

Analysis & Recommendations

# U.S. Policy & Regenerative Agriculture

FORA U.S. Policy Working Group

# 2021

FUNDERS  FOR  
REGENERATIVE  
AGRICULTURE

**This synthesis report was produced by  
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\*The organizations and groups referenced and highlighted throughout this document are by no means an exhaustive list of those who are working on food and agriculture policy. There are many other groups, particularly in individual states and communities, whose work is essential to realizing our shared visions and will be critical allies and collaborators in our collective policy efforts. We look forward to integrating learnings and other organizations into future iterations of this report.

*The contents of this document are for informational purposes. This document and any material are intended solely for the addressee(s) and may contain confidential and/or privileged information.*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Goals of this Analysis

Over the course of 2020, FORA's U.S. Policy Working Group conducted a series of 18+ interviews on the current state of agricultural policy in the U.S. and the opportunities and challenges to adopting policies, at the state and national levels, that would support the transition to a regenerative agricultural system.

From crop insurance reform, to climate mitigation, to equitable land access, these leaders highlighted multiple opportunities for transformation. The most important takeaway from this effort has been the long-term influence of policy on the agricultural landscape. Without a significant increase in understanding of these intertwined issues, from both policy makers and funders alike, we will not realize a more just, healthy, and regenerative agricultural system.

When reviewing the recommendations, it is important to note that the Working Group's conversations made it clear that organizations are approaching the policy change with different theories of change and work at different altitudes. There are significant differences in vision, with some groups deeply committed to an agricultural system rooted in export commodities and global trade and supply chains and others focused on diverse, local, and regional food systems. Many work for a mix of these two systems. These competing visions and assumptions about markets, subsidies and agricultural practices are a

source of tension in the policy arena. FORA recognizes that many groups and funders dedicated to regenerative agriculture have shared values yet differing visions of how regenerative practices should be applied in the larger agricultural system and differing visions on approaching policy change via incremental change vs. transformational change. This guide does not seek to reconcile those differences, yet we do not shy away from pointing some of them out for they are often at the heart of core policy disputes in the field.

What follows in this document are this working group's synthesis, analysis, and key policy recommendations identified during this process and outlined below.

## Immediate Priorities for Policy Work

- Integration of Regenerative Agriculture into Climate Policy and of Climate Impacts into Agricultural Policy
- Influencing Federal Agencies
- Advancing State Healthy Soils Policy Work
- Capacity Grants for Marginalized and Oppressed Groups to Participate in National Coalitions
- Funding and Support for Strong Coalition Building for the Next Farm Bill

## Longer Term and Ongoing Priorities for Policy Work

- Funding Staff and Resourcing Existing Organizations Who Are Leading the Way on Policy
- Build Capacity for Progressive State Legislators to Take Seats on Agriculture Committees
- Regenerative Agriculture Research and Science Funding
- Leverage Conservation Programs to Advance Regenerative Agriculture
- Long Term Support for Crop Insurance and Risk Management Reform
- Fellowship to Support Farmers Working Towards Elected Positions
- Integration of Municipal Policies That Link Food Waste, Compost Production, and Healthy Soils

## Summary & Next Steps

Funders have a variety of options for balancing between pragmatism and vision. We have laid out these recommendations into the above section, and aggregated our learnings in multiple ways to clarify these recommendations. We look forward to presenting these to FORA, and determining where we can turn these recommendations into action individually and collectively.

## Possible Partners

Below is a list of the organizations referenced in this report. For full descriptions, see the Appendix.\*\*

1. [CaICAN, California Climate and Agriculture Network](#)
2. [Organic Farming Research Foundation \(OFRF\)](#)
3. [American Farmland Trust \(AFT\)](#)
4. [The Rural Coalition](#)
5. [Meridian Institute/AGree Coalition](#)
6. [National Healthy Soils Policy Network](#)
7. [National Young Farmers Coalition \(NYFC\)](#)
8. [Land Core](#)
9. [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition \(NSAC\)](#)
10. [State Innovation Exchange \(SiX\)](#)
11. [HEAL Food Alliance](#)
12. [Western Landowners Alliance \(WLA\)](#)
13. [Intertribal Ag Council \(IAC\)](#)



14. Land Stewardship Project (LSP)
15. Animal Agriculture Reform Collaborative (AARC)
16. Socially Responsible Agriculture Project (SRAP)
17. National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC)
18. Native Farm Bill Coalition (now housed at the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC))
19. First Nations Development Institute (FNDI)
20. Ecdysis Foundation
21. Wolfe's Neck Center For Agriculture and The Environment
22. Green Lands, Blue Waters
23. Bionutrient Food Association (BFA)
24. Regenerative Research Centers at Land Grant Universities, Including:
  - a. University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative
  - b. Iowa State University's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
  - c. Center for Regenerative Agriculture and Resilient Systems, California State University at Chic
  - d. Colorado State's Soil Carbon Solution Center
  - e. Ohio State's Rattan Lal Center for Carbon Management and Sequestration

*\*\*This list is a partial one and by no means attempts to provide a complete map of the field, which continues to expand with groups both new and longstanding.*



Photo by Anca Gabriela Zosin on Unsplash

# FULL REPORT





# THE GOAL OF THIS ANALYSIS

Over the course of 2020, FORA's U.S. Policy Working Group conducted a series of interviews, conversations, and research on the current state of agricultural policy in the U.S. In doing so, we examined the opportunities and challenges to adopting policies – at both the state and national levels – that would support the transition to a regenerative agricultural system. What follows in this document are this Working Group's synthesis, analysis, and key takeaways from this process, as well as from insight gained during the virtual SAFSF 2020 Policy Outlook and Strategy Conference. Along with our Policy 101 Toolkit, we hope the FORA members find this to be a useful set of tools and recommendations for engaging in policy issues related to food and agriculture in the U.S.

**Perhaps the most important takeaway from this effort has been the long-term influence of policy on the agricultural landscape.**

The predominance of corn and soybeans on the Midwest landscape, for example, could not have happened without public research dollars, market incentives, farmer support, export subsidies, and numerous other policy interventions. Yet, policy is not the only driver, as economics, biology, and culture can accelerate or thwart policy goals. These intertwining drivers make revising and implementing new policies difficult; successful policy initiatives require an understanding of how economics and culture will interplay with proposed policy.

