

Rodale's Big Campaign, a lightbulb for organic honey, and weeds

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Rodale Takes the Reins

A few weeks ago, at their annual Field Day, the Rodale Institute announced something they call the **10 Million Acre Solution**, and it involves a hefty goal of raising \$139 million to “expand our research, education, consulting and global role as the definitive voice in regenerative organic agriculture. With it, they say they can transition 10 million new acres of organic and regenerative organic land by 2030. It’s a bold claim in an era when some see the USDA’s support of organic faltering.



During the Field Day, Rodale broke ground on one component of the project: a \$24 million Center for Regenerative Organic Innovation on their existing campus.

Rodale has divided the campaign into distinct segments:

Funding the mission: with research, farm consulting, local education, technology, and changing the way the market views food.

Funding the Infrastructure: The Center for Regenerative Organic Innovation plus a state-of-the-art science center.

Funding the Legacy: Using endowments to create a long-term financial foundation.

As Rodale begins this ambitious fundraising campaign, they're turning to private and nonprofit sources to back them. As Organic Insider notes, "The campaign's deeper significance lies in who Rodale is calling on to fund it—an explicit bet on private capital, for-profit and nonprofit alike, to finance a transition the government is abandoning."



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Research That Could Change Organic Honey

Most U.S. honey producers can't meet organic certification standards. While they may comply with the maximum residue limits for pesticide contamination in the honey itself, there's another standard that makes it much more difficult (and often out of their control): Current USDA organic guidelines require apiaries to have a 6.4-km (nearly 4-mile) buffer of either organic-certified or natural land for bees to forage.



However, new research out of Cornell University may pave the way toward changing that buffer requirement. In a test of 72 colonies in the Northeast, they found that bees foraged a median distance of just 750 meters from the hive. And they found that honey produced on small organic farms could meet the residue standard even without that big buffer. It's a finding that might start to move the needle toward new standards.

In the study, they were also able to produce honey with pesticide contamination levels adequate to meet the organic standards by applying organic colony practices on farms where natural and semi-natural habitats dominated the landscape.

The senior author of the study, Scott McArt, is associate professor of entomology in the Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Dr. McArt notes that it's difficult to even find a 6.4 km radius of fully organic-certified or natural land in the continental U.S. That means U.S. honey producers don't really even have the option of certifying organic. Three producers in Hawaii are certified, but most of the U.S. supply of organic honey comes from foreign countries.

"Our research shows that beekeepers in the Northeast U.S. may only need a small fraction of that land to produce honey with pesticide contamination as low as imported USDA organic honeys," said Ben DeMoras, another author on the paper. He also noted, "One in five beekeepers already manage their hives with organic methods, so with revised organic standards, many could still benefit economically."

You can learn more about the study [HERE](#).



New Silicon Product for Resilience

BioWorks just introduced a new silicon-based plant health solution called Stemmer. This highly soluble product helps reinforce plant cell walls, optimize nutrient and water-use efficiency, and

enhance crop performance. BioWorks notes that as environmental conditions become increasingly unpredictable, Stemmer is designed to improve plant tolerance to a range of abiotic stressors and produce greener plants that can still perform in those challenging conditions.

Stemmer works by delivering plant-available silicon, which reinforce cell wall architecture, enhance tissue strength, stem rigidity and overall resilience. They also say that increased silicon availability helps with the translocation and utilization of relatively immobile nutrients, including calcium, supporting cell wall development, tissue quality and improved crop vigor.

Interestingly, in a poinsettia rooting trial, Stemmer improved rooting performance, with 80% of treated cuttings having initiated roots within two days, compared to just 30% of untreated controls. At the seven-day mark, 100% of treated cuttings were ready to transplant, compared to 80% of untreated controls.

Stemmer can be used in greenhouse, nursery, high tunnel and field production, and is available in 49 states (but not California).

Learn more [HERE](#).



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Report from the MT Outpost



August is the month in which the weeds catch up and show their true colors, and I, their supposed keeper, begin to feel like a failure. The musk and Canada thistle have bloomed, revealing torrid patches that I missed or neglected. There's a spread of knapweed—part of which we successfully mowed at the exact time needed, per the extension agent's advice. But part of it got away from us.

I'm also noticing yellow streaks of leafy spurge. And honestly, the cheat grass was already a lost cause. This windswept western landscape, while gorgeous, invites invasives to take root in every hill, nook and cranny.

There's the obligation to keep them out from the "don't-let-them-take-over-native-species" angle, but around here, there's also an added livestock factor. That means there's a long list of both native and invasive species that can be toxic to livestock to varying degrees. A short walk from the house, cattle graze on U.S. Forest Service land, and nearly every summer a tree falls on the fence (or someone forgets to close a gate) and they gleefully seek out our green little oasis. Because the grass is always greener on the other side.

On a brighter note, the bee balm and yarrow are stealing the show at the cabin this month.

Until next time,



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