



# Living Without Money: *is it possible?*

Since writing 'An Introduction to Twenty-First Century Hoe Farming – an antidote to globalisation', several readers have asked us if we manage to live without money, or, alternatively, how much money we spend per month or per year.

At first, I was a little surprised by the question, as I had made no claims to be living without money in the book; on reflection, however, I realised that the issue of how to earn enough money to have a decent life, without having to make basic compromises, was something that had troubled me all my life, and that that was the issue that was troubling the people who were asking me the question.

There is no simple answer.

## The Cost of Living

The first thing to understand is that there is no connection between nature and money: if you have access to some land, you cannot then pay nature to grow some food on it for you, or to provide you with fuel, or anything else. The currency that nature recognises is the work that you do, and how intelligent you are in doing that work. If you manage the land well, all you will need is a few basic hand tools, and nature will provide you with food, fuel, building materials, and clothing, plus clean air and pure water, just as it does for everything else living on the land. So in one sense, one could say that the real cost of living is zero, and that, in theory, if one was prepared to live simply, one could live without money.

Of course, it is possible to spend money on things – tractors, power tools, greenhouses, fertilisers, compost, seeds, etc. – that are supposed to make life on the land easier, but, in essence, they are not essential to the basic process of nature providing the necessities of life free of charge.

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## The Cost of Living in the Modern World

Even if one sticks to the idea of working the land using only the simplest technology, however, and not spending any money on the garden from one year to the next, one still finds oneself confronted by money issues.

The first of these is gaining the right to work some land in the first place. In today's world, this usually means having to buy or rent land, and having to pay some sort of annual tax. Furthermore, in many countries one no longer has the right to live on the land that one is working unless one has planning permission for a private residence, which can be very expensive.

In addition, many things that were once taken care of within rural communities without money changing hands, are now part of the wider commercial economy – more or less anything that one cannot do for oneself, now involves some sort of financial cost.

Depending on where you live and how much money you start off with, these basic expenses will add up to different amounts – but are unlikely to be zero.

Then there is an extra complication. Does one take on employment that pays the amount of money that one needs, or does one try to earn it for oneself? If it is the latter case, one has to face the fact that in the modern world you have to spend money in order to make money – almost no matter what activity one is involved in, a phone, a computer, an electric connection, a car, and some sort of insurance becomes essential, all of which adds to the amount of money that you need, simply to have the right to work a plot of land on which to grow your own food.

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## The Value of Money

The other side of the coin is that money is more useful for some things than for others. It is good for man-made things, but not so good for the gifts that have traditionally come from nature free of charge. For instance, once you start growing some of your own food, you start to question the value of some of the food for sale in the shops.

At the moment, we are trapped in a system that attempts to put a price to everything, making it impossible to live completely without money, but, whatever one's personal circumstances, it should still be possible to live at least part of one's life in the other world, in which one gets what one really needs without any money changing hands.

*Gareth Lewis*

