

Healthy Soil Sub Committee of NOFA-NJ's Policy Committee-Statement

What are our purposes for pursuing Soil Health Initiatives

- Promoting Healthy Soil practices to organic farmers
- Promoting Healthy Soil practices to conventional farmers
- Promoting Healthy Soil practices to politicians for purpose of promoting legislation
- Promoting Organic Farms to the public/consumers
- Educating Public about Healthy Soil's benefits of:
 - Soil Carbon Sequestration
 - Increased organic matter such as porosity, water retention and nutrient retention
 - Nutrient density of food consumed (?)
 - Health benefits of consuming nutrient dense foods (?)

What do we mean by Soil Health?

The overall composition of the soil, including the amount of organic matter in and water holding capacity of the soil, and the continued capacity of the soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans.

What are Healthy Soil Practices?

Agricultural practices that minimize bare ground while increasing: the depth of topsoil horizons; water absorption and infiltration rate; organic carbon content; nutrient content; bulk density; and biological and microbial activity and diversity. Specific practices include:

Reducing-tillage;

Rotating Crops;

Intercropping;

Cover Cropping;

Rotational Grazing;

Application of soil amendments that add carbon or organic matter.

Traditionally Organic Farmers have adopted practices for which they have accumulated empirical evidence of their effectiveness. This is often followed by scientists quantifying the effectiveness of those practices. There are benefits of Healthy Soil Practices which are well accepted. There are other benefits for which we need more evidence. Our goal of promoting healthy soil practices would likely be easier with this evidence. This is summed-up below:

Healthy Soil Practices:

Will:

1. Increase Soil Organic Matter

Which will:

2. Sequester Carbon in the soil

Which we assume (but don't know for sure) will:

3. Increase Nutrient Density of Crops

Which we assume (but for which we may not have evidence) will:

4. Have health benefits for humans and livestock.

What We Plan To Do:

- Continue promoting healthy soil practices in conjunction with NOFA-NJ Education programs
- Search for evidence relating the increase in soil health to the increase in crop nutrient density (#3 above) and create links to this information at www.nofanj.org.
- Encourage NOFA-NJ member participation in active research linking soil health to crop nutrient density by universities, soil testing labs, USDA or the Bionutrient Food Association.
- Search for evidence relating the increase in nutrient density to the increase in human and livestock health (#4 above) and create links to this information at <https://nofanj.org>.