The Weston A. Price Foundation

Fake Meat and Other Fake Foods: Synthetic Biology Wolves in "Sustainable" Sheep's Clothing

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Print post

Over the past two years, the "Covid" narrative has provided an all-too-effective cover story for a worldwide takeover by central bankers and technocrats, one that is leaving no sector of society untouched.[1] Although it is still difficult for many members of the public to grasp the financial and governance implications of this globally imposed "reset,"[2] some have taken notice of ominous developments in the areas of food and farming.

With restrictive Covid policies reshaping everything from farmland ownership[3] to meat processing[4] to restaurant eating[5] to food costs and availability,[6] it is clear that critical battle lines are being redrawn. And one of the most disturbing new battlefronts has to do with the most age-old of rights, one that Maine voters just took the precaution of enshrining in their Constitution: the "natural, inherent, and un-alienable right to food, including. . . the right to grow, raise, harvest, produce and consume the food of [one's] own choosing."[7]

Although food freedom has been under attack for a long time (as Weston A. Price Foundation members[8] and regenerative farmers like Joel Salatin know only too well[9]), it is becoming increasingly evident that the perpetrators include a wider range of players than just the regulatory bullies at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Consider the bizarre tweet put forth by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis just before Thanksgiving, which encouraged

Americans to eat a "soybean-based dinner" instead of turkey.[10] The Federal Reserve blog post that prompted the tweet helpfully explained, "A tofurkey (soybean) dinner serving with the same amount of calories [as a serving of turkey] costs $0.66 [versus $1.42] and provides almost twice as much protein. Keep in mind that this plant-based meal would be almost three times larger by weight than the poultry-based meal and may either keep you at the dinner table longer or provide you with more leftovers."[11]

If it seems odd that central bankers are meddling with Americans' holiday food choices, it's time to recognize their promotion of a new zeitgeist[12]—a "post-Covid" synthetic-biology promised land. "Synbio's" proponents describe this new scientific frontier as the leveraging and manipulation of the "script of life" to make "useful materials."[13] With the help of tools such as CRISPR gene editing,[14] scientists insert synthesized pieces of DNA into an organism's genome, "exponentially accelerating gene evolution."[13] As the National Institutes of Health (NIH) blandly tell us, these inserted pieces "could be genes that are found in other organisms or they could be entirely novel."[15]

Spearheading the synthetic biology coup is a host of players: big ag,[16] big tech,[17] medicine/ pharma,[18] the military,[19] Wall Street[13] and others.[20] Illustrating some of these strange-bedfellow relationships, a 2018 MIT seminar series brought together creepy Harvard synthetic biology guru and Nebula Genomics founder George Church —who aspires to "build human (and other) genomes from scratch"—with representatives from Moderna, Novartis and Impossible Foods.[21] Synthetic biology has even had its own annual conference, SynBioBeta, since 2012, launched by a former NASA synthetic biologist and described by cheery investors as having "an irreverent, counterculture vibe to it."[17]

While these modern-day Dr. Frankensteins solemnly proclaim that the purpose of synthetic biology is to "solve problems in medicine, manufacturing and agriculture,"[15] the financial tea leaves tell a different story. The *sub-rosa* intent of synbio technologies like programmable cell-based biosensors[22] has less to do with "solving

problems" and more to do with the creation of "a surveillance-driven totalitarian system that uses new technologies to centralize economic flows—including controlling the ability to transact"—and eat—"at the individual level."[20]

The Synthetic Biology "Opportunity"

Breathlessly billing "synbio" as "hot,"[23] "disruptive," "transformative,"[12] "revolutionary"[24] and a twenty-first century "gold rush,"[23] investment research firms are pitching synthetic biology as one of the biggest opportunities going, telling those who recognize its "incredible potential" that they "stand to make fortunes."[25] One investment advisor enthuses:

Synthetic biology involves reconfiguring the DNA of an organism to create something entirely new. It allows scientists to design living things with attributes and characteristics we desire. In short, it allows you to *'program' biology* just like you would a computer! It's a way to create just about any product in the world. This is HUGE [emphasis in original].[25]

