

# Ronnie Cummins Describes Strategy for Taking Back Organics

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › I interviewed Ronnie Cummins, cofounder and international director of the Organic Consumers Association (OCA), in honor of Regenerative Food and Farming Week
- › One of OCA's major endeavors is the Billion Agave Project, an ecosystem-regeneration strategy being used by Mexican farms to turn agave into inexpensive animal feed
- › While small farms around the globe are using organic methods to grow food, they're not getting credit for the truly sustainable farming methods they're embracing because they're not certified
- › OCA's No. 1 project is to replace "the bogus carbon credits" with a system that measures the ecosystem services that farmers are providing, so they can be paid for these beneficial services along with the food they provide
- › OCA and their collaborators are working on a cellphone app that will streamline the organic certification process, enable farmers to apply to be certified organic and demonstrate higher levels of regenerative practices

I recently spoke with Ronnie Cummins, cofounder and international director of the Organic Consumers Association (OCA), in honor of Regenerative Food and Farming Week. OCA is one of the philanthropic organizations that we support, and Cummins shared some exciting updates in the field of organic and biodynamic agriculture.

One of OCA's major endeavors is the Billion Agave Project, an ecosystem-regeneration strategy being used by Mexican farms in Guanajuato, a high-desert region.<sup>1</sup> Cummins was in San Miguel, Mexico, when we spoke, which was right in the middle of the dry season.

As Cummins explains, there's typically no rain in the region for eight months out of the year, and since 86% of Mexican farmers don't have a well, the use of organic and regenerative farming techniques is very important for good production and to improve the environment.<sup>2</sup>

## **'Regeneration' Being Used for Greenwashing**

When you hear terms like regenerative agriculture, it's important to look at its source. While small farms around the globe are using organic methods to grow food, in part because they can't afford expensive agricultural chemicals, they're not getting credit for the truly sustainable farming methods they're embracing.

Meanwhile, corporate giants are using terms like "regenerative" to make it seem as though their industrial farming methods are natural. "Regenerative food and farming has become a buzzword in natural and organic food circles," Cummins explains.

*"More and more people understand what it is. But unfortunately, a lot of the ... agribusiness corporations are using the term regeneration to avoid going organic or biodynamic, and they're using it more as greenwashing. So, we're still looking for people to understand that, you know, regenerative needs to be organic or biodynamic as its bottom line, and then you can improve on those practices."<sup>3</sup>*

As it stands, however, the small farmers aren't typically getting rewarded for their regenerative methods the way they should. Cummins continues:<sup>4</sup>

*"We shouldn't allow big corporations like Monsanto to be paying bogus carbon credits to, you know, industrial monoculture, corn and soy farms in the Midwest, and claim that if they change one little thing, like they don't plow because they*

*use glyphosate instead – or if they use cover crops, but then they burn them down with glyphosate – there's nothing really regenerative about that.*

*And, if you look across the world of farming systems that are really increasing soil fertility, putting more carbon in the soil, increasing water retention, preserving or even expanding biodiversity, and providing a decent living, these farms are using all the techniques of organic and regenerative, and these are the best practices we need to be looking at and that need to be rewarded for their organic plus practices.”*

In Guanajuato, as part of the Billion Agave Project, farmers are harnessing the desert species agave to reform their food system. While agave leaves have historically been discarded as waste, as they're difficult for farm animals to digest, the farmers are now chopping up agave leaves and fermenting them, which turns the leaves into an excellent and inexpensive animal feed. Mexico is the largest buyer of GMO corn in the world, which is primarily used for animal feed:<sup>5</sup>

*“So, one of the things we're trying to get across to the Mexican government is that farmers who are feeding corn to their animals – chickens, pigs, cows, whatever – they shouldn't be feeding it to cows and herbivores.*

*But farmers that are feeding this feed can substitute fermented agave and protein from ... other sources to eliminate this water intensive, energy intensive, really destructive monoculture of corn and soybeans. So, we're pretty excited about this ... farmers are picking up on this across the country, and we are getting inquiries from all over the world.”*

## **All Agriculture Was Organic Until 1940**

Organic agriculture is sometimes viewed as trendy, but to put this into perspective, all agriculture was organic until about 1940, Cummins notes, pointing out that “it's only been 80 years of this disastrous experiment with chemicals, and chemical fertilizers and GMOs,” along with lab-grown meat and dairy products.

“If you look at the state of health in 1940, at various things like chronic disease, I mean, why is it four times higher chronic disease, you know, now than it was 80 years ago? Well, I think part of that is the diet,” Cummins says.<sup>6</sup> Now, however, “people with the biggest megaphones,” like Bill Gates, have stolen concepts like sustainable, regenerative agriculture in an attempt to gain control over the world.

Small victories are occurring, however, like the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) new proposed rule to only allow meat, poultry and egg products derived from animals born, raised, slaughtered and processed in the U.S. to use the “Product of USA” or “Made in the USA” claim on their labels.<sup>7</sup>

Current regulations allow products from multinational corporations to claim their meat is a “Product of USA” if it passes through a USDA-inspected plant, even if the meat is imported.<sup>8</sup> “We’ve been fighting this for 20 years,” Cummins says of the “Made in the USA” label, continuing:<sup>9</sup>

*“I never thought we’d win. But all of a sudden, they finally do something right. And two months ago, they tightened up the requirements for importing foreign grains and organic ingredients. And you know, not just letting people claim they’re organic, pay off a few people overseas, and get here. But in general, I think we have got to stop focusing so much on the federal government and look more at what can be done at the grassroots level.”*

## **Measuring Ecosystem Services to Reward Small Farmers**

Carbon credits are another greenwashing tool that allow globalists and multinational corporations to “offset” their pollution. It’s a matter of smoke and mirrors, however, that leaves small farmers once again at a disadvantage. While the rich can continue to pollute and buy carbon credits, small farmers may be forced out of business — leaving the wealthy polluters to grab their land and resources.

