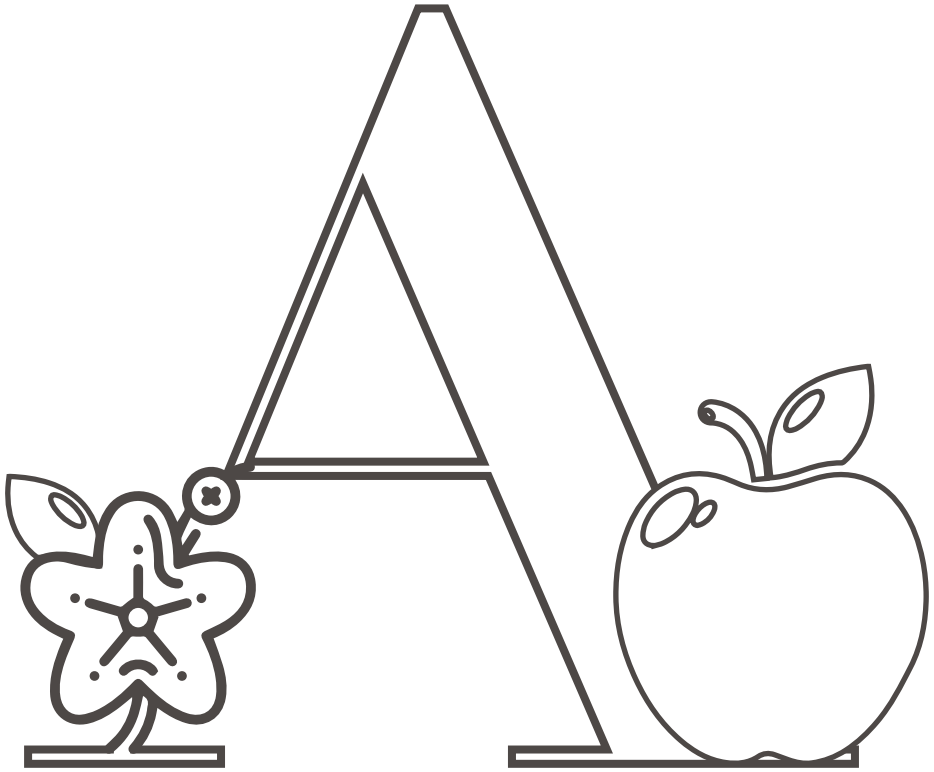
DO YOU KNOW YOUR GMO?

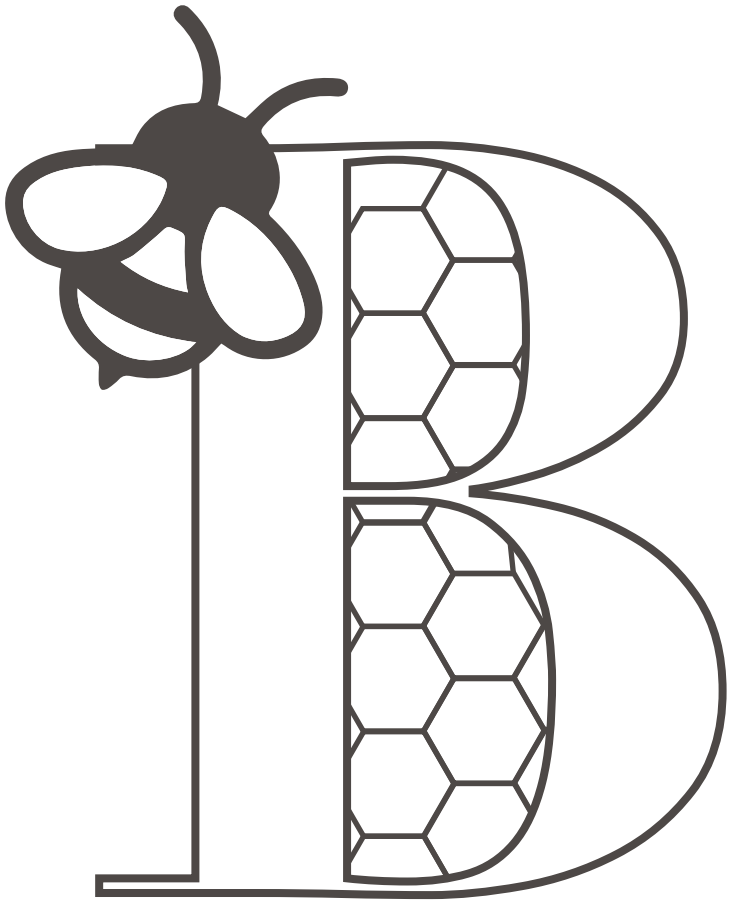
A coloring book exploring Non-GMO Project's mission from A to Z.

NON GMO Project



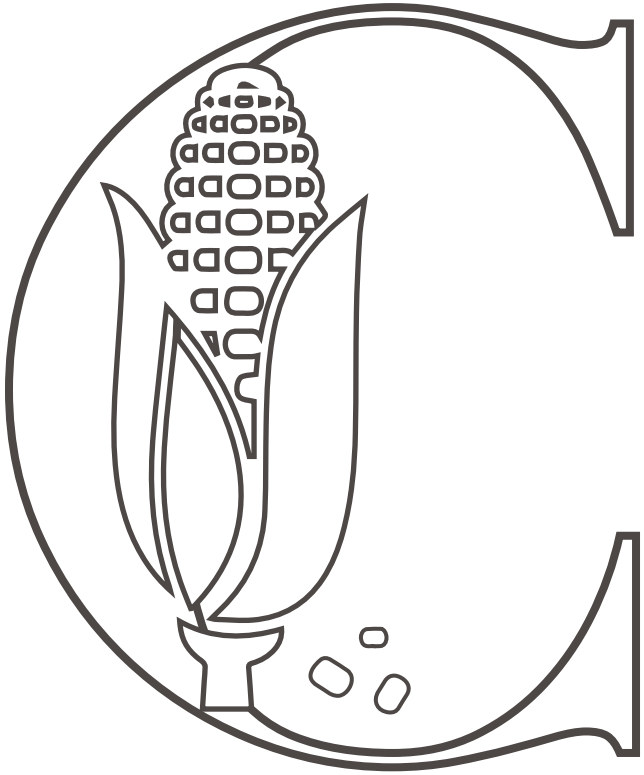
A is for Apple
In sauce or a pie
The natural ones are
The apples of our eye

There are new gene editing techniques which alter the building blocks that make up our food including "silencing" genes to keep apples from turning brown. That means a sliced apple from the grocery store or cafeteria might have been hanging around for quite a while! Keep it fresh and natural with non-GMO.