**Without a significant increase in understanding of these intertwined issues, from both policy makers and funders alike, we will not realize a more just, healthy, and regenerative agricultural system.**

Furthermore, policy work moves slowly and incrementally; the work we do today on policy will most likely not be fully realized until two Farm Bill cycles from now, which would be the 2028 Farm Bill. As such, we must act now to engage more broadly in food and agricultural policy, and recognize that progress can be made even if there are few immediate wins.

# SUMMARY OF U.S. POLICY LANDSCAPE

**Our collective understanding has grown tremendously in recent years for how state and federal agricultural policy both drives and inhibits regenerative practices.** U.S. agricultural policy heavily influences farming systems, covering aspects such as commodity subsidies, crop insurance, land conversion, trade, nutrition, and the research agenda. The current regulatory regime incentivizes the status quo; rethinking how to structure future policy, stimulus packages, and rural economic development plans will be key to creating an agriculture system that works for people and the planet.

**Recently, through the efforts of advocacy groups and the election of an Administration that accepts climate change and is committed to addressing racial equity, the dynamics in Washington DC have shifted regarding climate and agricultural policy.**

As a result, we anticipate more hearings, resolutions, and bill introductions that not only address climate and agriculture but also apply a racial equity lens to policy solutions. Due in part to recent natural disasters exacerbating the country's dire farm crisis, even farmers in politically conservative states are beginning to talk about climate change. And even when farmers are reluctant to discuss anthropogenic climate change, the necessity of adapting to unusual weather events has become a regular part of conversation and decision-making. Moreover, discussions are also growing regarding the intersection of climate change, particularly around land

access and opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to access land and build viable farm businesses. We see increasing opportunities for transformational change, often driven by crises. COVID-19 supply chain collapses, weather disasters, continued disastrous years for farm income—all of these factors are coming together to give us no choice but to take a hard look at what state and federal policy supports and does not support.

As momentum continues to build towards major policy changes, **there is a need felt by many advocacy and policy experts in the U.S. to rapidly experiment with and evaluate policy tools** to help government and policy makers have the evidence they need to implement ambitious new actions for climate mitigation, adaptation, rural economic development, habitat protection, and food security. Identifying and supporting a set of policy options upon which most stakeholders can agree and collaborate will be key.

**Ferd Hoefner, former Policy Director for NSAC, and his team sum up the current political landscape in the U.S. around regenerative agriculture,**

*“We are beginning to see some uptick in interest by legislators on agricultural policy reform. Most of this focus, however, is coming in the form of rolling agriculture up into climate legislation in the short term, which will likely not be very specific to the regenerative agriculture outcomes we all want to see. We are still a very, very long way off from our legislators understanding any of this at the practice level and advocating for and incentivizing a broadscale shift to regenerative agriculture on the landscape. We have a lot of organizing, convening, and movement building to do before we get there. And when we do get there, modifying, or better yet, overhauling, the Farm Bill is going to be necessary to ensure we can produce adequate, nutritious, and sustainable food—that doesn’t bankrupt farmers, our landscapes, or taxpayers in the process. Changing harmful subsidies and crop insurance will have to be the first priority across the movement. This will have to start with simply trying to engage more progressive legislators and policy advocates on the issues, both at the state and federal levels.”*

**The FORA U.S. Policy Working Group interviewed over 18+ national experts on state and federal policy. From crop insurance reform, to climate mitigation, to equitable land access, these leaders highlighted multiple opportunities for transformation.**

Stakeholders across the sector noted the importance of passing progressive policy and coordinated federal, state, and local legislation reform. As a pragmatic first step, stakeholders advocated for increasingly utilizing and expanding United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funding mechanisms, such as those provided through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship

Program (CSP), to engage policy makers while providing increased subsidies for regenerative practices. Stakeholders also regularly called attention to the need for policies to focus on committing government funding towards research on regenerative agriculture practices, improving land tenure and access, and addressing entrenched equity issues by supporting historically underserved farmers. The integration of policy frameworks addressing key areas from public health, climate, and food security were lifted up in these conversations, as a means to deliver the scale needed to support a full regenerative transition. What follows are the highlights and key recommendations that emerged from these conversations.



**When reviewing the recommendations, it is important to note that the Working Group's conversations made it clear that organizations are approaching the policy change with different theories of change and work at different altitudes.** There are significant differences in vision, with some groups deeply committed to an agricultural system rooted in export commodities and global trade and supply chains and others focused on diverse, local, and regional food systems. Many work for a mix of these two systems. These competing visions and assumptions about markets, subsidies and agricultural practices are a source of tension in the policy arena. Most experts interviewed could be characterized in one of two camps: the first focused on improving and changing existing policy, and the second creating a vision to enable long term structural change.

**The first camp is focused on making shifts in existing agricultural policy and leveraging key vehicles** such as federally subsidized crop insurance and improving and/or creating new federal conservation programs to drive change towards regenerative practices. The Meridian Institute and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) perhaps best exemplify these approaches. Both rely on their active collaborations with a wide variety of agricultural organizations on policy development to drive toward more regenerative practices in conventional agriculture and make progress toward a carbon neutral agriculture, and to build support for farmers employing sustainable, organic and regenerative agriculture. These

groups are grounded in the current context of agricultural systems, policy, and economics.

**The second camp takes a more progressive stance that focuses on a vision for the future rather than pragmatic policy development,** and includes organizations such as the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), the Animal Agriculture Reform Collaborative (AARC), and HEAL Food Alliance. Instead of focusing on how to improve current systems, they advocate for a regenerative agriculture system that goes beyond small policy tweaks and adequately addresses the enormous changes needed in our systems. This vision for more transformational change tends to gain more momentum outside of traditional agricultural policy vehicles, and therefore these groups are often involved in conversations such as the Green New Deal and advancing racial equity.

**Groups in this camp also noted that farmers using regenerative methods face the same economic challenges that all farms do, as well as additional challenges that come from being locked out of USDA risk management programs or traditional farm credit systems.** In addition to the financial issues outlined throughout this report, mentioned in several interviews were the structural reforms that farmers need to protect their livelihoods. These structural changes include reforms to the farm credit system, the ability to access markets that are competitive enough for farmers to get an adequate price for a crop that was raised with regenerative methods (and at higher costs), and the ongoing challenges to all farmers that face lack of access to affordable healthcare. These big issues must also be addressed by

policy advocates as they build the regenerative agriculture sector.

