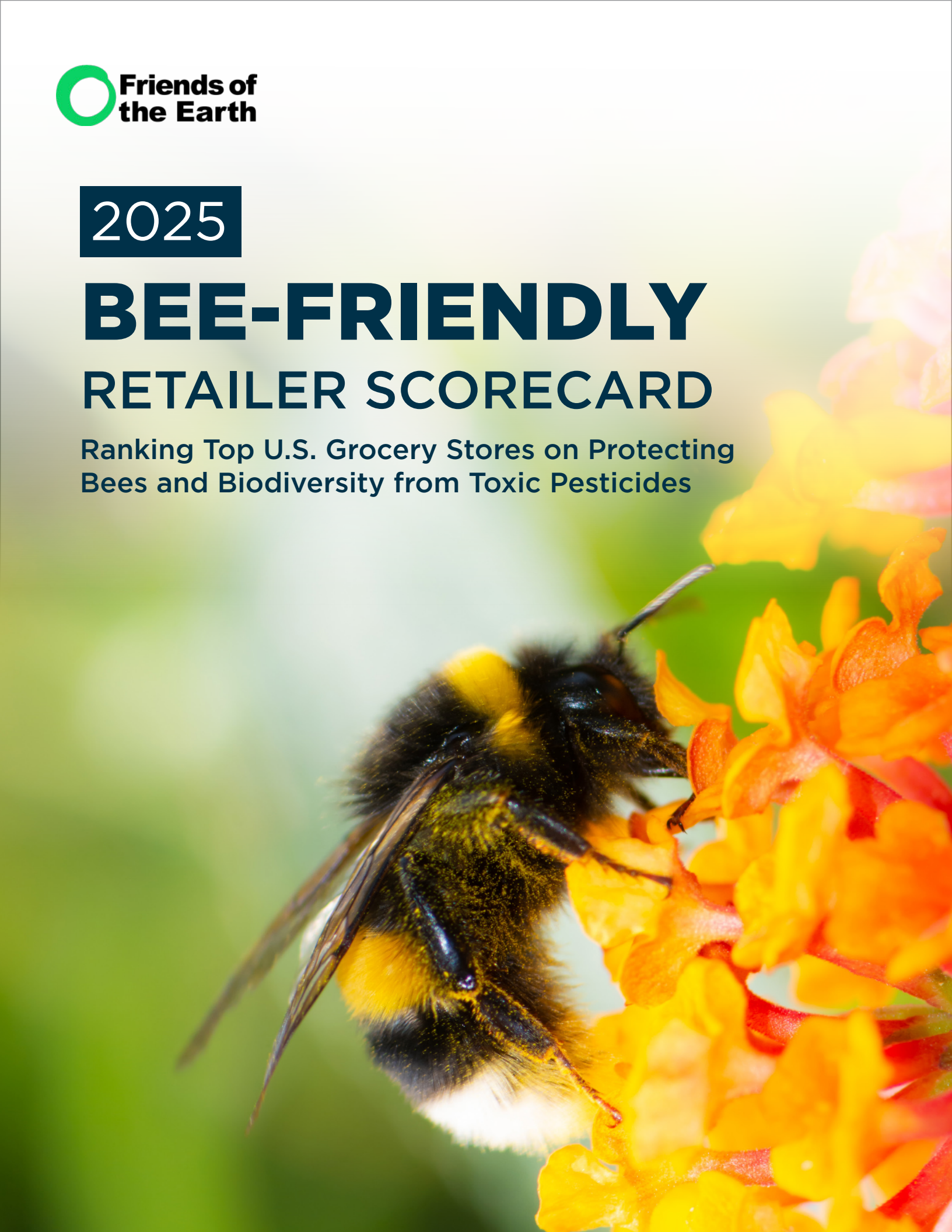
Friends of the Earth

2025

BEE-FRIENDLY RETAILER SCORECARD

Ranking Top U.S. Grocery Stores on Protecting Bees and Biodiversity from Toxic Pesticides



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was written by Kendra Klein, deputy director of science, Friends of the Earth.

ABOUT FRIENDS OF THE EARTH:

Friends of the Earth United States, founded by David Brower in 1969, is the U.S. voice of the world's largest federation of grassroots environmental groups, with a presence in 75 countries. Friends of the Earth works to defend the environment and champion a more healthy and just world. We have provided crucial leadership in campaigns resulting in landmark environmental laws, precedent-setting legal victories and groundbreaking reforms of domestic and international regulatory, corporate and financial institution policies.
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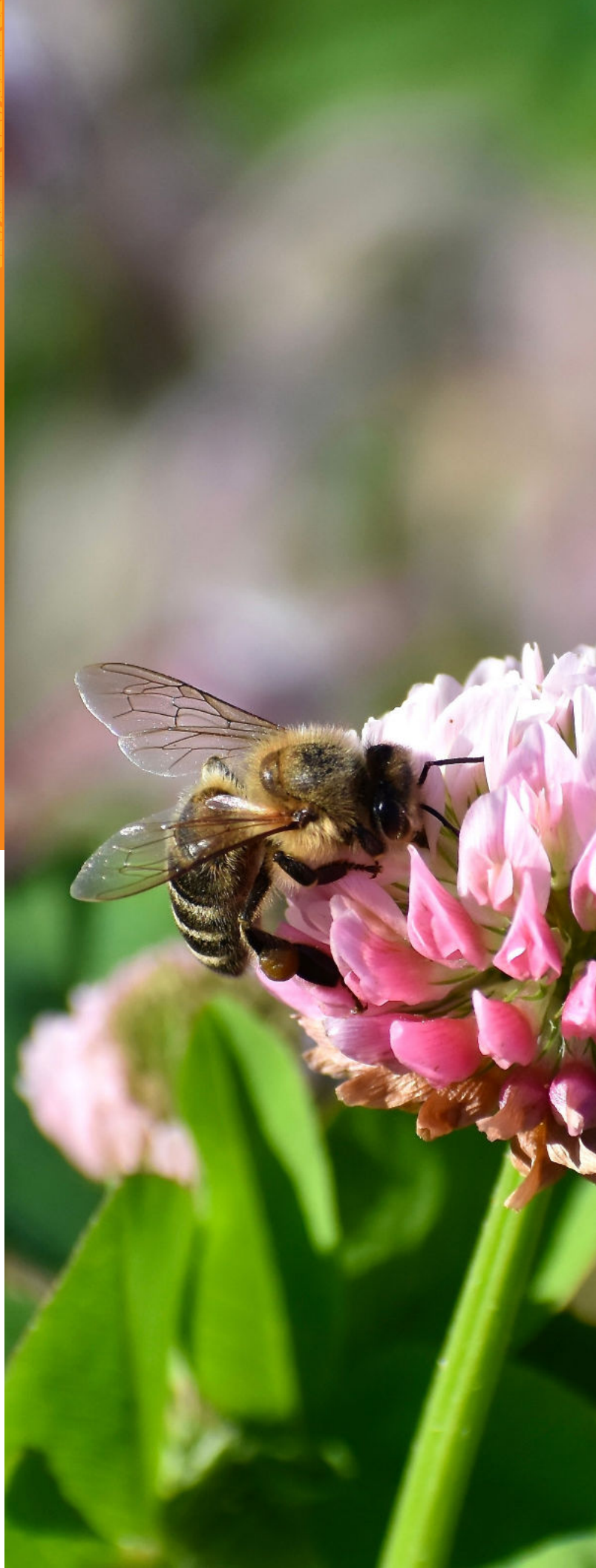


Table of Contents

Putting pesticides on the sustainability agenda for pollinators & the climate

Amid rising concern about an "insect apocalypse" and the decimation of bees and butterflies – the small but mighty pollinators responsible for one in three bites of food we eat – retailers are beginning to step up to address the routine and unnecessary use of toxic pesticides in their supply chains.

