



Call of the Reed Warbler

A New Agriculture, A New Earth

Charles Massy

foreword by Nicolette Hahn Niman

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“This is a story for our story-loving species at this most critical of all moments in its entire time on Earth.”

—CHARLES MASSY

C*all of the Reed Warbler* is an urgent, yet lyrically written call for the global transformation of agriculture, and an in-depth look at the innovative farmers who are revolutionizing the way we grow, eat, and think about food. Originally published by University of Queensland Press in Australia, Chelsea Green Publishing is bringing this important book to a wider audience this Fall.

What is Regenerative Agriculture and why is it important?

Farmland covers 38 percent of the Earth’s land area and is a major contributor to climate change. But it doesn’t have to be this way. Soil and plants have the capacity to store huge amounts of carbon in the ground, thus how we grow food can be one of the key solutions to our climate crisis. Visionary farmer and educator Charles Massy argues that an ecologically and socially enhancing agriculture—known as regenerative agriculture—can reverse these harmful carbon emissions by working with nature rather than against it to increase biodiversity, enrich soils, improve watersheds, and strengthen ecosystems.

Written from the perspective of a working farmer after a lifetime’s experience on the land, who is also a university professor with a PhD in human ecology, Massy tells a story that is accessible to not only farmers, but policymakers, rural leaders, and consumers alike. *The Guardian* calls it, “Part lyrical nature writing. . .part solid scientific evidence. . . part memoir. . . an elegant manifesto.” [see page 2 for full feature story].

What Sets this Book Apart?

- Provides a deeper understanding of how landscapes and natural systems function via illustrative stories from the author’s life and 140+ interviews.
- Traces the direct link between soil health and human health, and that the chemicals used in industrial agriculture are among the causes of modern illness.
- Shares philosophical reflections on a new “mind” and “heart” required to reconnect with nature and address the Anthropocene epoch.

Find out from Charles Massy what a New Agriculture could look like and how we can ensure the future health of our food supply, our planet, and ourselves.



Charles Massy is an award-winning author, veteran farmer, and owner of the prominent Merino Sheep stud “Seven Park.” He received the Order of Australia Medal for his service as chair and director of a number of research organizations and has served on national and international panels in sheep research and genomics.

<http://media.chelseagreen.com/call-of-the-reed-warbler>

The Guardian



Farmer wants a revolution: 'How is this not genocide?'

Health comes from the ground up, Charles Massy says - yet chemicals used in agriculture are 'causing millions of deaths'. [Susan Chenery](#) meets the writer intent on changing everything about the way we grow, eat and think about food

The kurrajong tree has scars in its wrinkled trunk, the healed wounds run long and vertical under its ancient bark. Standing in front of the homestead, it nestles in a dip on high tableland from which there is a clear view across miles and miles of rolling plains to the coastal range of south-east Australia.

Charles Massy grew up here, on the sweeping Monaro plateau that runs off the eastern flank of Mount Kosciuszko, an only child enveloped by the natural world, running barefoot, accompanied by dogs and orphaned lambs. Fifth generation, he has spent his adult life farming this tough, lean, tussock country; he is of this place and it of him. But when his friend and Aboriginal Ngarigo elder Rod Mason came to visit he discovered that a lifetime of intimately knowing the birds, trees and animals of this land wasn't significant at all.

The tree is probably a lot older than 400 years. Rod told him that when the old women walked their favourite songline tracks they carried seeds of their favourite food and resource plants, and sowed them at spirituality significant camping places. His front garden was one such ceremony place - there would have been a grove planted, and the women had stripped the bark from the tree to make bags and material. This old tree represented a connection to country "deeper than we can imagine, and linking us indivisibly with the natural world", he writes in his book *Call of the Reed Warbler: A New [Agriculture](#) - A New Earth*.

Part lyrical nature writing, part storytelling, part solid scientific evidence, part scholarly research, part memoir, the book is an elegant manifesto, an urgent call to stop trashing the Earth and start healing it. More than that, it underlines a direct link between soil health and human health, and that the chemicals used in industrial agriculture are among the causes of modern illness.