**FORA recognizes that many groups and funders dedicated to regenerative agriculture have shared values yet differing visions of how regenerative practices should be applied in the larger agricultural system, and differing visions on approaching policy change via incremental change vs. transformational change. Funders have a variety of options for balancing between pragmatism and vision.**

Driving change is more of a both-and approach rather than an either-or. Moreover, strategy focused on making changes in existing policy structures also must support grassroots power

building in the states and districts of the key decision makers. This requires sophisticated, coordinated campaigns with financial support for advocacy groups on the ground working in concert with DC-based organizations. For example, when a certain member of the Senate or House Agriculture Committee needs to be nudged from within their state or district, a group like the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) will connect with their member group in that state to coordinate advocacy from within the state/district. This is where funders can be strategic and work collaboratively to ensure broad support for this type of grassroots power building.



Sheep in Vineyard, photo by Alicia Arcidiacono

# IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES FOR POLICY WORK

## Integration of Regenerative Agriculture into Climate Policy and Climate Impacts into Agricultural Policy

**All indications are that the Biden Administration will be broadly advancing climate policy, and with debate over the direction of the 2023 Farm Bill starting this year, funders need to be ahead of the curve and prepared to fund policy development and advocacy efforts.** Regenerative agriculture advocates need to make sure that agricultural climate solutions are in the mix of considered climate legislation and regulations. Some regenerative agriculture solutions, such as building soil health, receive strong bipartisan support and the backing of major farm groups.

**Influential mainstream agricultural organizations tend to focus on rather narrow roles for the USDA and other agencies in climate solutions,** such as the development of simple carbon capture and private carbon markets, as seen in the Growing Climate Solutions Act, **versus a more comprehensive public approach of redirecting existing federal programs, such as the Agriculture Resilience Act, that facilitates farmer participation.**

FORA would be well served to have grantees, such as NSAC, participate and advocate for a

broad, inclusive perspective on carbon markets. Other organizations would better serve the broader movement by staying focused on bigger, bolder opportunities for regenerative agriculture and reminding lawmakers that a carbon market is only one small step toward addressing the climate crisis and is riddled with practical implementation challenges.

**FORA could improve these efforts by formulating a clear funding strategy that supports a coordinated inside-outside strategy for policy advocates.** This would involve policy advocates developing sophisticated, coordinated policy campaigns that work the inside game and are then reinforced through grassroots power building and strong communications plans focused on key congressional decision makers. The inside group could be led by an organization such as NSAC or the Meridian Institute, with grassroots power building led by NSAC member groups, for example. In addition, another layer of the outside strategy focused on the progressive, transformational change through narrative shift, could also be supported and led by a group like the HEAL Food Alliance. Both the inside and outside leads would provide regular updates to FORA members, and FORA members could thus make informed decisions about dedicating additional funding to promising efforts.



Finally, with the January 2021 Executive Orders from the Biden Administration on climate change, there will be important near-term opportunities for advocates to advance regenerative agriculture goals through federal initiatives such as 30 by 30 (conserving at least 30 percent of the country's land and waters by 2030) and the Civilian Conservation Corps. Advocacy groups can be supported to continue to ensure meaningful engagement with regenerative farmers, ranchers, and other land managers in the design of these initiatives.

## POSSIBLE PARTNERS

- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) and their state-based grassroots members
- Meridian Institute/AGree: Climate, Food, and Agriculture Dialogue and AGree E2 Coalition
- Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) Farm and Forest Carbon Solutions Initiative
- HEAL Food Alliance
- The Rural Coalition
- Animal Agriculture Reform Collaborative (AARC)
- Land Core
- National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC)
- Western Landowners Alliance (WLA)

## Influencing of Federal Agencies

**An important area in which advocacy organizations work to not only ensure the policy change they won in Congress actually plays out on the ground, but also advances policy that can be done administratively, is to influence the administrative implementation, rules, and regulations at U.S. government agency levels.** These agencies include the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and others.

A number of environmentally and conservation-oriented non-profits are currently collaborating together to try and influence **updates to U.S. Forest Service** (which is housed in USDA) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM, housed in the Department of Interior) grazing policies. In addition, a number of Western-focused non-profits are currently advocating for **changes in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**, which as of November 2020 was at its lowest enrolled number of acres since 1987. The 2018 Farm Bill actually raised the total CRP acreage cap from 24 million to 27 million acres, in part based on growing landowner interest and successful policy advocacy for such a change. However, since that time, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) has changed how rental rates are calculated, reduced incentives, eliminated management cost-shares, and failed to roll out forest conservation practices. This has led landowners to look elsewhere when evaluating how best to manage their lands, leaving

millions of potential CRP acres on the table. A series of changes in how this program is administered are now underway within the Biden administration and will have significant impacts on the potential of the program to provide ecological and wildlife benefits.

**Further improvements to the Conservation Stewardship Program and EQIP are also warranted. NRCS prioritization at state and local levels also makes a difference in terms of potential impacts on the ground.** These are just a few examples of ways in which advocacy-focused organizations can work to try and improve agency-level implementation within existing policy frameworks.

This type of “policy implementation” advocacy (or “administrative advocacy”) can be supported by funders at state and federal levels and can also feed into and tee-up longer-term legislative reforms through the Farm Bill and other means.

## POSSIBLE PARTNERS

- Western Landowners Alliance (WLA)
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)
- National Wildlife Federation
- National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC)
- State-based organizations serving on NRCS state technical committees
- Green Lands Blue Waters
- National environmental organizations (including National Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Audubon, and others)

## Advancing State Healthy Soils Policy Work

The National Healthy Soils Policy Network is building on collective power and policies across 17 key states to not only improve and revamp the current healthy soils programs so that there is an increased adoption by farmers, but also to launch at least two regional hubs alongside farmer leaders and technical assistance providers. With sufficient funding, this resource network could expand its mini-grants program, cultivate relationships with potential new members with an emphasis on BIPOC led and serving organizations, and start doing regional organizing and strategizing to more robustly build capacity for advancing state healthy soils policies. Building capacity in these national networks of state-based agriculture policy organizations is needed so they can play a more influential role across the sector in shaping the development, passage, and implementation of regenerative organic agriculture policies across the country.

## KEY PRIORITIES

- Developing a comprehensive resource library of climate smart agriculture bill language
- Offering webinars, trainings and consultation to individual states
- Collaborating with the State Information Exchange (SiX) to connect with progressive state legislators who are interested in advancing climate smart agriculture bills
- Supporting a steering committee to set

direction for the network and fundraise

- Coordinating a newly launched online resource ([healthysoilspolicy.org](http://healthysoilspolicy.org)) that documents and tracks healthy soils state legislation
- Building the capacity of state-based groups to mobilize support for these bills, which often take multiple years to pass, implement, and fund.

