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**Thursday April 27, 2017
1:00- 2:00 PM EST**

Digging into Healthy Soils and Carbon Farming

Resource Experts

Dr Sara Via, University of Maryland Extension
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Jay Ford, Virginia Eastern Shorekeeper & Shine and Rise Farm
Email: jay@shorekeeper.org

Additional Q&A, shared with the resource experts post-webinar

- 1. Hope you can share your thoughts on the role of pesticides and microorganisms - thank you.***

Sara Via: There is some evidence that pesticides affect the soil microbial community. However, in my opinion, pesticide runoff and presence on foods is probably a more serious problem than impacts on soil health. Evidence is accumulating that Roundup (glyphosate) alters soil microbial communities, and given the now pervasive use of Roundup on Roundup-ready crops, and the newly approved use of 2-4D in combination with Roundup, I think that this could become a huge problem.

- 2. Is silvipasture and silviculture a form of Carbon farming?***

Sara Via: Anytime more trees are planted, carbon storage is increased.

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3. ***Is the nitrogen from black locust (or other N fixer) immediately available to other plants?***

4. ***My organization has been promoting expansion of composting and compost use in MD as one way to store carbon in soils, increase organic matter in soils, reduce soil erosion, and more. One challenge in MD is that the state considers compost a fertilizer, making it subject to the State's nutrient mgt regs. Can you speak to the benefit of building organic matter via compost in storing soil carbon? Do you think a strategy is needed in MD to have a compost carve-out from the fertilizer regs?***

Sara Via: Building organic matter in the soil increases soil health, and adding compost does build up the organic matter. Sorry, but I don't know enough about the fertilizer regs to comment on your question.

5. ***What are your experiences or knowledge with farmers have tried best practices in organic farming methods, but have not been successful, and have resorted to chemicals, etc.? I knew of one in Vermont that had an apple orchard, and stated this, and I always wondered if they didn't try everything they could. Of course I realize apple orchards have a higher prevalence of fungus rot, etc.***

6. ***Regarding seed life, I think that they have found seeds in the pyramids that are still viable?***

Sara Via: I don't know about the Pyramids, but seeds of some plants can live up to 100 years or more in the soil, and that is enough to cause a problem after tilling.

7. ***What are your experiences or knowledge with farmers have tried best practices in organic farming methods, but have not been successful, and have resorted to chemicals, etc.? I knew of one in Vermont that had an apple orchard, and stated this, and I always wondered if they didn't try everything they could. Of course I realize apple orchards have a higher prevalence of fungus rot, etc.***

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9. ***What is the impact of solar arrays on soils?***



Sara Via: If the solar panels are close together, then it seems unlikely that plants will grow very well underneath them. This is a problem if it leads to lots of weeds and/or erosion. Spacing panels far enough apart for grass or a legume-based cover crop to grow would be good, and possibly could then provide some grazing land. In general, I don't think good agricultural land should be covered with solar panels. There is more than enough room in every state for panels to be located on commercial rooftops (think warehouses) or over parking lots.

10. Can you speak on Veganic farmers and farming? What are pros and cons to farming using that method?

Sara Via: I don't know a thing about this—sorry.

11. The use of drone aircraft are helping to manage farms more precisely . Any thoughts?

Sara Via: I don't know anything about this—sorry.