

# ORGANIC grower®



FieldWatch registries allow aerial and ground applicators of synthetic pesticides to know where sensitive crops and pollinators are when spraying. Photos courtesy of FieldWatch.

## A MAP TO SUCCESS

### *FieldWatch highlights locations of organic crops, bees*

**A**n online mapping registry that allows organic growers and beekeepers to alert commercial pesticide applicators and neighbors who farm about sensitive acreage continues to gain interest across the U.S.

FieldWatch, a nonprofit that provides the service in 24 states and one Canadian province, is progressing with adding Georgia to

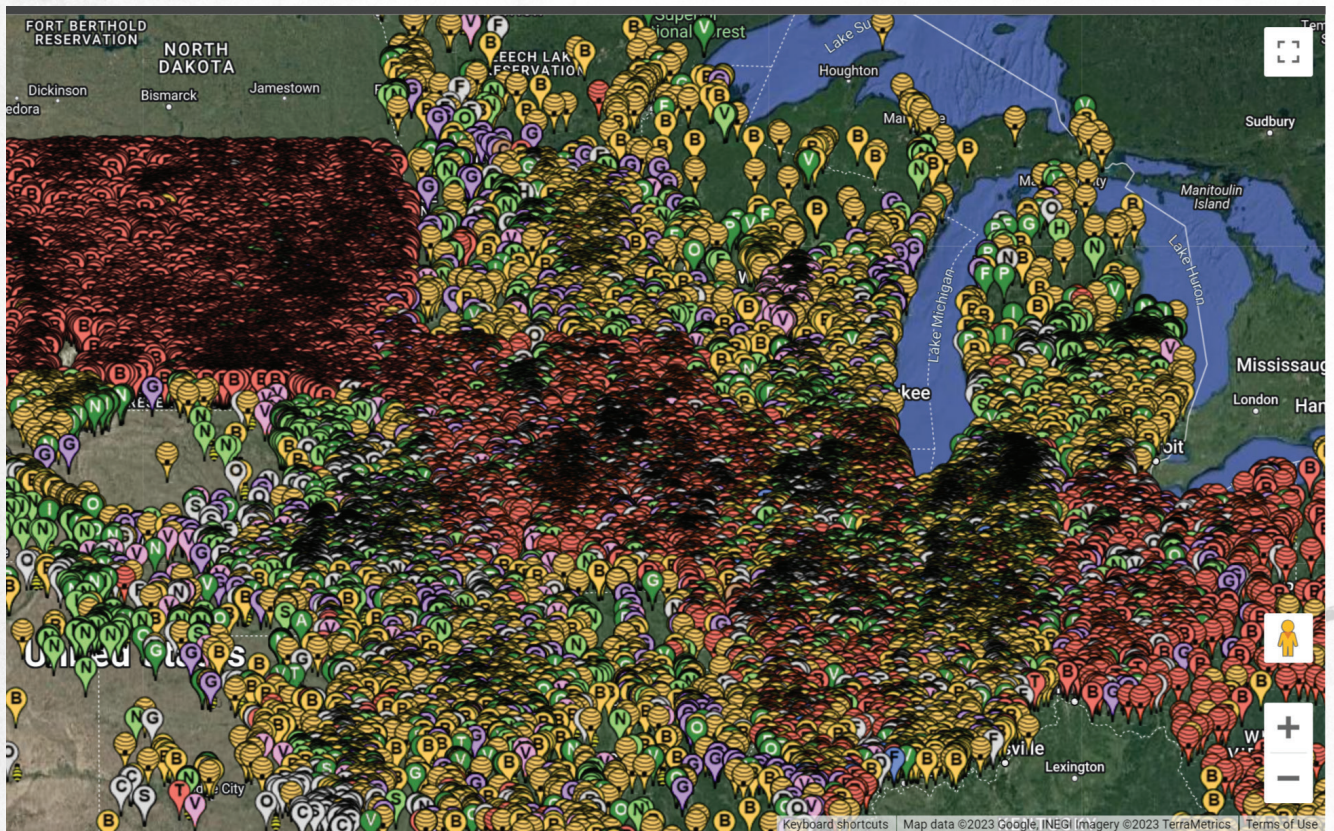
the program, and several other states have expressed interest. FieldWatch databases give applicators and growers the ability to check surrounding areas before they spray to minimize the risk of chemical drift that could compromise organic acreage or harm bees.

