

# FOOD BEWARE

ORGANIC  
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

A film by Jean-Paul Jaud

(Original Title: *Nos enfants nous accuseront*)

112 minutes, color, 2008  
English & French w/English subtitles



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## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

For the first time ever, our children are growing up less healthy than we are. As the rate of cancer, infertility and other illnesses linked to environmental factors climbs ever upward each year, we must ask ourselves: why is this happening?

Food Beware begins with a visit to a small village in France, where the town's mayor has decided to make the school lunch menu organic and locally grown. It then talks to a wide variety of people with differing perspectives to find common ground - children, parents, teachers, health care workers, farmers, elected officials, scientists, researchers and the victims of illnesses themselves. Revealed in these moving and often surprising conversations are the abuses of the food industry, the competing interests of agrobusiness and public health, the challenges and rewards of safe food production, and the practical solutions that we can all take part in. Food Beware is food for thought - and a blueprint for a growing revolution.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

In a little French village at the foot of the Cevennes Mountains, a revolution is underway. Here as everywhere, the current generation of children will be the first in memory to be unhealthier than their parents. Standing in opposition to powerful economic interests, the town's mayor has declared that the school lunchroom will serve organic food only, with the extra cost to be financed from the municipal budget. It is the start of a movement that is gaining momentum by the day, and it starts with recognizing the scale of the problem.

Director Jean-Paul Jaud aims his camera at an environmental tragedy: the poisoning of our countryside by chemical agriculture, and the damage it has caused to public health, especially that of our children. *Food Beware* documents the courageous initiative of one municipality, that of Barjac in the Gard, which has instigated a policy of using only organic produce for all school meals, financing the extra cost from the municipality budget.

Aware of the health risks which threaten a young population exposed to the 76,000 tons of pesticides used each year in France, one mayor decided to set an unprecedented political example, alerting public opinion and elected officials to the scandalous abuses of an economic system which values profits above the population's health.

Those interviewed in the film - children, parents, teachers, health care workers, journalists, farmers, elected officials, scientists and researchers – share their feelings, fears, anger, and the fruits of their labor with the camera. They recount their experiences, denounce the abuses, list the problems, but also suggest possible solutions, requiring simply that those in charge of decision-making take their responsibilities in hand. The result is an informative and moving testament surrounding this urgent situation. How many illnesses, tumors, disabilities and human tragedies are occurring without anyone taking effective action?

The film starts at UNESCO at a symposium of leading medical experts who have all signed the “Appel de Paris” petition. The goal: Not to simply record the devastation, but to find immediate ways to act, so that tomorrow our children won't accuse us of abandoning them. This is a film dedicated to the painful truth.

- \* In Europe every year, 100,000 children die of diseases caused by the environment.
- \* In Europe 70% of cancers are linked to the environment: 30% to pollution and 40% to food.
- \* In Europe cases of cancer in children have been increasing by 1.1% yearly for 30 years.
- \* In France the number of cancers in males has increased by 93% in 25 years.

## **DIRECTOR INFO**

Producer and director Jean-Paul Jaud studied at the French Ecole Nationale Louis Lumière.

### Filmography:

2008 Nos enfants nous accuseront  
2001 Les quatre saisons d'Yquem  
1999 Quatre saisons pour un festin  
1998 Football : du reve a la realite -Espagne,-Angleterre, -Italie, -Bresil, -Cameroun, -  
Norvege  
1997 Quatre saison entre Marennes et Oleron  
1992 Les quatre saisons du berger  
1992 Le Noel des bergers

### Short documentaries:

Le conteur Simounet  
Alphonse Ousteau, 12 ans apres  
Le Gruyere selon Guy Savoy  
Les saisons de Fargues  
Yquem et le Stradivarius  
Festivals:  
Montréal Festival du Nouveau Cinéma,  
Canada 2008  
Abu Dhabi Middle East International Film  
Festival, UAE 2008  
Göteborg Film Festival 2009

### Prizes:

**LES QUATRE SAISONS DU BERGER**  
-Grand Prix du festival de Montagne et d'aventure de Graz. (Autriche)  
-Prix spécial du jury au festival de Banff. (Canada)

- Award de la meilleure réalisation au Festival du film de montagne de Telluride.
- Prix spécial du jury de la Mostra Internationale du film de montagne. (Andorre)
- Prix spécial du jury et prix vie sociale et ethnologique au Festival d'Autrans.