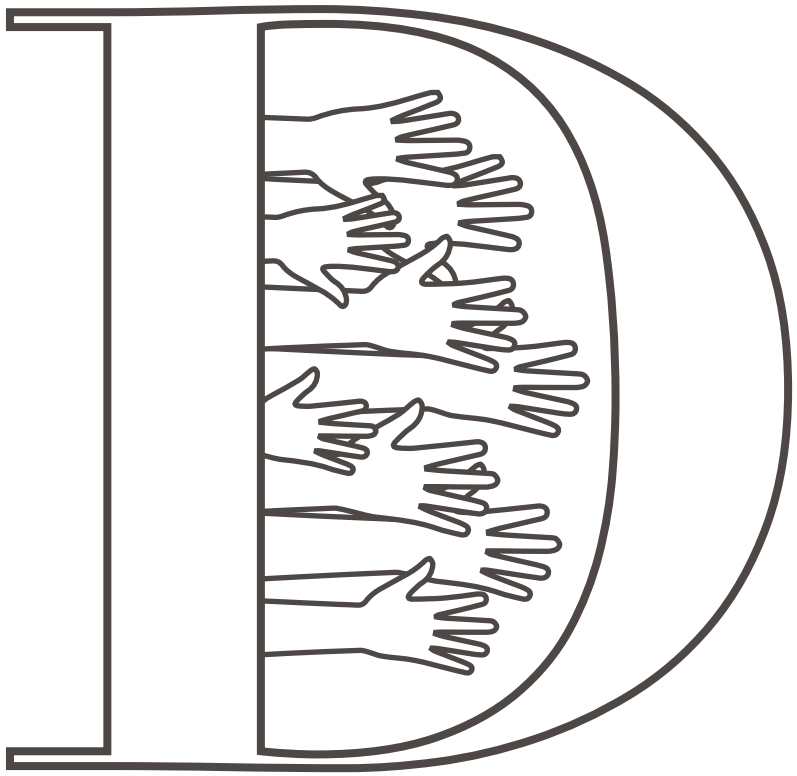
B is for Bees
Who buzz in the trees
Pollinating our crops
And surfing the breeze

Bees are directly responsible for pollinating a third of the food we eat each day. Bee populations around the world have been in decline for years, due in part to the effects of industrial-style farming and the increasingly toxic pesticides that go with it. Scientists in Germany are even developing a GMO bee to mitigate the loss a short-term "solution" that could deal the final blow to natural bees. Instead of going GMO, why not use regenerative farming practices like planting cover crops over the winter and growing "buffer zones" of pollinator-friendly grasses between fields? That way we can help the bees, increase biodiversity AND build soil health. That's stacks upon stacks of benefits!



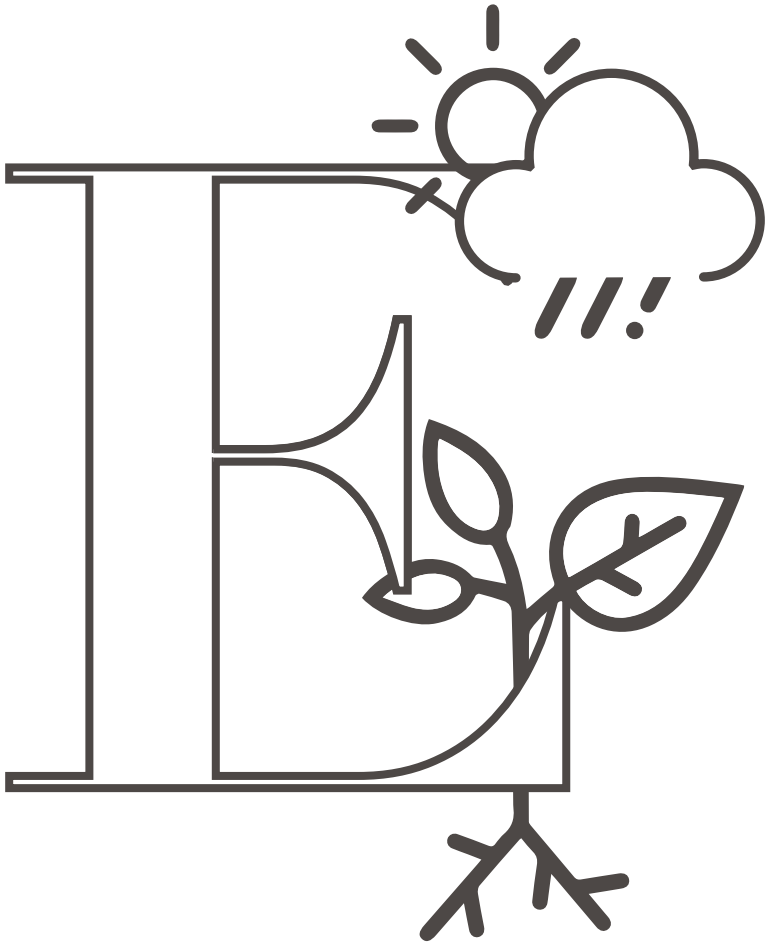
C is for Corn
Eat it fresh, eat it popped!
Share it with cows*
(*if it's Verified crop)

More than half the typical American diet comes from corn, the vast majority of which is genetically modified for resistance to pests or herbicides. Pest-resistant GMOs produce a toxin that repels crop pests, but can also make honeybees sick. Herbicide-resistant GMOs are engineered to withstand weed killers like Roundup, and have led to a massive increase in the use of Roundup in North America. Because corn shows up in our food in highly processed forms, many products made from GMO corn won't be labeled as "bioengineered" under the National Bioengineering Food Disclosure Standard, the USDA's incoming labeling law. The best way to avoid GMO corn is to look for the Butterfly!



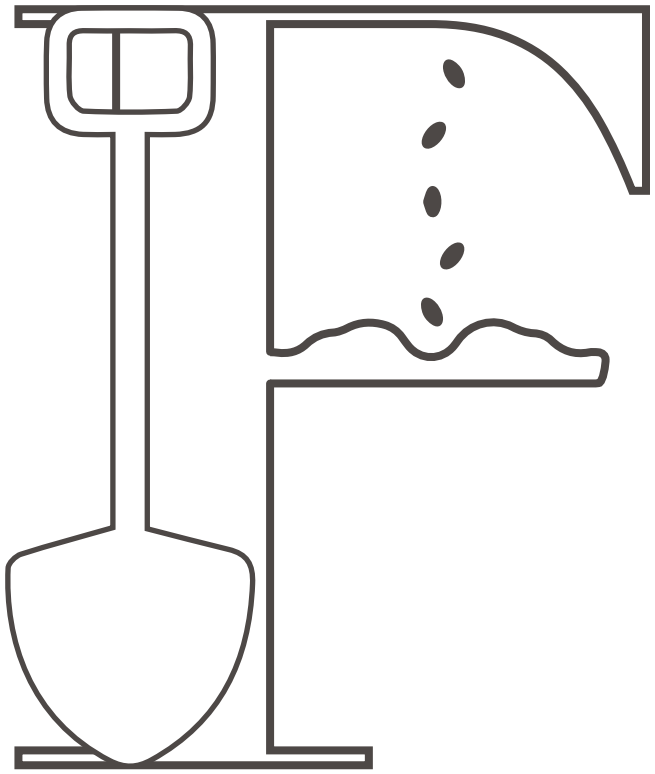
D's for Diversity
The "lots"-ness of things
More of this, more of that
Oh, the strength it brings!

The more species that are living and interacting in an ecosystem, the more "biodiverse" that ecosystem is. And the more diverse the ecosystem, the more resilient it is to change such as weather extremes. GMO crops such as corn, soy, cotton and alfalfa tend to be planted as "monocrops" acres upon acres of a single plant species. Monocrops are the opposite of diversity, and planting them makes the ecosystem very fragile. Growing more diverse plants, as well as integrating the different plant species as much as possible, makes farmland naturally more resilient to weather extremes, drought and pests.



