



# BEYOND PESTICIDES

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Dear Friends,

On Thanksgiving, I hope that you, like me, are lucky enough to share a wonderful meal with family and friends and share appreciations. This letter is first and foremost intended to wish you and yours a nurturing and Happy Thanksgiving. I'm also writing about the word "share."

This Thanksgiving, I'm especially thinking about the world and environment we "share" because how we go about sharing is so critical to our ability to thrive. Beyond the shared Thanksgiving meal, virtually every aspect of our lives and that which sustains us are shared—the air we breathe, water we drink, parks where we walk and our children play, the biodiversity that nurtures life, and the intricate balance of nature and the beauty and amazement that it offers us. We share in the positivity of all that supports our lives and for that we have a lot to be thankful.

Of course, there is a reality to this that we know and experience when we collectively do not take our stewardship and responsibility of these shared life-sustaining resources seriously or seriously enough—with the same passion and love that we may have for our closest loved ones, family and friends, who are sitting around the Thanksgiving table or those who we're reaching out to on this day of thanks.

In the Beyond Pesticides network, we experience the shared pain (or deep sense of empathy) from the loss of those struck by never-before-seen weather disasters—flooding, fires, and drought. As we track the science that documents the ongoing existential threats to health, biodiversity, and climate, and seek to turn this knowledge into action, we understand that these threats are shared by us all. Many of the effects of these escalating crises we share quietly with those who are suffering or have suffered with cancer, neurological disease, respiratory illness, reproductive problems, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, autism, and more that are known to be induced by environmental contaminants, often endocrine disruptors.

At the same time, I am thankful that organic practices offer a solution that is within our shared knowledge, experience, expertise, and grasp. And that's why I, and the staff and board of Beyond Pesticides, are working for the universal adoption of organic practices that are defined, certified, enforced, and governed by a transparent standard-setting process that invites a sharing of knowledge and input.

This note on Thanksgiving is an opportunity to explore shared thinking on what we can do together with our families, communities, elected and local governmental officials, health care providers, teachers, and farmers—how we can work to build this organic solution even when we hear rhetoric that denies the urgency of the existential threats.

As you may know, Beyond Pesticides started working to advance organic practices in the 1970's when we had the honor of visiting with family farmers as well as farmworkers in labor camps

who described to me their personal experiences with the horror of pesticides. As we met more and more organic farmers, who at that time were not recognized as legitimate producers of food, it became clear that the need for pesticides was what was not legitimate. So, we worked to pass the *Agricultural Productivity Act* in 1983, which established the Low Input Sustainable Agriculture program (later becoming the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program) at USDA, and then the *Organic Foods Production Act* in 1990, which created the organic seal that we see today in virtually every grocery store. Still, the threats we all share today and into the future are being widely reported, including in *Environmental Science & Technology* (2022), which asserts that the effects of synthetic chemicals are now exceeding the planetary boundary, “[the point at which human-made changes to the Earth push it outside the stable environment of the last 10,000 years.](#)”

The keynote speaker at our National Forum this Fall, *Imperatives for a Sustainable Future*, Tracey Woodruff, PhD, who earlier this year wrote the article, “[Health Effects of Fossil Fuel–Derived Endocrine Disruptors](#),”—in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, told us, “Many of these fossil-fuel-based chemicals are endocrine disruptors, meaning they interfere with hormonal systems, and they are part of the disturbing rise in disease.” The extraction of oil and gas and their use in the production of precursor chemicals used in the manufacturing of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers are one of the biggest contributors to chemical pollution and the greenhouse gases carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane. The manufacture of petrochemical fertilizers and pesticides also creates a major environmental injustice for predominantly Black and Brown communities where production facilities are often located and in land management where farmworkers and landscapers experience disproportionate harm. See [Forum recording](#).

In this context, [the universal adoption of organic practices has become an urgent necessity for the common good](#), with Congressional, administration, and corporate support needed at the highest level.

You may be aware that Beyond Pesticides has a program that is gaining momentum in which we share resources with communities that are interested in adopting organic land management in their parks, playing fields, and open and public spaces. We start with pilot sites, evaluate the soil and existing practices, develop a plan and recommendations for transitioning to organic, and then provide ongoing support through the transition period. This is something we can do together to show the viability, cost-effectiveness, resiliency, and the climate-friendly effects through the elimination of petrochemical pesticides and fertilizers and the drawdown of atmospheric carbon. See more on the program at [Parks for a Sustainable Future](#).

We are working for holistic change in food production and land management—from farms to homes, gardens, parks, playing fields, and schools. We are building on a foundation for this change that we helped to create. And now, we are taking this work to the next level, calling for and working toward the universal adoption of organic practices in communities and on farms.

[I trust that we share this vision for a sustainable future with you.](#) Please consider a donation to Beyond Pesticides this holiday season. [Your support is of tremendous value and deeply appreciated.](#)

Happy Thanksgiving,



Jay Feldman  
Executive Director