#### QUATRE SAISONS ENTRE MARENNES ET OLÉRON

- Grand prix de l'Académie de Saintonge.
- Deux reportages animaliers primés avec A2 au Festival de l'environnement et de la nature de Royan

#### TECHNICAL DETAILS

ORIGINAL TITLE Nos enfants nous accuseront  
ORIGINAL LANGUAGES French, English  
DIRECTOR Jean-Paul Jaud  
MUSIC Gabriel Yared - Editions Yad Music  
EDITOR Isabelle Szumny  
PRODUCER J + B SEQUENCES (Jean-Paul Jaud & Béatrice Jaud)  
DURATION 112 minutes  
SHOOTING FORMAT: HD CAM

#### PRAISE

“If there is a film to see this year about the environment and our health, it is 'Food Beware'.” –*Le Monde*

“A must-see!” –*Viva Magazine* (France)

“A powerful, important film! An inspiring and educational tale.” –*La Vie Verte* (A Guide to What's Green In France)

“What we found remarkable about this movie is that not only is it a warning cry but also indeed mostly it is a celebration of life and hope offering very simple solutions.”  
–*World Wildlife Fund* (France)

OFFICIAL SELECTION - Berlin Film Festival  
OFFICIAL SELECTION - Montreal Festival of New Cinema

#### **Louis Project: The Unrepentant Marxist**

October 12, 2009  
Food Beware

Opening Thursday at the Quad Cinema in New York and available in home video on November 17th, “Food Beware: the French Organic Revolution” is a companion piece to films like “Food Inc.” and “The Future of Food” that detail the harm done to consumer and nature by chemical farming.

But “Food Beware” has an added dimension, going one step further to make the case that the cancer epidemic of our epoch is directly related to the chemical-laden agriculture that has been largely adopted in the pursuit of profit. Originally titled “Nos enfants nous accuseront”, this documentary by Jean-Paul Jaud explores the same deadly nexus that is the subject of Sandra Steingraber’s “Living Downstream”. Stricken by bladder cancer in her 20s, Steingraber -a biologist and poet - sought to make the connections between cancer and the toxins that seeped into the waters of her Illinois farming community. In that book she wrote:

To the 89 percent of Illinois that is farmland, an estimated 54 million pounds of synthetic pesticides are applied each year. Introduced into Illinois at the end of World War II, these chemical poisons quietly familiarized themselves with the landscape. In 1950, less than 10 percent of cornfields were sprayed with pesticides. In 1993, 99 percent were chemically treated.

This is exactly the same threat that the people living in the small, rustic farming village of Barjac faced when the mayor decided to make the school lunch organic. Alarmed by a spike in cancer rates in an area dominated by chemical-based farming, the Communist mayor Edouard Chaulet (an affiliation unfortunately not identified in the movie) decides to take action against a cancer epidemic that has become generalized in Europe as the press kid for “Food Beware” indicates:

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Despite the clearly polemical - and urgently needed - focus of the movie, it does not preach to the audience and even sustains a meditative and lyrical quality throughout. Nestled beneath the C’vennes Mountains in south-central France, the village of Barjac and the surrounding fields look like something out of an impressionist painting. Furthermore, despite having all the reason in the world to be outraged by being victimized by toxic chemicals, the villagers appear more interested in creating alternatives to the existing system than confronting the powers that be. Since many of their friends and neighbors are farmers using carcinogenic pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers, perhaps they have no choice in the matter unless they were willing to fight a kind of civil war.

Some of the more interesting moments of this very human drama involve local organic farmers and their chemical-based counterparts having discussions about whether it is feasible to make the transition to all-organic, exploring the social and economic factors that divide the two groups.

Relying wholly on the testimony of the interviewees rather than direct commentary, the audience hears the case for organics in strictly economic terms - a clear rebuttal to those

who condemn organic farming as impractical and expensive. Considering the subsidies that chemical-based farming receives as well as the damage it does to soil and water resources, not to speak of the collateral damage it does to human beings, it condemns itself in both economic and human terms.

The movie arrives at a time when the food production system has received intense scrutiny. Yesterday, when I watched the screener, the Sunday NY Times Magazine section had a special Food Issue. One article promoted vegetarianism and another considered the calorie-restriction diet, a regimen that allows people to live far longer and with fewer ailments like diabetes and heart disease based on statistics. There was also an article by Michael Pollan touting “Rules to Eat By”. Along with the Times’s Mark Bittman, whose most recent book “Food Matters” worries about unsustainable agriculture, Pollan has become one of the major spokesmen for the values upheld in movies like “Food Inc.” and “Food Beware”.