E is for Ecosystem
We all live in one
Interacting with creatures
Under soil, sea and sun

An ecosystem is a community of many different kinds of organisms from the largest tree to the tiniest microscopic creatures in the soil. When an ecosystem is in balance, the organisms interact with one another in such a way that no single creature takes over. Because all of the creatures are interrelated, a change to any part of the ecosystem can disrupt the whole. For example, imagine a temperate rainforest in the Pacific Northwest, home to a river where salmon come to spawn. If the number of salmon in the river is depleted, it might be challenging for the salmon population to rebound the following year, and animals in the area such as bears will lose a food source. When bears carry their catch away from the river banks, the left-over remains of the fish provide food for insects and nutrients for the soil. Fewer fish traveling upstream might mean hungrier bears, fewer insects in the area, and less food for the animals that eat those insects. Ecosystems are beautiful examples of how interdependent life on earth truly is.

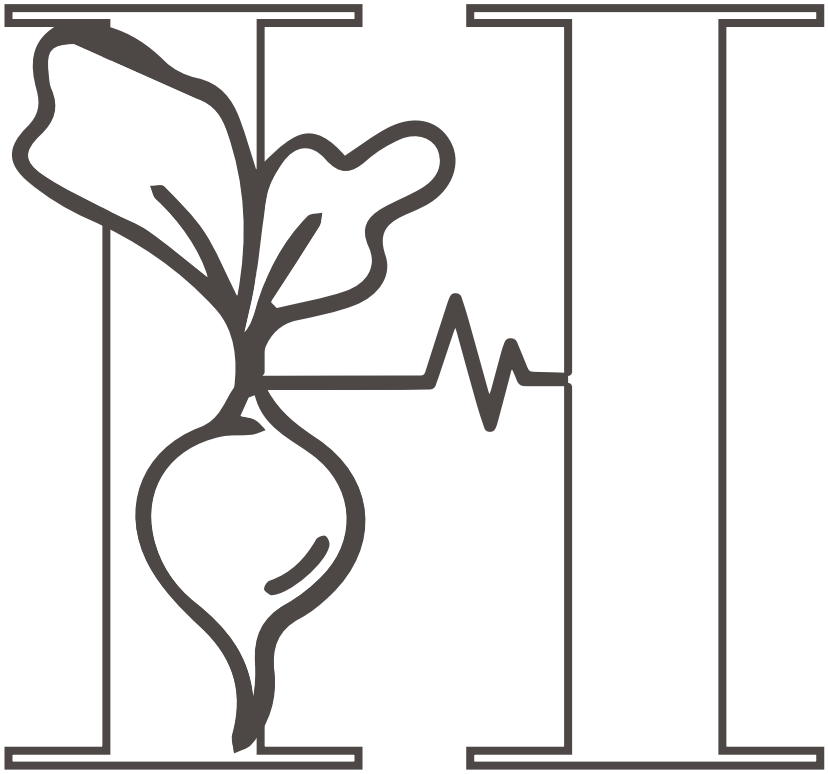


F is for Farmers
Who grow all our food
These people are heroes
Of keen aptitude

The world asked a lot of farmers over the last century. Farmers were told to grow huge amounts of food, and to do it cheaply. The more food they produced, the less that food was worth because now there was a surplus. While providing something invaluable, they were paid less and less for their crops. Many farmers have struggled to hold onto their land and support their families. At the Non-GMO Project, we'd like to see farmers paid fairly to grow fantastic food while building the health of their soils.

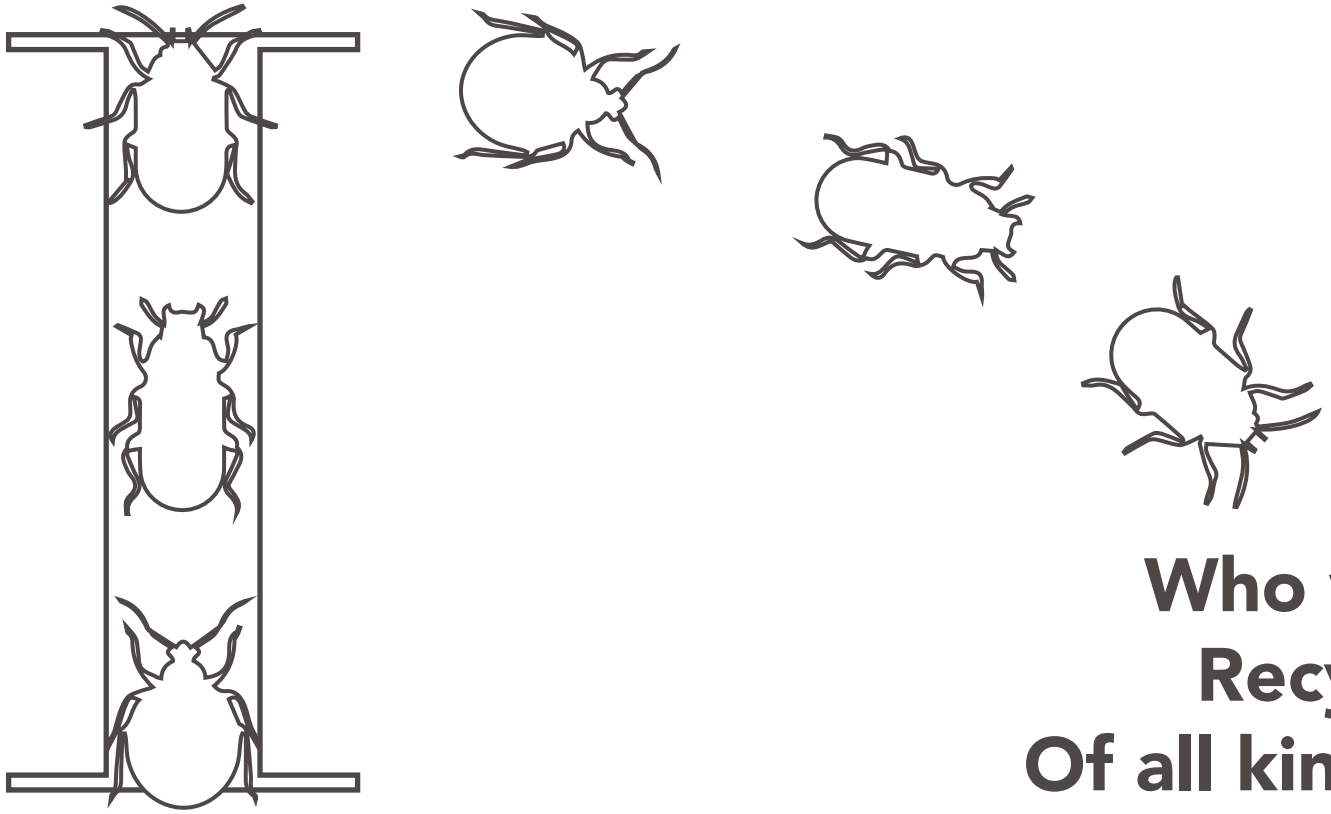
G is for Genes
Our inherited traits
How we look and behave
Are what genes regulate

Genes are the building blocks of life. Every living organism on earth inherits genetic material that determines how it behaves, appears, and reproduces. In genetically modified organisms (GMOs), the organism's genes have been manipulated in a lab to change their behavior. GMOs can be engineered for resistance to pesticides, to produce compounds that are toxic to certain insects, or for other traits that a scientist or a corporation considers desirable. But even scientists don't fully understand how genes work tinkering with them can produce unintended effects and serious problems. That's why the Non-GMO Project works to preserve and build our non-GMO food supply.



H is for Health
For hearty and hale
Not just how I feel
But the world, at large-scale

Health affects us at more than just an individual level. Real health means building healthy communities and healthy ecosystems. Farming with non-GMO seeds and regenerative practices supports biodiversity and produces more nutrient-dense food, which is healthier for us, too. We really do reap what we sow!