In late 2017, an innovation-focused website described synthetic biology as "one of the fastest growing fields in terms of both information and *capital generation*" [emphasis added], with a "compound annual growth rate [of the synthetic biology market] of 24%."[26] At the time, there were an estimated one hundred sixty synthetic biology companies; today, there are something like six hundred.[25]

The funds driving this "boom" come from two main sources: private capital and the Department of Defense (DOD)—primarily via the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).[26] And tech billionaires dominate the list of private capital players (see Table 1). Bryan Johnson (current CEO of Kernel, "a groundbreaking company building technology to measure brain activity," and past CEO of Braintree and Venmo) has a hand in at least nine different synthetic biology companies. Johnson has stated, "Synthetic biology is like playing with LEGO blocks. You can build

pretty much whatever you can imagine." He rhapsodizes that whereas "the previous era was built on silicon, the future will be built on atoms, molecules, organisms and complex systems."[27]

Johnson's venture capital synbio portfolio runs the gamut from mRNA therapeutics to agricultural applications such as those made by Pivot Bio, "a scalable proprietary tech platform that enables microbes to reliably produce nitrogen for cereal crops"; early grants from the Gates Foundation helped launch Pivot Bio.[28]

The "Sustainability" Marketing Gimmick

Many synbio proponents are making a "straightforward economic argument for using synthetic biology," claiming that "Bio-based raw materials can make a product more efficient, higher performance, and most often cheaper than the legacy products they're displacing."[13] Such claims are somewhat disingenuous, however, eliding the fact that synthetic biology organisms essentially represent "the next generation of GMOs."[29]

In fact, NPR announced back in 2014 that GMOs are "old hat," stating that "synthetically modified food is the new frontier."[30] However, whereas "old hat" GMOs merely swapped genes from one species to another, synbio techniques make it possible "to create entirely new life forms, as well as genetically 'reprogram' existing organisms to produce a new type of life that behaves in new ways or that produces substances that it wouldn't produce naturally."[31]

Aware that synthetic-biology ingredients are likely to give the GMO-leery public "the heebie-jeebies,"[32] corporate players have a ready response: synbio innovations, we are told, are solutions to "climate change." For example, citing climate change as a threat to the coffee bean, a Finnish research group has developed lab-grown coffee and suggests its product "could . . . do the planet a huge favor" by allowing coffee drinkers to consume a beverage "that smells and tastes almost the same as

conventional coffee" but "without the environmental guilt" (and never mind the potential "loss of livelihood for the 20 million rural poor and smallholders who rely on coffee growing").[33]

In the current environment where consumers are only too eager to virtue-signal their support of "sustainability," the hope is that passing off synbio as "green" and "virtuous" will short-circuit at least some members of the public from asking deeper questions about unforeseeable genie-out-of-the-bottle consequences, ethical considerations or other risks. What are those risks? Although many are similar to those posed by first-generation GMOs, synbio techniques, critics note, are "more powerful, faster, and present a broader array of potential consequences."[31] These include the dangers of environmental contamination, increased demand for unsustainable feedstocks (such as the commercial sugar used in synbio fermentation), problems of seed contamination, unknown effects on health and potentially devastating impacts on the small and genuinely sustainable farmers who produce the artisan products (vanilla, saffron, cacao, coconut, shea butter, stevia—and coffee) that synthetic biologists seem to be targeting.[31] Scientists admit that synbio organisms "will inevitably escape into the environment," where they have the potential to self-replicate.

Related to the verbiage about sustainability are the déjà vu claims that synthetic biology is the answer to global hunger—the very same claim once made about GMOs! Arguing in favor of synthetic biology "innovations" to address hunger, German researchers stated in 2020, "Global food production needs to be increased by 70% to meet demands by 2050. Current agricultural practices cannot cope with this pace and furthermore are not ecologically sustainable."[24]

