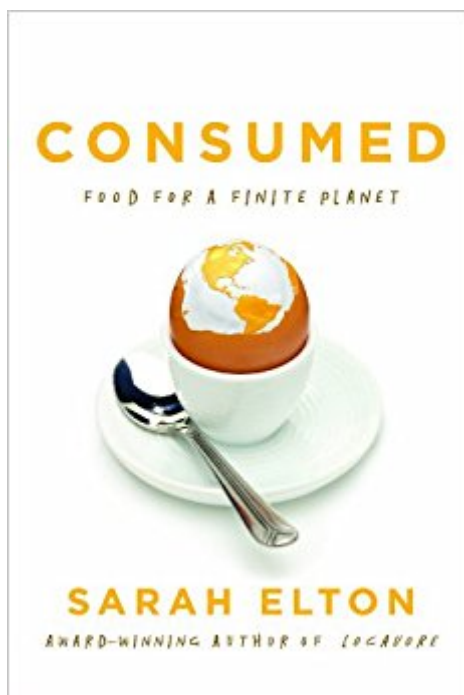


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# Consumed: Food For A Finite Planet



## Synopsis

By 2050, the world population is expected to reach nine billion. And the challenge of feeding this rapidly growing population is being made greater by climate change, which will increasingly wreak havoc on the way we produce our food. At the same time, we have lost touch with the soil—few of us know where our food comes from, let alone how to grow it—and we are at the mercy of multinational corporations who control the crops and give little thought to the damage their methods are inflicting on the planet. Our very future is at risk.

In *Consumed*, Sarah Elton walks fields and farms on three continents, not only investigating the very real threats to our food, but also telling the little-known stories of the people who are working against time to create a new and hopeful future. From the mountains of southern France to the highlands of China, from the crowded streets of Nairobi to the banks of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec, we meet people from all walks of life who are putting together an alternative to the omnipresent industrial food system. In the arid fields of rural India we meet a farmer who has transformed her community by selling organic food directly to her neighbors. We visit a laboratory in Toronto where scientists are breeding a new kind of rice seed that they claim will feed the world. We learn about Italy's underground food movement; how university grads are returning to the fields in China, Greece, and France; and how in Detroit, plots of vacant land planted with kale and carrots can help us see what's possible.

Food might be the problem, but as Elton shows, it is also the solution. The food system as we know it was assembled in a few decades—and if it can be built that quickly, it can be reassembled and improved in the same amount of time. Elton here lays out the targets we need to meet by the year 2050. The stories she tells give us hope for avoiding a daunting fate and instead help us to believe in a not-too-distant future when we can all sit at the table.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“If our industrial food system leaves you feeling a little queasy, Sarah Elton has just the medicine you need: a powerfully hopeful account of the gathering efforts to take down our too-big-to-fail agribusiness empire and replace it with something that makes sense for our planet and our communities!” (Bill McKibben, author of *Oil and Honey: The Education of an Unlikely Activist*)  
“A terrific new book.” (Michael Pollan @michaelpollan)  
“The optimism that Sarah Elton shows about feeding the growing population of the world—which she anticipates will reach 9 billion by 2050—shines forth from every page of *Consumed: Food for a Finite Planet*.” (Times Literary Supplement)  
“Meticulously researched and carefully written. . . . An enlightening and worthy read. Highly recommended.” (K. M. Monks, University of Idaho Choice)

Sarah Elton is the author of *Locavore: From Farmers' Fields To Rooftop Gardens* • How Canadians Are Changing the Way We Eat. She has written for publications such as the New York Times, Atlantic, Maclean's, and Globe and Mail and is the food columnist for CBC Radio's *Here & Now*. She lives in Toronto.

*Consumed - Food for Finite Planet* - is essential and stimulating reading. What could be more central to our wellbeing than the food we eat and the land we produce it on? With projected water shortages, dwindling biodiversity, and an exponential growth in agricultural oil dependency, it doesn't take much to see a horrifying crisis on the horizon. But those fears can seem so overheated, sitting down to a big meal at our tables in the first world; we know we're on the brink, but we're not certain - and would rather not imagine - that we'll be among the ones who'll suffer. Sarah Elton neatly shreds our illusions. Her tone is measured, sober, and bracing. Elton shines light on a series of issues that demand worldwide attention, and her observations are candidly direct. There will always be those who manipulate or dismiss these concerns, and it can be depressing to see how easily they displace responsibility. But I've come away from Elton's book invigorated with optimism. She depicts a number of examples of conscious confrontation - the women's agricultural

cooperative in rural India - rooftop gardens in Queens - sustainable CSAs in China - many many others. In intelligent, evocative prose, Elton renders numerous examples of positive self-determination, people she sought out and actually listened to, and she shares their success stories and methods without hyperbole. I get so sick of talking heads who remain isolated from the subjects they comment on, always hedging their bets on where and how the system will collapse - while make sure to suggest how to profit off the chaos that will ensue. They maintain enough distance to ignore fundamental concerns, taking care to avoid discussing first principals and answer basic questions about their values. Who deserves to eat healthy food grown in healthy soil, and who deserves to profit from it? Are we going to continue to permit a global economic structure that allows algorithms on Wall Street to radically manipulate the price of bread? But Consumed isn't only a provocative critical analysis. What makes this book really useful - and such a pleasure to read - is how constructive and encouraging Elton is, how many real-world solutions she offers. She got her hands dirty and dug out the evidence to prove we can do it differently - we can structure a global food economy that's just AND sustainable. Elton has proven how interconnected we are, and presented a refreshing analysis of the challenges and rewards of our responsibilities. I love books that offer this level of intelligent problem solving - I can't recommend it enough!!!

I really enjoyed reading this book!! It was truly eye-opening and engaging.

Great book, timely delivery.

Sarah Elton's book offers an interesting and informative look at our relationship with food, mostly from a farming perspective. She's not afraid to examine some of the big issues of our time: GMOs, global food trade, mega-farms, industrial foods, and food security. And her insightful reports from various global fronts range from Chinese rice growers to French cheese-makers, from Indian small farm organic co-operatives and bazaars to Detroit's urban agriculture movement. And the end, she writes, "Any food system must be sustainable. By that I mean it must be able to not only provide us with food today, but continue to provide food well into the future. Our farming can't take more from the biosphere than it gives back... Water should also be stewarded with utmost concern both for conservation and for effluent--we must not pollute the water with fertilizer runoff or with livestock waste. All this must be done while paying attention to energy use..." and "It is important that our world's farmers earn a living wage. We cannot continue to exploit farmers so the rest of us eat cheap food." Good words. This book is a worthy read on a seriously important topic.

Having just finished Consumed I applaud the author for painting such a clear and well researched picture of the current state of environmentally abusive farming practices. She sets the stage well for highlights of how small scale sustainable farming can, and must, change our food system. This book is such a great resource for information on sustainable agriculture and how small growers can change the status quo. It's a call to action that shows how individual choices can bring about change.

Or it'd be 8 pages long. If you like feeling worried and adore books that are bad at math, history, and economics, this one is for you. I almost finished this book before deciding that a walk was a far better use of my time. It's well written, but ignores a LOT of inputs and cherry picks the rest to make the case. The plural of data is not anecdote and they shouldn't be treated as such. Entertaining, but misleading. If you do not have a background in economics & ag however her arguments have a certain truthiness to them.

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