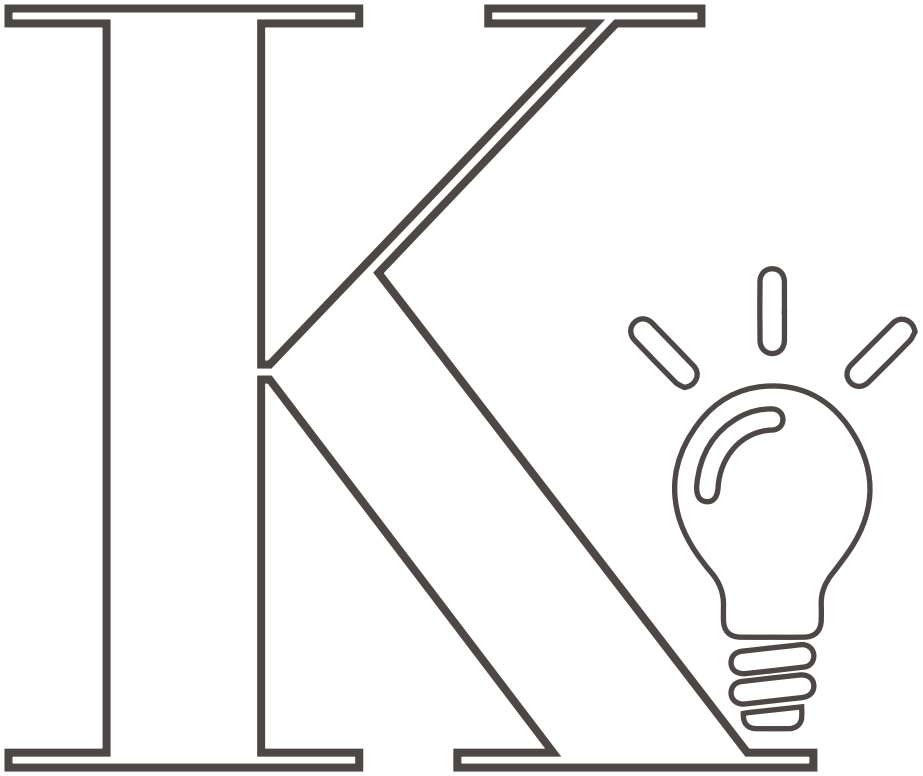


I is for Insects
Who work very hard
Recycling nutrients
Of all kinds in your yard

Insects are a crucial part of any ecosystem. They pollinate plants, recycle nutrients back into the soil and keep other insect populations in check. Insects around the world are in steep decline, due in part to farming practices that eliminate habitat and rely on insecticides and herbicides. But, there are lots of ways to be kinder to insects. Limiting chemical fertilizers and pesticides, rotating crops and maintaining habitat strips along the edges of fields can all help insect populations rebound. Farming can be a powerful part of the solution to building and preserving biodiversity!

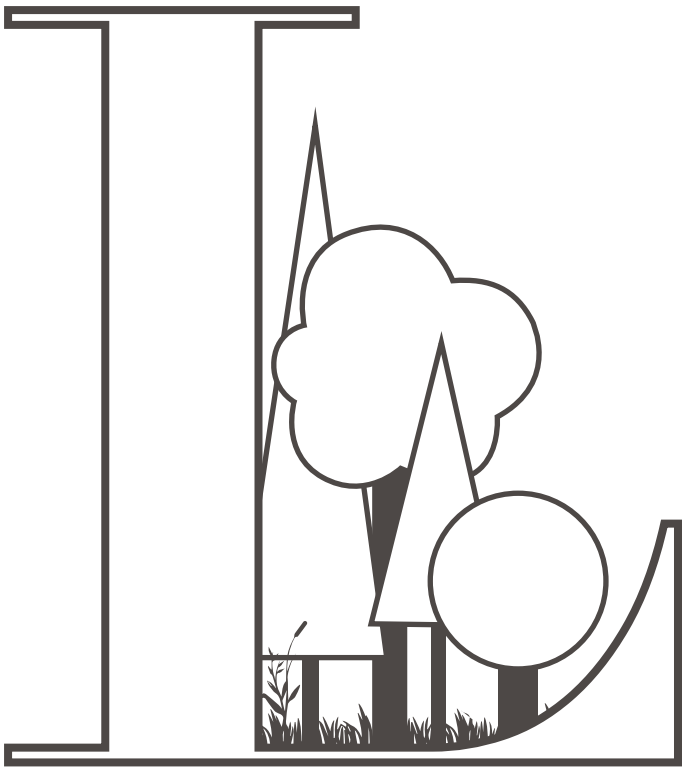
J is for Jobs
The tasks that we do
All the flora and fauna
Not just me and you

Everything on earth has a job. From the tiniest microorganism to the greatest tree, everything makes a contribution. Sometimes we don't understand what these contributions are, or how the connections between species work. Even if we don't fully understand the purpose of a creature (or a gene), the purpose is still there. Nature doesn't waste, and it doesn't give space to wasteful things.



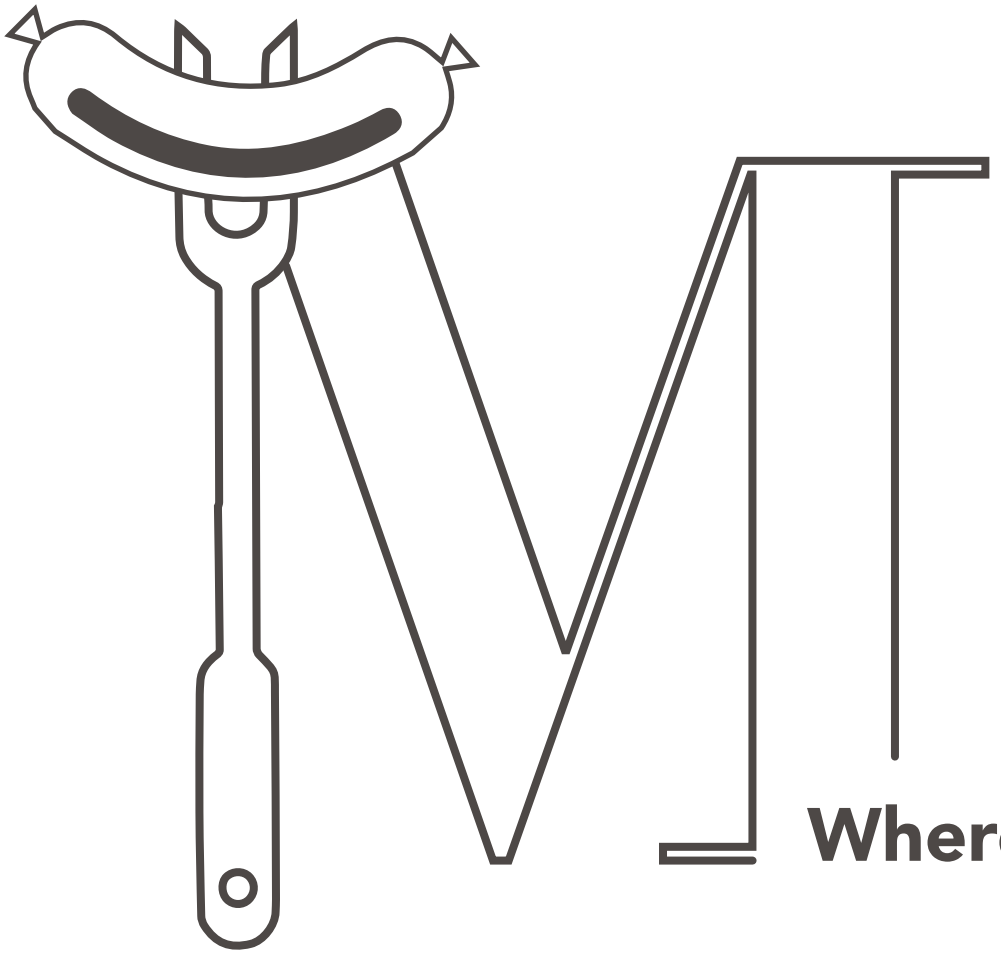
K is for Knowledge
And learning new stuff
Do you look at the world
Curiously enough?

