

Carbon taxes, poor sales of eco-friendly products, and my Black Friday.



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#### COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Poor Sales for Eco-Friendly  
Organic Fungicide  
Check-off Program  
Carbon Tax Relief for Growers  
My Black Friday

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## Why Don't E-Friendly Products Sell Better?

Consumer interest in natural and earth-friendly products may be strong, but that doesn't mean those consumers actually purchase those goods. In fact, according to the new [Consumer Insights Trends Report](#) from the Natural Marketing Institute (NMI), there's a large gap between consumers who say they're "very interested" in a natural or eco-friendly product and consumers who've actually purchased that product in the last year.

When it comes to environmentally friendly lawn and garden products, 37% of consumers surveyed said they were very interested in those kinds of products, but only 13% had actually purchased one in the last 12 months. So what's happening?

- 61% say the product is too expensive
- 34% say they can't always tell if it's e-friendly or not
- 27% say they think it won't work as well as the products they usually buy
- 27% say they don't know if it's actually better for them/their family
- 26% say they don't know enough about them
- 24% say the products aren't available at the stores they shop

While price is a barrier, the rest of this screams for education and communication. If you're carrying a line of e-friendly products and it's not selling that well, maybe it's time to ask why. And ask yourself the hard question: Are you helping your customers make an informed choice?



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## A Fungicide for Organic Production

If you've been looking for a fungicide that's approved for organic production, but can also be used with conventional disease programs, my colleague Paul Pilon over at *Perennial Pulse* found a product that fits the bill. Gowan USA has a new botanical fungicide called EcoSwing.

EcoSwing is based on the extract of *Swinglea glutinosa* and has been shown to be effective on a number of diseases, including alternaria, botrytis, powdery mildew and 11 others. EcoSwing offers a unique mode of action, 4-hour re-entry interval, zero-day pre-harvest interval and exception from tolerances. EcoSwing is labeled for use on outdoor and greenhouse food and non-food crops. That's right—ornamentals are on its label.

Paul says it's another tool for the IPM toolbox. [Click here](#) to check it out.



## OTA Proposes Voluntary Check-Off

While the idea of a mandatory check-off program to promote organics was killed by the USDA, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) is charging ahead with a voluntary “check-off-like” program. They’re calling it GRO Organic (short for Generate Results and Opportunity for Organic) and they’re soliciting comments through April 30.

The program would be a private-sector initiative to invest in organic research, promotion and education. OTA says, “In order to be effective, we need to determine the best way to encourage broad participation and set up a fair governance structure, so that we can research where we need to, promote where we need to and educate where we need to based on the best potential ROI for organic.”

They ask interested stakeholders to submit their comments and answer a series of questions online during the comment period. You can do so [HERE](#).



## Canadian Growers Get Relief from Carbon Tax

In late October, the Canadian government announced it would provide greenhouse growers with targeted relief from their federal carbon tax on fuels for greenhouse heating.

**Carbon taxes** are often cited by economists as the cheapest way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In short, a price is levied on each ton of emissions from fossil fuel sources. But for growers who've already made moves to be energy efficient, they feel the carbon tax puts them at a disadvantage.

The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA) stated in a [press release](#), “Without relief, carbon pricing has the potential to negatively impact the competitiveness of

greenhouse and field production of fruits and vegetables, both of which compete in the global marketplace."

"The reality is that farmers have already been incentivized to become energy efficient, as it has been necessary to remain competitive," says Jan VanderHout, chair of the OFVGA. "Today, we thank the federal government for recognizing the specific needs of greenhouse production."

## Black Friday: Putting the Money Outdoors

For the last four years, outdoor retailer REI has bucked the Black Friday sale trend and instead closes their doors on what many retailers consider to be their biggest sales day of the year. Using #OptOutside, they encourage their employees and customers to instead get outside. It makes sense for a company that is, essentially, selling the outdoor experience. Other companies have followed in their footsteps.

Admittedly, I've never done the Black Friday thing; the thought of it makes me shudder. The long Thanksgiving weekend has always been about long walks and food in my family—and yes, I'll gladly stretch that out for four days.

While some might be quick to claim REI's #OptOutside is more marketing than it is altruistic, REI is doubling down this year. The company is giving 12,000 employees a paid day off as usual and inviting the public to get outside, but they also **announced** a pledge of \$1 million to the University of Washington to study how outside time impacts our health. The university plans to establish a center for academic excellence called Nature for Health.

So with that, Happy Thanksgiving. And #GetOutside.

*Until next time,*



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