



EXPEDITIONARY  
LEARNING

# **Grade 8: Module 4: Unit 1: Lesson 9**

## **Evaluating an Argument: The Polyface Local Sustainable**



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Evaluating an Argument:  
The Polyface Local Sustainable

**Long-Term Targets Addressed (Based on NYSP12 ELA CCLS)**

- I can determine a speaker’s argument and specific claims. (SL.8.3)
- I can evaluate the reasoning and evidence presented for soundness and relevance. (SL.8.3)
- I can identify when irrelevant evidence is introduced. (SL.8.3)
- I can identify the argument and specific claims in a text. (RI.8.8)
- I can evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text (assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims). (RI.8.8)
- I can identify when irrelevant evidence is used. (RI.8.8)

**Supporting Learning Targets**

- I can evaluate two arguments for the same claim to identify which is the strongest.
- I can evaluate Michael Pollan’s argument on pages 161–166 of *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* for sound reasoning and sufficient relevant evidence to support the claim.
- I can identify irrelevant evidence in a text.

**Ongoing Assessment**

- Evaluating an Argument graphic organizer for pages 161–166



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Agenda	Teaching Notes
<p>1. Opening</p> <p>    A. Unpacking Learning Targets (2 minutes)</p> <p>2. Work Time</p> <p>    A. Comparing Two Arguments (10 minutes)</p> <p>    B. Identifying the Claim and Relevant Evidence (10 minutes)</p> <p>    C. Evaluating an Argument: Sufficient Evidence and Sound Reasoning (15 minutes)</p> <p>3. Closing and Assessment</p> <p>    A. Identifying Irrelevant Evidence (8 minutes)</p> <p>4. Homework</p> <p>    A. Read Chapter 20 of <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i>. Begin filling in the Food Chain graphic organizer for Michael Pollan's hunter-gatherer food chain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In this lesson, students are introduced to the Evaluating an Argument graphic organizer, which will be used in the end of unit assessment. Fill in the graphic organizer to evaluate the argument Michael Pollan puts forth on pages 161–166 of <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> together with the class to serve as a model for students. In subsequent lessons, students will gradually become more independent at filling in this organizer in preparation for the end of unit assessment.</li> <li>• Note that students also read another short excerpt of text at the end of the lesson to identify irrelevant evidence in an argument. A new excerpt of text is required to teach this, as there is very little irrelevant evidence in Michael Pollan's writing. To save time asking students to identify a new claim in a new excerpt, a short paragraph of the same excerpt of <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> students have been reading and analyzing since the previous lesson has been rewritten to include irrelevant evidence. This is explained to students to avoid confusion, and it is also a good teaching point as students can compare the actual paragraph of writing to the rewritten paragraph to see how Michael Pollan's original paragraph is stronger.</li> <li>• Students may struggle to determine how much is sufficient evidence. Emphasize that sufficient evidence is not just about how much evidence, but the quality of the evidence. For example, one piece of evidence containing data from a research study will be stronger than two pieces of evidence that are opinion-based.</li> <li>• In advance: Read pages 161–166 and read the answer key for the Evaluating an Argument graphic organizer to familiarize yourself with what students will be doing and the answers you will be guiding them toward (see supporting materials).</li> <li>• Post: Learning targets.</li> </ul>