Seeking out knowledge is always a good thing. It's one of the ways we grow, come up with new and creative ideas, and appreciate the amazing world we live in. So keep asking questions about where your food comes from!



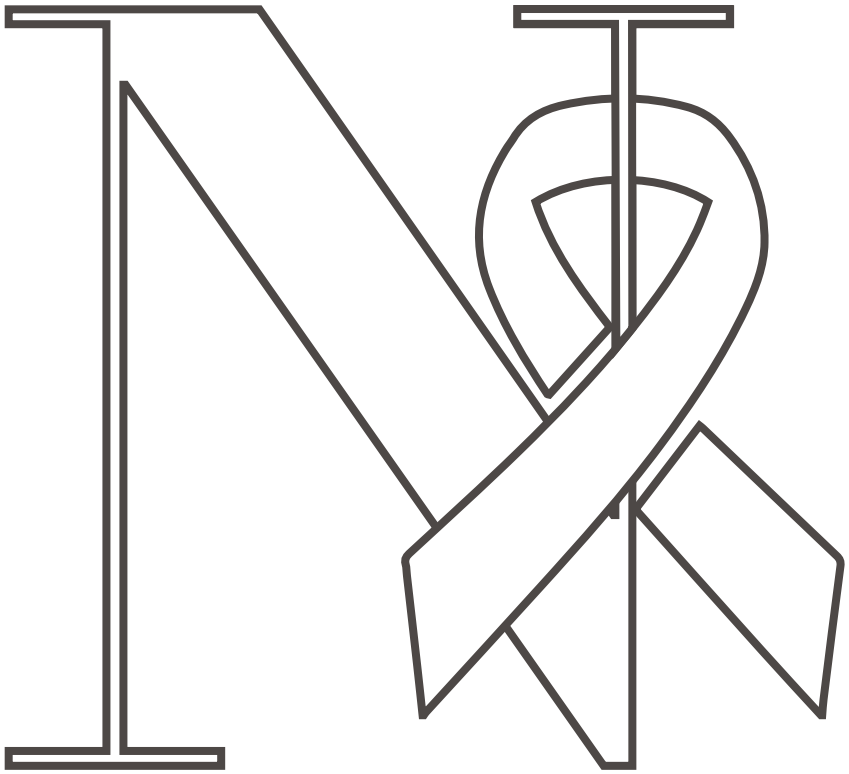
L is for Land
Where we live and we grow;
Everything we eat
Comes from land, don't you know

All of our food comes from the land. It might seem like there's lots of land on earth to grow food, but only a tiny amount a thin layer covering about less than 4% of the earth's surface is fertile enough for crops. Many modern farming practices damage that land, including the fertilizers and pesticides that GMO crops rely on for their productivity. If we grow food differently, we can preserve and build precious topsoil, securing a future for generations to come.



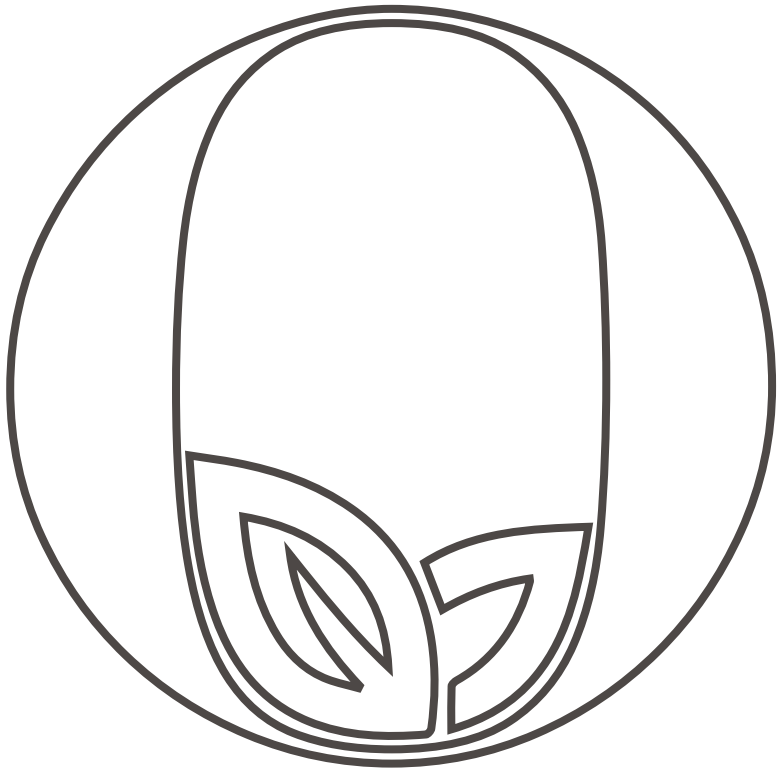
M is for Meat
From a bird, pig or cow,
Or from a lab
Where they grow it... somehow

We're used to meat that comes from an animal. Companies around the world are creating synthetic alternatives, "cell-based meat" that is cultured in a lab rather than grown in an animal. So far, it's a very expensive process, requiring a lot of raw animal materials to make a single burger of cell-based meat. At the Non-GMO Project, we support sustainable and regenerative livestock farming, which results in happier animals and healthier land. And of course, steer clear of GMO feed!



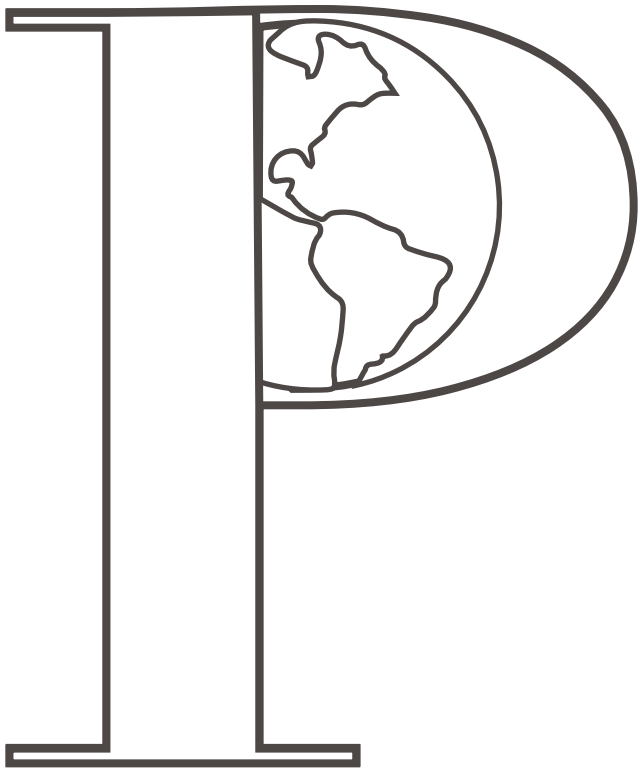
N's for Nonprofit
501(c)3
Acting in service
Not to make money

Did you know the Non-GMO Project is a non-profit? We're driven by the belief that a non-GMO future is better for everyone and healthier for the planet. There are about 40 people on staff right now, working to educate consumers about GMOs, and getting more brands to use non-GMO ingredients. Our revenue comes from retailer and brand partnerships and through consumer donations.



