

the Solari Report | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Pharma Food – Biotech on Your Plate: The Next Chapter in Big Money’s Battle to End Food Sovereignty

THE EMERGENCE of bioengineered food, aptly nicknamed “pharma food” by this report’s lead author Elze van Hamelen, is an important primary trend, both in the U.S. and globally. In the U.S., food quality and local food networks have been breaking down for some time, but the tsunami of synthetic products showing up in grocery stores—with many more on the horizon—signals accelerating debasement of the food supply. This report shows that the synthetic foods sales pitch (that traditional food production is environmentally harmful) is as fake as the foods themselves; rather, lab-engineered foods appear to be part of a thinly veiled power grab to decrease food independence and achieve tight technocratic control of food systems. As Catherine Austin Fitts argues in her Introduction, this means that there is now no question more important than “Who’s your farmer?”

Van Hamelen’s extensive research focuses primarily on the lab-grown (“lab-cultured”) meat industry—one prong of an exploding “alternative protein” sector that also has lab-manipulated insect and plant proteins within its sights. She shows that generous venture capital and billionaire investment—much of it with ties to Silicon Valley—has been flowing into “FoodTech” and lab-grown meat start-ups despite significant manufacturing challenges, lack of consumer demand, and an economics that makes no sense. Interestingly, the infusions of capital sped up during the Covid-engineered disaster capitalism of 2021–2022, when public-private partnerships and consortia promoting lab-grown meat began popping up all over the world. In addition to over a hundred lab-meat start-ups, dozens more biotech companies provide specialized products or services to the industry, while well-heeled nongovernmental organizations help establish legitimacy and seed regulatory approval.

As the report describes, numerous technological precedents—genetic engineering, cell culturing, tissue engineering, gene editing, precision fermentation, synthetic biology, molecular farming—laid the groundwork for lab-grown meat. Although these techniques

are loosely covered by the umbrella term “GMO 2.0,” they come with even more risks than “traditional” GMOs. The hubris driving experimentation with such technologies, van Hamelen suggests, may also be a clue that the backers of lab-meat have transhumanist goals, including a professed wish to bring about a “Synthetic Age.”

For some experts quoted in the report, the complicated, high-tech, capital-intensive process required to produce low-margin synthetic meat does not make economic sense—yet lab meat ventures continue apace. In a chapter on unanswered questions, van Hamelen speculates on possible reasons for the ongoing push, including control of people through food, creation of “dual use” products (such as “edible vaccines”) that function as both food and pharmaceutical agent, support for the ultra-rich’s obsession with longevity, and geophysical threats to traditional agriculture.

Fortunately, the report features some positive segments to counterbalance the dismal “pharma food” theme, including two essays by Solari *Food Series* host Pete Kennedy, Esq. (“Finding Sources of Fresh Food” and “Local Food Legislation”), as well as a “Feast for the Eyes” art essay by *Food for the Soul’s* Nina Heyn, which illustrates some of the delightful ways in which centuries of painters have celebrated food. Ultimately, concludes van Hamelen, building and retaining access to “natural, fresh, poison-free foods” is “one of the most important acts of resistance” that we all can take.

The Solari Report is published by:
Solari, Inc.
P. O. Box 157
Hickory Valley, TN 38042 USA
solari.com

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