

Mentorship

JACK GEIGER, *GEIGER FARM*

certified organic since 1989 | land stewardship in Kansas since 1856

A Generational Ethic

Our forefathers settled in Northeast Kansas in the 1800s. They came from an area of abundant people with scarce land to an area of abundant land and scarce people. They practiced a farming ethic based upon:

- **DIVERSITY**—Cultural basis including animals, people and skills, food production
- **THRIFT**—Health and ease of care, local adaptation
- **EFFICIENCY**—Energy/synergy
- **SELF RELIANCE**—Food, seed, community



“Rule by Obeying” Implies:

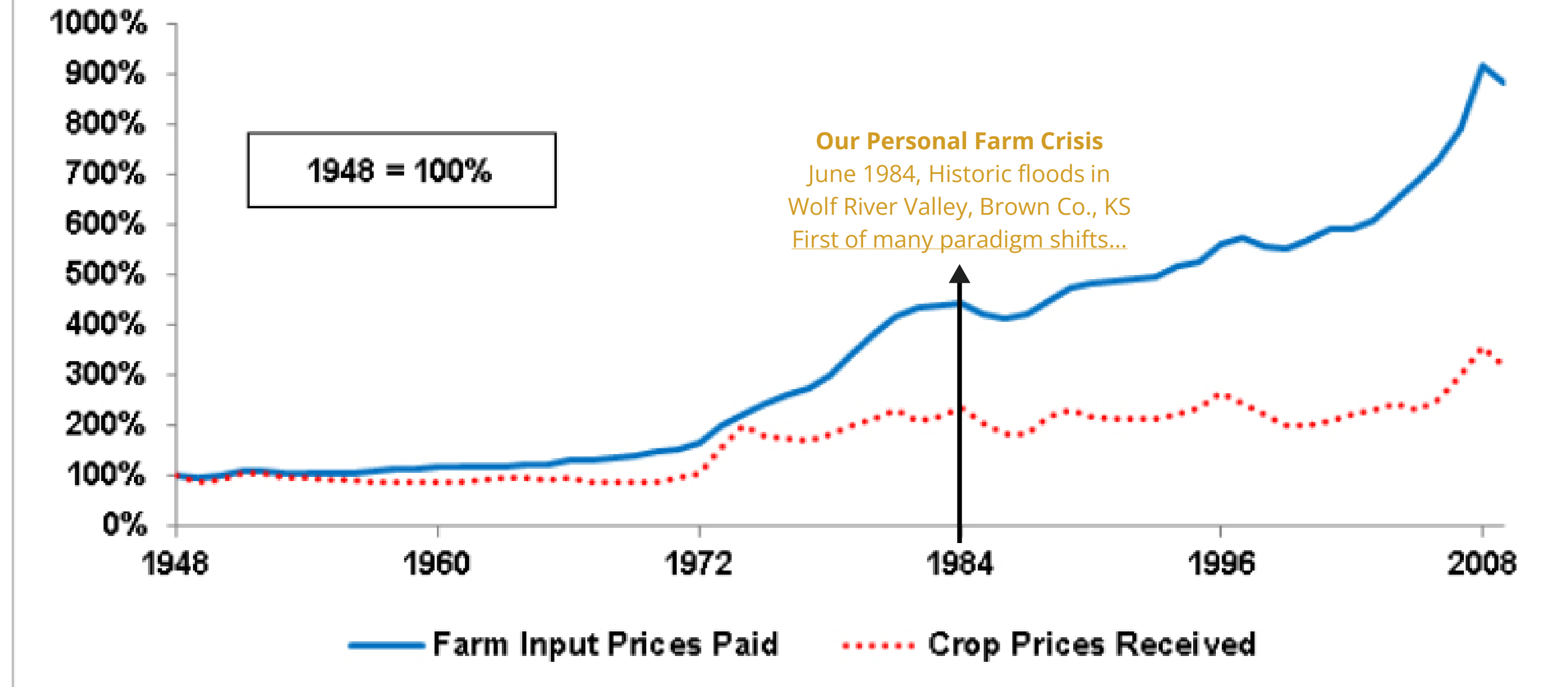
- A social contract
- Individual responsibilities
- Working towards a common good