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Lesson Vocabulary	Materials
<p>evaluate, argument, claim, relevant, irrelevant, sound, sufficient</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example of Strong and Flawed Arguments (one per student and one for display)</li> <li>• <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i>, Young Readers Edition (book; one per student)</li> <li>• Evaluating an Argument graphic organizer for pages 161–166 (one per student; one for display)</li> <li>• Evaluating an Argument graphic organizer for pages 161–166 (answers, for teacher reference)</li> <li>• Example of Irrelevant Evidence: Page 162 of <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> Rewritten (one per student; one for display)</li> <li>• Food Chain graphic organizer (from Lesson 2; one new blank copy per student)</li> </ul>
Opening	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Unpacking Learning Targets (2 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct students' attention to the posted learning targets and invite them to read them with you:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "I can evaluate two arguments for the same claim to identify which is the strongest."</li> <li>* "I can evaluate Michael Pollan's argument on pages 161–166 of <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> for sound reasoning and sufficient relevant evidence to support the claim."</li> <li>* "I can identify irrelevant evidence in a text."</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Circle the word <i>evaluate</i>. Ask students to Think-Pair-Share:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "What does 'evaluate a claim' mean?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cold call students for their responses. Listen for them to explain that to evaluate an argument and a claim means analyzing them to decide whether the author's or speaker's claim seems strong.</li> <li>• Invite students to turn and talk with a partner about synonyms or other words that could be used in place of the word <i>evaluate</i> in the target. Cold call students to share their ideas. Listen for them to say: "judge," "decide," "rate," "assess," "grade," etc. Write correct synonyms above the word <i>evaluate</i> on the posted target.</li> <li>• Explain that evaluating something requires a set of criteria. For example, when students are evaluated on a piece of writing, there is a rubric with criteria describing a good essay. Explain that today they will determine the criteria for what makes a strong argument so they can evaluate arguments.</li> <li>• In the learning targets, put a box around the words <i>sound reasoning</i>, <i>sufficient</i>, <i>relevant evidence</i>, and <i>irrelevant evidence</i>. Tell students they'll spend time defining these terms and then use them to determine whether Michael Pollan makes a strong argument in the section of the text they worked with in Lesson 8.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning targets are a research-based strategy that helps all students, especially challenged learners.</li> <li>• Posting learning targets allows students to reference them throughout the lesson to check their understanding. The learning targets also provide a reminder to students and teachers about the intended learning behind a given lesson or activity.</li> <li>• Reviewing academic vocabulary words benefits all students developing academic language.</li> </ul>



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Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Comparing Two Arguments (10 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell students today's lesson focuses on evaluating arguments, or determining whether an author or speaker makes a strong argument. Explain that this is an important reading and thinking skill because in evaluating the argument, they have to think critically about the text. Also, practicing this skill helps them as writers and speakers when they speak and write their own arguments later in the unit and module.</li> <li>• Display and distribute <b>Example of Strong and Flawed Arguments</b>. Invite students to read along silently in their heads as you read both Arguments A and B aloud.</li> <li>• Invite students to discuss in triads:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "What is the claim the author is making?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Call on a volunteer. Listen for the claim that "our food should come from nature, not industry."</li> <li>• Invite students to discuss in triads:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "Is the evidence in this argument relevant? Does it support the claim?"</li> <li>* "Is the evidence sufficient? Is there enough of it?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cold call students to share their responses. Listen for students to explain that the evidence isn't sufficient because there aren't any research-based facts or data and some of the evidence given for this argument is not relevant; for example, people buying chips and soda has nothing to do with food coming from nature or industry.</li> <li>• Invite students to discuss in triads:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "What about the reasoning? Is it sound reasoning? Think about this passage, "Turkey could be from nature or industry, and macaroni and cheese tastes so good, so we better eat food from nature."</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Select volunteers to share out. Listen for students to explain that the reasoning is not sound because there is no link between the opinion "macaroni and cheese tastes so good" and the claim.</li> <li>• Ask students to discuss in triads:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "Is it a strong argument? Why/why not?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for them to say something along the lines of: "No, because it doesn't make sense," "it has unrelated supporting details or evidence," or "it isn't logical."</li> <li>• Tell students that now they are going to analyze Argument B. Make it clear that the claim is the same as that in Argument A: "our food should come from nature, not industry."</li> <li>• Ask students to discuss in triads:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "How is this argument stronger than the first argument? Think about the use of evidence and reasoning."</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cold call students to share responses. Listen for them to explain there is sufficient relevant evidence, and the reasoning is sound. Ask students to provide evidence from the text to support their responses.</li> </ul>	