A growing body of science shows that agricultural pesticides are one of the main drivers of insect declines worldwide, along with habitat loss and climate change.[1,2] This is a pressing global issue, as scientists have warned that biodiversity loss is a crisis on par with the climate crisis.[3]

Without pollinators, grocery shelves would run short of a wide assortment of fruits and vegetables, nuts, beans, and delicious favorites like chocolate and coffee. And because bees pollinate alfalfa and other crops eaten by cows, even the dairy and meat shelves would look bare. In fact, 71 of the 100 crops that provide 90% of the world's food are pollinated by bees.[4]

To spur a race to the top, Friends of the Earth created a retailer scorecard to benchmark 25 of the largest U.S. grocery stores on pesticides. In just the past eight years, thirteen major grocery retailers have created policies that address pesticides, showing important momentum in the industry. Yet only five — Giant Eagle, Walmart, Kroger, Whole Foods, and Meijer — have made timebound and measurable commitments. The scope and implementation of pesticide policies across the sector fall far short of what is needed to protect biodiversity, the climate, and human health from harmful pesticides. Pesticides lag behind other sustainability issues in the sector. While 24 of 25 top food retailers have policies related to energy and climate, just thirteen have taken steps in the right direction on agricultural pesticides.

The choices these powerful companies make could determine whether bees and butterflies, as well as many other beneficial insects, will exist in the future. Scientists warn of "catastrophic ecosystem collapse" if we don't save these small but important creatures by changing the way we farm.[5] From birds to fish to people, insects are the basis of the food webs that feed us. They are essential to maintaining a livable planet.

Biodiversity solutions are climate solutions

It's time for grocery stores to create policies that reflect the urgency of the biodiversity crisis. These pollinator solutions will also be climate solutions. When grocery retailers commit to truly shift their supply chains away from pesticide-intensive agriculture to organic and other science-based ecological farming systems, they will not only protect pollinators, they will reduce their climate impact and help farmers cope with climate change. That's because pesticides — a term that encompasses insecticides, herbicides and fungicides — are a cornerstone of an industrial agricultural system that is decimating biodiversity, producing massive greenhouse gas emissions and destroying the soil and water resources that we need to grow food.[6] Environmental harm caused by industrial farming costs the world $3 trillion each year according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.[7]

The energy-intensive process of pesticide manufacturing alone accounts for approximately 10% of the total energy used for growing crops.[8] Therefore, grocery retailers should count pesticide reduction as an important part of their energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Pesticide reduction is also key to regenerative agriculture. Building healthy soils that can serve as a carbon sink requires reducing pesticide use, as pesticides harm the soil organisms that are central to the process of soil carbon sequestration. Pesticides harm soil invertebrates in 71% of cases studied according to a peer-reviewed meta-review co-authored by Friends of the Earth.[9] Invertebrates play a critical role in converting the carbon in plants into soil organic matter.

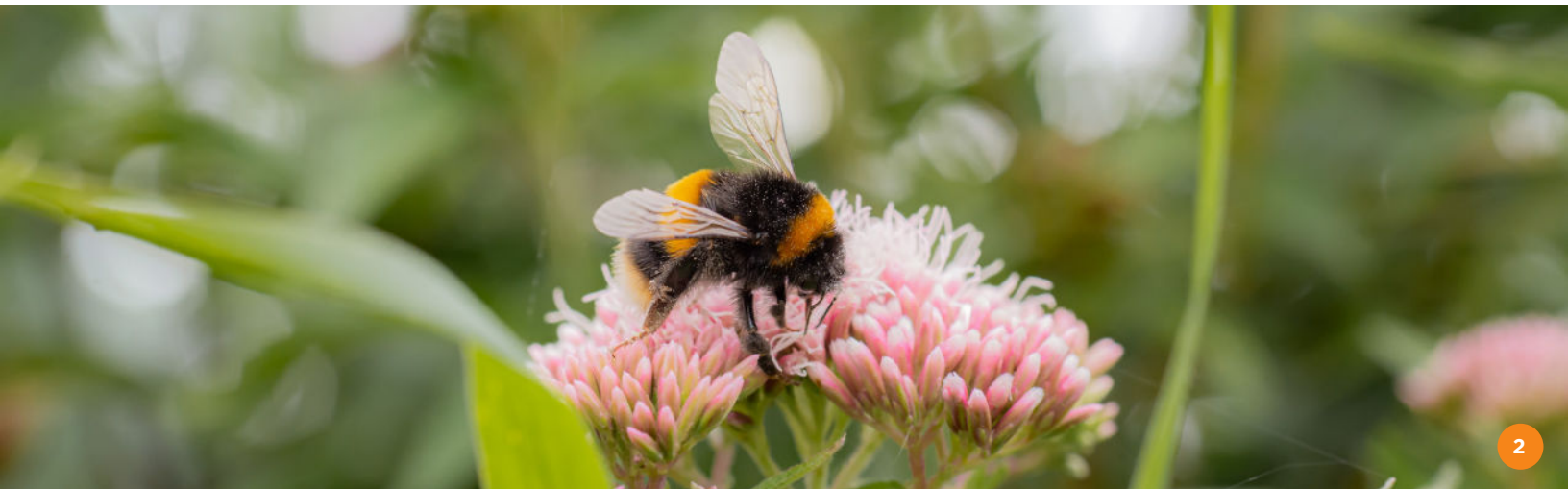
Building healthy, living soils also helps mitigate the effects of climate change on farmers since healthy soils conserve water and significantly increase farmers' resilience in the face of climate-related droughts and floods.[10,11]

Friends of the Earth's **research** on pesticides and soil invertebrates reveals the science on why pesticide reduction is a key part of regenerative agriculture, which can draw carbon down from the atmosphere to the soil.

Grocery stores have a major role to play in moving from pesticide-intensive agriculture to the food system of the future

Food retailers have enormous market power and influence over the food system. The top six companies, Walmart, Kroger, Costco, Amazon, Albertsons and Target, command an estimated $754 billion in annual grocery sales, representing 75% of the $1 trillion food retail sector.[12]

Grocery stores are also growing their private label brands, which creates more opportunities to directly influence practices in their supply chains. Private label sales now make up 29% of sales in the grocery sector.[13]



Market leadership is critical because our federal pesticide policy system is broken

U.S. agriculture uses more than 1.1 billion pounds of pesticides annually, representing approximately 15% of total global pesticide usage.[14] The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) allows use of many pesticides banned in other countries — 72 that have been banned in the European Union, 17 in Brazil and 11 in China.[15] Between 2017-2018, the EPA approved over 100 new pesticide products containing ingredients widely deemed to be highly hazardous.[16] And more than 35% of pesticides sold globally are considered "highly hazardous" to pollinators and/or people.[17] Despite a large and growing body of scientific data on the health and environmental damage wrought by pesticides, the U.S. government's food and agriculture policies subsidize pesticide-intensive agriculture to the tune of billions of dollars while ecological farming solutions are woefully underfunded.[18]