“Nature’s Laws” Implies:

- Objective truth v. subjective truth
- Order in the system
- Man is a **part** of nature



Figure 1. Index of Prices Paid for Farm Production Inputs, Interest, Taxes, and Wage Rates and Index of Prices Received for Crops, U.S., 1948 - 2009



Zulauf, C. and N. Rettig. "Prices Paid for Farm Inputs vs. Prices Received for Crops: Implications for Managing Risk and Farm Policy." farmdoc daily (3):48, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, March 13, 2013.

Paradigm (n)

A typical example or pattern of something; a model

Paradigm shift (n)

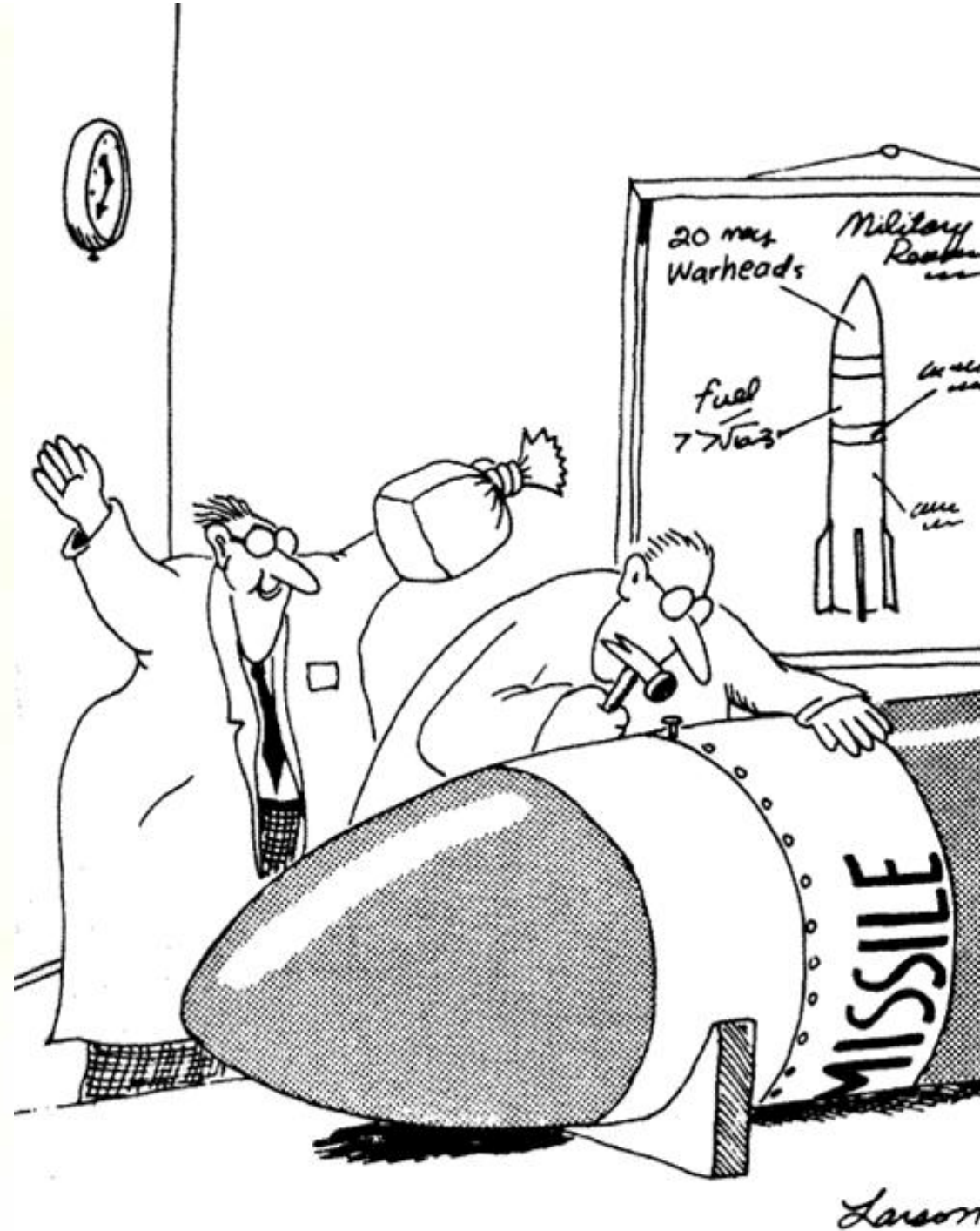
A paradigm shift is a transformation from one organizing theoretical perspective to another.