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Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>B. Identifying the Claim and Relevant Evidence (10 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite students to reread the learning target:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “I can evaluate Michael Pollan’s argument on pages 161–166 of <i>The Omnivore’s Dilemma</i> for sound reasoning and sufficient relevant evidence to support the claim.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Be sure students have their text <i>The Omnivore’s Dilemma</i>. Distribute the Evaluating an Argument graphic organizer for pages 161–166.</li> <li>• Invite students to spend a minute reading the graphic organizer.</li> <li>• Ask them:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What do you notice?”</li> <li>* “What do you wonder?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tell students that the first step in evaluating an argument is simply identifying the author’s claim and supporting evidence. Make sure students understand that sometimes we must infer what the claim is because the author or speaker doesn’t state it explicitly.</li> <li>• Ask students to Think-Pair-Share:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What is relevant evidence?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Select volunteers to share answers whole class. Listen for students to explain that relevant evidence is clearly connected to the claim being made.</li> <li>• Remind students that for homework, they reread pages 161–166 of <i>The Omnivore’s Dilemma</i>, identified a claim that Michael Pollan makes, and flagged supporting evidence. Select volunteers to share their claim and the evidence they flagged. Listen for claims and evidence to be similar to the <b>Evaluating an Argument graphic organizer for pages 161–166 (answers, for teacher reference)</b> and guide students in that direction.</li> <li>• Invite students to record the claim and what they determine to be relevant evidence on their Evaluating an Argument graphic organizer. Make it clear that 1) students may not have as many pieces of evidence as there are boxes, which is fine; and 2) at this stage, students should not yet evaluate the evidence or the argument. They are just to fill in the Claim and Relevant Evidence boxes.</li> <li>• Circulate and support students as they work. See the Evaluating an Argument graphic organizer for pages 161–166 (answers, for teacher reference) for a suggestion on how to fill in the organizer. Ask students as you circulate:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “Why is that relevant evidence?”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	



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Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After 5 minutes of work time, display the Evaluating an Argument graphic organizer. Cold call students to share their thinking on the author's claim and relevant evidence. Use student responses and the answers for teacher reference to model filling in the boxes for claim and relevant evidence.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>C. Evaluating an Argument: Sufficient Evidence and Sound Reasoning (15 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell students that after identifying the claim and evidence, the next step is to evaluate how well the evidence proves the claim. Let them know it is helpful to ask two questions when determining how well a piece of evidence supports a claim:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "Does it connect to the claim?"</li> <li>* "Does it offer specific, concrete facts, statistics, or examples?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>Using the answer key, model thinking through and filling in one of the next row of boxes, "Explain how well this piece of evidence supports the author's claim." Invite students to work in pairs to finish filling in this row on their own organizers.</li> <li>Ask students to discuss in triads:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "What is sufficient evidence?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>Cold call volunteers to share their responses whole group. Listen for them to explain there is enough evidence to support the claim.</li> <li>Ask students to discuss in triads:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "So how much evidence is enough?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>Select students to share their responses. Listen for and guide students to understand there should be more than one piece of evidence, but exactly how much depends on the evidence provided. Students must look across the evidence provided to determine the quality of the evidence and then if there is enough of it.</li> <li>Using the answers for teacher reference, model thinking through and filling in the next box, "Did the author provide sufficient evidence? Explain why or why not." Invite students to work in triads to look across the evidence on their graphic organizer and complete the box using the model as a guide. Remind them of the Teammates Consult protocol.</li> <li>Ask students to discuss in triads:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "What is sound reasoning?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>Cold call students to share their responses whole group. Listen for them to explain that sound reasoning means the author has clearly explained the connection between the claim, the evidence supporting it, and the choice of evidence makes sense.</li> </ul> <p>Direct students to look at the "Explain how this piece of evidence supports the author's claim" row, as this will help them determine how the evidence supports the claim and if there is a clear connection between the evidence and the claim.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graphic organizers and recording forms engage students more actively and provide the necessary scaffolding that is especially critical for learners with lower levels of language proficiency and/or learning.</li> <li>When reviewing the graphic organizers or recording forms, consider using a document camera to display the document for students who struggle with auditory processing.</li> <li>Providing models of expected work supports all learners, especially challenged learners.</li> </ul>



