

## 6,101 say Thank You, Farmers

Jun 30, 2011 by Kathryn Gilje



The smell of earth is the first thing I always notice when I return to the Midwest. I grew up among the lakes and prairies of this region, and though I am intrigued by the salty, tangy smell of the sea that comes in with the fog where I now live, it's the smell of soil that grounds me, and brings me home.

Traveling to Oklahoma and through Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota this week, I have been honored to deliver 6,101 thank you notes from the PAN community, expressing sincere appreciation to farmers for their innovation and hard work to grow good food that nourishes us, while also stewarding the earth and keeping that soil alive.

The notes are heartfelt, and the breadth of response is impressive: 6,101 messages turned into 261 pages of thank yous. People wrote from 47 states, 3 Canadian provinces and 1 European country! I am proud and very grateful that so many of our community took the time to help PAN build connections with the farmers and farm families here.

A few excerpts from across the country:

Please know that there are thousands of us who support you and the others that are doing the right thing! We will continue to fight for you to be able to continue your healthy farming practices!! Wishing you health and prosperity! ~California

I grew up on a 6-generation farm in Nebraska; hundreds of years of history and my own experience prove that using these toxic pesticides isn't necessary. Thanks for knowing and acting on this basic truth! ~New York

You're awesome, and there are many of us who appreciate your courage and commitment to the health of your fellow Americans. Keep fighting the good fight, and THANK YOU!!!!!! ~Michigan

It is very hard to overstate the important and harmful effects pesticides have on our

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environment and health. I am SO thankful for farmers like you that have chosen a better way to produce food—with less pesticides! ~North Carolina

I want to personally thank you for taking a stand to make a difference in our world by doing the right thing. God has given us an awesome responsibility as stewards over the earth, but few are willing to take the responsibility seriously. Thank you. ~Ohio

Thank you for protecting everyone's health! This means a lot. A lot of a lot. ~Oregon

Thank you for being good stewards of the soil, water, air and the people and creatures whose very lives depend on this care. In the words of Joel Salatin: Thank you for being a part of the healing, and for being on the "right" side of the food system. ~North Dakota

Thank you for caring about America and the people who live here and for doing the right thing about not using pesticides and chemicals in farm production. This sets an example that all hope will reach Washington and our representatives. ~Texas

In a world so rife with business doing the wrong thing in the name of making money, I commend you for doing the right thing! Thanks. ~Alabama

### A gathering of forces

I came to Oklahoma for the inspiring national gathering of the [Rural Coalition](#), where we strategized about needed changes at USDA and in Washington, with a focus on making sure that new and small farmers are able to access all the tools they need to get the job done. We talked about pressing issues of democracy in our food system, including corporate control, the rights of farmworkers and the real need for immigration reform.

And perhaps most inspiring, a group of roughly 100 rural youth set the tone and stated their intentions to farm, to "lose the chemicals," and revitalize an equitable and thriving future in rural America. I'm ending the trip at the [2011 Rural Assembly](#), learning about how PAN can best help push forward a vibrant and healthy rural tomorrow that includes thriving farms and food systems.

So many farmers have opted, often against tremendous pressures, to pull pesticides that threaten children's health, or that harm bees and other pollinators. These farms end a generation of reliance on hazardous chemicals. They intentionally grow the health of the soil, address climate change and revitalize our streams, rivers and oceans — all at once. They are responsible for stewarding the luscious deep prairie loam that's been all around this visit.

For today, please join us to [send a strong message to Congress](#) to keep funding the green payment programs that support their stewardship. And from me personally: thank you for everything you do to keep the thriving soil, and my passion for this work, alive.

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