Think of a paradigm shift as a change from one way of thinking to another. It's a revolution, a transformation. It does not just happen, but rather it is **driven by agents of change**.





"Thank God! ... Those blasted crickets have finally stopped!"



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- Unknown/unforeseen reality in the environment will challenge paradigms
 - Communication about paradigms is difficult but necessary
 - The human factor is unpredictable but always present



Reductionist vs. Holistic

Analyzing and describing a complex phenomenon in terms of its simple or fundamental constituents. This perspective has allowed us to commoditize single variables while discouraging awareness of system implications.

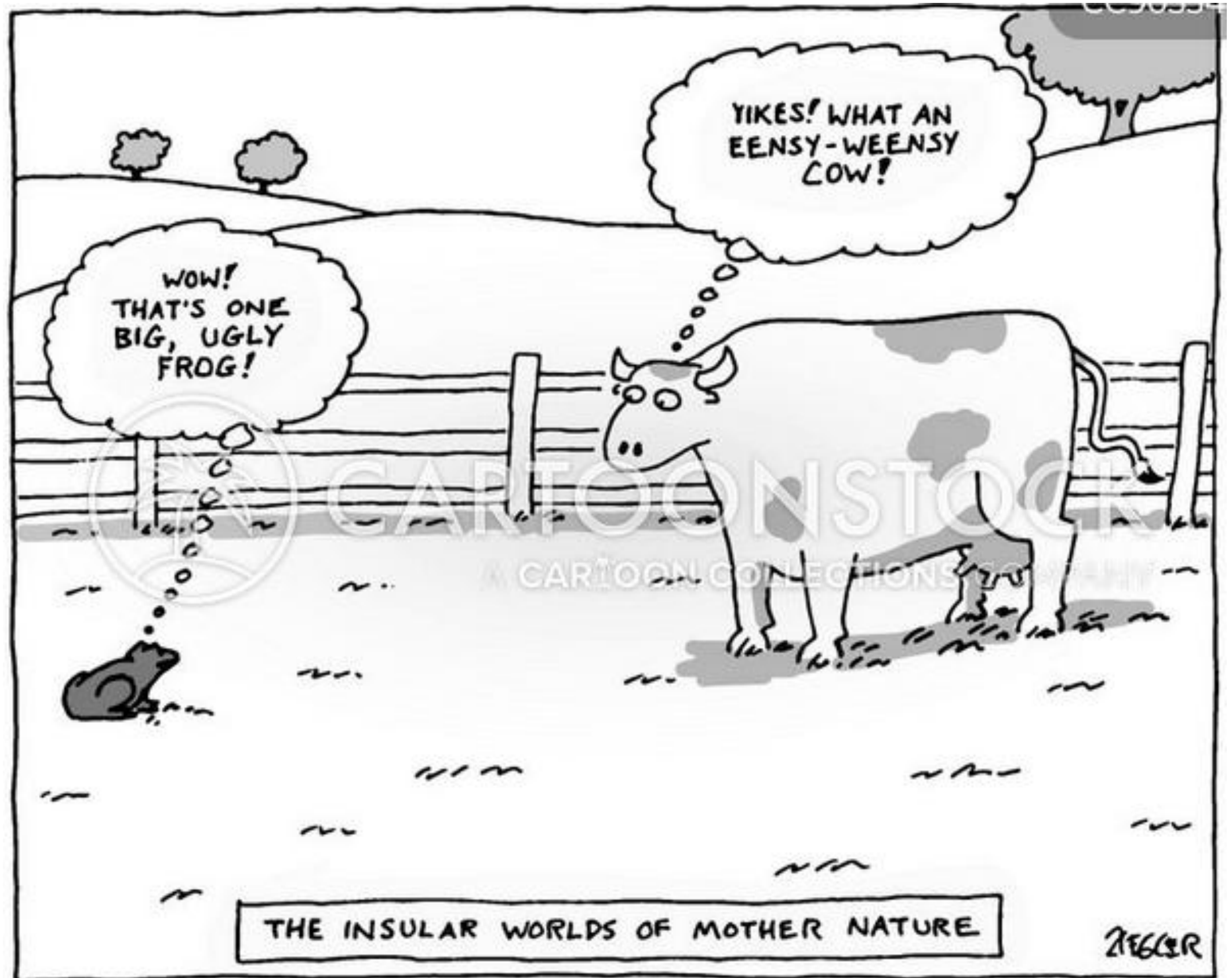
Successful Farming—50 Harvests + Glossy Pictures