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Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the answers for teacher reference, model thinking through and filling in the next box, "Was the reasoning sound? Explain why or why not." Invite students to work in triads to look across the evidence on their graphic organizer and to complete the final box, using the model as a guide.</li> <li>Cold call two or three students to share, correcting misconceptions if they arise.</li> </ul>	
Closing and Assessment	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Identifying Irrelevant Evidence (8 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invite students to look at the second part of their graphic organizers, "Part 2: Irrelevant Evidence." Ask students to discuss in triads:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* "What is irrelevant evidence?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>Listen for students to explain that irrelevant evidence is that which doesn't support the claim or make sense in support of the claim. It may also be evidence that has been deliberately added to mislead the reader or listener.</li> <li>Explain to students that good writers and speakers like Michael Pollan use sufficient relevant evidence and sound reasoning to support their claims, but as they have already seen from the interview at the beginning of the lesson, sometimes people also use irrelevant evidence when they are putting forward an argument and making a claim. Explain that now they are going to analyze a short excerpt of text for irrelevant evidence.</li> <li>Tell students this excerpt is a rewritten piece of the Michael Pollan excerpt they have been reading and analyzing in the previous two lessons. Explain that this will help because they have already identified a claim in this excerpt, which will help them see why Michael Pollan's actual writing is a good example of a strong argument.</li> <li>Ask students to close their <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> books. Display and distribute <b>Example of Irrelevant Evidence: Page 162 of The Omnivore's Dilemma Rewritten</b> and read it aloud as they follow along silently in their heads.</li> <li>Remind students that they have already figured out a claim that they think Michael Pollan is making in this excerpt (something similar to: "Local sustainable farming is good for the land and for the chickens and cows the farm raises"), so now they will work in triads using the Teammates Consult protocol to identify irrelevant evidence in this excerpt of text and record it on Part 2 of their organizers.</li> <li>This is a very short piece of text, so students should need no more than 5 minutes to identify the irrelevant evidence and record it on their organizers.</li> <li>Cold call students to share the irrelevant evidence whole group. Refer to the answers for teacher reference to guide them toward appropriate answers and invite them to revise their graphic organizers accordingly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of protocols (like Teammates Consult) allows for total participation of students. It encourages critical thinking, collaboration, and social construction of knowledge. It also helps students to practice their speaking and listening skills.</li> </ul>





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Closing and Assessment (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold call students to share the irrelevant evidence whole group. Refer to the answers for teacher reference to guide them toward appropriate answers and invite them to revise their graphic organizers accordingly.</li> <li>• Invite students to review the original paragraph on page 162 of their books. Ask students to discuss in triads:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “How is the rewritten excerpt different from the original? How is Michael Pollan’s better?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Select volunteers to share their responses whole group. Listen for students to explain that Michael Pollan gives a brief description of what broiler chickens are, but then continues to discuss the chicken pens rather than providing irrelevant evidence about the broiler chicken industry.</li> <li>• Distribute new <b>Food Chain graphic organizers</b> for homework.</li> </ul>	
Homework	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Chapter 20 of The Omnivore’s Dilemma. Begin filling in the Food Chain graphic organizer for Michael Pollan’s hunter-gatherer food chain.</li> </ul>	



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# Grade 8: Module 4A: Unit 1: Lesson 9

## Supporting Materials



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Example of Strong and Flawed Arguments

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Name:

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Date:

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**Argument A (example of a flawed argument)**

Our food should come from nature, not industry. The food industry makes me angry. The people who run it are bad people who just want to make money. When I went to the grocery store today, I noticed so many people buying chips and soda. We don't want to end up obese, so we better eat food from nature.

**Argument B (example of a strong argument)**

Our food should come from nature, not industry, for several reasons. Getting food from nature does not damage the world. For example, my pig's place in the forest would soon be taken by another pig and the cherry tree would bear fruit again next year. Also, there are no hidden costs to food that comes from nature. For example, you don't have to pay for manure from feedlots to be hauled away. Food from industry costs each and every one of us: in government spending, in pollution, in global warming, and in our health. Finally, food from nature is better for our bodies. Eating meat from cows that were fed grass is much healthier for us than eating meat from cows that were fed corn.



Evaluating an Argument:  
Graphic Organizer for Pages 161–166

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- I can identify the argument and specific claims in a text. (RI.8.8)
- I can evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text (assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims). (RI.8.8)
- I can identify when irrelevant evidence is used. (RI.8.8)

<b>Part 1: Evaluating an Argument Graphic Organizer</b>		
Author/Speaker’s Claim:		
<b>Relevant Evidence 1</b>	<b>Relevant Evidence 2</b>	<b>Relevant Evidence 3</b>
Explain how this piece of evidence is relevant to the claim:	Explain how this piece of evidence is relevant to the claim:	Explain how this piece of evidence is relevant to the claim:
<b>Relevant Evidence 4</b>	<b>Relevant Evidence 5</b>	<b>Relevant Evidence 6</b>



Evaluating an Argument:  
Graphic Organizer for Pages 161–166

**Part 1: Evaluating an Argument Graphic Organizer**

Explain how this piece of evidence is relevant to the claim:

Explain how this piece of evidence is relevant to the claim:

Explain how this piece of evidence is relevant to the claim:

Did the author provide sufficient evidence? Explain why or why not.

