Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, persistent organic pollutants, and the achievable utopias

Does it make much sense to ask your butcher whether a piece of beef contains the bovine spongiform encephalopathy prion protein? I doubt it. Essentially—but not solely, as explained below—because it is unlikely that any prion protein, even if an efficient test to detect it was available for use on a daily basis. By contrast, it is perfectly sensible to ask your butcher, grocer, or supermarket manager how much the meat, fish, or milk you buy harbour environmental contaminants such as the pesticide residue DDE, polychlorinated biphenyls, hexachlorobenzene, or hexachlorocyclohexane, which comprise the bulk of persistent organic pollutants in humans. We largely absorb such chemicals through a wide variety of foods, and most of us store them in fat tissues.2,29 Ubiquitous throughout the planet, persistent organic pollutants are a true symbol of “globalisation”: they travel through the air and waters as fast as through the global goods’ distribution channels. And they persist even through our bodies for decades. Human health and environmental crises. Many efforts to create utopias that entice citizens. Real health and ecological targets will hardly be achieved unless we reduce the hearts and minds of our fellow citizens. Real changes in food and environmental policies will not occur unless public health and ecological help draw utopias that entice citizens. Sorry to say: whoever did it for them did pretty well, in terms of impacting the social agendas. And of course, they did badly. But we’re doing pretty bad as well. We talk risks, prions, pollutants. We say so little about the dreams, and so softly, and out of tune. About the real dreams, the achievable utopias...

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