Food Atlas Entry: Madyson McGuire

ANTH 2801

For many, perhaps like you and I, consumers (people) are growing in concern for what can be found in their food. The newer generations are becoming more conscious of their health and first step to doing so is analyzing what exactly is in our food; Which was exactly my intentions in writing my research paper, From Plate to Farm: How Consumer Preferences Impact Grain and Grass Fed Beef in Rural Canada to the Benefit of Smaller Farmers, where I analyzed both grass and grain fed beef grown in the rural communities of Canada using a backwards notion, of looking what we consumers find at the supermarket and curate to make meals with. In writing my research paper, I had included a personal component; where I discussed my own experience in grass-fed cattle farming and mentioned a “day in the life” of a grass-fed cattle farm. With beef, there are two more “common” ways of growing. The first one, or the more conventional practice, is grain-fed beef, where once they are large enough, they are fed grain products such as but not limited to soy and corn. The conventional beef practice takes roughly 60-220 days, which is significantly faster than that of a grass-fed cow. The other growing practice, and the focus of my research paper, grass-fed beef, where like grain beef once the calf is at an acceptable weight, they are fed strictly grass and hay in the winter months when grass is not readily available. With that, my paper discussed the fact that consumer preferences of grass fed beef, due to the fact that the overall taste, quality and appearance of the beef is of higher grade than grain fed beef, which in turn enables farmers to charge more per pound (on average a dollar or more a pound). Due to the fact that farmers are able to charge more for grass-fed beef which provides incentive to small-scale farmers despite the fact that grass-fed herds take longer to meet an appropriate weight for market (roughly one year). With relevance to the main differences in grass and grain fed beef; grass fed beef is known to be healthier as there is decreased marbling (knotting) in the meat, which means there is less saturated fats and also that there is fewer calories. Along with that, grass fed cattle, since they are fed strictly grass and hay, it inhibits the possibility for the use of growth hormones and steroids, which is of growing concern to consumers. Dicussing the benefits of grass-fed beef, grass-fed beef has also been known to have less of environmental impact as it aids in the conservation of soil, reduces erosion, and water pollution. Along with that, conventional farming practices of any livestock is known to be a major contributor to Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, but where grass-fed cattle are usually grown in smaller herds over a greater surface area, they are able to reduce their methane emission, despite the fact that they have a longer growing time. Since westernized society is being more conscious of food and environmental impact (wishing to possess a green thumb), it is of great benefit to farmers both economically and environmentally to pursue grass-feeding cattle raising practices.