

Sustainable Families, Farms and Food ***Resilient Communities through Organic Practices***

The 31st National Pesticide Forum
University of New Mexico ■ Albuquerque, NM ■ April 5-6, 2013

Call to the Conference

It is significant that we begin this conference with a performance about Rachel Carson and protection of the earth – *A Sense of Wonder*. Her landmark book, *Silent Spring*, published in 1962 – just over 50 years ago, provides us with guiding principles and an affirmation of core environmental values, rooted in scientific understanding of biological systems, that are central to the sustainability of our environment and our very existence. We come together to build on those values with sustainable practices in communities and a nation that are threatened by environmental and public health hazards associated with toxic chemical use, their contamination of air, water, land, and food, and their contribution to global climate change.

This conference brings together many of the best minds to address the latest science, discuss policies and practices that nurture health and the environment, to share practical information on how we effect a true transformation in managing our land and buildings. While the problem is not new, we live in a period where for the first time in the chemical age we see that organic land management practices are effective, and compete with chemical-intensive methods in their productivity and profitability. Whether in agriculture, turf and rangeland management, or urban spaces, there are success stories in the southwest, the west, and nationwide that serve as a guide for the transition to resilient, toxic-free communities.

In *Silent Spring*, Ms. Carson writes, “[T]he method of massive chemical control has had only limited success and also threatens to worsen the very conditions it is intended to curb.” This truth has been repeatedly affirmed throughout our history as chemical-intensive practices have created insect and weed resistance, advancing the chemical treadmill of increasing dependency on more and more potent formulations that bring with them unique health and environmental threats. New scientific understandings are emerging and toxic chemical exposures are linked to impacts on children’s health, behavioral effects and learning disabilities, reproductive failures, and increasing numbers of public health diseases associated with endocrine disruption.

The nation’s organic law, under the *Organic Foods Production Act*, supports farmers, land managers, and consumers in continuously improving management and governance decisions as we seek to develop new approaches that recommit us to sustainable practices. In so doing, the underlying standards of the national organic rule advance practices that “maintain or improve soil organic matter content in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil, or water by plant nutrients, pathogenic organisms, heavy metals, or residues of prohibited substances.” We apply this concept by not just maintaining, but improving or regenerating the ecosystem in which we live.

The organic solutions are just as real as the environmental and health problems they seek to reverse. This conference is intended to provide us with the latest science to use as tools in seeking to elevate our advocacy, practices, and support of sustainable strategies that are critical to sustaining life. Thanks for joining us!



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