## POSSIBLE PARTNERS

- National Healthy Soils Policy Network
- CalCAN and other state-level networks or working groups (e.g., Illinois Stewardship Alliance, New Mexico Healthy Soil Working Group, etc.)
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) and its state-based affiliates
- State Innovation Exchange (SiX)
- National Resource Defense Council (NRDC)

## Capacity Grants for Marginalized and Oppressed Groups to Participate in National Coalitions

**Most legislation on food and agriculture has happened without the incorporation of the voices and needs of producers of color, indigenous producers, women producers, and young producers.** With the new Biden administration, there is an opportunity to push for real structural reform and changes within the USDA and our next Farm Bill. While the administration has promised to make agriculture a cornerstone of its ambitious climate agenda, they have also pledged to tackle a legacy of discrimination that has driven generations of BIPOC producers from their farms and land, with steps to improve Black and other minority farmers' access to land, loans and other assistance, including "climate smart" production.

A Senate bill, The Justice for Black Farmers Act, sponsored by Democrats Cory Booker, Elizabeth Warren and Kirsten Gillibrand, would permit Black farmers to reclaim as much as 160 acres through federal land grants. The House Agriculture Committee has its first Black chairman, Congressman David Scott of Georgia, who plans to invite Black farmers to give testimony on racial discrimination in federal aid. The Biden administration has appointed Jewel H. Bronaugh, Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, as Mr. Vilsack's deputy. If confirmed,



Dr. Bronaugh would be the first woman of color to serve as USDA Deputy Secretary. Additionally, Deb Haaland, a member of the Laguna Pueblo, is now serving as Secretary of the Interior. And the Biden Administration is expected to advance a flurry of executive actions on climate directing the agency to study ways to encourage “climate-smart” agricultural practices while creating new sources of income for rural Americans.

## **POSSIBLE PARTNERS**

**FORA members should look to continue to build a broad and diverse coalition, with strong BIPOC leadership, that can advocate for and advance racial and economic equity as central pillars to climate, food, and agricultural policy.**

- Native Farm Bill Coalition (now housed at the Intertribal Agriculture Council [IAC])
- Southeastern African American Farmers' Organic Network (SAAFON)
- National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC)
- National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC)
- HEAL Food Alliance
- Socially Responsible Agricultural Project (SRAP)
- The Rural Coalition

# Funding and Support for Strong Coalition Building for the Next Farm Bill

**There are longstanding structures that drive Farm Bill policymaking that do not include grassroots voices or the voices of family farmers and farmers of color.** Multiple financial, technical, and historical barriers keep the Farm Bill from being a truly democratic process.

**Moving forward, we would like to see Farm Bill policymaking at the local, state, and federal levels that is truly grassroots as the result of the broad engagement of new voices** and the empowerment of rural communities and advocates to build power and consensus around policy priorities and demands.

## **KEY PRIORITIES**

- Build and scale a diverse and intersectional coalition of leaders and organizations that will put forward a unified and strong vision and policy recommendations for regenerative agriculture (this will require significant long term funding to groups to support their time and capacity to take this work on long term).
- **Fund an organization or group of organizations to serve as a convener for this coalition** to work towards consensus on a regenerative agriculture platform for the Farm Bill. There needs to be special attention given to consensus building around support for conservation of farmland and farmland access.

## POSSIBLE PARTNERS

- Animal Agriculture Reform Collaborative (AARC)
- Socially Responsible Agriculture Project (SRAP)
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)
- Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF)
- National Resource Defense Council (NRDC)
- The Rural Coalition
- CalCAN
- Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC)
- Land Stewardship Project (LSP)
- Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment
- Intertribal Ag Council (IAC)
- National Family Farm Coalition
- Native Farm Bill Coalition



Photo by Chris on Unsplash

# LONGER TERM AND ONGOING PRIORITIES FOR POLICY WORK

## Funding Staff and Resourcing Existing Organizations Who Are Leading the Way on Policy

**Capacity issues and resource constraints were highlighted by many of the organizations we interviewed** in terms of barriers to advancing regenerative ag policies at the federal level. These types of challenges certainly need addressing in the near-term but funder support for organizations to strengthen capacity and grow influence is critical to long-term success as well. This type of longer-term funding would help further the work of the groups listed here, as well as others.

- CalCAN
- American Farmland Trust (AFT)
- Meridian Institute/AGree Coalition
- Healthy Soils Policy Network
- Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF)
- National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC)
- The Rural Coalition
- Land Core
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)
- State Innovation Exchange (SiX)
- HEAL Food Alliance

- Western Landowners Alliance (WLA)
- Intertribal Ag Council (IAC)
- Land Stewardship Project (LSP)
- Animal Agriculture Reform Collaborative (AARC)
- Socially Responsible Agriculture Project (SRAP)
- Native Farm Bill Coalition
- First Nations Development Institute (FNDI)

## Build Capacity for Progressive State Legislators to Take Seats on Agriculture Committees

**Members of Congress, especially environmentally progressive members, do not seek membership on the Agriculture Committee, as they often can better serve their constituents as a member of a committee that creates environmentally specific legislation.** Most Agriculture Committee members join because of a specific interest in production agriculture or nutrition programs funded by the Farm Bill. This has resulted in the Committee generally being filled with members from the middle of the country, from the most sparsely populated states and districts, and from conservative and corporate friendly backgrounds. Work needs

to be done to attract members from the West, from more diverse districts, and those with more progressive agricultural interests.

We need to support:

1. **Organizations that galvanize and build champions** of regenerative, climate friendly, regional, worker friendly, and healthy food systems.
2. **Organizations that oppose policies that prop up the current system**, including encouraging overproduction, monocultures, and environmentally harmful farming practices, while discouraging regenerative practices, diversity, and conservation.
3. This also means supporting policy development efforts that **identify a third way, or alternative, platform to support and reach rural America, one that is neither reliant on corporate interests or on government subsidies**, which seem to be the two favored alternatives that exist today.

