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JOHN'S CORNER:

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS

by John Ferguson

Since I am in the middle of a series on minerals, and what they do for soil, microbes, plants and animals, many readers might find this interesting.

There was an article in the April 1, 2017 issue of Science News on Climate Change and Nutrition from the Annual Review of Public Health in January and Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Studies are showing that as the climate warms trace elements like selenium (Se), iron (Fe) and zinc (Zn) will not be held in the soil, and plants will absorb less of these minerals into our food supply. These nutrients are already deficient in most of the foods that are being grown worldwide and the deficiencies are predicted to get worse. Note: Soils with a high clay content and abundant organic matter do a better job of holding on to these nutrients.

Most plants use what is known as the "C₄" pathway for carbon capture. Researchers looked at 41 species of cultivated crops and as carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels rise nutrient absorption decreased. Over 2 billion people around the world are already zinc deficient and even a small change can drive hundreds of millions more people into deficiency.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2014) reports that crop yields are also likely to decrease as carbon dioxide (CO₂) increases.

A multi year study by the United Nations with dozens of scientists from all over the world has found that due to the reasons above, the declining nutrient density of our food, and many other reasons, the only way to feed our growing populations is to convert all of the world's agriculture to sustainable organic methods.