

Cultivating Community and Environmental Health

Models for sustainable and organic strategies to protect ecosystems, pollinators, and waterways

34th National Pesticide Forum

A Call to the Conference

Change is occurring across the country as communities engage in robust discussion and the adoption of land and building management practices and policies that replace toxic pesticides with organic and sustainable methods. As the science continues to support the urgent need for this transition, the practitioners –whether farmers, gardeners, homeowners, or building managers– are proving daily that toxic inputs are not necessary to meet goals for agricultural productivity or expectations for athletic fields, parks, and home lawns.

Effective community advocates for change take a science-based approach, utilizing the current findings in the scientific literature, which link pesticides to disease outcomes and ecological and wildlife effects, to hold decision makers accountable to standards that protect health and well-being. This is both a collaborative and sometimes contentious process, with attention focused on a clear understanding of the pesticide threat, statutory and regulatory deficiencies, and sound and effective solutions. Whether it is a recent study on the cancer causing properties of the weed killer glyphosate, the increasing pesticide dependency in genetically engineered (GE) crops and off-site contamination by GE material, the decline of pollinators tied to neonicotinoid and systemic insecticides, or pesticide contaminated waterways, bringing the information to a community forum is critical to the process of advancing policy that embraces a precautionary approach. Information on the viability of an organic systems approach not dependent on toxic chemicals, from experienced organic practitioners and the business community, helps to paint a complete picture that challenges the need for pesticide-dependent practices.

In agriculture and home and community gardens, organic systems are taking hold in record numbers. In this context, people have adopted soil management techniques that respect nature, nurturing a healthy ecosystem, biodiversity, and the ability to partner with and regenerate soil biology, and, in the process, prevent pest problems. The approach is cross-cutting in ensuring clean air and water, safe food, worker protection, and sequestration of carbon and the slowing of global climate change.

But, the facts alone do not drive change. Local organizations, joining with state and national groups, form the alliances to work with elected officials at all levels of government. In this process, focus is needed to ensure corporate and government accountability to standards and certification specifications that have high integrity and public trust –driving responsible and protective policy and marketplace practices.

It is our goal at this conference to hone our understanding of cutting edge science and practices, contributing to an increasing number of successful campaigns for healthy communities that protect the fragility of life. Thanks for joining us at *Cultivating Community and Environmental Health!*



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