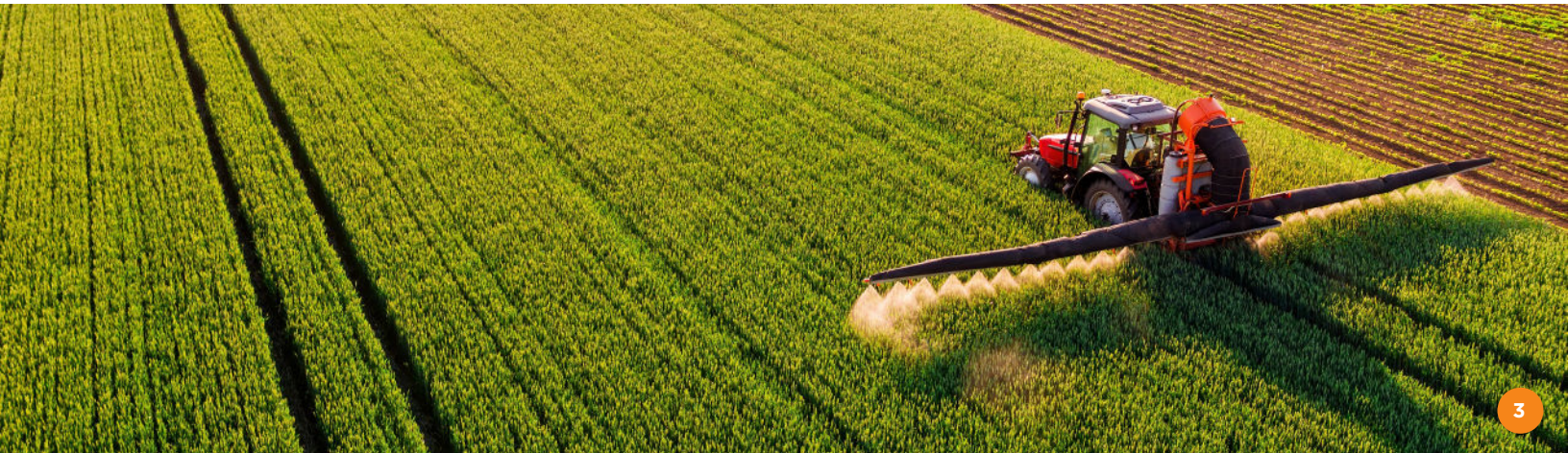
Pesticide policies will help companies meet consumer expectations for safe and sustainable food

In the hypercompetitive food retail market, strong policies to expand organic offerings and phase out toxic pesticides are critical ways for retailers to distinguish themselves from the pack. If retailers want to establish themselves as leaders on health and sustainability, they need to set clear goals to phase out toxic pesticides in their supply chains. According to polling by YouGov commissioned by Friends of the Earth, 83% of Americans believe it is important to eliminate pesticides that are harmful to pollinators from agriculture, and 74% believe grocery stores should support efforts to protect pollinators, such as bees and butterflies. 81% want their food to be free of pesticide residues and 67% feel it is important that the grocery store they shop at sells organic food.

Consumer opinions on pollinators, pesticides and organic food

Pollinator Protection	
Agree that it is important to eliminate pesticides that are harmful to pollinators from agriculture.	**83%**
Agree that grocery stores should support efforts to protect pollinators.	**74%**
Human Health	
Agree that it is important to eliminate pesticides that are harmful to human health from agriculture.	**83%**
Want their food to be free of pesticides.	**81%**
Shopping Preferences	
Feel it is important that the grocery store they shop at sells organic food.	**67%**
More likely to shop at a grocery store that made a formal commitment to eliminate harmful pesticides from its food supply if distance and price were not a factor.	**65%**
More likely to shop at a grocery store that made a formal commitment to protect pollinators if distance and price were not a factor.	**63%**

Results from YouGov Plc. poll of 1,454 U.S. adults commissioned by Friends of the Earth carried out online June 2nd - 3rd 2021. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all US adults.



THE PROBLEM

U.S. beekeepers lost over

55%

of their colonies this year.

More than 80% of flowering plants and 75% of all food crops depend on pollinators. Of those, bees are nature's best. But 25% of wild bee species have not been seen since the 1990s.[19] And U.S. beekeepers lost over 55% of their colonies this year.[20] Research shows that 40% of invertebrate pollinators like bees and butterflies face extinction.[21]

Bees are the canaries in the cornfields showing us that U.S. agriculture is on a deadly track. Along with pollinators, pesticides harm a wide range of beneficial insects that allow crops to thrive and that make up the basis of healthy ecosystems. Forty percent of insect species face extinction in coming decades according to a recent meta-analysis, leading the authors to warn of "catastrophic ecosystem collapse" if we don't change the way we farm.[22]

Pesticides threaten the health of people, from farmworkers to eaters

Pesticide exposure is linked to cancers, asthma, neurodevelopmental disorders like autism and ADHD and to adult neurological diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.[23,24,25,26] Exposure is also associated with endocrine disruption which is linked to a range of health problems including increased risk of obesity, diabetes and reproductive disorders.[27,28] There are more pesticides on our food now than a decade ago, and we can't just wash these pesticides off our food. More than 90% of Americans have detectable pesticides in their bodies, and government testing finds at least 29 different pesticides in the average American.[29,30] Farmworkers can be exposed to pesticides at levels hundreds of times higher than consumers. Farmers, farmworkers and their families have higher rates of acute poisonings, cancers, birth defects, asthma, infertility, autism and other neurological and reproductive problems. [31]

Friends of the Earth found 29 toxic pesticides in Target's Good & Gather baby food, including 10 banned in the EU.

Pesticide-intensive agriculture is failing to deliver on its primary goal: controlling pests

Since the widespread introduction of synthetic pesticides after World War II, hundreds of insect and weed species have developed resistance.[32] This has created a "pesticide treadmill" in which farmers spray more often and use more toxic pesticides to deal with resistant pests.[33] Despite drastic and costly increases in pesticide use, research shows that farmers are losing more of their crops to pests today than they did in the 1940s.[34,35]

ECONOMIC RISKS OF PESTICIDE USE & POLLINATOR DECLINES

Food costs are predicted to increase as pollinator populations decline

Pollinators are a cornerstone of a dependable food supply. They contribute approximately $34 billion to the U.S. economy and up to $577 billion to the global economy annually.[36,37] Honey bees alone contribute an estimated $20 billion to the U.S. economy[38,39] and $217 billion to the global economy.[40] Pollinator decline presents a material risk for the supply chains of food retailers.[41] Food costs are predicted to rise as managed and wild pollinator populations decline.[42] Research indicates that pollinator loss has already resulted in decreased production of key crops like apples, cherries and tomatoes in the United States.[43]

Pesticides are costly inputs

U.S. farmers spend approximately $15 billion on pesticides annually.[44,45] Every year, North American farmers spend approximately $782 million on neonicotinoids alone — the pesticide class most strongly linked to pollinator declines.[46] These expenditures could be invested in alternative pest management strategies instead.[47]

Farmers are paying more than ever to hire managed honey bees

Managed honey bees have a value of $15 to $20 billion in North American agriculture, and demand for pollinator-dependent crops in the U.S is at an all-time high.[48] However, losses of honey bee colonies since 2004 has left North America with fewer managed pollinators than at any time in the last 50 years, with commercial beekeepers consistently reporting annual losses of 29-45%, far exceeding the historical rate of 10-15%.[49] In 2021, U.S. beekeepers reported 45% losses in the previous year.[50] High colony loss rates require beekeepers to rapidly rebuild their colonies at substantial expense, which increases the costs of commercial pollination for farmers. For instance, the cost of renting honey bee hives for almond pollination tripled from 2003 to 2009 from approximately $50 per hive to $150 - $175.[51]

