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Ecology of Food Fall 2007



Pleasant Valley Farm

Pleasant Valley Farm raises produce, chickens, and a few pigs. The Arnold family (Paul, Sandy, Kim and Robert) will introduce you to their farm, where you will learn about how they produce and market food. During your visit to the farm, take notes and ask questions of so that you have the information necessary to answer the following:

What kinds of inputs (seeds, chemicals, equipment, infrastructure, livestock, feed, labor, etc.) go into the farm?

What sorts of outputs and ecosystem services (marketable products, waste, landscape conservation, erosion control etc.) does the farm produce or provide? How are products sold, how is waste disposed of, and why?

How do the Arnolds choose what to plant, where to plant it, and when to plant it? Develop specific examples as illustrations, and relate these examples to ecological interactions that you have studied in class (predation, herbivory, parasitism, competition, mutualism).

What is the animal husbandry regimen, and why? How do they provide for the health and welfare of their animals? Develop specific examples as illustrations.

How is the quality of the fields maintained?

Is this farm a sustainable operation? Can it continue to run in the current manner for the foreseeable future, or is the balance of inputs and outputs such that the operation cannot be maintained in its present form for the long term? **Use specific observations from your visit to the farm and information that you received from the Arnolds as evidence in support of your answer.**

Please turn in an essay that explicitly answers each of these questions. Your papers should be typed in a legible font and printed with a good quality printer; double-sided printing is always preferred.