
A Fable for the New Age

by Mark Lutes

The Little Red Hen approached the barnyard animals with a proposal to grow some wheat to bake a loaf of bread.

"Tilling the soil will lead to run-off and erosion," said the horse.

"Monocultures lead to loss of biodiversity and insect infestation," said the dog.

"This variety of wheat was created by genetically manipulating seeds stolen from animals in the forest," said the cow.

So the Little Red Hen tilled the soil, planted the seed, and a few months later harvested the ripe wheat. Then she asked for some help with grinding the wheat into flour and cooking the bread.

"The seeds are pre-sprouted plants, and killing them is murder, as well as depletion of a renewable resource," said the rabbit.

"Whole wheat is better for the digestion," said the goat.

"The stove uses wood that was clearcut, and burning it contributes to global warming," said the ewe.



So the Little Red Hen ground the flour, cooked the bread, then asked the animals in the barnyard if they would like to help eat it.

"There are starving animals in the forest that should get it first," said the pig.

"It was made by killing living plants, and I will only eat things that are already dead," said the worm.

"The loaf has an intrinsic value, and eating it would violate its rights," said the cat.

"I cannot eat it when I don't know if my children and grandchildren will have enough," said the frog.

The Little Red Hen then held an auction for the bread, where the highest bidder could deliver it to the hungry animals in the forest, hold a ceremony around it to mourn the wheat that died in its production, allow it to exist untouched by the barnyard animals, or preserve it for future generations.

The bidding was so spirited, and the final price was so high, that the Little Red Hen was able to hire all the animals in the barnyard, and even some in the forest, to clear more land on which to plant wheat in the following year to fill the seemingly unlimited demand for bread.