Let Them Eat Synthetic Beef

As indicated by Bill Gates' extensive investments focused on agricultural "transformation" and fake meat (including Beyond Meat, Eat Just, Impossible Foods, and Upside Foods/Memphis Meats), Gates is one of the leading front men in charge of

shifting public attitudes about next-generation Frankenfoods. In October 2021, the billionaire made headlines with his advice that residents of rich countries switch to 100 percent synthetic beef as a key climate action step.[34] Gates is well aware of the marketing challenges, however, admitting that to tell people "You can't have cows anymore" is "politically unpopular."[35] (For a topical case study, read the Fall, 2021 *Wise Traditions* article about the de facto banning of beef in Karnataka, India.[36]) Also acknowledging the handicap posed by labeling legislation (which would, in Gates' view, require fake beef "to be called. . . lab garbage"), Gates has coyly suggested that if consumers don't fall for the notion of a "green premium," then "regulation" could be used to "totally shift the demand."[35]

Unfortunately for Beyond Meat's gung-ho investors, Gates' October 2021 media tour to tout the wonders of synthetic beef seems to have fallen flat. On October 25, Beyond Meat experienced a 14 percent one-day decline in its stock price[37] amid reports that the company's share value was down 60 percent over its January peak.[38] One news outlet noted that even with "meat prices on the rise, it appears many Americans would rather pay extra for animal protein or do without it rather than try Beyond Meat's synthetic plant-based protein products."[37] To redeem the company's reputation, analysts are suggesting that Beyond Meat might have a brighter future in "easier-to-replicate" synthetic poultry and pork, rather than beef, and that "the way forward" might involve wholesale partnerships that make it possible to sneak fake meat products into school lunches and fast-food offerings.[38]

Beyond Meat's setback may not mean much for the fake meat industry as a whole, however, due to the startups' many powerful backers and "full steam ahead" momentum. The *Corey's Digs* website has outlined, for example, how lab-grown meat produced by the Israeli firm Future Meat Technologies is gearing up to hit the U.S. market in a big way in 2022.[39] With tools like a "Smarter Food Safety Blueprint" and food traceability apps, the FDA and USDA are helping to get everything lined up for the lab-grown meat stampede. In addition to Future Meat Technologies and the two U.S. government agencies, other key players in the global "full scale agenda to remove the meat industry entirely" include NASA; various universities; Bill Gates; Beyond

Meat, Impossible Foods (which already has products stationed in Burger King and Starbucks), Eat Just (plant-based alternatives to eggs) and Upside Foods (formerly Memphis Meats); Tyson Foods; Amazon; and the World Economic Forum, among others.[39]

The Bigger Picture

It does not take too much digging to connect the dots between the various interventions rolled out by global technocrats in 2020 and 2021. As Corey Lynn of *Corey's Digs* (https://www.coreysdigs.com/)explains:

The SAME companies and individuals that are involved with the 2030 agenda 'Great Reset,' that are rolling out the digital identities to get everyone onto the blockchain in order to control humanity, are also invested in the lab grown meat industry. Why? Because in order to control the masses, you have to also control the food, and meat is a good place to start. If anyone believes this is about climate change or sustainability, they've lost site [*sic*] of reality.[39]

Lynn, who further notes that "Many of these same people are also involved with the Covid jabs," has taken pains to document in a four-part series, the wider implications of digital identities and vaccine passports. In her analysis, digital identities are the spearpoint of "a coordinated attack against humanity" to "plug every human being into the smart grid, inside their smart cities, where a virtual and augmented reality awaits, all data is mined and surveilled, people become a labor force synced with robots, and everybody's actions, access, and spending is controlled by a social and climate scoring system."[40]

Certainly, these wider trends are driving food fights in unprecedented science-fiction directions, almost making one long for old-fashioned regulatory bullying. To push back against those who would move humanity onto a *Soylent Green* diet, commit to WAPF's "50-50 pledge" to spend at least 50 percent of your food dollars supporting local farmers and artisans,[41] and consider working on food freedom bills such as

Maine's and those passed in several other states.[42] More broadly, do whatever you can to help rebuild vibrant local economies and communities, while rejecting global tyrants' dystopian vision of centralized control over your every move, every purchase, every thought— and every bite.

