

# TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE

ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY | JANUARY 2019–JUNE 2020



## BUILDING A BASE FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Our program strives to reverse the pending catastrophic events destructive of the ecosystems that support life—exemplified by the dramatic decline in biodiversity (including pollinators) and the climate crisis—with action to eliminate the use of pesticides in land and building management and the adoption of ecological-based organic practices.

With the current coronavirus pandemic and the “new normal,” we are leading a crucial effort to transform our country’s approach to toxic pesticide regulation with systemic change to pesticide law, which must consider comorbidities and preexisting conditions, and the fact that pesticide exposure exacerbates the threat of risk factors for the virus—especially respiratory, immunological, and neurological illness. This speaks to the need to eliminate toxic pesticides and shift to organic systems.

### Disproportionate Risk and Environmental Justice

Nurturing and sustaining life is at the core of the environmental work that Beyond Pesticides is doing with communities across the country. However, as the events of early 2020 have illustrated, if we are to ensure that our society and planet are sustainable, it will require the protection of those facing the greatest hazards and attention to the underlying disparities behind them.



### Pesticides Elevate Disproportionate Coronavirus Harm

The nation is seeing disparities in who is at highest risk of infection, not just by age groups, but along racial lines. This is occurring because those with the highest disease and death rates are disproportionately “essential workers.” They are among the lowest income workers in society and, as a result, have medical comorbidities that elevate risk factors, and have limited, if any, health insurance. For millions of people outside the black and brown community, this has raised a heightened awareness of societal inequities related to race—bringing into focus the disproportionate effect that pesticide exposure has by elevating risk factors for Covid-19.

### Advancing Systemic Change

Our work to advance systemic change seeks to identify underlying policies that codify disproportionate harm, such as a federal pesticide law that is built on a foundation that allows elevated and disproportionate risk to workers. The law effectively requires EPA to allow higher rates of harm for workers, particularly farmworkers and landscapers

(who are disproportionately people of color). Beyond Pesticides is reimagining policy proposals that effect a transformation to an organic society that eliminates toxic pesticides, respects the complexity of life and the ecosystems that sustain us, and put an end to institutional biases that codify environmental racism. The time for systemic change is now.

### Transitioning to Organic Policy and Practices

Organic being a defined systems approach to soil management and plant health is central to our program:

- **Protecting Organic Integrity**—In agriculture and food production, we play a key role in advocating for the integrity of organic standards, including allowed and prohibited substances, to ensure a trustworthy USDA organic label for certified organic food.
- **Organic Parks, Playgrounds, and Playing Fields**—Our unique program works with local communities to adopt organic land management policy and practices. We expanded our work, as well as continued work that has begun, in over 30 communities across the country and other communities are being added. We conduct soil analysis, site reviews, and staff training to implement organic practices. As the coronavirus pandemic emerged, we transitioned to a remote program with continued success.

### Protecting Ecosystems That Sustain Life: Bee Protective

The interrelationship and interdependency of organisms is critical to ecological balance and human survival. With broad spectrum pesticide use, and indiscriminate poisoning with systemic pesticides, an ecological imbalance is created, sacrificing the benefits of



# POLLINATOR WEEK



nature and escalating pest problems. The threat to pollinators caused by toxic pesticides continues to be an important indicator of our society's failure to adequately regulate pesticides and more broadly adopt land management practices that eliminate their use. To counter this, we provide science-based content and context to counter harmful legislation and regulations at the federal, state, and local levels.

## Global, Economic, Social and Environmental Effects

Tracking the science and our focus on the role of biodiversity are key to our grassroots advocacy. We zeroed in on research that finds that a decline in wild pollinator abundance, notably wild bees, limits crop yields in the U.S. The national average value of wild bee pollination for the most economically important and pollinator-dependent crops is approximately \$1.5 billion; the annual total value of all U.S. pollinator-dependent crops equals \$50 billion. Seventy-five percent of the 115 top global food crops depend on insect pollination, with one-third of all U.S. crops dependent on pollinators, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

## Center for Community Pesticide and Alternatives Information

The Center provides hands-on information and strategy. We work daily with grassroots people, volunteer and non-profit organizations, and those in policy, decision-making, and land and facilities management positions to address issues on the hazards of pesticide use, safe and organic alternative strategies that eliminate toxic pesticides, and of local and state policies that embrace the adoption of ecological approaches to land and building management.

## Informing Action

Our website has become the go-to source, continuing to be an important fount of information on science, policy, and action, with 250,560 total website visitors in 2019. Online resources include:

- **ManageSafe™**—Database of practical solutions to pest issues is a central clearinghouse of information on eliminating hazardous pesticides in land and building management.
- **Gateway on Pesticide Hazards and Safe Pest Management**—Information on 378 chemicals and new ones are added continuously.
- **Pesticide-Induced Disease Database (PIDD)**—A total of 1,138 studies, up from 1,046 studies, with pesticide exposure links to cancer, brain and nervous system disorders, and learning/developmental disorders logging the most entries.
- **What the Science Shows**—This tracks the science on pollinators and pesticides; currently 254 studies are available.
- **Eating with a Conscience**—Linking food purchasing decisions to production effects on workers and the environment, the database includes information on legal pesticide residue allowances by specific crop on over 80 crops.

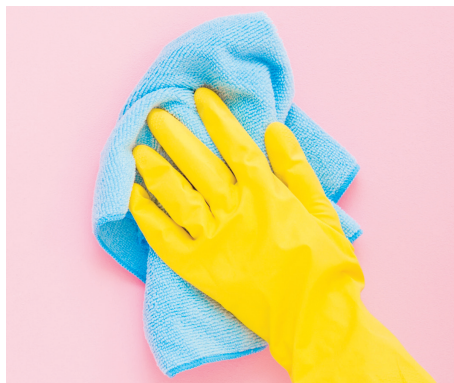
## Disinfecting Safely—Avoid the Toxic Ingredients

We are getting out information on safe disinfectants, critical at a time when toxic chemical use exacerbates people's vulnerability to Covid-19—since toxic ingredients in disinfectants contribute to respiratory, immunological, and neurological illness. Our new webpage on disinfectants and sanitizers alerts people to the availability of safer products, while issuing a warning on the hazardous products that EPA is allowing on the market, toxic materials like the quaternary compounds. In addition, we produced factsheets to guide safe decision-making: *Protecting Yourself from COVID-19 (coronavirus) Without*

*Toxic Sanitizers and Disinfectants—Fight the coronavirus with common sense prevention and safer disinfection products, and Can Schools be Opened Safely During the COVID-19 Pandemic?*

## Challenging Fraudulent and Misleading Advertising

We filed lawsuits against two major corporations for misleading the public on the safety of their products and the adverse impact they have on the environment. TruGreen, a nationwide, chemical-intensive lawn treatment company, has long characterized its practices as good for the environment and healthy for those who purchase their toxic pesticide service. ExxonMobil, as an oil and gas producer of petrochemicals that are the basis for pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, has invested significant advertising dollars to tell the public that they are a green company, heavily invested in addressing and solving the climate crisis. Both companies are engaging in fraudulent and misleading practices that misstate the truth and the facts, leading the public to believe that they are offering solutions that people want to support with their purchasing power, according to separate lawsuits we filed in Washington, D.C.



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