

## Will the Greens Sacrifice Their Own “Sacred Cows”?

By Dennis T. Avery, Hudson Institute

*Wired Magazine* has published a list of “Green sacred cows” it says must be sacrificed to save the planet. *Wired’s* founding editor, Kevin Kelly, formerly edited the *Whole Earth Catalog*, so the magazine has credentials for rethinking what it means to be Green.

“Today, one ecological problem outweighs all others: global warming,” says *Wired’s* May 19 issue. “Restoring the Everglades, protecting the Headwaters redwoods, or saving the Illinois mud turtle won’t matter if climate change plunges the planet into chaos. . . . Winning the war on global warming requires slaughtering some of environmentalism’s sacred cows. We can afford to ignore neither the carbon-free electricity supplied by nuclear energy nor the transformational potential of genetic engineering. . . .”

Here, then, are some of *Wired’s* new eco-heresies:

**Air conditioning is good:** “As a symbol of American profligacy, the air conditioner may rank second only to the automobile. . . . But this stereotype gets it wrong. When it’s 0 degrees outside, you’ve got to raise the indoor thermometer to 70 degrees. In 110-degree weather, you need to change the temperature by only 40 degrees to achieve the same comfort level. . . . In the Northeast, a typical house heated by fuel oil emits 13,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> annually. Cooling a similar dwelling in Phoenix produced only 900 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> a year.”

**Organics are not the answer:** *Wired* notes that organic farms yield less food per acre. Actually, the organic yields are only about half as high as conventional because the world has an urgent shortage of manure. So all-organic farming would give up half the current world food output, threatening hunger for billions and extinction for species whose wild forests get cleared to plant more low-yield crops. Additionally, organic steers are on pasture much longer, burping up twice as much methane per pound as a feedlot steer, according to the UN’s FAO—and needing three times as much of the world’s scarce land.

**Farm the forests like fields:** Old-growth forests have a problem. “A tree absorbs roughly 1,500 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> in its first 55 years. After that, its’ growth slows and it takes in less carbon. Left untouched, it ultimately rots or burns and all that CO<sub>2</sub> gets released. . . . The most climate-friendly policy is to continually cut down trees and plant new ones. Lots of them.” Use the wood to build durables such as furniture and houses, says the magazine.

**Accept biotechnology:** New nitrogen-efficient genetically engineered crops need only half as much nitrogen fertilizer—which *Wired* says could save a whopping 50 million tons worth of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year, with almost no leftover fertilizer to leach into streams. An organic dairy cow, with no boost from biotech growth hormone, gives 8 percent less milk. That means more cows,

eating more feed, and emitting more methane, to produce organic milk that contains identical growth hormones.

**Embrace nuclear power:** “Nukes are the most climate-friendly industrial-scale form of energy.” A recent British government white paper says that from uranium mining to decommissioning, a nuclear power plant emits only 2 to 6 percent of the carbon per kilowatt-hour as natural gas. “Embracing the atom is key to winning the war on warming. . . . One of the Kyoto Protocol’s worst features is a sop to greens that denies carbon credits to power-starved developing countries that build nukes—thereby ensuring they’ll continue to depend on filthy coal.”

We commend *Wired* for indeed focusing on environmental first principles. Now, if some additional warming actually occurs after our ten-years-and-counting vacation from higher temperatures . . .

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