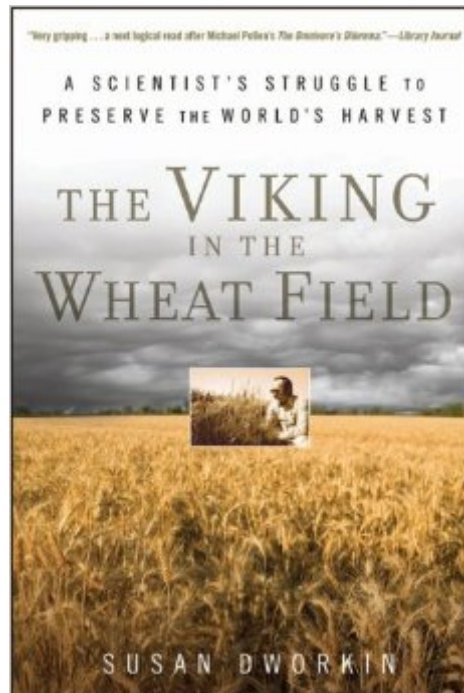


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The Viking In The Wheat Field: A Scientist's Struggle To Preserve The World's Harvest



Synopsis

For thirty years, Danish plant scientist Bent Skovmand served as adviser to dozens of countries and hunted for seeds with genes to resist disease and such environmental stresses as drought, flooding, and global warming. In an era when multinational corporations often jealously guarded patents on plant breeding, Skovmand fought to keep his seed bank a free, open scientific exchange for breeders and farmers everywhere. By telling the story of Skovmand and his colleagues, *The Viking in the Wheat Field* sheds welcome light on an agricultural sector--plant genetic resources--on which our food supply is crucially dependent.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Most of us think of the Irish potato famine as a plague of a bygone era, or as a result just of horrid and treacherous 19th century British imperial policy. Yet the biological element, a plant disease, looms closer than we might think. Susan Dworkin's *The Viking in The Wheat Field* tells the story of a small core of dedicated plant scientists who breed and preserve grain seeds adapted to resist crop-devastating disease, to thrive in hostile growing conditions and to increase bounty to levels only dreamt of before the 20th century. The focus for presenting the story is a charismatic Dane, Bent Skovand, a plant scientist passionately dedicated to feeding the hungry -- not in soup kitchens and shelters -- but by working to ensure abundant grain harvests worldwide. I had never before known of the fragility of our grain harvests to disease and climate. As I read I wanted to follow Bent's life. In doing so I was carried through the lessons of grain breeding and preservation,

including the trips to the world's most remote places such as the Himalayas and beyond the Arctic Circle to gather and preserve rare local grains and chart their properties. The book has a few technical parts, but just enough to allow the reader to be carried knowledgeably through the story. Understanding the fragility of the world's grain crops sensitizes one to the importance of environmental preservation. Other hot topics covered include food irradiation and the legal policy of granting patents for life forms (seeds). Might such patents give private multi-national corporations power to influence or control food production? After having gouged our bank accounts will they now "take the food off our plates?"

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