

Clark prof to speak about agricultural sustainability

If you go

■ **What:** Reception, discussion on agricultural biodiversity.

■ **Who:** Kathleen Perillo, Clark College biology professor.

■ **When:** 12:15 to 1:30 p.m. Friday.

■ **Where:** Penguin Student Lounge, Clark College, 1933 Fort Vancouver Way.

■ **Cost/parking:** Free; use Clark's red and yellow parking lots.

Kathleen Perillo says our food choices affect planet

By **HOWARD BUCK**
Columbian staff writer

Talk about food for thought.

Clark College biology professor Kathleen Perillo wants to toss conventional thinking about grocery shopping, agribusiness and our modern food chain on its ear.

On the heels of Earth Day, her "Birds, Bees and Biodiversity" presentation Friday will focus on how food choices affect the planet and how they can improve.

Time was, Perillo notes, Americans used to cherish seasonal fruits and veg-

etables grown in the same time zone, if not the same ZIP code.

No longer.

"Our young students can't imagine not getting what they want, at any time," she said. Now, "You get that tomato that you can't even recognize for what it is. And we pay top dollar for it, too," she said.

Set for 12:15 to 1:30 p.m. in the Penguin Student Lounge (fireplace room), the free event is the second in a Faculty Speaker Series launched this year at Clark.

Doors will open at noon for refreshments, featuring seasonal food from local farms.

Perillo is a tenured professor who traveled in Europe and Mexico to study

sustainability issues and their U.S. impact.

She will tell guests how to become a "locavore" by choosing locally grown and produced foods, for both environmental and health benefits. Guests will learn differences between polyculture and monoculture farming, and how to reduce their contribution to global warming.

Much education is needed, Perillo



Kathleen Perillo
Clark College
biology professor

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said.

"I'm not sure people understand the underlying reasons why our current food system is totally unsustainable," she said. "We've got to take it back and give it to the farmers, where it belongs."

Inspired by her journeys, Perillo is cofounder and president of the nonprofit Center for Eco-dynamic Agriculture.

She said she will explain "the disastrous impact of buying pears during winter from 2,000 miles away"; what being "organic" really means (hint: less than you think); and "how the food industry is connected to the trucking industry and connected to oil, and how it's politics."

It's not all gloom and doom.

Consumers can buy from local markets or Community Supported Agriculture farms, Perillo said. They can ask local stores, even chain stores, for more local products. They can research what's grown in the area, and in what season.

"That makes a tremendous positive impact," she said.

Perillo, an East Coast native, takes sustainability to heart. She lives in a straw-bale house near Cape Horn and is a partner in the organic Meadowlark Vineyard near Lyle, which sells wine grapes regionally.

She knows many shoppers want badly to do the right thing but are unsure, she said.

"It's really confusing in today's world," Perillo said. "There's no simple answer, but it's great we're having these conversations."

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