O's for Organic
A way to grow food
Using natural means
Sometimes old, sometimes new

Organic farming produces food without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, growth hormones or GMO seeds. Instead, organic farmers practice rotating crops, composting and using natural fertilizers like manure. Organic practices are much healthier for the people who work on the farms, and they're better for species biodiversity and soil health. A well-managed organic system can produce just as much food as a conventional one, and it fares better in extreme conditions such as drought.

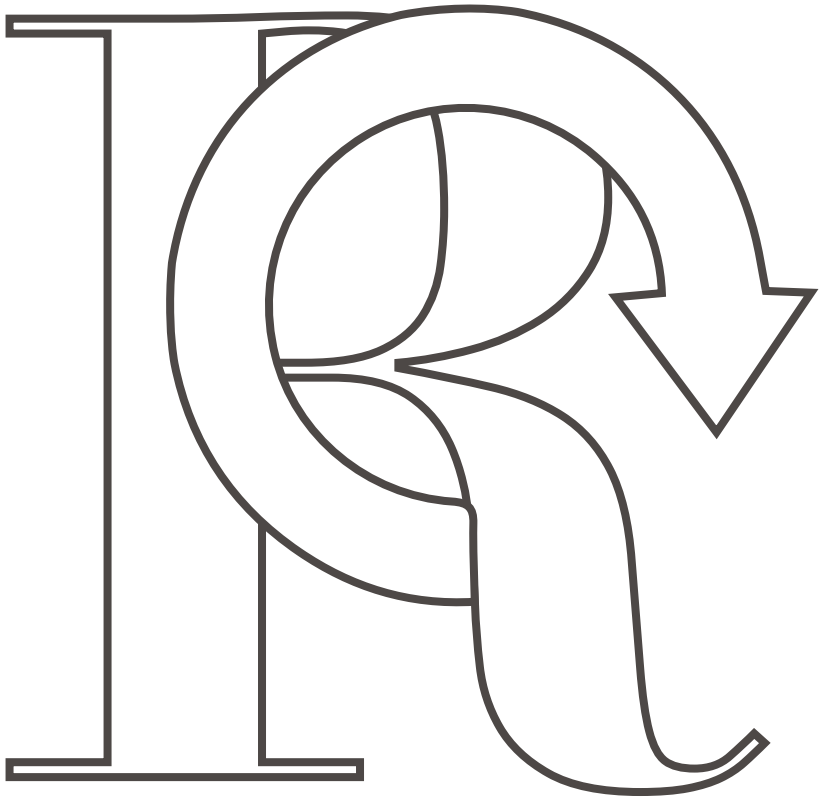


P is for Planet
The earth where we live
She's in need of our help
It is imperative

True health extends beyond our own personal well-being. It includes our families, our communities, and our environment. How we produce our food is one of the most profound bonds we have with the planet that sustains us. Every one of us depends on a healthy ecosystem, healthy soil, and healthy crops. By choosing to go non-GMO, you're supporting an agricultural system that respects our planet's biodiversity and helps provide security and prosperity for future generations.

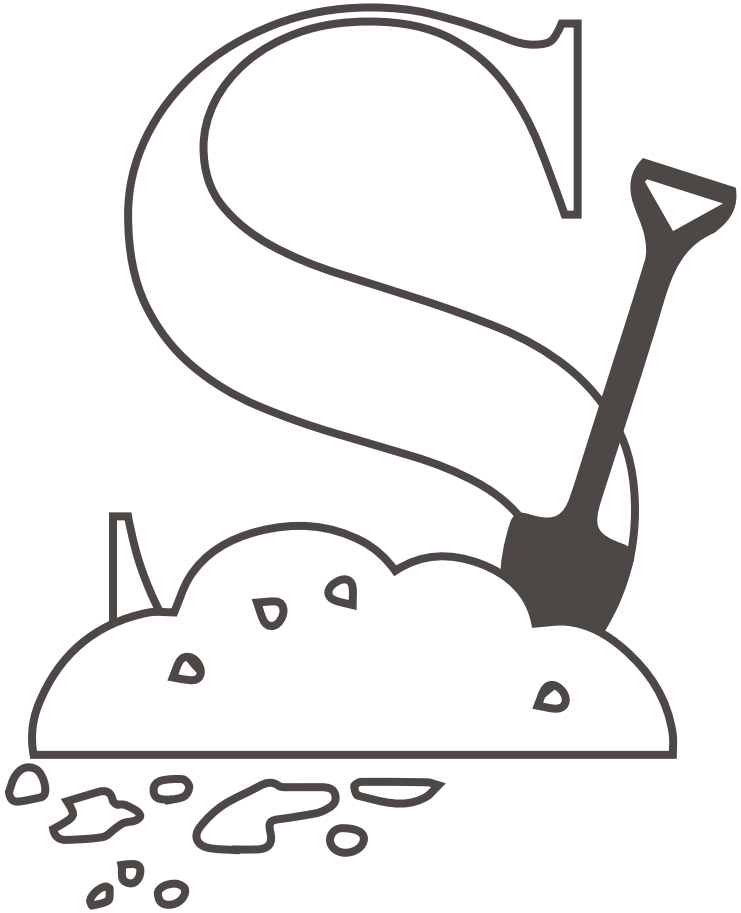
Q is for Quality
A measure of worth
Like the health of our food
Our soil and earth

The quality of our soil directly impacts the quality of our food. Degraded soil produces weaker crops more susceptible to pests and less nutritious and after 30 years of GMO farming, there's a lot of degraded soil out there. That's why ditching GMOs and the chemical treadmill they rely on makes for a healthier planet and healthier people.



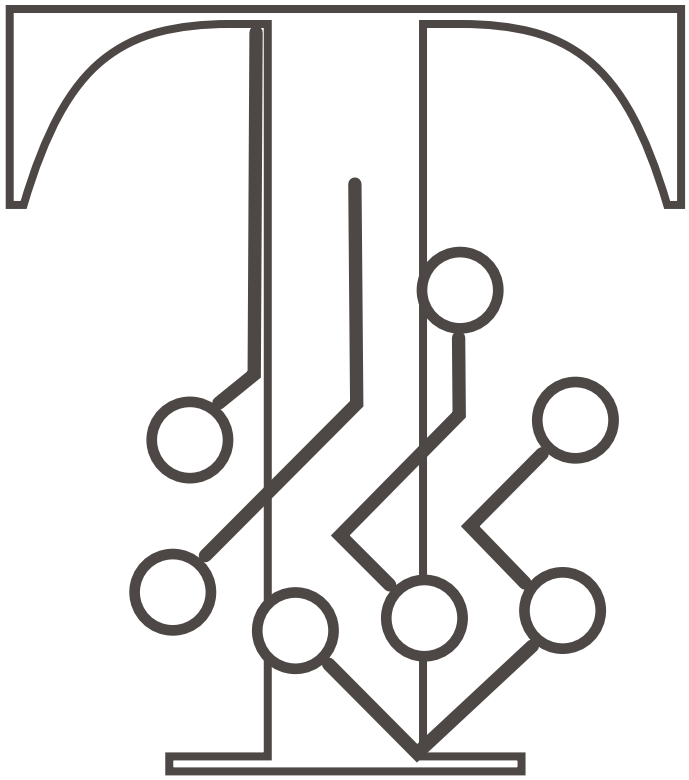
R's for Regenerate
To regrow or replace
The stuff that was here
In the first place

Regenerative agriculture helps to rebuild the fertility and biodiversity that's been lost in modern farming practices. Regenerative practices put nutrients back into our soil and food. The regenerative movement is gaining popularity, and there are a lot of people all over the world sharing their experiments and creativity. At the Non-GMO Project, we believe the future is regenerative and non-GMO!