New Tractor = More Debt = Greater Risk = Lower Margin = More Land = **VICIOUS CYCLE**, and repeat



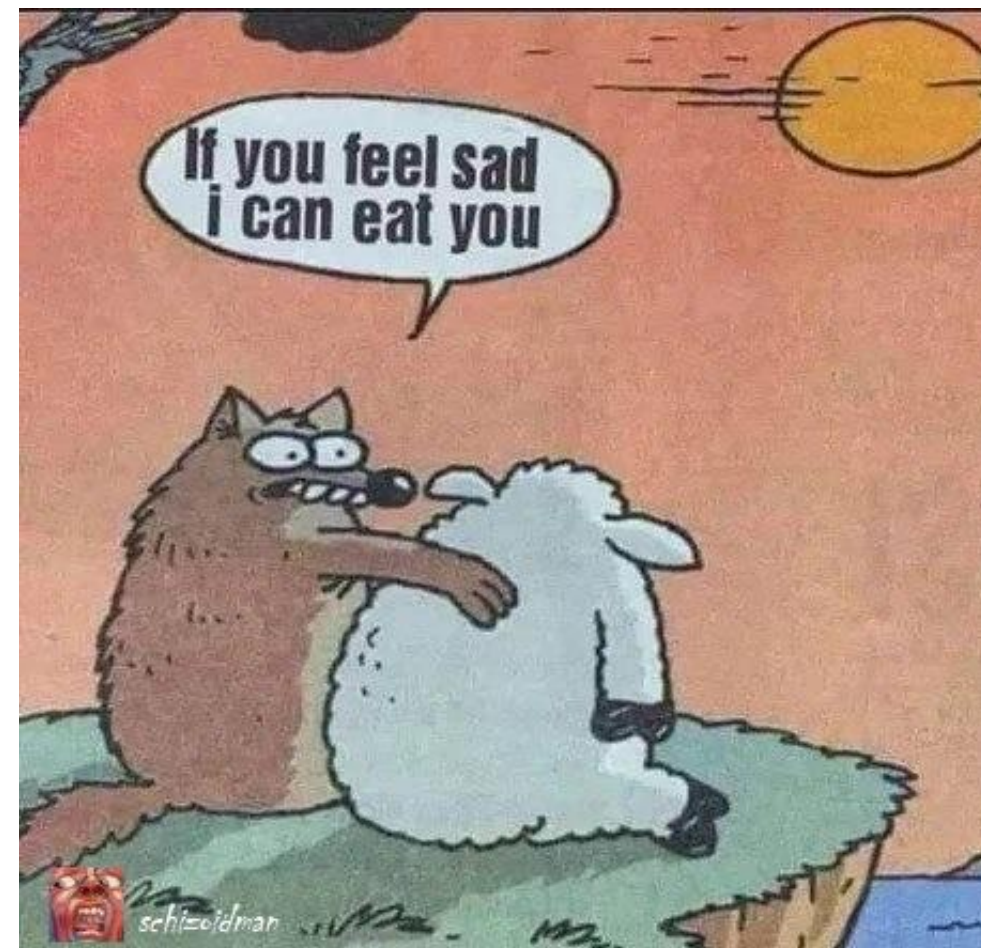
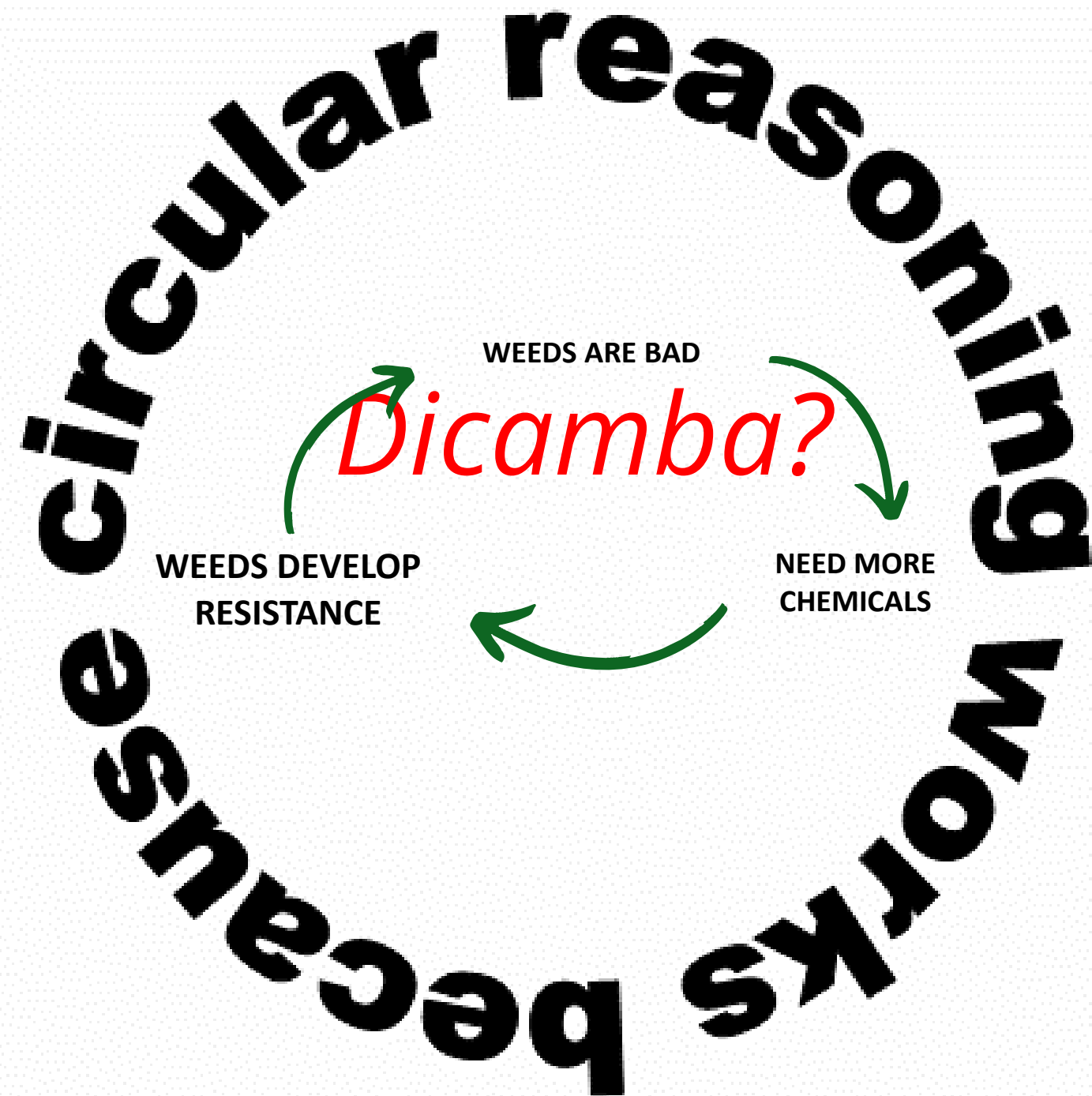
Insular (adj.)