## KEY PRIORITIES

- Build a Soil Health Advisory Council to the Agriculture Committee
- Fund partnerships with organizations working to educate a broader swath of legislators on regen ag, soil health etc. (See Possible Partners)
- Fund Hill briefing series with the Meridian Institute/AGree Coalition, Soil Health Institute, Soil Health Partnership, or others
- Support creation of a Regenerative/Climate Smart Agriculture Week on the hill
- Fund educational tours for policy makers around ag, including support for local organizations to lead
- Support an agriculture focused initiative within the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Congressional Progressive Caucus (through their affiliated 501(c)(3)3 organizations).

## POSSIBLE PARTNERS

- State Innovation Exchange (SiX)
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) and specific NSAC members
- Taxpayers for Common Sense
- Environmental Working Group (EWG)



# Regenerative Agriculture Research and Science Funding

**The revolution in regenerative agriculture cannot occur without reimagining the federal government's investments in agricultural research.** Science is necessary to validate regenerative systems, scale and transfer successful systems to other farms, remove barriers to innovative farmers wanting to change their operations, and develop the data to inform sound policies that can encourage farm resilience and adoption of practices. Science will be particularly critical in providing the actuarial data on regenerative agriculture needed to drive the shifting of crop insurance practices and other lending practices.

**As it is currently practiced, a significant portion of the agricultural science in countries such as the U.S. are influenced, and even funded by, the ag industry, creating significant conflicts of interest and creating incentives for scientists to focus on incremental changes to cure symptoms of a broken system, rather than helping to fundamentally reinvent it.** The research from the institutions and scientists that are leading the way on achieving better ecological, economic, and social outcomes in the agricultural sector is often not making it to farmers, as it is not supported by the industry. The majority of scientists also do not have first-hand experience with farming and assess their worth using metrics that are generally valuable only to themselves, not farmers; as such, agricultural science is disconnected from the people they are trying to help.

**In order for research to be effective, we must link science to practice, ensuring measures are rooted in core science but actionable on the farm** and include an understanding of the wider business impacts of changing management (including cost savings and time requirements). There must be a transition from telling to showing using on-farm research sites, including using farmers in generating solutions. These farm sites can be used to demonstrate efforts to policy makers and consumers. Science and field based projects also need to involve insights from social sciences about how best to engage, involve and encourage behavioral change within farming communities.

## POSSIBLE PARTNERS

- Ecdysis Foundation
- Wolfe's Neck Center For Agriculture and The Environment
- Green Lands, Blue Waters
- Bionutrient Food Association (BFA)
- Regenerative Research Centers at Land Grant Universities
- Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF)

# Leverage Conservation Programs to Advance Regenerative Agriculture

**Existing conservation programs run by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) could serve as a powerful tool to expand the adoption of regenerative practices.** But changes have to be made in both statute (the next Farm Bill) and in USDA's current practice (regulation, guidance, staffing levels and training) to elevate practices that are regenerative within the extensive system that already exists to pay farms and landowners for specific conservation practices.

**For example, the NSAC memo to the Biden transition team lists 10 pages of changes USDA could make to existing conservation programs,** ranging from addressing problems with payment limits (to encourage small farms to participate and prevent abuse by large operations), to making it easier for beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers to participate, to better coordinating with organic certification, to changing what practices receive priority in ranking applications.

**It would take bigger fixes to really re-orient these programs to require more dramatic changes in farming practices,** but there are bills that would change the mandate of various conservation programs (EQIP, CSP, CRP) and explicitly require the USDA to make things like soil health and pastured livestock the priorities of these programs (Rep. Pingree's Agriculture Resilience Act takes this approach, and so does Senator Booker's Climate Stewardship Act).

**As the debate about whether market-based programs like carbon payments for farms are an appropriate or feasible solution for addressing climate change, one approach that has more widespread support is improving existing conservation programs to drive better practices on more land.** Changing the priorities of conservation programs (which affects which practices are eligible for funding) to emphasize practices that benefit the climate could be done through regulation and the next Farm Bill. If more funding is available for these programs through the Farm Bill or other channels, it will be critical to reform the eligibility criteria to ensure that the funding can reach as many farms as possible, and that truly regenerative methods are being prioritized. Especially in the EQIP program and USDA's renewable energy program, criteria about payment limits will need to be revised and practices updated to rule out large, expensive technologies like anaerobic digesters that are most often used by large concentrated animal feedlot (CAFO) livestock operations.

## KEY PRIORITIES

- Build up the capacity of advocacy groups with expertise in conservation to push for changes in USDA NRCS rulemaking and procedures (short-term) and statute (preparation for 2023 Farm Bill cycle) to prioritize regenerative practices throughout various conservation programs (EQIP, CSP, CRP, other initiatives.)
- Advocate for support and training to NRCS agents to understand and support regenerative ag

## POSSIBLE PARTNERS

- Understanding Ag, Ray Archuleta
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)
- American Farmland Trust
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)
- Land Stewardship Project (LSP)
- Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment (CFFE)

## Long Term Support for Crop Insurance and Risk Management Reform

**The Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP) as it exists today discourages farmers from adopting regenerative practices** that would reduce their risk and mitigate climate change while it encourages practices that damage water quality, reduce biodiversity, harm rural communities, and accelerate climate change. The program is not actuarially sound because it does not adequately account for a changing climate and all the externalities associated with the soil, water, ecosystem, and community impacts of our current industrial agriculture system.

The program does not fully recognize the risk reduction benefits of conservation practices. **Lenders and insurers lack effective, actuarially sound models to determine the risk mitigation benefits associated with specific regenerative practices on any given piece of land.** The program also encourages farm consolidation and discourages integrated diverse rotations, and regional food systems. While crop insurance policies are offered for over 100 crops, revenue policies, the gold standard policy that ensures revenue and yield, are only available for a handful of crops. As a result, bankers encourage – if not require – farmers to grow the crops with the best insurance.

Throughout our interviews, stakeholders highlighted that these shortcomings can be addressed through necessary policy changes, while also continuing to provide the critical

risk management tool that crop insurance is supposed to be.

## KEY PRIORITIES

- **Support efforts to improve risk management options** for specialty crops, organics, and smaller scale and diversified operations.
- **Bring the bankers and insurer lobbyists to the table on soil health via the risk approach** (which is non-partisan) to find ways to reduce the impact of crop insurance on consolidation.
- **Support efforts to improve the actuarial soundness of the current crop insurance program** by recognizing the risk reduction benefits of conservation practices.
- **Support efforts to implement policies that ensure the risk of transition to more climate-friendly** farming practices, such as cover crops, spring application, strip till, etc...
- **Support efforts to reform the structural components of subsidized crop insurance** that allow the largest farms to reduce their risk of continuous expansion.

