

Comparing Use of Rhetoric in Two Sustainable Agriculture Websites

Sustainable agriculture is a very important topic, especially when considering long term effects of unsustainable farming practices, and it is even more important when considering that large industrial agriculture and chemical corporations lobby and campaign against sustainable farming as it can be more expensive than using toxic chemicals and exploiting and overusing land and resources, since it can have a lower yield for the same amount of land. Sustainable agriculture is necessary for food security, making sure there is still land and resources to grow and produce food in the future, and providing consistent income for small farmers. Where industrial agriculture is more focused on maximizing yield and profit in the short term by getting as much out of land and resources as possible, sustainable agriculture is more focused on maximizing it in the long term, by using given resources and natural processes. The purpose of this essay is to analyze two websites on sustainable agriculture and their effectiveness when using rhetorical strategies, such as logos, pathos, ethos, and kairos. Both websites are non-profit and informative and both seek to inform about sustainable agriculture practices and about the downsides of unsustainable agriculture, and seek to persuade farmers, corporations, individuals, and lawmakers to adopt sustainable agriculture practices and policies. While the website from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture uses logos and ethos to persuade people to use sustainable agricultural practices, the website from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition uses logos, pathos, ethos, and kairos to persuade people to adopt sustainable agriculture practices and lobby for federal policy change, which makes it more persuasive overall than the website from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture.

The first website is from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. The purpose of this website is to provide information and resources on sustainable agriculture and to persuade people to adopt

and use sustainable agriculture practices, with their mission statement being “develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond.” and their goals being to work with farmers to develop sustainable agriculture practices, extend the knowledge and resources needed to develop sustainable agriculture practices, and to create an environment suitable for farmers to be sustainable. The website is responding to problems with current farming practices and researching sustainable agriculture, as gathered from its publications and about page. The intended audience is mainly farmers but is also any student or interested person in sustainable agriculture and solving problems facing current agricultural practices. The website is very ethical in its persuasion. It is very truthful and respectful, acknowledging the other side’s opinion on the argument for sustainable agriculture, and gives information on how they are working to solve the problem rather than arguing their side.

The second website is the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. The purpose of this website is to advocate for policy reform regarding agriculture and advance the sustainability of agriculture and farming communities by working closely with and supporting and protecting small and medium size farms and other independent farmers, and to provide information on these topics, as stated in its about page. It also serves the purpose of raising funds for these goals. The website is responding to issues regarding sustainable agriculture being threatened by large industrial farms and unfair federal policies, to increase on-farm research for sustainable practices, and increase production and accessibility of sustainably farmed or organic food, which can be found using their work and goals that they post on their website. The intended audience is everyone who cares about independent farmers and access to organic food, as well as anyone who wants to start farming. The website is pretty ethical. It is truthful and works towards fairness for independent farmers, as well as trying to solve real problems facing farmers and by extension anyone who eats food

For the website from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, the rhetorical appeals used include logos, an appeal to logic and reasoning, and ethos, an appeal to authority or character. For logos, the website mainly talks about the benefits of sustainable agriculture, especially in its publications. One

example of logos is in their publication on *Reintegrating Ruminant Grazing in Row Crop Country*, where they found that “making a shift on 7.5 million acres of mostly marginal land in the state from traditional row crop production or basic grazing on existing grasslands to more continuous living cover and well-managed grazing, could drive a public benefit of \$450 million over six years after an initial \$330 million in state-funded cost-sharing for farmers to shift their practices.” This is using logos because it is using evidence derived from research to support their argument that sustainable agriculture can be profitable. One example of ethos is from their people section, where they list people in the organization, which includes actual farmers, heads of university departments, and other well respected researchers. This is ethos because it is listing out people who have real authority in the field relating to their argument that sustainability is the future of agriculture. While this website has very persuasive logos and ethos, there is little to no use of pathos or kairos used to support any sort of argument. This is likely because some of their main goals are to support research, education, and information sharing on sustainable agriculture practices rather than focusing on persuading people.

For the website from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, they use logos, ethos, pathos, which is an appeal to emotion, and kairos, which is an appeal to urgency. An example of logos is from their work, where from 2018, it is stated that “For increasingly more Americans, eating locally produced foods is becoming a priority. Family farmers are interested too, because local and regional marketplaces often offer better prices for farmers’ products, which helps them to sustain their businesses and put food on their families’ tables.” This is logos because it is using the reasoning that eating local supports local farmers, which helps support those farmers and has lower prices, which supports their argument farms need to be more diverse and localized. One example of ethos is under their supporters page, where they list tons of well known foundations such as the Walton Family Foundation, Platform for Agriculture and Climate Transformation, Clif Family Foundation, and many more. This is ethos because it is appealing to the character of their supporters, creating the appeal that since these foundations and organizations support them, then they must be doing good things. One example of pathos is on their front page, where they show pictures of real farmer’s stories of sustainable agriculture. They create the appeal that they are helping out

small farmers and how sustainable agriculture plays into that to try to get people to care about their cause. One example of kairos is their “Donate” and “Take Action!” buttons that are almost always visible. This is an appeal to kairos because it creates a sense of urgency that something has to be done immediately to get people involved and to donate.

Comparing the two websites, the website from the Minnesota Institute of Sustainable Agriculture is more focused on research and education, and the website from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is more focused on persuasion and advocating for policy change, and it is mainly for that reason that the website from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition tends to be more persuasive overall, since it uses more persuasive techniques. The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition had a more in depth website and overall had more numerous and better rhetorical strategies incorporated into their website compared to the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture website, and relied more on kairos and pathos, rather than just logos and ethos. While The website for the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition was more persuasive overall, the website for the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture was more ethical in its persuasion, since the main purpose of the website is to hold information about research and research publications, which may try to be persuasive in themselves, but the main purpose of the website is to inform and educate rather than to persuade, whereas the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is actively trying to persuade people, and presents information in a way more favorable to their argument, though most of the information is presented in an ethical way.

In conclusion, the purpose of this essay was achieved by analyzing two websites on sustainable agriculture and their effectiveness when using rhetorical strategies such as logos, pathos, ethos, and kairos and it was found that the website from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is more effective at persuading its audience to adopt sustainable agriculture practices and calling for federal policy change using logo, paths, ethos, and kairos, compared to the website from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture is at persuading its audience to adopt sustainable agriculture practices uses logos and ethos. This analysis is helpful because it highlights the difference between the rhetorical strategies of the two

websites and shows how different core purposes for a website or organization can affect the effectiveness of the same persuasive argument of trying to get people to use sustainable agriculture practices. These same analytical techniques can also be applied to evaluate other websites on the effectiveness of their rhetorical strategies and identify pitfalls in those arguments, which can be used to build a stronger, more persuasive argument overall.

Revision #5

Created 2026-04-14 14:55:16 UTC by Admin

Updated 2026-04-29 00:43:17 UTC by Admin