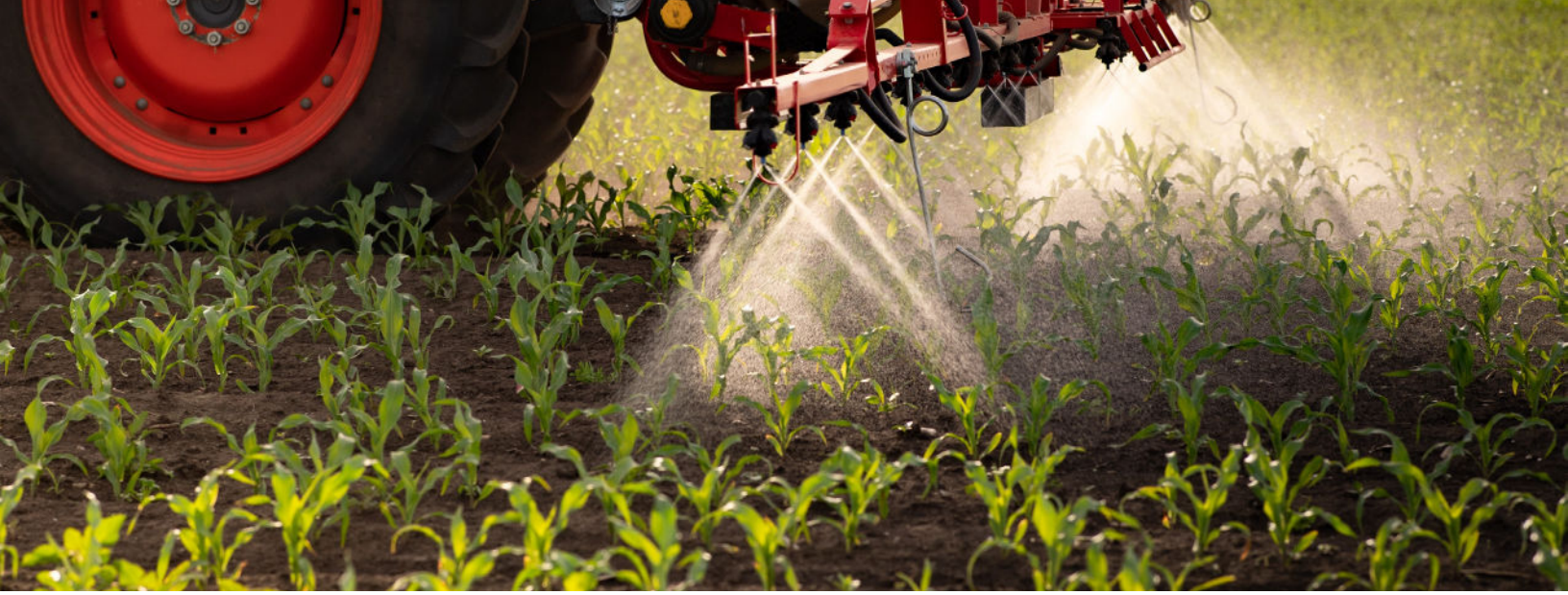
Farmers are increasingly paying for an ecosystem service that wild pollinators could provide for free

The market for managed bees is expanding due to the increasing scarcity of wild pollinators since the 1980's.[52] In other words, growers are increasingly paying costly commercial pollinators for an ecosystem service that wild pollinators could perform for free.[53]

Worldwide, there are an estimated 20,000 species of bees with approximately 3,600 species native to North America.[54] Native species play a vital role in pollinating agricultural crops in the United States and are often more efficient pollinators than non native species, such as honey bees.[55] According to an analysis across five continents, wild bees contributed approximately $3,251 per hectare of crops including watermelon, tomato, cranberry, and blueberry.[56] Researchers estimate that the countries most impacted by wild pollinator declines are in the global South, particularly Africa.[57]

The U.S. food retail sector faces $219 billion in financial, climate, and biodiversity risks from pesticide use on four key crops according to a **report** commissioned by Friends of the Earth.

One analysis estimated that declining managed and wild pollinator populations could result in a $10.5 billion loss to farmers and a $334 billion loss to the whole economy including price and household effects.[58]



Pesticides' harm to beneficial insects results in reduced crop yields

Pesticides often harm or kill neutral or useful organisms in an ecosystem, including pollinators. Thus, pesticides can reduce yields rather than bolster them by harming beneficial insects. As one example, certain pesticides targeted at early-season pests, such as maggots, have been found to increase other pest populations that feed on crops, subsequently reducing yields.[59] Yield reduction associated with pesticide use results in an estimated $1.4 billion loss in the U.S alone with greater losses at a global level.[60]

Pesticide use results in weed and insect resistance which increases farmers' costs

Since the widespread introduction of synthetic pesticides to agriculture in the 1950s, approximately 368 weed varieties and over 600 insect species have developed resistance to commonly used pesticides.[61,62] For example, due to widespread use of glyphosate in conjunction with genetically engineered Roundup Ready™ crops, "superweeds" now plague more than 60 million acres of U.S. farmland.[63]

Weed and insect resistance perpetuates a cycle of pesticide use — 90% of Iowa farmers report feeling that "pest management is a never-ending technology treadmill."[64] As a result, farmers experience an increase in production costs due to more intensive and frequent application of pesticides.[65,66] For example, pesticide costs for Illinois corn farmers rose 67% from 2012 to 2017 largely due to the prevalence of herbicide-resistant weeds, and herbicide costs have more than doubled for most farmers over the past 10 to 15 years.[67, 68]

Investors recognize the economic importance of pesticide reduction and pollinator protection

Pesticide reduction must be a central tenet of all regenerative agriculture to guard against greenwashing. Read Friends of the Earth's **Rethinking No-till report.**

In a comprehensive analysis of the issue, global asset manager, Schroders, urges investors to engage with companies to develop plans to halt and reverse pollinator declines given the scope of pollinator-dependent products.[69] Some shareholders have prioritized pesticide reduction as a sustainability goal. Shareholder advocacy has resulted in company programs such as McDonald's efforts to reduce pesticide use in its potato supply chain.[70] And in 2018, nearly one third of shareholders called on General Mills to eliminate pesticides like pollinator-toxic neonicotinoids from its supply chain.[71] Such efforts speak to the urgency of pollinator declines and to the growing recognition of concomitant economic risks.

THE SOLUTION

Decades of research show that we need a rapid shift to ecological agriculture to feed all people sustainability, now and into the future.[72]

A growing body of science shows that farmers who rely on ecological methods for pest management instead of pesticides can outperform their conventional counterparts in terms of yield and profits.[73,74,75,76] Rather than toxic chemicals, these farmers build healthy soils that confer greater pest immunity to plants and increase biodiversity in their farming systems to disrupt the growth of pests and to foster natural predators. This includes crop rotations, cover cropping, composting, reducing tillage and planting habitat for beneficial insects.