It makes a world war look like a little storm in a teacup. And we are in denial

“Most of our cereal crops, the soybeans, the corn, are all predicated now on the world’s most widely used chemical which is glyphosate [Roundup],” Massy says. “There is mounting evidence that it is one of the most destructive chemicals ever to get into the system. Its main effect is on the human gut and our entire immune system.

“When you look at the As - autism, ADHD, all the other auto-immune diseases - their take off is a 95% correlation to these chemicals being introduced. The evidence is that it affects the gut and the immune system, though it is not the sole factor, and it is a complex thing. But it is that gut that drives our whole immune system, it is our second brain.”

He says that when you spray insects with insecticides you kill off the predators so you have got to have more powerful chemicals next time because the pests come back stronger.

Massy is among scientists who believe we have entered a new geological epoch, the life-threatening Anthropocene, where human impact has permanently altered the Earth’s geology and sustaining systems, causing ecological destruction and extinction of species. “It is the greatest crisis the planet and humanity has ever faced,” he says, sitting at his kitchen table in country **New South Wales**. “It makes a world war look like a little storm in a teacup. And we are in denial.”



Tall, lean, fit, with white hair crowning a face that has spent a life outdoors, Massy looks more like the establishment grazier he is rather than a powerful advocate for revolutionising everything about the way we farm, eat and think about food. We are at a tipping point, he says, and if we ignore we are “history”.

Massy spent eight years going to his office in an outbuilding behind the house in the early hours of morning to write before a day of working on the farm; the 569-page book is his life’s work; the big picture, the long view both historical and into the future that pulls together the latest international scientific research and thinking on climate change, regenerative farming, industrial agriculture and the corporations driving it.

He writes: “While consuming more resources than the Earth’s systems can replenish, we are hurtling towards multiple calamities. We are degrading the air we breathe, denaturing the food we eat and water we drink and lacing them with a witch’s brew of deadly poisons.”

We have lost touch with the land, we manipulate the Earth to our own ends, we dominate it and are ultimately destroying it. Aboriginal people, he says, saw it differently, as something to be nurtured and nourished, a living entity. He calls their custodianship “one of the greatest ever sustainable partnerships between humankind and the ecosystems they occupied”.

Then white Australians brought what he calls the mechanical mind and the European mind. “It is a totally different continent to anywhere else in the world. It works totally differently to that young landscape of Europe with humidity and rich soils. Until we throw off the European mechanical mind we are going to continue to stuff the joint. It is not something inanimate that you can belt. It is almost like being with a lover, you have got to nurture it and care for it.”

Now 65 and “a fossil” Massy is, by his own admission, a “biophilia”, filled with the wonder and delight of nature. “I believe one cannot gain true ecological literacy without a great empathy with, and understanding of, nature and how it functions. Thus one’s heart also needs to be involved.”

But his own journey and awakening was slow and stumbling. He was at university when, at the age of 22, his father had a heart attack and he came home to manage the merino and cattle property. Well-intentioned and diligent he read the books, he sought advice, he learned. “I thought I was running a pretty good show.” His wool was being bought for fabric by “the top guys in Italy. We were the first group to breed animal welfare-friendly sheep.” But he now realises he was “blind” and “oblivious”, he saw the landscape “as if through a glass darkly”.

He writes: “I completely overlooked the most important of all factors, the keystone of the whole operation: that our farm was a complex and dynamic series of ecological systems, and that our landscape actually functioned in specific but sensitive ways.” He made mistakes; he assiduously ploughed a paddock just before a huge storm came and washed the topsoil away, “I had cost the landscape perhaps a thousand years of topsoil.” Like many other regenerative farmers he reached the conclusion he had to make a big shift when something “cracked” his mind open.

FOR THE REST OF THE ARTICLE VISIT:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/sep/23/farmer-wants-a-revolution-how-is-this-not-genocide>