

# OBAMA ON POLLAN

Remember the Michael Pollan article offering suggestions on agriculture to the next President? I pulled out these bits (and more on greenhouse gases and ag), which I thought were particularly important.

After cars, the food system uses more fossil fuel than any other sector of the economy – 19 percent. And while the experts disagree about the exact amount, the way we feed ourselves contributes more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere than anything else we do – as much as 37 percent, according to one study.

Here's Obama describing what he took away from that article.

I was just reading an article in the New York Times by Michael Pollen about food and the fact that our entire agricultural system is built on cheap oil. As a consequence, our agriculture sector actually is contributing more greenhouse gases than our transportation sector. And in the mean time, it's creating monocultures that are vulnerable to national security threats, are now vulnerable to sky-high food prices or crashes in food prices, huge swings in commodity prices, and are partly responsible for the explosion in our healthcare costs because they're contributing to type 2 diabetes, stroke and heart disease, obesity, all the things that are driving our huge explosion in healthcare costs. That's just one sector of the economy. You think about the same thing is true on transportation. The same thing is true on how we construct our buildings. The same is true across the board.

In find his take fascinating for several

reasons. One, he read it. Two, he didn't acknowledge that Pollan styled this article as a letter to the next President; Obama took advice intended for him, but he pitched it as a more general article (Would he have read it if Pollan had not addressed it to him, I wonder? Did Obama want to hide that addressing calling articles "letters" to the next President make it more likely he'll read them?). Three, he read it closely enough to synthesize a great deal of the content of the article. And four, he synthesized the article into his more general understanding of the economy—applying the lessons from this one article more generally.

Klein should have asked whether Obama plans on having one meatless day at the White House each week.