

**PRESIDENTIAL**



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**Elizabeth Warren**  
&  
**The Changing Face of  
American Politics**

Regan Arts

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WARREN**

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splashed across newspaper pages. So we called her to discuss her thoughts on the women running in 2020.

### What do people not understand about food safety?

Everybody has had food poisoning at one time or another, but nobody really knows how many people get ill from foodborne illness or from the source. The CDC can only do estimates. Outbreaks seem to happen to other people. We only think about food safety when something horrible happens to us or to people we know well. Then we realize what a terrible problem it is.

### An Interview with Marion Nestle

**O**ne woman is not impressed with the 2020 candidates. Since the mid-1980s, Professor Marion Nestle has been the world's leading expert in food politics. She has studied everything from food supply to food poisoning to the policies that govern what we eat and how it affects our health. In 1988 Nestle even wrote the Surgeon General's Report on Nutrition and Health. Her work is more vital than ever. Headlines about trade wars, corn prices, and farming subsidies are

### What food policy issues are affecting the 2020 election?

The big one right now is what can we do to help farmers in the Midwest. Large agricultural corporations have driven out small farmers, immigration politics has driven out farmworkers, and climate change has driven out normal planting. Even though flooding has delayed the planting of corn, there is still so much corn on the market that prices have dropped. Corn farmers will not make money and taxpayers have to bail them out to the tune of billions of dollars. Oh, then there's what's happening to dairy farms. Milk is so overproduced that prices have dropped below cost. Our agricultural policies are a mess.

# THESE WOMEN ARE JUST AS CLUELESS AS MEN

**Has Trump made these problems worse?**

The trade war with China is a disaster. There are real problems with the way the Chinese operate, but to use trade wars rather than diplomacy to address those problems only makes them worse.

**Are people on the coasts unaware of these issues?**

People on the coast don't see what farming looks like. Even if they drive through the Midwest, all they see is miles and miles, hundreds of miles, of corn without any sense of what that means for biodiversity, the environment, and health. Everybody has this sentimental view of agriculture as small-scale family farms and people going out and milking cows. I wish at least some of that were true.

It's hard to understand just how industrialized agriculture has become, and how this industrialization has depopulated the Midwest. Schools are closed. Stores are closed. Movie theatres are closed. Hospitals are closed. When you drive off Midwest highways, you see ghost towns. I think we need to bring back some smaller-scale farming that involves people, not machines, and farmers, not absentee landlords.

**How much do politicians, male and female, understand this topic?**

Why would they? I learn a lot at a conference of food industry executives I go to nearly every year. When Trump was elected, the head of a large state

agriculture trade association was really excited. He thought Trump would solve their problems—labor, overregulation, trade. He was convinced that Trump would understand what Big Agriculture's problems were and fix them. That hasn't happened. If anything, the farm labor situation is worse. Agriculture lobbyists don't have the power they used to so politicians don't listen.

**Are you impressed with any of the women running and their agriculture policies?**

Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris have come out with thoughtful proposals that deserve close attention. Others have too. All the candidates went to Iowa. But there isn't much they can do unless they can change the root of corruption in American government. We'll never fix food politics until election campaigns are publicly funded and we find a way to keep corporate money out of politics. As long as candidates are beholden to corporations, we can't expect them to care about the common folk, low-wage workers, protecting the environment, or putting public health interests over corporate interests.