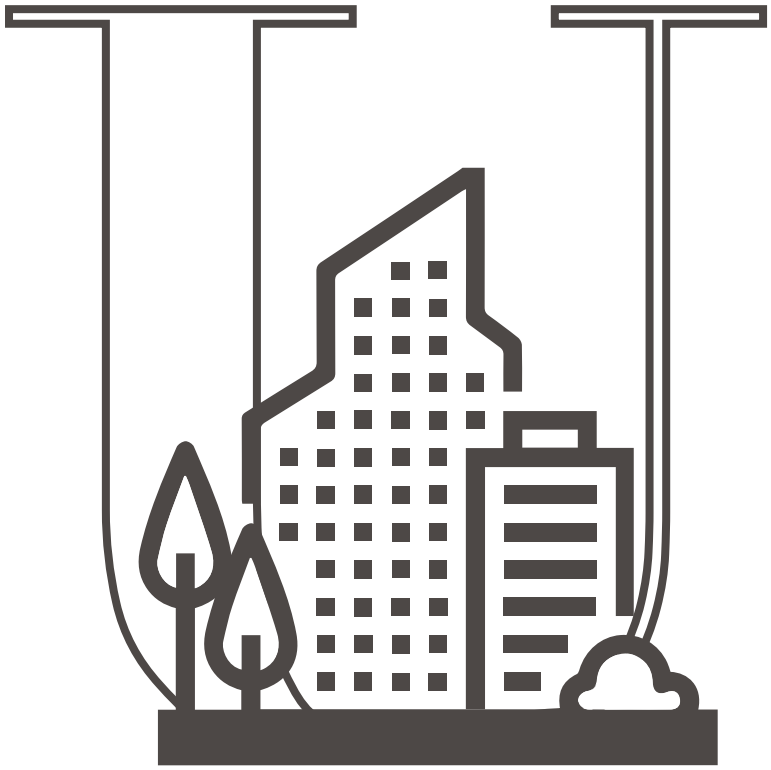
S is for Soil
Not just dirt on the ground
Home to zillions of creatures
We need to keep around

There's a big difference between soil and dirt. Soil is a nutrient-rich, biodiverse substance that was built up over millennia. A single teaspoon of healthy soil is home to more tiny organisms than there are people on earth! Industrial-style agriculture, however, doesn't support those creatures. Planting the same crops year after year and relying on fertilizers and pesticides kills microorganisms, turning healthy soil into lifeless dirt. By going non-GMO and regenerative, we can support soil health and biodiversity. We need to feed those microorganisms so that they can feed us.



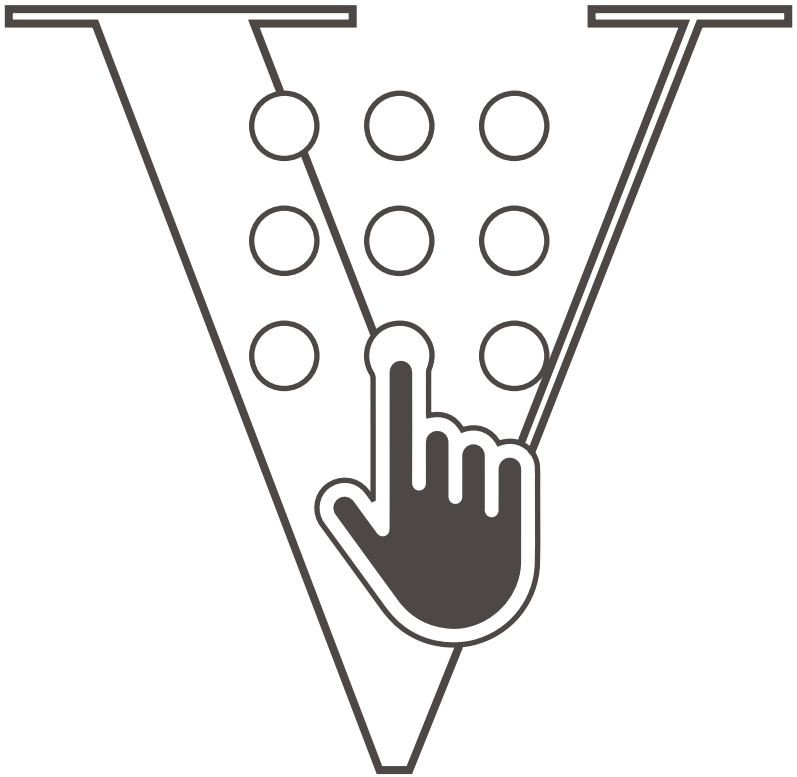
T's for Technology
A powerful tool
That can either be used
For good or for ill

Technological advances over the last century have dramatically changed people's lives. They have brought us more information, more choices and a massive amount of power. And tech itself isn't a problem it's another tool in the toolbox, no better or worse than the hand that picks it up. But people aren't always great at knowing when or how to use that big tech, or what the long term consequences might be. Sometimes our excitement or ambition gets the better of us. So when it comes to something as fundamental to human life as our food and the land it is grown from, we need to use that power wisely.



U's for Urban Farming
In the center of town
There are folks planting crops
Growing food from the ground

In cities all around the world people are transforming vacant lots and unused spaces into urban farms. Urban farming has stacks on stacks of benefits. It brings nutrition to people living in "food deserts" where convenience stores stocked with junk food are the only other option. It builds community and teaches kids about good food cuz if they grow it, they eat it. And it's about as local as you can get.

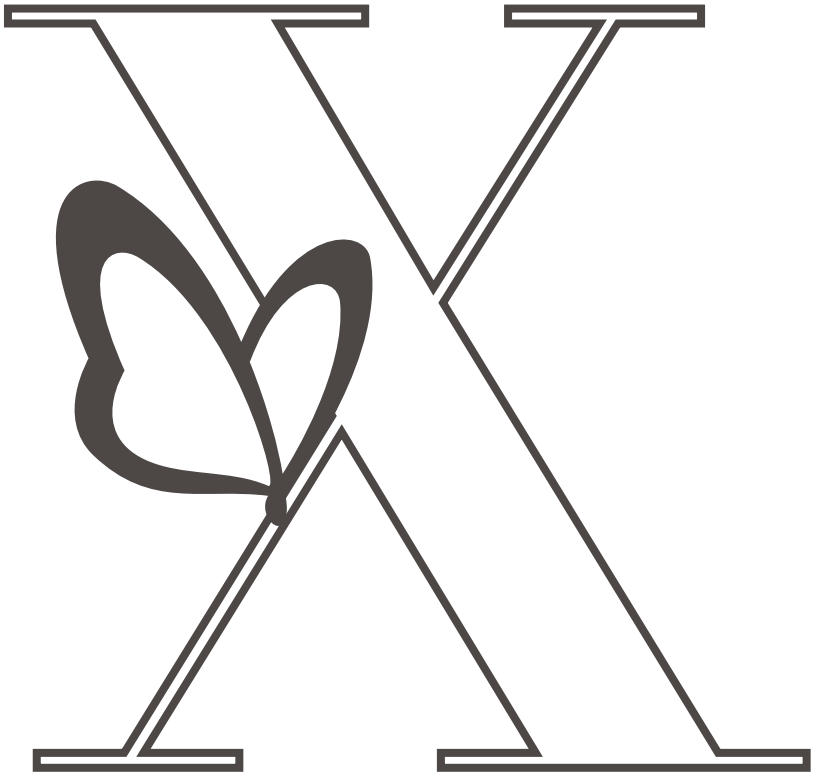


V's for Variety
The natural state
Of our forests and fields
And what ends up on our plate