Ecological farming methods reduce risk to pollinators and work in tune with ecological processes in diverse agricultural landscapes.[77] A study conducted on 949 commercial farms in France concluded that reducing pesticide use does not harm profitability or productivity.[78] Another study found that regenerative farming approaches in the U.S. can be up to 78% more profitable than chemical-intensive farm systems.[79] Researchers have found that an abundance and diversity of insects can improve productivity and yield outcomes, according to a global synthesis with 1,475 field sites.[80]

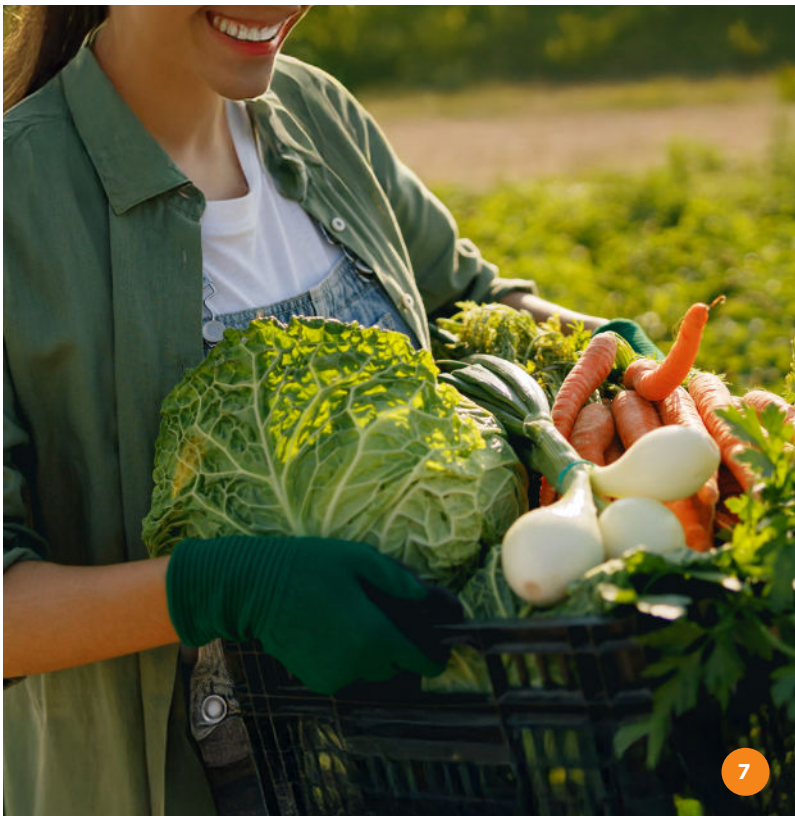
The same science-based ecological farming methods underpin organic agriculture, Integrated Pest Management, and regenerative agriculture. Of these methods, only organic is governed by a robust federal law which prohibits the use of the vast majority of pesticides.

- **Organic:** Organic food is certified through robust standards governed by federal law under the USDA National Organic Program. These standards prohibit most synthetic pesticides, including an estimated 900 pesticides otherwise allowed in agriculture. The standards also prohibit GMOs (genetically modified organisms), synthetic fertilizers, irradiation and sewage sludge. In organic dairy and meat, the use of antibiotics, growth hormones and arsenic-based drugs is strictly prohibited, while over 450 drugs are allowed in non-organic production. The organic standards also require farmers to manage their land in ways that protect soil, water, and biodiversity.

- **Integrated Pest Management (IPM):** IPM is a pest management framework that minimizes pesticide use and risks by relying on inspection and monitoring to detect and correct conditions that could lead to pest problems; implementing biological, cultural and physical strategies to prevent and suppress pest populations; using chemical controls only as a last resort and when economically justified; and assessing pesticide risks and prioritizing the lowest risk options.

- **Regenerative agriculture:** Meaningful approaches to regenerative agriculture use ecological farming methods to build healthy soil that can sequester carbon and conserve water resources by minimizing soil disturbance and keeping the soil covered; increasing diversity within the faming system; reducing synthetic inputs; and integrating crop and livestock systems when appropriate.

Science shows that farmers who rely on ecological methods for pest management instead of pesticides can outperform their conventional counterparts in terms of yield and profits.



WHAT CAN RETAILERS DO?

Grocery stores must support the expansion of organic farming in the U.S. and beyond. At the same time, they must support the non-organic farmers they source from to eliminate toxic pesticides by shifting to ecological farming methods, which reduce the need for pesticides in the first place. Companies must also make agrochemical input reduction central to all "regenerative" and "climate-smart" agriculture initiatives. These actions would be a huge win for pollinators, people and the planet.

Friends of the Earth is asking grocery stores to:

REDUCE PESTICIDES

Establish a pollinator protection policy that addresses key pesticides of concern, including neonicotinoids, glyphosate, organophosphates and other pollinator-toxic pesticides, and that promotes sustainable, least-toxic pest management strategies in the company's supply chain.

GROW ORGANIC

Increase USDA certified organic food and beverages to 15% of overall offerings or sales, prioritizing U.S. farmers.

INCREASE TRANSPARENCY

Publicly disclose company policies and progress related to these actions.

Prioritize pesticides of concern

Many of the pesticides commonly used in U.S. agriculture are toxic to bees and other beneficial insects. Among the pesticides that are of highest concern are neonicotinoids, glyphosate and organophosphates, including chlorpyrifos.

Since we began using neonicotinoids 25 years ago, U.S. agriculture has become 48 times more toxic to bees and other insects according to a peer-reviewed study co-authored by Friends of the Earth.[81,] The EPA found that the three most commonly used neonicotinoids jeopardize the continued existence of over 200 threatened and endangered species.

Organophosphates are a heavily used group of insecticides, many of which are highly acutely toxic to bees.[82]

Glyphosate is decimating monarch butterfly populations by destroying the milkweed plants their young depend on.[83] Glyphosate is also linked to declines in bee populations and threatens 93% of endangered species.[84,85]

U.S. agriculture is 48 times more toxic to bees and other beneficial insects since neonicotinoids were introduced according to a **peer-reviewed study** authored by Friends of the Earth.

Expand organic offerings

Organic is the gold standard for pesticide reduction. Organic farmers grow abundant food without the use of an estimated 900 pesticide active ingredients allowed in non-organic farming, including neonicotinoids, glyphosate and organophosphates.[86] Research shows that organic farming benefits pollinators, people and the planet.

- Pollinators: Organic farming can help reverse pollinator declines.[87] Organic farms support up to 50% more pollinating species than pesticide-intensive farms and help other beneficial insects flourish.[88,89,90]
- Health: An organic diet rapidly and dramatically reduces people's exposure to toxic pesticides and protects farmers and farmworkers from exposure.[91,92,93]
- Climate: Organic farming systems conserve water, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester carbon in the soil and increase farmers' resilience in the face of drought and floods.[94,95,96,97]