But there is not a neat fit between the Food Revolution and the more traditional ideas about revolution upheld by people like Barjac’s Communist mayor. Pollan became a lightning rod for criticism after he urged people to continue shopping at Whole Foods. After John Mackey, the libertarian founder of Whole Foods, had written an article in the Wall Street Journal attacking government involvement in health care, there were calls for boycotting his stores. Using his reputation as a prophet of healthy eating, Pollan denounced the boycott using a singularly tortured logic:

John Mackey’s views on health care, much as I disagree with them, will not prevent me from shopping at Whole Foods. I can understand why people would want to boycott, but it’s important to play out the hypothetical consequences of a successful boycott. Whole Foods is not perfect, however if they were to disappear, the cause of improving Americans’ health by building an alternative food system, based on more fresh food, pastured and humanely raised meats and sustainable agriculture, would suffer. I happen to believe health care reform has the potential to drive big changes in the food system, and to enlist the health care industry in the fight to reform agriculture. How? Because if health insurers can no longer pick and choose their clients, and throw sick people out, they will develop a much stronger interest in prevention, which is to say, in changing the way America feeds itself.

There is also some reason to question the NY Times’s commitment to healthy eating despite the frequent publication of Michael Pollan and Mark Bittman’s articles on eating healthy. Their science pages have been polluted for some years now by the writings of John Tierney, a libertarian who never saw a chemical he didn’t like. On June 5th 2007, Tierney mocked Rachel Carsons for warning of “a cancer epidemic that never came to pass.” He also touted the work of I. L. Baldwin, a professor of agricultural bacteriology at the University of Wisconsin who believes that “civilization depended on farmers and doctors fighting ‘an unrelenting war’ against insects, parasites and disease.”

Possibly an even worse offender is the NY Times’s Gina Kolata, who has virtually made a profession out of denying links between chemical pollutants and cancer,

notwithstanding (or perhaps because of) being a sibling of Judi Bari, the environmental activist who was killed by a bomb planted in her car. In an article published in the July 6th 1998 Nation Magazine, environmental journalist/activist Mark Dowie pointed out:

On March 19, 1996, two long stories by Kolata appeared in the Science Times section. "Some environmentalists are asserting that humans and wildlife are facing a new and serious threat from synthetic chemicals," reads Kolata's lead, ignoring the fact that Colborn's hypothesis was drawn not from environmentalists but from the work of more than 400 scientists, all of whose names and numbers were provided to the Times. Throughout the main article she uses the "e" word repeatedly to describe Colborn and Myers, though both have doctorates in zoology. And she calls Myers's employer, The W. Alton Jones Foundation, "an environmental group." (The private foundation dedicates only part of its philanthropy to environmental issues.) Kolata invokes the expertise of Dr. Bruce Ames of the University of California, Berkeley, and Dr. Stephen Safe of Texas A&M, as she has often before, to counter Colborn and Myers's hypothesis. Ames is an active adviser to The Advancement of Sound Science Coalition (TASSC), a corporate-supported "watchdog coalition that advocates the use of sound sciences in public policy." TASSC has about 900 members, 375 of whom are scientists. The rest are executives from the chemical, oil, dairy, timber, paper, mining, manufacturing and agribusiness industries seeking ways to defend their products in media and the courts.

Ultimately, the cognitive dissonance at work in the pages of the NY Times points to the political paralysis that prevents major reforms from taking place in American society as well as other major industrialized countries like France. The powers-that-be recognize that humanity is threatened by greenhouse gases, chemical-based farming, exhaustion of the world's fishing stocks, mountaintop removal in coal country and a myriad of other environmental problems but they stop short of attacking the root of these problems, namely production on the basis of profit.

As the crisis deepens, with all its attendant symptoms from the cancer epidemic to species extinctions, the understanding that a radical change is necessary will seep into the consciousness of those who have the power to change the system, namely the working people who bear the brunt of unhealthy food, chemical pollution and other hazards that constantly lowering wages leaves them vulnerable to. A NY Times editor or a hedge fund manager can afford all the healthy food and the best medical care required to fix the illnesses that attack even the wealthy but the world we need should make it possible for everybody to live well, not just the rich. If it takes socialism to make that world possible, then let's move forward.