## POSSIBLE PARTNERS

- Land Core
- Meridian Institute/AGree
- Environmental Working Group (EWG)
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)
- Land Stewardship Project (LSP)

# Fellowship to Support Farmers Working Towards Elected Positions

**The U.S. agricultural system has long divided those who work the land and those who can make decisions about the land and their own livelihoods.** Farmers and ranchers, especially young farmers and ranchers, indigenous producers, and farmers and ranchers of color, are critically underrepresented in both state and national policy boards, agricultural advocacy groups, local water districts, conservation districts, and other decision-making bodies. As a result, our policies do not benefit from the knowledge of these farmers and ranchers, and these producers are denied a critical opportunity to help shape their conditions for success.

**Our research highlighted an urgent need to broaden involvement, include more voices, and deepen community level engagement in local, state and national policy** in order to advance the kinds of policies that can support a more regenerative and sustainable organic agriculture system. We see this as a critical opportunity for FORA funders to help build the next generation of food and agricultural policy advocates and legislators, bringing together new voices with legacy organizations, to grow the kinds of support we need from the ground up.



**Several groups are already undertaking efforts in this area.** Launched this year, the California Young Farmer Political Leadership Fellowship aims to support underrepresented young farmers in gaining positions within agricultural governance entities and in leading policy campaigns for farmer viability. Additionally, they are building water fellowships, such as the Colorado Young Farmer Water Fellowship, to provide opportunities for young producers to take a more active role in water planning conversations and policies that will impact agricultural communities for decades. Other groups, such as Practical Farmers of Iowa, are also providing critical support to local producers to get elected on soil and water conservation boards.

## **POSSIBLE PARTNERS**

- National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC)
- Practical Farmers of Iowa
- HEAL Food Alliance
- National Farmers Union Beginning Farmers Institute



Photo by [Eric Ward](#) on [Unsplash](#)

## NEXT STEPS

**While policy may be incremental and slower-paced, when it is implemented, it is sweeping.**

As such, the resounding message from this landscape analysis is that policy work will always be incremental, but our vision must be transformational. Whether the focus is at the national or state level, affecting short-term or long-term policy objectives, or using 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) approaches, our north star must aim to embody the holistic principles that draw us all to supporting regenerative agriculture. Within these approaches, funders have a variety of options for balancing between

pragmatism and vision, and the opportunity to strategize individually and collectively for an integrated strategy. We hope that this analysis and aggregation of learnings clarify these recommendations. We look forward to presenting these to FORA, and determining where we can turn these recommendations into action individually and collectively in aligned partnership.

# APPENDIX

## Interview Questions

- 1. Short-term:** From your perspective, what are some of the most important policy opportunities in the coming 3 years as it relates to regenerative agriculture?
- 2. Long-term:** From your perspective, what are some of the most important policy opportunities to address over the next 10 years as it relates to regenerative agriculture?
- 3. Race & Equity:** How do you feel about existing efforts to incorporate more of a race and equity lens into federal agricultural policy? Are there any particular actions that FORA should consider for advancing more inclusive policy efforts?
- 4. Peers:** Are there any individuals that you see as key advocates in advancing any of these policy opportunities? Or blocking?
- 5. Organizations:** Are there any organizations that you see as key advocates in advancing any of these policy opportunities? Or blocking?
- 6. COVID-19:** What are some of the most notable impacts of COVID-19 on both local and federal ag policy and regulation?

## Regenerative Agriculture Policy Organizations

### CalCAN, California Climate Smart Agriculture Program

**Overview of Organization's Work:** CalCAN is a statewide coalition in California that advances policy to realize the powerful climate solutions offered by sustainable and organic agriculture. California's Healthy Soils Program (HSP), which has served as a model for other states, is only several years old. Since its launch it has been adapted and improved, its funding has quadrupled, and farmer participation and awareness has grown. However, CalCAN is working to ensure it is much more impactful, both in terms of achieving more net GHG reductions and working better for farmers and ranchers. CalCAN also leads the National Healthy Soils Policy Network to advance climate smart agriculture policies in every state.

**Key Policy Focus:** Influencing and advocating for state-level, climate-smart agricultural policies and programs state-wide.

### Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF)

**Overview of Organization's Work:** OFRF aims to foster the improvement and widespread adoption of organic farming systems, cultivating organic research, education and federal policies that bring more farmers and

acreage into organic production. OFRF gathers research and listens to farmers and consumers across the country to determine how to push for necessary and appropriate policy changes. OFRF's research with organic farmers is used to update their National Organic Research Agenda, an influential roadmap that identifies the issues most critical to the success of organic farmers for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other research institutions.

**Key Policy Focus:** Advocating for federal programs and policies that support the unique needs of organic agriculture and working to ensure the voices of organic farmers and ranchers are heard in Washington, DC.

## Meridian Institute/AGree Coalition

**Overview of Organization's Work:** Meridian Institute is working on a tool that will make it efficient for any ag lender to consider soil health in their risk ratings and contribute to a shift in lending practices that favors farmers who use conservation and regenerative practices. The A Gree Coalition, housed at Meridian, is working to make the case for ag lending for regenerative agriculture and preferential lending to regenerative practitioners. Over the past five years, Meridian helped build the evidence-based research alongside Cornell University that showed, using 5 years of field level data in Illinois, how the current crop insurance models are off by up to 200%. Backed by this evidence, they built a coalition to help get specific language in the 2018 Farm Bill that will enable the infrastructure and the research that is needed to change the rating models.

**Key Policy Focus:** Changing the rating models for crop insurance and ag lending to favor more conservation/RA practices.

## National Healthy Soils Policy Network

**Overview of Organization's Work:** The National Healthy Soils Policy Network is building on collective power and policies across 17 key states to not only improve and revamp the current healthy soils programs so that there is an increased adoption by farmers, but also launch at least two regional hubs alongside farmer leaders and technical assistance providers.

**Key Policy Focus:** Prescribed grazing policy and alternative manure management policies at state and national levels, state level healthy soils policy advancement, a green new deal for regenerative agriculture, and developing state level financing mechanisms for RA and soil health beyond cap and trade money.

## The Rural Coalition

**Overview of Organization's Work:** The Rural Coalition amplifies the voices of their 50 grassroots member organizations, representing African American, American Indian, Asian American, Euro-American, Latinx, and women farmers, ranchers, farm workers, and rural communities. The Rural Coalition aims to build an equitable and sustainable food system that is beneficial to people of color, small farmers, rural and tribal communities. To protect the environment and enhance our communities, we fight for legislation that ensures that everyone everywhere is guaranteed healthy food, safe housing and working conditions,



and access to healthcare among other services needed for community well-being.

