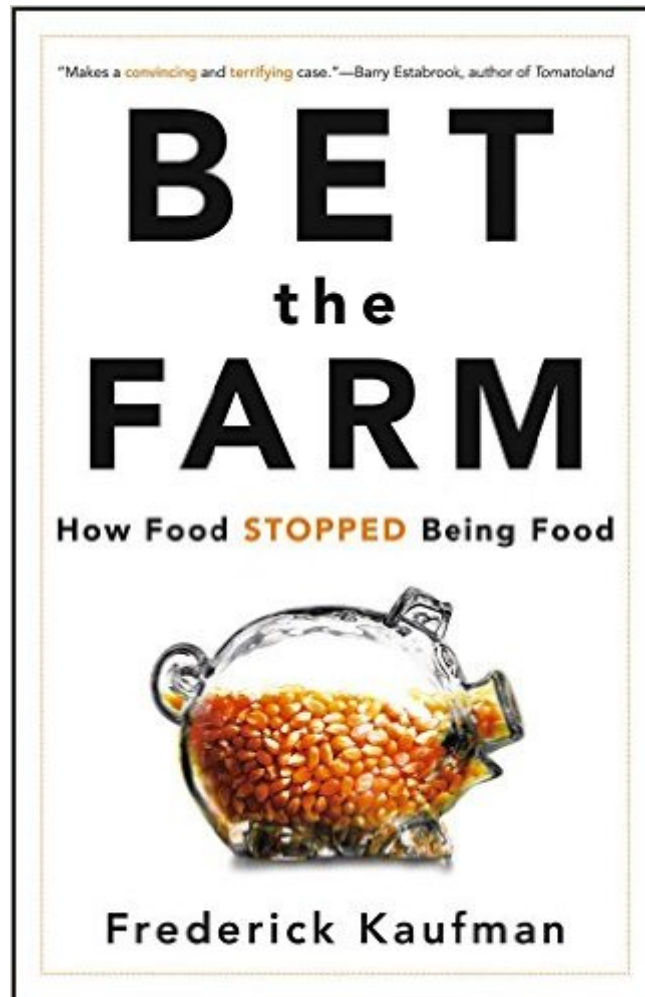


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# Bet The Farm: How Food Stopped Being Food



## Synopsis

A prominent food journalist follows the trail from Big Pizza to square tomatoes to exploding food prices to Wall Street, trying figure out why we can't all have healthy, delicious, affordable food. In 2008, farmers grew enough to feed twice the world's population, yet more people starved than ever before—and most of them were farmers. In *Bet the Farm*, food writer Kaufman sets out to discover the connection between the global food system and why the food on our tables is getting less healthy and less delicious even as the world's biggest food companies and food scientists say things are better than ever. To unravel this riddle, he moves down the supply chain like a detective solving a mystery, revealing a force at work that is larger than Monsanto, McDonalds or any of the other commonly cited culprits—and far more shocking. Kaufman's recent cover story for Harper's, "The Food Bubble," provoked controversy throughout the food world, and led to appearances on the NBC Nightly News, MSNBC, Fox Business News, Democracy Now, and Bloomberg TV, along with features on National Public Radio and the BBC World Service. Visits the front lines of the food supply system and food politics as Kaufman visits farms, food science research labs, agribusiness giants, the United Nations, the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, and more. Explains how food has been financialized and the powerful consequences of this change, including: the Arab Spring, started over rising food prices; farmers being put out of business; food scientists rushing to make easy-to-transport, homogenized ingredients instead of delicious foods. Explains how the push for sustainability in food production is more likely to make everything worse, rather than better—and how the rise of fast food is bad for us, but catastrophic for those who will never even see a McNugget or frozen pizza.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The title says a lot. This book is about the myriad of ways food decisions have become dominated by one factor: money. Fred builds his case by showing how three different parts of the new global food system have been altered by speculation and profit motives. Throughout each section, Fred seeks answers to his ultimate question, why are there so many hungry people in the world? At each turn, he shows how money is turning food into something it's not nor should be. Part 1 starts with a pretty standard food chain analysis of a common food item: fast food pizza. Fred traces the ingredients of a pizza through global networks that make pizza on a huge scale possible. SPOILER: it takes a lot of tomatoes to make that much sauce. This section also introduces the idea that extending markets to smallholders will break the cycle of hunger. Part 2 is a short section on GMOs. It's not as well-developed as the wheat section (see part 3), but there's an amazing connection between intellectual property here that I haven't read enough of in Food Studies literature. The book ends with a VERY compelling description of how food markets have become overly-commodified, disrupting HUGE parts of the global food chain. The same forces that created the 2008 financial meltdown caused disorder in food markets, jacking up prices for those very people who were supposed to benefit from more access. I thought this was the best part of the book, although some will say it's boring, and some will say it's not detailed enough, I thought it was the perfect amount of technical knowledge sprinkled over the narrative. This book is a really compelling narrative of Fred's exploration of a question that perplexes him. I love this form, and I teach exploratory writing like this in my writing classes.

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