see it everywhere I talk on all campuses everywhere across the country. It's based on being, the food has to be local, fair, sustainable, and humane. Those four situations have to exist at the same time. So you say to yourself, "Good, that's great. They're looking out for four very important issues." But the problem is that inherent to their definition, okay, because something's local doesn't at all mean that it's humane. We have local, you can find chicken that's slaughtered in any which way, any fashion whatsoever, just two minutes, two steps from anybody's house. In terms of sustainable, we've already talked about how various grass-fed movements and permaculture movements and anything that has anything to do with our oceans or fish or certified sustainable, how they're really not sustainable. The label is placed because it's trying to find a way to support continued efforts to eat meat, but it's really not sustainable in any fashion. In terms of humane, you have many other people talking about that, but just because there's a humane certifying agency now stating that an animal was raised in a humane fashion doesn't at all mean that when it's killed it's humanely killed. You can take any of the animals we have at our animal rescue and I guarantee that not one of them would follow you into a slaughterhouse, if they knew what was going on in there, to be put through that. So really, the essence, the root of the definition of real food is flawed, and therefore the movement is flawed.

And similarly with local. Local is a word that most people ascribe now to, which is buying food within 100-mile radius of sorts, and basically, again, you can have any food that is produced from an animal or an animal product itself which is not going to be sustainable, and it's not going to be healthy for you, it's not to be healthy for the animal that was killed, even though it's local. So it's much more important to look at, again, how a food item was produced, and it'd be much healthier for the world and for yourself and for the animal if you bought food from 1500 miles away if it was plant-based, entirely derived from plants, rather than eating an animal that was produced by your next-door neighbor. Now, in the other direction, it's certainly good to support local businesses, but not if they have anything to do with animal agriculture.

DR. TUTTLE: So basically, it comes down to that from every angle, not only compassion, but from environmental sustainability, and it really even from energy use and pollution and so forth, that plant-based agriculture is much more efficient, much less environmentally damaging than any animal agriculture, whether it's local, real, slow, humane, whatever, it's always going to have inherent within it the devastating effects to the environment and to animals.

DR. OPPENLANDER: That's right, and one other thing you could add in that summary, and it's on a timeline. Anytime that anyone would be supporting the meat and dairy and fishing industry, you are contributing to and lengthening out a timeline that's not in our best interest.

DR. TUTTLE: Right. This has really been amazingly interesting. What I've felt as you're basically unpacking the hidden side, really, of animal agriculture is that I wish we had more time.

DR. OPPENLANDER: No question. Will, I think there's one thing I'd like to say just very quickly, now that I was just listening to you talk there for a minute. You have a number of people, a number of speakers that are just so beautiful in terms of what they have to say and their message talking about ethics. You yourself, you're so well-known for your ability to transfer information in a very kind way to make people understand about the ethics of eating food. Well, I think that's one more definition that needs refinement is ethics, the consideration of what we choose to eat. I think that instead of just animal rights and animal welfare, certainly we need to start thinking about the ethics of, for instance, is it ethical for any of us to eat food that causes the extinction of other species and irreversible climate change, loss of ecosystems, resource depletion, etc.? That's the way the word ethics should now be applied.

DR. TUTTLE: Right, exactly. Causing the devastation of the planet for future generations and other species. Wow, thanks so much. I'm going to, I want to just really encourage everyone to look more deeply into the work of Dr. Richard Oppenlander. Can you say what you prefer is your website?

DR. OPPENLANDER: You mentioned earlier a couple websites, but the one that I think you could get the most information from that links to everyone else is just comfortablyunaware.com. I'll even probably wrap the second book into that one, and that would be great.

DR. TUTTLE: Great. Comfortablyunaware.com. thank you very much, Dr. Oppenlander, it's been really extremely thought-provoking to have you with us, and I hope people can continue, everyone who's listening, to do more research and find out, make an effort to find out if what he's saying is really true, and if it is, how we should live, how we should respond to these truths because I think that's the most important thing that we can do. Thanks so much for joining us.

DR. OPPENLANDER: Thank you very much for all your efforts here and in general. I appreciate the opportunity to be part of this, and a heartfelt thank you to everyone listening. Let's all go out and inspire others now. Thank you so much, Will, I appreciate it.