OCA’s No. 1 project is to replace “the bogus carbon credits, bogus carbon offsets, bogus payments for so-called prevented deforestation — in other words, the across-the-board

greenwashing that's now happening – with a system that really is alternative ... it's called organic ecoservices.”<sup>10</sup>

The idea is to measure the beneficial farming practices, or ecosystem services, that farmers are providing, so they can be paid for these services along with the food they provide. According to Cummins:<sup>11</sup>

*“We've got to start paying organic and organic plus producers a premium for the food they produce so that they will become more regenerative and really take over ... 71% of organic farmers in the United States ... are not certified organic. OK, across the world there are 60 billion farmers that could easily be certified organic, if there was a financial incentive to do so. And market access.*

*... we're developing a system to where the only payments that we want the polluters to pay, and be able to enhance their PR or their supply chain dynamics, are two things. We want them to stop carbon offsetting and do only carbon insetting.*

*That is, a carbon inset is something that a corporation does in its supply chain that enhances these environmental services, and puts carbon and fertility in the soil. Or else we want these companies to just pay out money in the form of ... 'MCs' ... these are mitigation contributions. So we don't want Nestle to be able to claim, 'Oh, yeah, we're gonna be net zero emissions by 2050.'”*

## **Why ESG Funds Are a Scam**

Pouncing on investors' interest in environmentally friendly, sustainable investing, the S&P 500 ESG Index was launched in 2019.<sup>12</sup>

ESG, or environmental, social and governance, funds are supposed to be those focused on companies with strong environmental ethics and responsibility, but further investigation reveals rampant greenwashing has occurred, and many ESG-labeled funds are far from “sustainable.” Globally, an estimated \$41 trillion flowed into ESG funds in 2022.<sup>13</sup> Cummins explains:<sup>14</sup>

*“We're going to have to make the polluters really squirm if we want them to pay out. ESG companies that file ESG reports now have a total of \$125 trillion in assets. That's not billion, that's trillion ... you got all these companies filing these, they're bragging about their carbon offsets, their carbon credits ... how they paid to defer deforestation here and there ... our solution to this is we can't write a big company's ESG.*

*But we can say, if you don't make a sizable contribution to these mitigation contributions, that are actually restoring the environment and sequestering carbon and biodiversity around the world, we're coming after you ... there are only about six major carbon credit certifiers in the world, and it's now coming out that it's all corrupt – and that 90% or more is bogus.”*

## **App in the Works to Streamline Organic Certification**

OCA and their collaborators are working on a cellphone app that will enable farmers to apply to be certified organic and demonstrate higher levels of regenerative practices. Right now, costs and regulatory red tape make it difficult for most farmers to become certified organic and stay that way.

“We know full well the reason farmers that were once certified organic stopped getting recertified, or the reason why the overwhelming majority of organic producers in the world are not certified at all, is because it costs money and it takes time ... the recording is onerous,” Cummins says.<sup>15</sup>

The app will make it much easier for farmers and organic certifiers by providing an online system of records “instead of a bunch of copies of receipts and hand-drawn maps of farms.” They’re also using sophisticated drones that can fly over 50 acres a day combined with satellite information to help determine where and how many soil samples should be taken and how to determine water retention in soil, biodiversity and more.

They're even using microphones tied into databases to identify bird calls and figure out how many birds live in the area. It's so detailed, it can determine which birds live there year-round and which are just migrating.

By making the organic certification process easier, and getting more farms certified organic, Cummins hopes that the agricultural system will transform to one that produces healthy, toxin-free food in a truly sustainable way:<sup>16</sup>

*"We're obviously in the middle of a ... crisis and organic and regenerative nutrient-dense food is what's got to be made available to everyone. And we can't do this by paying organic farmers enough for their food to where it gets priced out of the range of more and more people.*

*We've got to start thinking of how do we pay farmers and ranchers and land managers for the environmental services that they provide for all of us, and for reducing poverty.*

*And so we've got to come up with a new system. We need a campaign to rejuvenate the organic movement worldwide ... many farmers in the world ... aren't certified and aren't getting any reward in the marketplace. We can change this, and the way to change it is public education.*

*We've got to expose not only the machinations of the World Economic Forum and Gates and World Trade Organization, but we've also got to point out that this new magic bullet that they're offering up is just greenwashing – and that we have an alternative. This alternative is organic and regenerative, and it's based on the cutting-edge science and verification that are now within our reach for the first time."*

## Sources and References

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- <sup>1</sup> [Regeneration International, Billion Agave Project](#)
- <sup>2</sup> [Ronnie Cummins Interview Transcript, 0:52](#)
- <sup>3, 4, 5</sup> [Ronnie Cummins Interview Transcript, 1:31](#)
- <sup>6, 9</sup> [Ronnie Cummins Interview Transcript, 25:13](#)

- <sup>7</sup> FarmAction.us March 6, 2023
- <sup>8</sup> OCA March 7, 2023
- <sup>10</sup> Ronnie Cummins Interview Transcript, 32:55
- <sup>11, 14, 15</sup> Ronnie Cummins Interview Transcript, 32:55, 37:09
- <sup>12</sup> TIME May 25, 2022
- <sup>13</sup> Quartz June 13, 2022
- <sup>16</sup> Ronnie Cummins Interview Transcript, 54:34