SIDEBARS

Synbio—Far From "Green"

Synthetic biology vanillin, developed by the Swiss company Evolva in partnership with International Flavors & Fragrances, is made with a synthetic genetic code inserted into yeast. In 2013, the organization Friends of the Earth warned consumers about the impending, unlabeled arrival of synthetic biology vanillin—"coming to an ice-cream cone near you"—and emphasized, "Production of synthetic biology vanillin is not environmentally sustainable at the industrial scale."[43]

Among the problems with claiming that synbio vanillin is "green," Friends of the Earth highlighted the following:

- Efficient vanillin synthesis requires an "immense amount of sugar."
- This "encourages monocultures of fast-growing sugars instead of the rich biodiversity of the tropical ecosystems which are host to the vanilla orchid."
- Sugar plantations often contribute to environmental degradation, and many are infamous for poor working conditions.
- There are no data on whether synthetic biology vanillin is safe to eat.

Of greatest concern, the environmental organization stated, "Synthetic organisms threaten biological diversity if they escape into the environment—either intentionally or unintentionally from a lab. Once 'living self-replicating organisms' are released, there is no way to remove them. They could become a new class of invasive species or pollutant and disrupt ecosystems."

Reinventing Restaurants: QR Codes and Nanoparticles

In the U.S., draconian lockdowns and occupancy limits took out one hundred ten thousand restaurants and two and a half million jobs in 2020—one in four of total jobs lost—making it "the worst year for the restaurant industry in its history."[44] The majority of closed restaurants had been in operation for at least sixteen years, employing an average of thirty-two people.[5] As trade magazine *QSR* put it, "The pandemic did not simply sweep brands on the brink off the cliff. . . . It plucked legacy operations and communities [*sic*] fixtures off the map." The demise of many small and immigrant-owned restaurants also gave larger chain restaurants an opportunity "to expand and obtain prime restate [*sic*] left behind. . . potentially locking in a permanent and inequality-widening change in the [restaurant] sector."[5]

Many restaurants are attempting to survive by adopting a more "tech-centric" business model. In fact, *Food Safety News* rosily predicts a "post-COVID restaurant environment [that] will look entirely different from before"; instead of mom-and-pop restaurants with candles and checkered tablecloths, the eating establishments of the near future will be characterized by QR-code-based menus, apps for reservations and ordering, "ghost kitchens" (carry-out and delivery only) and robotic "cashiers, cleaners and even cooks."[45] This space-age vision also includes "metallic nanoparticle coatings to sterilize and disinfect kitchen equipment"—and, no doubt, brave new synthetic biology ingredients.

Profile of a Synthetic Meat Venture Capitalist

Greg Bohlen, a North Carolina-based venture capitalist, has a 1 percent ownership stake in Beyond Meat[46] and served on the company's board until late 2019, having initially invested in Beyond Meat in a 2012 funding round.[47] Although Bohlen grew up on a cattle farm and is an "avowed meat eater," publicly he supports Bill Gates' proposition that meat substitutes "can help feed the world cheaply, easily and more efficiently than cattle farms."[48] As of July 2019, Bohlen's 1.6 million Beyond Meat

shares (purchased for eight million dollars) were valued at over one hundred forty-four million dollars, with an August 2019 sale of tens of thousands of shares netting the investor nearly twelve million dollars.[49]

These fake meat proceeds appear to be helping the venture capitalist, who is also an amateur vintner, with real estate acquisitions and genome-altering agricultural pursuits. Bohlen has been amassing hundreds of acres in the Chapel Hill area, with his most recent purchase being two hundred seventy-nine acres taken off the hands of a long-time local dairy farm.[50] Bohlen bills his vineyard as "regenerative" and "eco-friendly" while employing a genomics specialist and others to help him produce a genetically altered seedless muscadine grape intended for mass production. Interestingly, gene tinkerers have sought to produce a seedless muscadine since the late 1980s; more honest back then, they admitted at the time that such a grape would be so different from the ordinary muscadine that they "wouldn't call it a grape" but would "have to come up with a new name."[51] Concerns expressed in the late 1980s about the opening of a Pandora's box of genetic mutants are still relevant three decades later.

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