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Comments: I have been an organic farmer and researcher for 25 Years. I conducted nutrition research under the guidance of Dr. Steven Britz at the Nutrient Data Lab of the USDA in Beltsville, Maryland almost 25 years ago. My research focused on how soil variables affect mineral uptake by plants, and in turn, affect the nutrient density of the food grown accordingly.

One of the discoveries that I made was that unique soil microbes are critical intermediaries to nutrient uptake by plants, and that the majority of the thousands of species of microbes that were once present in soil have been killed off by farming practices over the past hundreds or even thousands of years. As a result, the nutrient density of our food has declined, as mineral content of soil has declined, and as microbial diversity has been lost.

Old growth forests are the last remaining ecosystem on land where high levels of microbial diversity still exist. Analogously to the recognition that the Amazon rainforest supports plants that have important medicinal values- even undiscovered medicinal values, and that these plants may exist nowhere else, we can say the same about old growth forests. There are tens of thousands of species of soil microbes, and these soil microbes, which scientists have not yet fully catalogued, and have not yet determined their potential benefit may only remain alive because they are supported by the ecosystems of old growth forests.

I am therefore speaking out to urge those responsible for the care of our old growth forest heritage to go to all necessary lengths to protect them.

Thank you.