

Fukuoka - San's Vision

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They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. Isaiah 2:4

As a key note speaker at the 6th International Conference on Organic Agriculture, Masanobu Fukuoka made an eloquent concluding speech on the Earth's behalf. Extending his vision from his small, marvelously intricate and balanced farm in Japan to the desertified lands of Africa (he visited in 1984), he emphasized the vital need for replanting forests to half the advancing deserts. Reaching to the very heart of the matter, he proposed that the armed forces now practicing and preparing for annihilation should and could be used for this vital work. Following his lead, we can consider what this might mean.

The challenge in much of Africa and elsewhere in the developing countries is two fold; getting seeds to where they are needed--when they are needed. The modern war machine is well equipped to do this. Satellite imaging and long-range weather forecasting can predict when favorable precipitation patterns will develop, just before or as the rains begin to fall cargo planes or bombers could deliver native locally appropriate seeds by aerial broadcasting. Each C-5A, for example, can carry 200 tons of seed – enough to plant more than 10,000 acres.

Aerial delivery of pregerminated, inoculated seed for locally adapted native multi-use trees, shrubs, and plants could do much to half the degradation of these lands and allow restoration specialists, working with local residents, to begin the longer path toward ecological health and sustained production.

The biggest obstacle to Fukuoka-san's vision is not the technical question of delivery by air or prediction of favorable moisture patterns, but the agronomic and ecological problem of identifying and producing seed for native species that are desirable and will be effective. This problem should be addressed in any case, because even if the weapons of war are never turned to the war against the deserts; the ecological wisdom to use these plants is needed, not only in Africa, but throughout the World where the deserts are on the march.

An important element in this study will be the detailed study of microbial inoculants, pelletizing methods to protect seeds, and selection of plant material and species mixes for synergistic rather than allelopathic

effects. Much of this work can be gleaned from the literature of ecological, forestry, and agriculture, and from Fukuoka-san himself, whose decades of research provide a model for all of us. Additional research is urgently needed. Foregoing only one jet fighter (\$30-40 million) would fund a major research center for a decade and provide a more lasting basis for peace.

In honoring Fukuoka-san, I would conclude with a Japanese translation of the Chinese philosopher, Lao Tsu. 千里の道も一歩から始まる
A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step

Fukuoka, M. 1978. *The One Straw Revolution*. Rodale Press, Emmaus, PA.