

Bee Better News

Eco-Labels, Field Day, and Advisory Board Spotlight



RESEARCH BRIEF:

Analyzing the Real-World Impact of Eco-Labels

Anyone working with food or farming is no doubt familiar with "certification fatigue" - the claim that there are too many eco-labels and sustainability certifications.

Yet it turns out that the best sustainability certifications are, in fact, making a significant and positive impact on farm profitability and the conservation of natural resources. That's the finding of a recent report (and summary [webinar](#)) developed by [iSEAL Alliance](#), a global coalition working to promote transparency and science-based credibility among food and farming certification programs.

Transparency and science-based claims are central to how we developed Bee Better Certified. Leveraging decades of [peer-reviewed research](#) on pollinator ecology and conservation, we developed our standards under the auspices of a formal [steering committee](#) made up of leading pollinator scientists, food industry professionals, farmers, and conservationists. More than that, in developing Bee Better Certified, we leaned heavily into a conservation value system that Aldo Leopold referred to as A Land Ethic.

Thanks to this model, we've had a tremendous year of expansion. The farmers we

represent are carrying out Leopold's Land Ethic on almost 20,000 Bee Better Certified acres. This value system is also resonating with consumers who are finding products with the Bee Better Certified seal in retailers such as Costco, Walmart, Trader Joe's, and Kroger stores across the country.

All of this only scratches the surface of what we still have in the works. Who said anything about fatigue?

BEHIND THE LABEL: Bee Better Field Day - Grinnell Heritage Farm

In partnership with Andy and Melissa Dunham of Grinnell Heritage farm, this summer Bee Better Certified hosted its second field day at the Dunhams' farm near Grinnell, Iowa. Grinnell Heritage Farm, an 80 acre organic mixed vegetable operation and Bee Better Certified pilot farm, serves as an oasis for pollinators and beneficial insects among the virtually endless sea of corn and soy that blankets the surrounding landscape. The event attracted thirty five people who were interested to learn about Bee Better Certified and the great work that the Dunhams do on their farm to support biodiversity.

The field day included presentations on the role of Bee Better in the food industry, the Bee Better Production Standards and the background to creating them, and a farmer's perspective on meeting those standards. Xerces Society Executive Director and Bee Better Certified advisory board member, Scott Hoffman Black, attended the day and shared his perspective on global insect decline and how changes in agricultural practices across the landscape can play a key role in our response to the sharp declines we are seeing in insect populations. The day culminated with a tour of the exceptional on-farm habitat that is spread throughout Grinnell Heritage Farm.



Xerces Society staff with Andy Dunham and his daughter (Photo: Xerces Society / Sarah Foltz Jordan)

The Dunhams have planted extensive native plant hedgerows that bloom successively throughout the year sustaining pollinators on their farm across the seasons. Logs are strategically stacked between the woody shrubs providing nesting habitat for bees while supporting other wildlife including song birds that contribute to pest control within their fields. Two beetle banks on the farm support bees while also creating a refuge for predatory ground beetles. Since installing the beetle banks, the Dunhams haven't had to apply pesticides to control the potato beetles, dramatically reducing their overall pesticide applications.

As we work to grow Bee Better across the food industry in the coming years we will

continue to use field days as a way to connect industry professionals, Bee Better staff, and consumers with Bee Better Certified farms and companies. These field days offer a unique opportunity for an up-close and in-depth view of the farms where Bee Better products and ingredients are grown in ways that support bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects.



Flowering habitat at Grinnell Heritage Farm (Photo: Xerces Society / Cameron Newell)

SPOTLIGHT: **Bee Better Advisory Board Member - Katrina Heinze**

When we talk about the genesis of Bee Better Certified we usually talk about the influence of a few key people who were integral to the development of the program. Katrina Heinze, due to her love for pollinators and what she sees as the simplicity of the message of pollinator conservation, is one of these people.

Katrina has held many roles in food and agriculture. During her 23 years at General Mills, Katrina worked in manufacturing, food safety, and product certification. Her last ten years were in marketing supporting the mission work of the natural and organic brands where she partnered with the sustainability team. Katrina also served on the USDA National Organic Standards Board. Today Katrina is board chair of the Organic Farming Research Board and is a board member of California based Lundberg Family Farms.



It has always been important to Katrina to teach consumers of the importance of sustainability. "We can all do more to help consumers make choices in line with their values," she says.

People like Katrina, with her depth of experience and visionary approach, are critical to help guide us in developing the program as it continues to grow. When I asked Katrina about her role in Bee Better's development she laughed and said "All I did was offer an idea. The science and technical side (of pollinator conservation) is hard to ignore and the call to action is simple: just plant flowers!"

In her mind a pollinator focused certification program was a great way for brands to highlight the work they are doing with their sustainability initiatives. It was also a great way

to address the work that is often overlooked, like planting habitat but failing to protect it from pesticides.

When asked where she sees biodiversity in agricultural lands going, Katrina answered "We are in the early stages of people understanding the importance of biodiversity, both above and below ground, for farms to be financially viable."

She sees programs like Bee Better Certified as playing a key role in helping farmers that haven't yet considered the benefits of biodiversity and how it plays into their operation. Katrina's hope is that Bee Better Certified will lead to increased adoption of on-farm practices to support and conserve biodiversity in ag lands.

For more information on Bee Better Certified, visit beebettercertified.org or contact us directly:

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