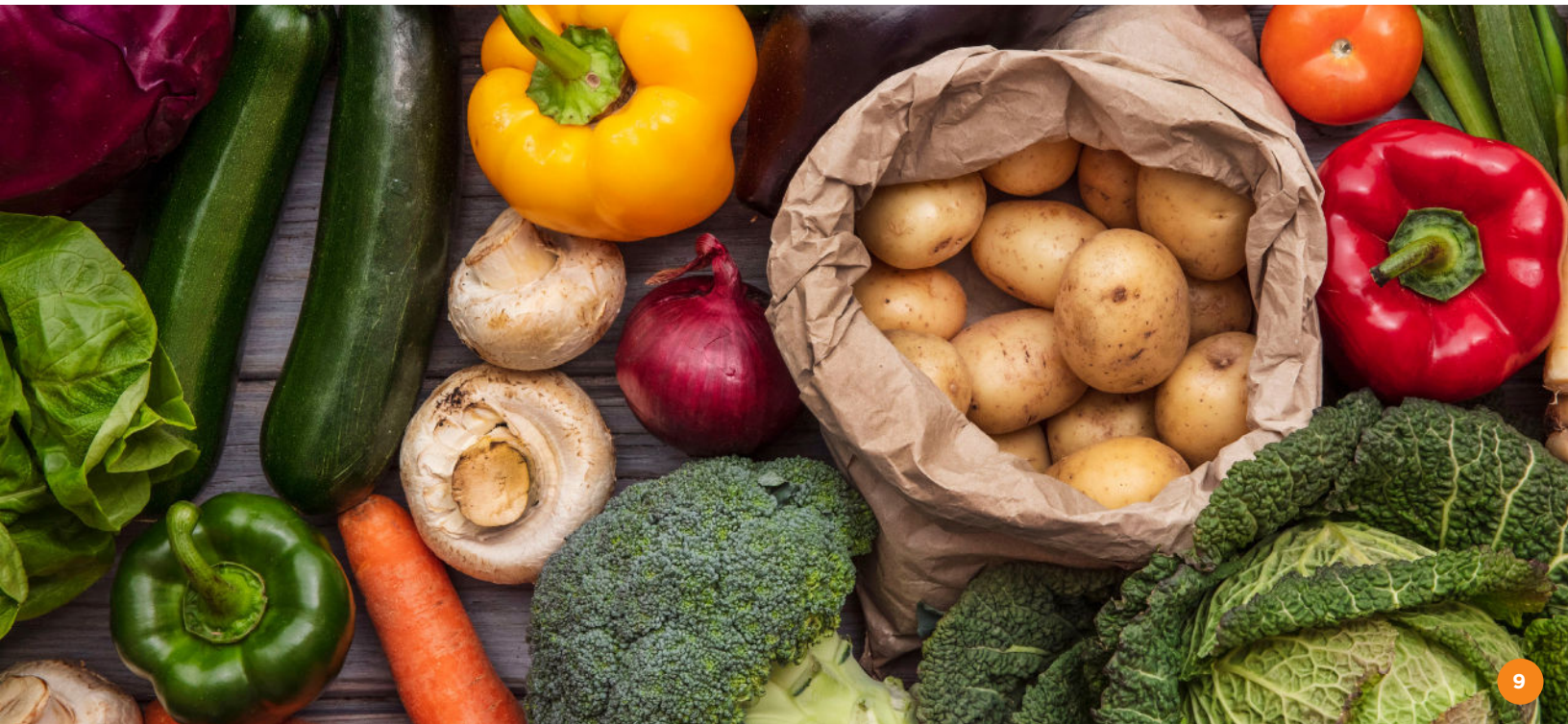
Pesticide levels in people's bodies dropped up to 95% after just one week on an organic diet according to a **peer-reviewed study** co-authored by Friends of the Earth.

Grow U.S. organic

U.S. production of organic crops is not keeping pace with growing consumer demand.[98] The gap is increasingly being filled by tens of millions of dollars' worth of imports.[99] Grocery retailers can help expand organic agriculture in the U.S. by supporting farmers during transition, prioritizing products from domestic organic farmers, and pushing for public policies to advance the U.S. organic sector. This would be a win-win-win: retailers will ensure a steady supply of high-quality organic products, U.S. farmers and local communities will get an economic boost and U.S. agriculture will become more pollinator- and climate-friendly.[100]

Support non-organic farmers to shift to least-toxic approaches

Pesticide reduction goals in non-organic supply chains must go hand-in-hand with helping farmers to adopt the ecological farming methods that underpin robust integrated pest management and regenerative agriculture systems. These farming methods reduce the overall need for pesticides. Phasing out hazardous pesticides without shifting production practices is likely to result in regrettable substitution: replacing one type of hazardous pesticide with another.

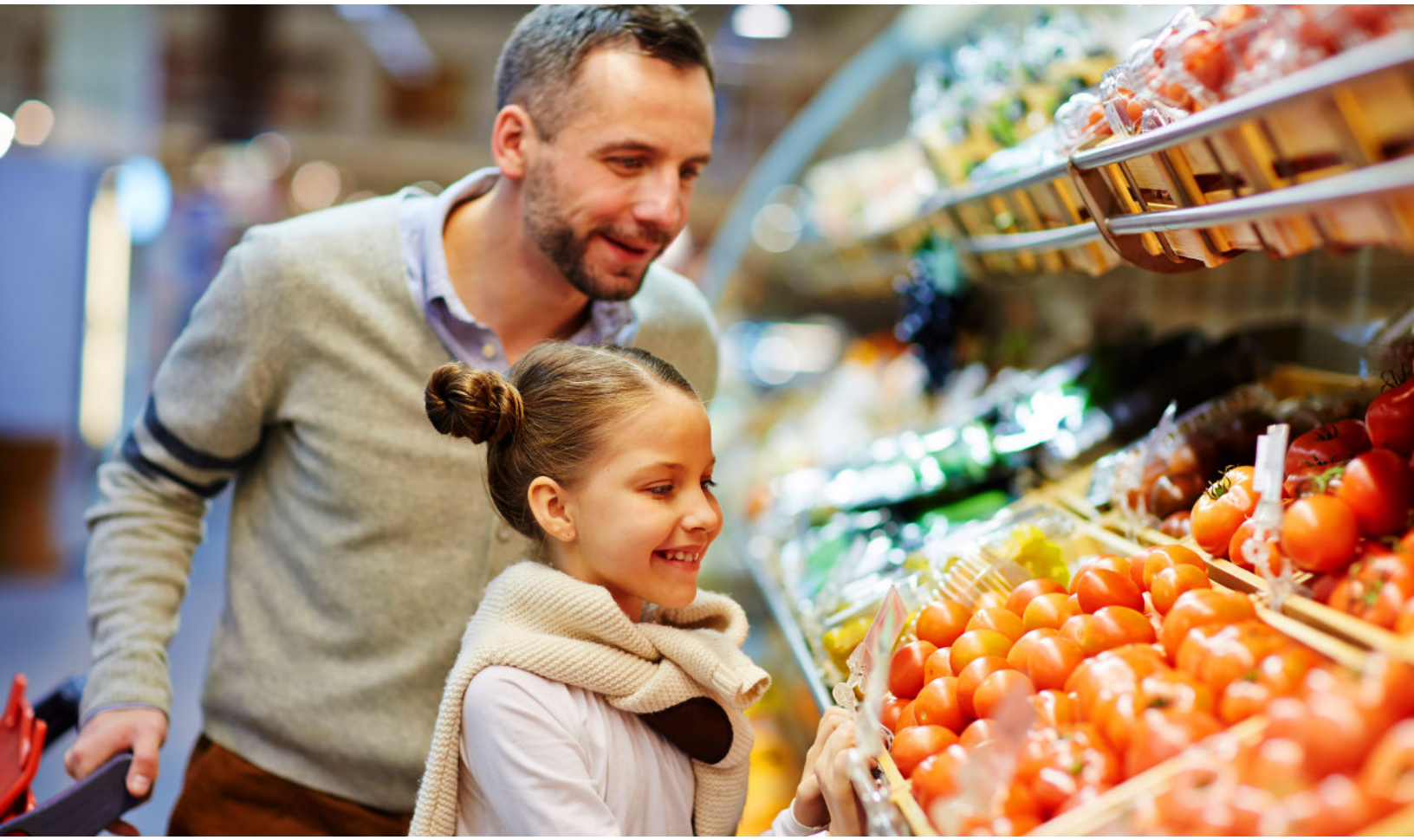


HOW COMPANIES SHAPE UP

Grocery stores can use their enormous market power to reduce the use of toxic pesticides on farms in the U.S. and around the world and bolster farmers' ability to rapidly transition to organic and ecological farming systems.

