



RODALE INSTITUTE | CALIFORNIA ORGANIC CENTER

POWERED BY VENTURA SEED COMPANY

Rodale Institute Launches New Organic Research & Training Center in California with Ventura Seed Company

The California Organic Center in Ventura is the organization's third regional resource center start-up in 2019

August 1, 2019 (Camarillo, CA): As a fifth-generation farmer in the Oxnard Plain, Phil McGrath has seen a vast shift in California agriculture over the past 60 years. Particularly a loss of biodiversity, as Ventura County has become increasingly monocropped with a few high-value food staples like strawberries, lemons and avocados.

“We’ve moved to conventional, chemical and industrial agriculture, and we’re seeing a rise in issues with pests, water shortages, and heavy chemical use,” said McGrath. “The world needs a wake-up call. We have to rethink the big picture now. Cheap food has an environmental and social cost. Farming can just as easily hurt us as sustain us. We need regenerative agriculture for our collective future.”



Phil McGrath, owner of McGrath Family Farm, on the site of the new California Organic Center in collaboration with Rodale Institute and powered by Ventura Seed Company. Photo: Phil McGrath

Phil McGrath's farm, located in Camarillo, CA, will be the site of Rodale Institute's new California Organic Center, a satellite location for the famed organic research & education institution to conduct regionally focused research trials, farmer outreach and consumer education. The project is being funded by Ventura Seed Company, a hemp seed propagation and cultivation company with growers throughout the US. Ventura Seed Company currently grows about 60 acres of certified organic hemp for CBD on McGrath's farm.

“We’re excited to be partnering with Rodale Institute to increase organic research and farmer training opportunities in California, the epicenter of the organic movement,” said Riki Trowe, President of Ventura Seed Company. “We know there is still so much we can learn about growing in a true regenerative fashion to support the health of people and the planet.”



The California Organic Center is powered by the Ventura Seed Company, California's first licensed USDA certified organic hemp CBD supplier. Photo: Ventura Seed Company

California, always an agriculture powerhouse with its long growing season and huge geographical area, leads the U.S. in number of organic farms, the amount of land in organic production and in organic sales. The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, in its 2016 Organic Survey, reported that California has 2713 certified organic farms, or 19% of the total in the U.S., with annual sales totaling nearly \$2.9 billion.

However, California farmers still face growing challenges. Farmers are feeling the effects of climate change in fires and droughts, and pesticide use in the state is at an all-time high. The California Department of Pesticide Regulation reported that California used 208,972,917 pounds of pesticide in 2016.

The new Rodale Institute California Organic Center aims to solve challenges for farmers in the region and across the globe by conducting research in new climates and soil types, and on crops, pests, diseases and weeds that are most relevant to farmers in this important agricultural area. Ultimately, the center aims to increase the number of organic farms and acreage in the region, help farmers improve soil health and other key metrics like yields and profitability without synthetic chemicals, and serve as an organic research and education hub for farmers and consumers in Ventura County and California.

“We know that organic research is still vastly underfunded compared to the size of the industry in the United States,” said Jeff Moyer, Rodale Institute executive director. “We need more resilient agriculture that can deal with the extreme weather of climate change, so that farmers can continue to feed our growing population. That all starts with soil health. With researchers on the ground working on solutions geared for organic farmers in their own communities, we’ll continue to increase both the demand and supply of organic products in this country and around the world.”

The California Organic Center is Rodale Institute’s third new regional resource center. All three satellite centers were launched in 2019, as Rodale Institute works to fill the gap on more localized research and education to meet the needs of organic farmers around the country. The other two centers include the [Midwest Organic Center](#) in Marion, Iowa, near Cedar Rapids, and the [Southeast Organic Center](#) in Chattahoochee Hills, Georgia, about an hour from Atlanta.

Throughout the summer and fall, Rodale Institute will hire research and extension staff for the site, meet with local partners in the area to determine research needs, and begin drafting trials and field plans.

About Rodale Institute: Rodale Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to pioneering organic farming through research and outreach. For seventy years, the Institute has been researching the best practices of organic agriculture and sharing findings with farmers and scientists throughout the world, advocating for policies that support farmers, and educating consumers about how going organic is the healthiest option for people and the planet. Learn more at RodaleInstitute.org.

About Ventura Seed Company: Ventura Seed Company is California’s first licensed USDA certified organic Hemp CBD supplier. Their fully integrated supply chain ensures a premium, sustainably cultivated product from genetics through final processing. Born in Ventura County, California, Ventura Seed Company has affiliate farms located throughout the US and is a leading pioneer in hemp genetics and organic and regenerative agriculture practices. Learn more at VenturaSeedCompany.com.

Media Contact:

Diana Martin

Director of Communications, Rodale Institute

Email: Diana.Martin@RodaleInstitute.org

Phone: 610-683-1443

Cell: 717-405-1844