Health is supported by variety, both in nature and in what we eat including a rainbow of fruits and veggies, different grain types and protein sources. Food offers more than calories: it provides nutrients and antioxidants we're just starting to learn about. Speaking of variety, did you know that the majority of the world's food supply is controlled by just four corporations? We need more variety than that! Don't put all your eggs in one basket, and don't put most of the world's food in FOUR baskets.

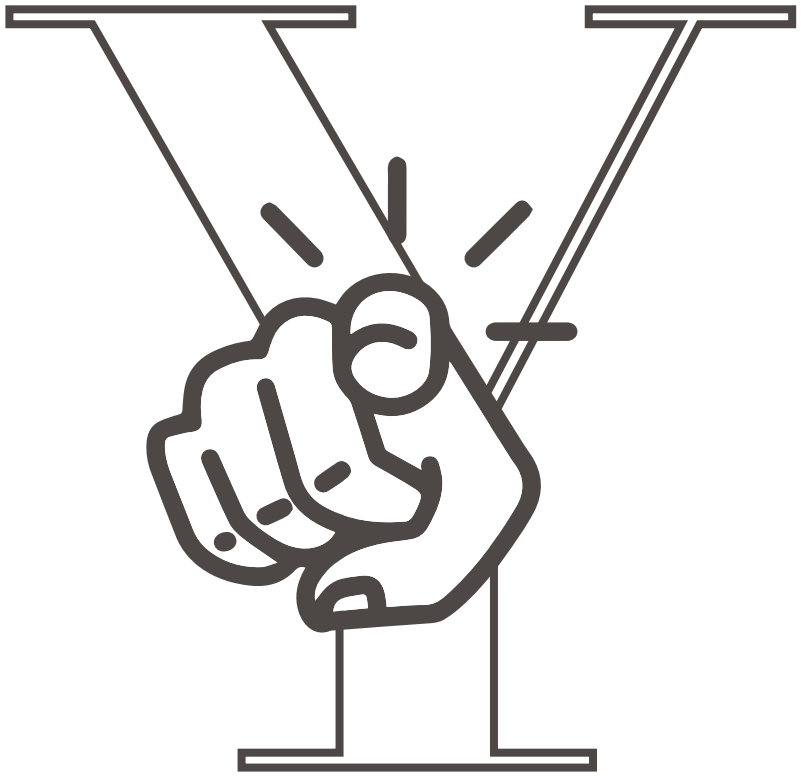
W is for Water
To satisfy thirst
Of people and plants
We need water first

All life on earth requires water. Without it, there would be no cells; without cells, there would be no living organisms on the planet. Food crops ABSOLUTELY need water, but not too much or too little all at once, as happens in extreme weather events like droughts or floods. Healthy soil is better at tolerating extremes because it can hold more water and resist erosion. Regenerative practices like planting cover crops also help preserve water. These off-season crops keep farmland covered and cozy during wet winter months. They also prevent run-off from the fields, keeping soil nutrients in the ground where we need them, not in waterways where we don't. Fish might not know that there are cover crops planted upstream, but they sure love the cleaner water they call home.



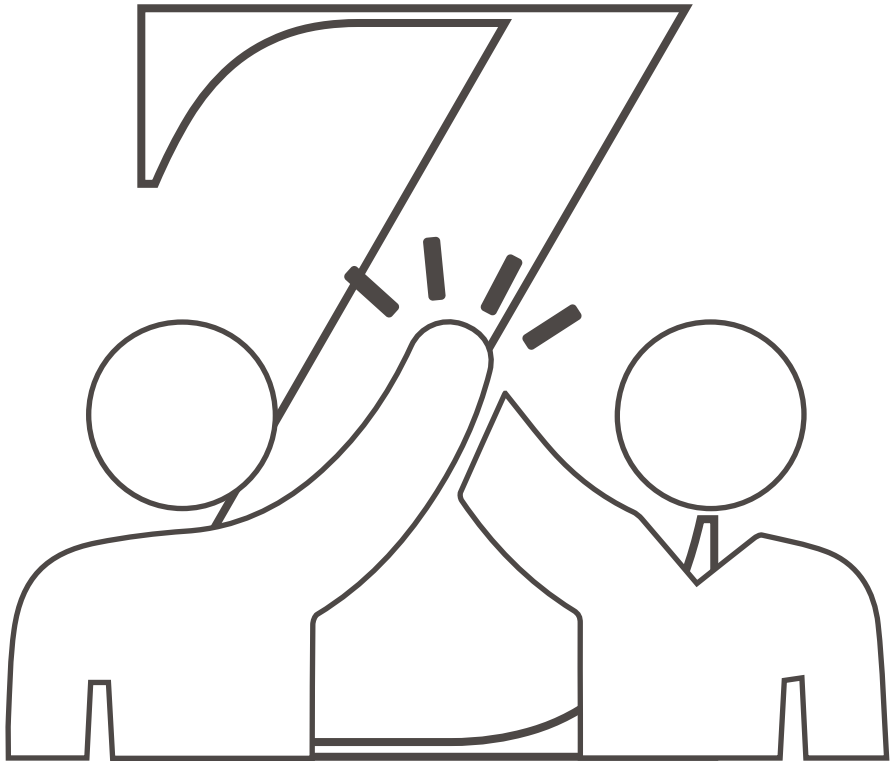
X is for Xerces
Who do wonderful things
Protecting invertebrates
With or without wings

People around the world are working together to protect the planet and everything that lives on it (including us!). One such group is the Xerces Society, who protect some of the smallest creatures on earth: the invertebrates. Invertebrates are animals that don't have a backbone, and they are way more common than you'd think. In fact, 95% of the animals on earth are invertebrates, from octopii to dragonfly! The spineless majority does all sorts of important (and courageous) things, including many of the essential tasks that keep our ecosystems healthy. From the Non-GMO Project, we offer our thanks to the invertebrates, and the Xerces Society that works to protect them.



Y is for You
My powerful friend
Your voice can drive change
That's what matters in the end

Each one of us can be a force for positive change in our community. There is no age limit or minimum height requirement. All that's needed is the willingness to ask questions, to learn, and to think creatively about the kind of world you want to live in. And to act. There are millions of people around the world taking a stand for their visions, for their futures. Would you like to be a part of that?



Z is for Zealous
And that's how we feel
Thanks for learning with us
And, as always, keep it real!

Thank you for joining us as we went back to basics, in fine rhyming style. If you'd like to learn more, A-Z and beyond, check out our blog at the link in our bio for articles and graphics created to entertain and enlighten.

#DoYouKnowYourGMOs