Ignorant of or uninterested in cultures, ideas, or peoples outside one's own experience.



Circular Logic vs. Straightforward Logic

Circular logic; a **fallacy** in which the reasoner begins with what they are trying to *end* with. Straightforward logic is direct, open, and free of circular reasoning.



Are all weeds bad?
Not if a cow will eat them.

Generation after generation, those who intended to **remain and prosper** where they were have been dispossessed and driven out, or subverted and exploited where they were, by those who were carrying out some version of the search for **El Dorado**. Time after time, in place after place, these conquerors have **fragmented and demolished** traditional communities, the beginnings of domestic **cultures**. They have always said that what they destroyed was outdated, provincial, and contemptible. And with alarming frequency they have been believed and trusted by their victims, especially when their victims were other white people.

“The Unsettling of America”, 1977, Wendell Berry





“It must be obvious to every man, who considers the agriculture of this country... how miserably defective in the management of [our lands]... A few years more of increased sterility will drive the Inhabitants of the Atlantic States westward for support; whereas, if they were taught how to improve the old, instead of going in pursuit of new and productive soils, they would make these acres, which now scarcely yield them anything, turn out beneficial to themselves.”

George Washington

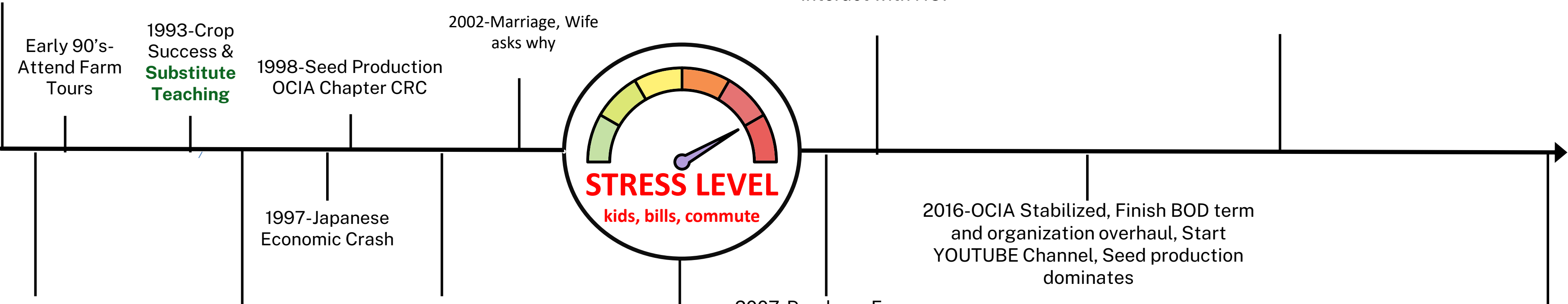
- Referring to tobacco monoculture
- 1794 - invention of the cotton gin
- In 1836, more than 100,000 slaves were shipped out of Virginia*
- "Census data for 1860 suggests that the value of slaves directly accounted for almost half the value of all personal property in the South, including land."*

**David R. Montgomery, DIRT; The Erosion of Civilizations*





1987-Coming out of 80's, Start Farming and TRANSITION to organic



When you're up to your ass in alligators, it's difficult to remember you came to drain the swamp.
-Cajun proverb



2018-Farm Prospering, Back on the OCIA BOD Purchase Dream Truck

My Mentorship Journey

- Mentored for 9+ years
- Over 20 mentees
- Originally they came from YouTube, then word of mouth, now formally through USDA Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) (will continue after program expires).
- Constructed a GroupMe group of all mentees and compiled all agronomic info for mentee reference (Agronomy for Dummies).
- Unintentionally built a multi-level ~~marketing~~ mentorship scheme - mentees are now working with one another and looking for guidance from my longer-term mentees.
- Challenge: meeting people where they're at. You're not teaching yourself; you're teaching someone with different goals, values, operations, etc. You must be vulnerable and willing to share.
- Mentoring is a two-way street; my mentees have given me more than I've taught them.

Thank You

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