To highlight leaders and laggards, Friends of the Earth created a retailer scorecard benchmarking 25 of the largest U.S. grocery stores against four criteria related to pesticide use in their food and beverage supply chains: policies, implementation, transparency and collaboration.[1] Additional points were awarded for companies with complimentary pesticide policies in their home and garden supply chains.

We looked at whether these companies are setting goals to reduce use of key toxic pesticides, what they are doing to increase organic offerings and whether they are taking steps to support non-organic farmers to shift to least-toxic approaches. We also looked at whether they are educating consumers about these issues and if they are using their power to advocate for public policies that shift government support from pesticide-intensive agriculture to organic and ecological farming systems.



1 For the evaluation, we reviewed publicly available information, including company websites, annual reports, SEC filings, corporate social responsibility and sustainability reports, press coverage and industry analyses. We sent a provisional grade and scoresheet to each company by email and gave companies three months to respond with updates and corrections. The following companies responded or were in contact with Friends of the Earth in the past year: Ahold Delhaize, Amazon, Costco, Dollar Tree, Giant Eagle, Kroger, Meijer, Sprouts, Walmart, and Whole Foods.

Key Findings

Momentum on pesticides and pollinator protection continues to grow

Sprouts Farmers Market became the second company to score in the "A" range, joining Whole Foods. Sprouts revealed a new commitment to pollinator health aimed at reducing use of toxic pesticides in its supply chain and building on the company's industry-leading organic sales. **Costco** advanced notably, rising from a "C" to a "B+" due to strong organic sales and reported progress toward implementing its pollinator health policy. **Amazon** improved from an "F" to a "D-" based on Amazon Fresh sales of organic and other meaningful third-party certifications. Thirteen of the 25 companies ranked on the Bee-Friendly Retailer Scorecard now have policies aimed at reducing the use of harmful pesticides in their conventional supply chains and/or expanding organic agriculture.

Laggards fall behind despite rising concern about pesticides

While progress from top performers signals a shifting landscape, many retailers remain far behind. Six companies — **Albertsons, Aldi, CVS, Kroger, Southeastern Grocers,** and **Target** — lost points for failing to communicate meaningful progress toward meeting their pollinator health commitments. **Target** fell from a "D-" to an "F," joining **Wegmans, BJ's Wholesale Club, H-E-B, Walgreens, Hy-Vee, Dollar General, Publix,** and **Wakefern.**

Leading policies expand least-toxic pest management strategies in conventional supply chains

Major grocery retailers have a critical opportunity to help conventional growers transition to least-toxic pest management practices — an investment that strengthens supply-chain resilience and reduces long-term risk. **Walmart, Kroger, Whole Foods, Meijer,** and **Giant Eagle** are requiring all fresh produce suppliers to adopt integrated pest management (IPM) practices verified by third-party certification. **Meijer** is also partnering with academic researchers to deliver training and technical support, giving suppliers practical tools to implement least-toxic strategies. Broader industry adoption is essential to drive meaningful, system-wide improvement.

Organic sales are a key differentiator

The USDA Organic seal remains the most trusted benchmark for reduced pesticide use, prohibiting more than 900 synthetic pesticides — including many linked to risks for pollinators, soil health, and human well-being. Yet most retailers do

Retailer	Grade	Points
Whole Foods Market	A	133
Sprouts	A-	121
Giant Eagle	B+	115
Costco	B+	110
Walmart	B-	94
Meijer	B-	86.5
Kroger	C-	65
CVS	D+	46.5
Dollar Tree	D	43
Trader Joe's	D	42
Aldi (US)	D	40
Southeastern Grocers	D-	33
Amazon.com	D-	32
Ahold Delhaize	D-	30
Albertsons	D-	26
Target	F	23
Wegmans	F	17
BJ's Wholesale Club	F	14
H-E-B	F	9
Walgreens	F	5
Hy-Vee	F	5
Dollar General	F	0
Publix	F	0
Wakefern Food	F	0
7-Eleven	F	0

not disclose organic sales performance, making it challenging to evaluate competitive positioning. Several leading retailers provide transparency through public reporting. **Sprouts** states that certified organic items account for **30%** of its grocery sales; **Trader Joe's** reports that **over 20%** of its grocery products sold are organic; and **Whole Foods Market** reports that **33%** of its grocery assortment is organic. Additional companies have shared organic sales data directly with Friends of the Earth. **Costco, Walmart,** and **Whole Foods** reported organic sales across all grocery categories; **Meijer** reported data for produce; and **CVS** reported organic performance for its own-brand food and beverages.

Organic sales should be a core pillar of sustainability strategy and reporting

Extensive research demonstrates that organic agriculture delivers measurable regenerative benefits — supporting pollinator health, improving soil quality, enhancing biodiversity, reducing climate impacts, and promoting human well-being. Despite this clear value, most retailers have yet to integrate organic performance into their sustainability frameworks. Currently, **Sprouts** is the only major retailer that includes organic sales as a key performance indicator in its annual impact reporting.

Leading companies are investing in the expansion of organic agriculture in the U.S.

U.S. farmers are being left behind as demand for organic products continues to outpace domestic supply. Yet only four major retailers — **Costco, Sprouts, Wegmans**, and **Whole Foods** — report taking concrete steps to support the growth of U.S. organic production. **Whole Foods** demonstrates the most comprehensive approach, including setting price floors for farmers transitioning to organic, offering loans that support organic and family-scale producers, and investing in supplier education on organic practices and transition pathways. Both **Whole Foods** and **Sprouts** also advocate for federal policies that bolster the U.S. organic sector. **Costco** reports collaborating with U.S. farmers and ranchers to transition acreage to organic production, while **Wegmans** operates a research-driven organic farm designed to share best practices with regional growers.

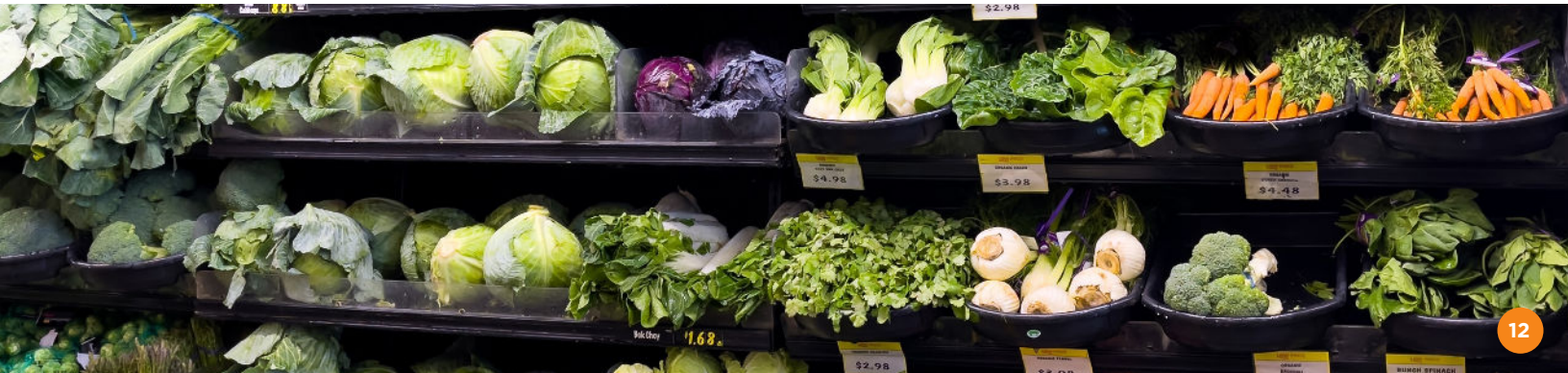
Grocery retailers lack visibility into which pesticides are used in their supply chains