FieldWatch offers several registries: DriftWatch, for specialty crops; CropCheck, for row crops;

BeeCheck, for beekeepers; and SeedFieldCheck, for seed companies to map the location of field workers. FieldCheck is a master map of those registries, for applicators to consult before aerial or ground spraying.

Growers can include personal contact information, and Curt Hadley, FieldWatch business development director, said it's opening a dialogue

# ORGANIC GROWER: FIELD WATCH



Thousands of fields and beehives are mapped throughout almost half of U.S. states, alerting FieldWatch users to the location of areas sensitive to synthetic chemical applications.

between people who apply synthetic crop products for a living, and the organic community and beekeepers.

“I’ve said that in agriculture, 99 out of every 100 people want to do the right things and we’re giving everybody a platform to have an opportunity to do the right thing, so it’s refreshing that we can have those conversations and bring people together where historically we haven’t,” Hadley said.

Surveys from users bear this out, Hadley said, and even when there is no direct communication, the platform works.

“What we tell people is that just because somebody isn’t reaching out to you and making a phone call, does not mean they’re not modifying their behaviors based on what they see,” Hadley said. “It makes a huge difference.”

## How it works

The interface is Google Maps-driven and centers around users

mapping their crops or apiary sites through a simple web-based interface. Larger growers who have existing map data in other farm management systems can use that data. Growers can upload as many acres/fields by crop type as they have. Growers must enter their field boundaries on a laptop/desktop computer, but beekeepers can use a mobile app to enter hive locations.

Hadley meets with current and potential user groups, and although states handle the program differently, a state agency must

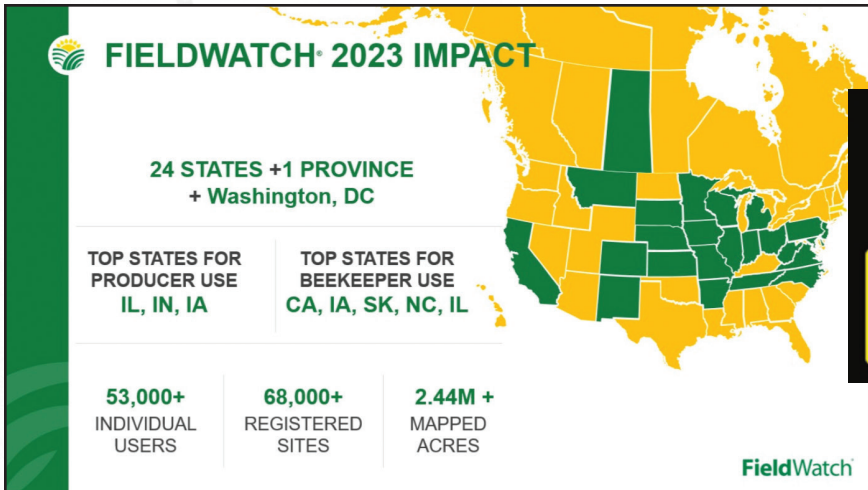
be involved to sign the contract. Although growers/beekeepers can control their data, every acre is vetted to ensure the program’s integrity. The goal is to have each state’s online presence to carry its department of agriculture seal.

“So nothing new goes on the map in any given state until somebody at the state level looks at it, scrutinizes it, and either kicks it back, or looks at it and says it’s good,” Hadley said.

Organic acreage must be certified by a USDA-approved certification agency.

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– Curt Hadley



The service relies on growers and beekeepers to maintain their data each year.

“One of the things that we do every year without fail is, if you had something mapped last year, in the first quarter of the ensuing year, we send you emails and we bully you, browbeat you, and make sure that you validate, update, whatever the case might be — but if you take no action on those fields they disappear from the maps,” Hadley said. ■

Although use of the registry is mostly voluntary, at least one state, Kansas, requires personnel at the county level to consult FieldCheck before spraying for noxious weeds, Hadley said. Most states enrolled in the program include FieldWatch information in their mandatory pesticide

certification training.

A big boost to the use of FieldWatch registries comes from precision agriculture platforms; Hadley said more than a dozen companies offer access as part of their software packages. All told, a conservative estimate of users is about 50,000, he said.

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