**Key Policy Focus:** Equity advances in the Farm Bill and amplifying the voices of grassroots and rural communities in policy.

## American Farmland Trust (AFT)

**Overview of Organization's Work:** AFT works to protect farmland, promote environmentally sound farming practices, and keep farmers on the land. AFT is staffed by farmers, policy experts, researchers and scientists. Its headquarters are in Washington, DC, and it has regional offices throughout the country. AFT also runs the Farmland Information Center, an online collection of information on farmland and rangeland protection and stewardship established as a public-private partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. AFT has helped shape U.S. farm bills since the 1980s. AFT published the policy document, "Soil Conservation in America: What Do We Have to Lose?" in 1984 and was a member of the conservation coalition that played a significant role in the development of the Food Security Act of 1985, which established the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). AFT's work as a proponent of the expansion of government-funded agriculture programs led to the passing of the 2002 Farm Bill and the authorization of the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (succeeded by the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program, or ACEP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), among others. AFT advocated to increase funding for the ACEP by supporting the passing of the

Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, which would increase the program's funding by \$2 billion over the span of 10 years.

**Key Policy Focus:** Expansion and improvement of federally funded agriculture programs, through coalition building and collaborative research, as well as farmland protection.

## National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC)

**Overview of Organization's Work:** NYFC is a national advocacy network of young farmers fighting for the future of agriculture. Since its inception in 2010, Young Farmers has built a network of more than 140,000 young farmers and their supporters working together for change. They tackle the most critical structural and economic barriers that prevent motivated young people from starting and continuing to farm, with the goal of helping 25,000 young people enter into viable farming careers by 2022.

**Key Policy Focus:** Land access especially for young farmers and BIPOC farmers, incorporating regenerative agriculture into any new climate deal, advancing young and new farmer funding and supportive policies, developing fellowships for young farmers to run for local and state offices

## Land Core

**Overview of Organization's Work:** Land Core is working to advance soil health policies and programs that create value for farmers, businesses and communities. They advocate for practical, "big-tent" federal policy solutions that bring diverse groups together under the banner

of soil health to make our public infrastructure work for us. Land Core also works to develop the missing infrastructure and incentives that can scale the adoption of regenerative practices, including through their current work building a predictive model of risk mitigation as a tool for agricultural lenders and insurers.

**Key Policy Focus:** Providing detailed advice to the Biden-Harris administration, Members of Congress, USDA and stakeholders about federal soil health legislation and public infrastructure; incorporating soil health into infrastructure, stimulus, and/or green jobs bills; creating new incentives for producers, particularly through reforms to agricultural lending, crop insurance, and tax credits.

## National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)

**Overview of Organization's Work:** NSAC is a leading force for agricultural policy reform in the United States. It supports advocacy by farmers and rural stakeholders in opposition to harmful subsidies and in support of healthy soils, a just and healthy food system, and soil carbon sequestration. This group has prioritized the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the Grasslands Initiative—all key tools that should be leveraged to support sustainable land management strategies.

**Key Policy Focus:** Holding the administration accountable to conservation stewardship plans and revising crop insurance to support more sustainable ag practices – with a focus on Farm Bill 2028 in recognition that the work we do

now will be seen mostly in that bill two cycles from now.

## State Innovation Exchange (SiX)

**Overview of Organization's Work:** SiX is a national resource and strategy center that collaborates with state legislators to improve people's lives through transformative public policy. In 2020, SiX is launched the Rural, Food & Agriculture Legislative Cohort (RFLAC) for progressive state legislators who have an interest in issues including healthy rural economic development, local food economies, food sovereignty, and regenerative agriculture and helping them develop policies that support regenerative agriculture adoption.

**Key Policy Focus:** Education of policy makers at both state and national level on food and ag issues and understanding regenerative agriculture, building a Soil Health Advisory Council on the Ag Committee in Congress, and building Black and Indigenous caucuses of legislators focused on agriculture.

## HEAL Food Alliance

**Overview of Organization's Work:** HEAL serves as a platform to build collective power that advocates for a fair food system. Led by member organizations, HEAL amplifies the experiences of frontline communities who are affected by the current system. To achieve a vision of transformative change, the organization's programs focus on three areas: growing community power, developing political leadership, and exposing harmful policies and power structures.

**Key Policy Focus:** Among these programs, HEAL launched a School of Political Leadership to connect activists, farmers, educators, and organizers to build solidarity in community resistance to policies favoring large-scale agriculture. Additionally, HEAL's Good Food Purchasing Program encourages transparency in the public food procurement process, providing governments a framework for choosing healthy foods produced sustainably and ethically.

## Western Landowners Alliance (WLA)

**Overview of Organization's Work:** WLA was founded by western landowners to advance policies and practices that sustain working lands, connected landscapes and native species. They provide a direct voice for landowners on policy matters, share information among peers across their network, and champion the stories of working land stewardship.

**Key Policy Focus:** Advocating for advancement of BLM and Forest Service management policies to support working landscapes and grazers, policies that reward and incentivize land stewardship and good practices (ecosystem services), regionally specific grazing and other natural resource management policies for the western rancher.

## Intertribal Ag Council (IAC)

**Overview of Organization's Work:** IAC is one of the most respected voices within the Indian community and government circles on agricultural policies and programs in Indian country. They recently launched a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI),

the Akiptan Fund, focused on providing investments that support the wealth building and leadership of Indian producers and are now also home to the Native Farm Bill Coalition.

**Key Policy Focus:** Advocating for improved and increased financing mechanisms at national government and local levels that support multi-generational mortgages for multi-generational farming, specifically funding for Indigenous producers that require larger capital for large landscapes and for young producers.

## Land Stewardship Project (LSP)

**Overview of Organization's Work:** LSP is dedicated to creating transformational change in our food and farming system. LSP's work has a broad and deep impact, from new farmer training and local organizing, to federal policy and community based food systems development. Organizing from the grassroots level to the halls of Congress since 1995, LSP has played a national role in winning important policy changes like the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP).

**Key Policy Focus:** Focused on both national and state level policy change. At the national level, LSP has led on major pieces of policy, including a strong focus on the Farm Beginnings Program. At the state level, policy assistance is core to LSP's work, focusing primarily on Minnesota state policies for water regulation, cover cropping, environmentally sensitive and marginal lands, managed grazing, etc. LSP has critical relationships with policy makers both at state level and nationally.