Only a handful of companies have begun taking steps toward pesticide tracking. **Walmart** encourages fresh produce suppliers to annually report use of nitroguanidine neonicotinoids and chlorpyrifos. **Aldi** requires suppliers of key commodities to disclose whether they use chlorpyrifos and neonicotinoids. **CVS** conducted a pilot pesticide analysis in key own brand commodity chains. **Ahold Delhaize** reports a pilot-level effort to track suppliers' practices related to pollinator health and pesticide use. These types of initiatives must be scaled industry-wide.

Thirteen companies have pesticide commitments in their home and garden supply chains

While agriculture drives the majority of pesticide use, many retailers are also taking meaningful steps to reduce chemical risks and protect pollinator and consumer health within their home and garden categories. Five companies — **Ahold Delhaize, Costco, CVS, Dollar Tree,** and **Giant Eagle** — have committed to ending sales of Roundup and other glyphosate-based products. Four companies — **Costco, CVS, Dollar Tree,** and **Giant Eagle** — have eliminated neonicotinoid-containing garden products, and **Walmart** is phasing them out. **Sprouts, Walgreens,** and **Whole Foods** report having never sold products containing glyphosate or neonics.

Retailers are also strengthening standards for live plants and flowers. **Meijer, Dollar Tree, Kroger, Giant Eagle,** and **BJ's Wholesale Club** have committed to eliminating the sourcing of plants or flowers treated with neonicotinoids. **Aldi, Costco, Southeastern Grocers,** and **Target** have issued supplier guidance encouraging a phaseout of these chemicals. **Sprouts** goes further by ensuring all flowers sold are Rainforest Alliance Certified, a standard that prohibits the use of concerning neonicotinoids.

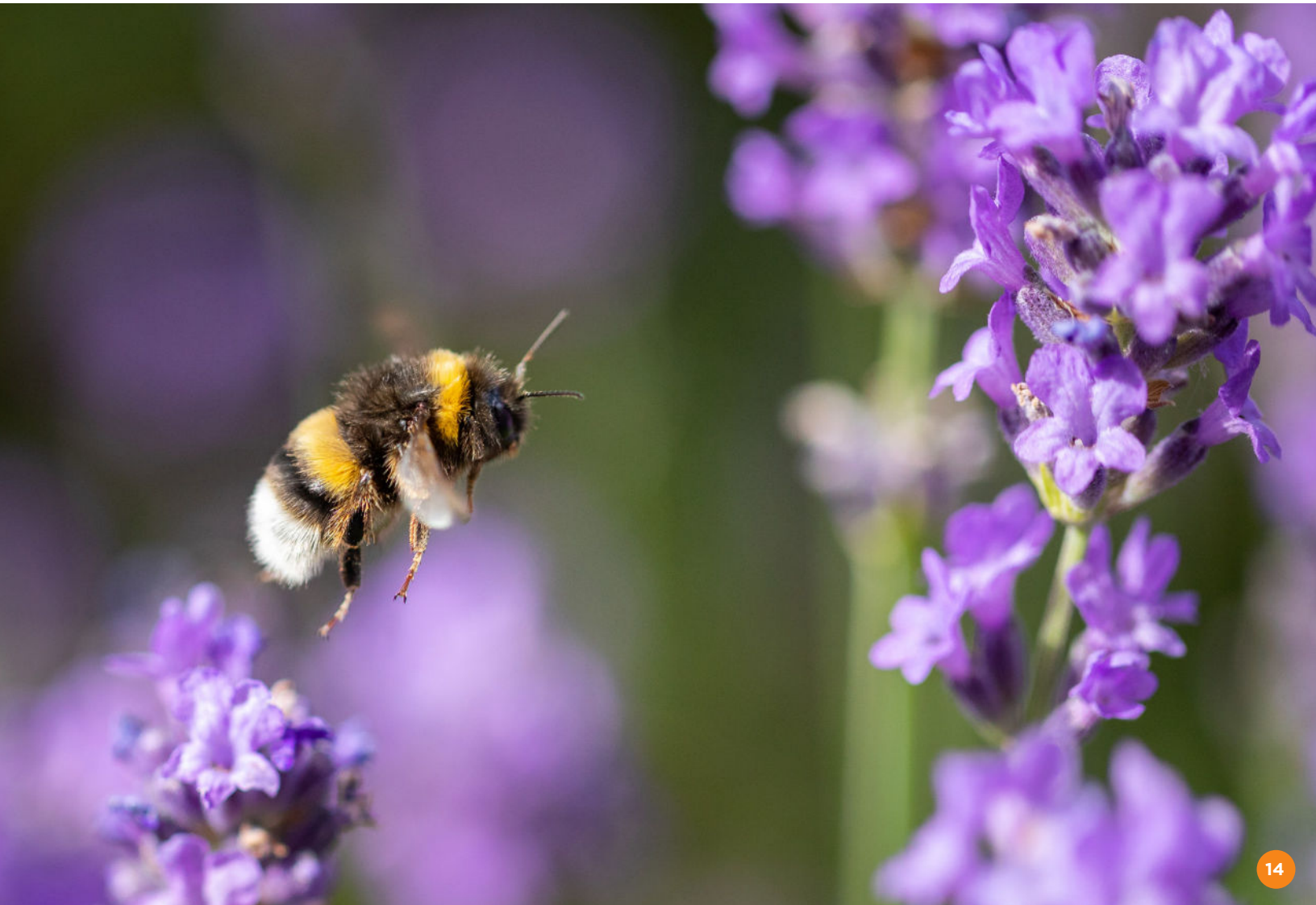


CONCLUSION

It is time for grocery retailers to implement pesticide policies that reflect the interrelated biodiversity and climate crises we're facing. Pesticides contribute directly to both crises. They are responsible for widespread harm to biodiversity, including pollinators, which are required to maintain a third of our food supply, and soil organisms, which are central to building healthy soil, sequestering carbon, conserving water, and improving farmers' climate resilience. Moreover, pesticides are derived from fossil fuels, the production and use of which are significant drivers of agriculture-related greenhouse gas emissions. Pesticides also pose devastating risks to human health, from consumers to the farmers, farmworkers, and rural communities that are on the frontlines of exposure.

US food retailers must urgently reduce and eliminate the use of toxic pesticides in their supply chains to address the threat that pesticides pose to biodiversity, the climate, and human health. To do so, food retailers must support the expansion of organic farming in the U.S. and beyond. At the same time, they must support the non-organic farmers they source from to eliminate use of toxic pesticides by shifting to ecological farming methods, which reduce the need for pesticides in the first place. Companies must also make agrochemical input reduction a central pillar of all "regenerative" and "climate-smart" agriculture initiatives.

These actions will create a more regenerative and resilient food system and will meet growing consumer demand for transparency, health, and sustainability.



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