Back to the Farm

In the year 1900, 60% of Americans lived in the country. Many of those people worked on family farms for a living. Families raised livestock and kept vegetable gardens and orchards for their own consumption and for sale in local markets.

By the year 1990, only 25% of Americans lived in rural areas. The explanation for this is that new jobs and the siren call of city life enticed young people to leave the family farm. Large, corporate farms started to produce more and more of America’s food. Over the years, many farmers found they could no longer make a living on the land. Small farms run by families began to die out.

Today, the perception that many city-dwellers have of farm life is that it is “less than” city life. The presumption that farmers are “hillbillies” or “rednecks” is common—and unfair. People sometimes make the assumption that farmers know little about culture, technology, or the world in general. They also wonder how farmers can bear to live so far from “the good things” in life: restaurants, entertainment, and the conveniences of city living. They seem to think living on a farm is worse than being sent to detention!

But the fact is that there is a growing reclamation of American farming roots. These new family farmers have a different take on what “the good things” in life are. To them, running a farm means more time spent with loved ones and the resumption of a healthier lifestyle. Organic food, an enjoyment of nature, and leaving behind the stress of office jobs are all appealing to these farmers. Other families have returned to the farm as a way to be more Earth-friendly. Instead of importing fruit from South America (and using gasoline to do so), these families prefer to “eat local.”

Whatever the reason, farm life is becoming popular once again. Will most Americans farm again? That’s probably not likely—but you never know!