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### A Seed's Journey to the American Household: A Movie Review

The remarkable journey of Ian Cheney and Ellis Curtis to discover how the American diet is dominated by corn is captured thoroughly within the documentary *King Corn* directed by Aaron Woolf. Upon discovering that majority of their diet is constituted by corn in one form or another, Ian Cheney and Ellis Curtis decided to move to Greene, Iowa, and grow an acre of corn by themselves. With the help of local farmers, an Iowa State professor, and the government, Cheney and Curtis explore the main areas of American life affected by America's largest staple food crop. Their journey unmasked America's demand for cheap food, thus, leading to cattle being fed corn throughout the years. Corn fed cattle requires less time to reach their target weight before they're sent to the slaughter house and become cuts of meat (Woolf, 2007). Because of this development within the American society, much of the beef found at fast food restaurants and grocery stores contain corn. Equally important was Earl Butz' role as the former secretary of agriculture to increase the corn supply causing a surplus. By interviewing Butz, Cheney and Curtis discovers that the surplus of corn in United States led to the rise of a new industry: High-fructose corn syrup (Woolf, 2007). High-fructose corn syrup is a sweetener that has taken over American food products by large. Many of the sugary drinks and snacks found at a grocery store contains this sweetener. In fact, Cheney and Curtis discovers that diabetes looms large over

every American's life due to the presence of high-fructose corn syrup in the meals consumed daily (Woolf, 2007).

An important aspect about this documentary that I appreciated was the cinematography. The aerial shots that captures the thousands of acres in Iowa with corn crops displays America's dependence on this staple crop. Equally remarkable was the time-lapse shots of Cheney's and Curtis' one acre land. The growth of their corn crops captures the hard work necessary and patience to grow a crop important to the American economy. I also believe the time-lapse shots captures the beauty of nature itself. The cinematography was further enhanced by the editing utilized within this documentary. The stop-motion clips of how corn is planted and exported within the American economy gives the audience a glance into how a complex system has become the core to drive productivity within the United States. The transition between each scene also felt very natural and smooth. The choice of music within this documentary was also well done. During Ian and Ellis' road trip to Iowa, the music choice was very appropriate. The music was soothing to the ear and fitting to the theme of road trip. The music selected to accompany many of the scene transitions were also fitting to the theme of farming.

The only flaw I find in this documentary is the failure to include footage that discusses the environmental risks of industrial farming. For example, the seeds used in Cheney and Curtis' farm were genetically modified. Additionally, their one acre of land was sprayed with a substantial amount of chemicals to ensure optimal growth and prevent the contamination of their yield. Often times, the chemicals used in agriculture flow into nearby water sources. This is significant because the water sources will be contaminated affecting the biodiversity of the aquatic systems as well as water supply for other farmers, etc. Therefore, including this footage would have spread awareness regarding the risks associated with industrial farming.

Overall, I believe this documentary was well done. The journey to discover how corn affects the many parts of our lives was explored in-depth. The individual interviews conducted within the documentary was also very informative. The excellent cinematography, editing, and music choice also made *King Corn* a good watch.

### Works Cited

Woolf, Aaron, et al., directors. *King Corn*. Mosaic Films, 2007.