Was the reasoning sound? Explain why or why not.

**Part 2: Irrelevant Evidence**

What irrelevant evidence did the author/speaker provide? Explain what makes this evidence irrelevant.



Evaluating an Argument:  
Graphic Organizer for Pages 161–166 (Answers, for Teacher Reference)

<b>Part 1: Evaluating an Argument Graphic Organizer</b>		
<p><b>Author/Speaker’s Claim:</b></p> <p><i>Local sustainable farming is good for the land and for the chickens and cows the farm raises.</i></p>		
<b>Relevant Evidence 1</b>	<b>Relevant Evidence 2</b>	<b>Relevant Evidence 3</b>
<p><i>p. 162</i> “It was hard to believe this hillside had ever been the gullied wreck Joel had described at dinner. One type of farming had destroyed the land. Now another type of farming was restoring it.”</p>	<p><i>p. 163</i> “Joel moves the chickens every day for the same reason he moves the cows every night. The chicken manure fertilizes the grass, supplying all the nitrogen it needs. But left in one place, the chickens would eventually destroy the soil.”</p>	<p><i>p. 164</i> “Every night the hens climb the little ramp into the safety of the coop and Joel latches the door behind them. In the morning he moves them to a fresh pasture.”</p>
<p><b>Explain how this piece of evidence is relevant to the claim:</b> <i>This piece of evidence is a specific example of how sustainable farms are good for the land.</i></p>	<p><b>Explain how this piece of evidence is relevant to the claim:</b> <i>This piece of evidence provides another example of how local sustainable farming is good for the land because it explains how the land would be destroyed if it were different.</i></p>	<p><b>Explain how this piece of evidence is relevant to the claim:</b> <i>This explains how the chickens are well cared for because it explains how they are safe at night.</i></p>



Evaluating an Argument:

Graphic Organizer for Pages 161–166 (Answers, for Teacher Reference)

<b>Part 1: Evaluating an Argument Graphic Organizer</b>		
<b>Relevant Evidence 4</b>	<b>Relevant Evidence 5</b>	<b>Relevant Evidence 6</b>
<p><i>p. 165</i>  <i>“It seems the chickens don’t like fresh manure, so he waits three or four days before bringing them in—but not a day longer. “Three days is ideal,” he explained. “That gives the larvae a chance to fatten up nicely, the way hens like them ...”</i></p>	<p><i>p. 165</i>  <i>“Because of the chickens, Joel doesn’t have to treat his cattle with toxic chemicals to get rid of parasites.”</i></p>	
<p><b>Explain how this piece of evidence is relevant to the claim:</b>  <i>This piece of evidence explains how he gives the hens what they like, which supports the idea that local sustainable farming is good for the animals.</i></p>	<p><b>Explain how this piece of evidence is relevant to the claim:</b>  <i>This piece of evidence explains how he doesn’t need to give the cows toxic chemicals, which supports the idea that local sustainable farming is good for the animals.</i></p>	
<p><b>Did the author provide sufficient evidence? Explain why or why not.</b>  <i>Pollan did provide sufficient evidence to prove his claim. He doesn’t use any research-based facts, but he did use at least five examples of how local sustainable farming is good for the land and how it follows the natural cycle. These examples are detailed enough to prove his claim.</i></p>		
<p><b>Was the reasoning sound? Explain why or why not.</b>  <i>His reasoning was sound because he explained how his evidence supported his claim. For each piece of evidence, he connected it to being good for the environment or being the same as the natural cycle.</i></p>		



Evaluating an Argument:

Graphic Organizer for Pages 161–166 (Answers, for Teacher Reference)

**Part 2: Irrelevant Evidence**

**What irrelevant evidence did the author/speaker provide? Explain what makes this evidence irrelevant.**

*The author provides irrelevant evidence about the broiler chicken industry and how much chicken is consumed in the U.S. It says, “The United States has the largest broiler chicken industry in the world and 17 percent of the broiler chickens produced here are exported to other countries. Americans consume more chicken than anyone else in the world and it is the number one source of protein in the United States.” This evidence might be interesting, but it is not linked at all to the claim that local sustainable farming is good for the land and for the cows and chickens raised for production.*