



## Restoring Eden: Unearthing the Agribusiness Secret that Poisoned my Farming Community

**Elizabeth D. Hilborn**

Chicago Review Press (Aug 8, 2023)

Softcover \$19.99 (236pp)

978-1-64160-938-8

Elizabeth D. Hilborn's *Restoring Eden* covers the devastation caused by agricultural pesticides alongside an impassioned plea for ecological reform.

Two decades ago, Hilborn and her husband moved to a North Carolina fruit farm, surrounded by green hills and abundant creeks. In addition to growing produce, they reveled in the native bees, songbirds, frogs, and salamanders that thrived in their wetland. But in May 2017, after a major flood, their land became “an altered, alien landscape,” covered in grey scum and made silent. Birds abandoned their hatchlings or died; no bees hummed, no moths gathered at the porch light, and no insects remained to pollinate plants.

To investigate the insect apocalypse, Hilborn asked neighbors about their fertilizers and pesticides and arranged tests of the soil and water quality. After false starts and frustrating delays, she determined that agricultural runoff was the culprit. Common pesticides and nitrogen fertilizers contributed to the devastation; however, the main cause was an insecticide coating a neighbor's corn seeds.

The book reveals that, in the early 2000s, seed companies started coating crop seeds with neonicotinoids—potent nervous system poisons that are lethal to bees and other insects. Hilborn alerted her neighbors to this, hoping to inspire more regenerative and sustainable farming techniques.

Gripping descriptions capture the beauty of Hilborn's property, as well as the subsequent anguish of witnessing a “hollowed-out world where...water and sky are empty and quiet.” Noting that today most cornfields are planted with neonic-coated seed, the book contends that, instead of enhancing yields, these chemicals poison soils and waterways, kill pollinators, and threaten the world's food supply. Regenerative farming, Hilborn says, is essential to protecting the web of life.

Illustrating the catastrophic impact of agricultural chemicals on one farm, *Restoring Eden* conveys a stirring, forceful message about the environmental health of the planet.

KRISTEN RABE (July / August 2023)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*