## **Animal Agriculture Reform Collaborative (AARC)**

**Overview of Organization's Work:** AARC is a movement alignment hub facilitating bold collaborative action to accelerate a shift towards a regenerative, high-welfare, pasture-based animal agriculture system.

**Key Policy Focus:** As a movement alignment hub, AARC brings together leaders from across the movement to build power to shift policies and practices that have fueled corporate control of the animal ag system and shift the dominant narratives. Members of AARC work on joint campaigns to pursue structural wins and advocate for moratoriums on factory farms.

## **Socially Responsible Agriculture Project (SRAP)**

**Overview of Organization's Work:** SRAP informs and educates the general public about the negative effects of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs)—also known as factory farms—while working directly with U.S. communities impacted by this destructive form of industrial animal agriculture. Through public education, issue advocacy, and local community organizing, SRAP empowers rural residents to protect their public health, environmental quality, natural resources and local economies from the damaging impacts of factory farms.

**Key Policy Focus:** SRAP's model aims to empower rural residents with the knowledge and tools to protect themselves and hold polluters accountable, and use local-level engagement as a means of building state

and national coalitions to support agricultural policy that safeguards the environment and public health.

## **National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC)**

**Overview of Organization's Work:** NFFC works on Capital Hill and around local communities, with members representing farmers, ranchers, and fishers, to build movements and broad-based campaigns that challenge the inequities in our food and farm system. The work focuses on four strategies: changing federal legislation, building coalitions, collaborating with international networks, and leading advocacy campaigns.

**Key Policy Focus:** Some of the policy focus areas of the coalition include fair prices for farmers, ending corporate control of the food system, ensuring the right to food sovereignty, and supporting farmers transitioning to regenerative and conservation practices.

## **Indigenous Food & Agriculture Initiative (IFAI)**

**Overview of Organization's Work:** IFAI focuses on putting tribal sovereignty in food sovereignty by promoting tribally driven solutions to revitalize and advance traditional food systems and diversified economic development throughout Indian Country. IFAI provides Tribal governments, producers, and food businesses with educational resources, policy research, and strategic legal analysis as a foundation for building robust food economies.

**Key Policy Focus:** Integrating tribal food



sovereignty into policy approaches. Their central work is through the Native Farm Bill Coalition, a groundbreaking umbrella organization, formed to advocate for Native American interests in the Farm Bill. The Coalition is an outgrowth of the *Regaining Our Future* report, which assessed the risks to and opportunities for Native communities in the next Farm Bill.

## First Nations Development Institute (FNDI)

**Overview of Organization's Work:** FNDI improves economic conditions for Native Americans through direct financial grants, technical assistance & training, and advocacy & policy.

**Key Policy Focus:** As a re-grantor, in the realm of policy FNDI primarily supports increasing organizational capacity within grantee partners working in policy as it relates to Tribal communities.

# Regenerative Agriculture Research Organizations

## Ecdysis Foundation

**Overview of Organization's Work:** Ecdysis Foundation, led by former USDA scientist Jonathan Lundgren, is a national hub of research ranches and farms that serve to advance the science and educational support for regenerative agriculture practices. They are producing farmer-driven science that can be translated, across multiple systems and regions,

for practical use by producers and to guide and inform other key stakeholders in regenerative agriculture. They are currently scaling their work to build out regenerative agricultural hubs in key ecosystems across the U.S., including the Northern Plains, Intermountain West, California, and the Midwest. Within these hubs, they are performing critical regional research and experimentation on practices and tools and translating this research into on farm implementation, as well as disseminating this data and providing training to RCD's, NRCS agents, and key community level NGOs.

## Wolfe's Neck Center For Agriculture and The Environment

**Overview of Organization's Work:** The Center works with community organizations to improve soil health through research and regenerative farming. With the help of \$10 million in grants, Wolfe's Neck Center is leading a worldwide initiative to improve soil and slow climate change. Called the "Open Technology Ecosystem for Agriculture Management", or OpenTEAM, this work is a collaborative network led by Wolfe's Neck that includes The Soil Health Partnership, General Mills, Purdue University Open Technology and Systems Center, and Michigan State University Global Change Learning Lab, among others.

## Green Lands, Blue Waters

**Overview of Organization's Work:** Green Lands Blue Waters is a collaboration between Midwest land grants and nonprofits to implement cropping systems that provide Continuous Living Cover. They are conducting

essential research, improving the genetics of old and new crops, translating knowledge into Continuous Living Cover farming systems, developing new extension and outreach capacity, working in farm fields, shaping policy, building profitable markets for new crops, and changing the narrative around what's possible through agriculture. They just received a \$10 million NIFA grant to advance Kernza.

## **Bionutrient Food Association (BFA)**

**Overview of Organization's Work:** The Bionutrient Food Association, which founded the Real Food Campaign, was established in 2010 with a mission to increase quality in the food supply. Today, the Bionutrient Food Association is the preeminent organization working globally to bring forward the importance of focusing on nutrient density in our agricultural systems. Bringing forward empirical definitions of nutrient density and through developing a Bionutrient Meter for consumers, the BFA is poised for a much larger role in the food system. In 2020, they announced the expansion of their nutrient density in food research study. Through a partnership with Pipeline Foods, the RFC is adding grains to its survey of nutrition in the food supply. The research will evaluate the connection between the health of the soil in which crops are grown and the resulting levels of nutritional quality, or nutrient density, in the final products at harvest. In addition, the study will examine the connection of carbon sequestration in the soil from the atmosphere.

## **Regenerative Research Centers at Land Grant Universities**

Many university researchers recognize that the existing land grant structure and funding mechanisms have not worked well for advancing regenerative agriculture research. Several centers have been created to carve out a niche for this research, including

- [The University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative](#)
- [Iowa State University's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture](#)
- [Colorado State's Soil Carbon Solution Center](#),
- [Ohio State's Rattan Lal Center for Carbon Management and Sequestration](#)
- [Center for Regenerative Agriculture and Resilient Systems](#)
- [California State University at Chico](#)

These centers become more effective and gain more stature within the agricultural colleges when they are able to attract outside funding, and ideally become a vehicle for slowly shifting land grant research toward more regenerative practices.

# FUNDERS FOR REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

## Policy Working Group

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