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**U.S. SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE TOM VILSACK JOINS ANNUAL
FARMER FIELD DAY AT RODALE INSTITUTE**

Secretary Vilsack and PA Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding joined Institute CEO Jeff Tkach and others for Panel Discussion on Current Issues and Progress for Farmers

KUTZTOWN, Pa. (July 24, 2024)—On Friday, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack joined Rodale Institute’s Annual Organic Field Day, host to hundreds of farmers, researchers, and scientists. Secretary Vilsack joined PA Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding and U.S. Representative Madeleine Dean (PA-04) to discuss efforts to expand producers’ access to climate-smart agriculture, expand the market for organic products, and help producers transition to organic production. He also discussed ways to create additional income opportunities for producers and entrepreneurs by building more, new, and better markets, along with the ways USDA is providing expansive options for consumers to access healthy, locally-produced products, investing in rural infrastructure, and strengthening local and regional supply chains.

“President Biden’s historic Inflation Reduction Act made nearly \$20 billion available over five years for USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to address continuous high demand for popular conservation programs, creating more and better revenue streams, and reducing costs for small- and mid-size farming operations,” said Secretary Vilsack. “It starts with Climate-Smart agriculture, which provides benefits to the soil and water biodiversity and crop diversity. We’re providing resources for the next three to five years to adopt these practices, and we’re going to monitor, measure, quantify, and verify to figure out exactly what works and what doesn’t work. And, we’re going to continue to invest in what works.”

Joining Secretary Vilsack during the panel discussion were Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding, Rodale Institute CEO Jeff Tkach, Organic expert and former CEO of Stonyfield Farms Gary Hirshberg, and Organic Farming Ambassador and James Beard award winner Christa Barfield. Charlotte Vallaeys, General Mills Organic Expert, served as moderator.

Hirshberg had inspiring words to the farmers attending: “You are on trend and you are on market, and it’s up to the rest of us to be supporting you. You are not just producing delicious, incredible food. You are providing preventative healthcare for people and the planet.”

“Without farming, we lose on so many different levels”, Barfield explained. “What we need to do in order to make sure that does not happen is to remind people to thank a farmer, to think about a farmer each and every day, and interacting with them on a local level is so important. Regardless of what you’re eating, what you’re drinking, the clothes you’re wearing, the house you live in, the tables that we’re eating on, that is all thanks to a farmer.”

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“At Rodale Institute’s Field Day, we are highlighting the progress of the organic movement, how far we have come, and looking ahead to the future,” said Jeff Tkach, CEO of Rodale Institute. “We are excited and honored to host policy makers and friends of the Institute for a discussion about the future of organics with a shared commitment to work together to create a better future for people and the planet.”

During the Field Day, visitors and policy makers had the opportunity to speak to exhibitors including USDA, Rodale Institute’s Farmer Training (RIFT) program and the Southern Piedmont Climate-Smart Project, a USDA-funded program led by Secretary Vilsack aimed at increased productivity, enhanced resilience, and reduced emissions. Guests at Field Day learned from Rodale Institute experts and staff on additional topics related to regenerative organic agriculture, including protective measures against extreme weather events, soil health, composting, and crop nutrient density variations.

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- ***Rodale Institute Field Day 2024 Fireside Chat speakers.jpg***: Gathered at Rodale's annual field day on July 19, 2024, from left, Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding, General Mills organic associate Charlotte Vallaeys, Organic luminary and Former CEO of Stonyfield Farm Gary Hirshberg, Organic Farming Ambassador and James Beard award winner Christa Barfield, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and Rodale Institute CEO Jeff Tkach.
- ***Rodale Institute Farmer Field Day 2024 Secretary Vilsack.jpg***: U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack speaks to visitors at Rodale Institute Field Day.
- ***Rodale Institute Field Day 2024.jpg***: Field Day visitors learn from Rodale Institute scientists and staff about their 40+ year Farming Systems Trial research.
- ***Rodale Institute Field Day 2024 CEO Jeff Tkach.jpg***: Rodale Institute CEO Jeff Tkach speaks to farmers, scientists, and researchers visiting and learning during the annual Field Day.

ABOUT RODALE INSTITUTE

Rodale Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to growing the regenerative organic agriculture movement through rigorous research, farmer training, and education. The Institute’s groundbreaking science and direct farmer support programs serve as a catalyst for change in farming and food production worldwide. Over its 77-year history, Rodale Institute has proven that organic farming is not only viable but essential to humanity’s survival.

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