

**REGENERATIVE
AGRICULTURE**
AND FOOD SYSTEMS SERIES



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Research**

HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE?

In order for regenerative agriculture to deliver on the promise of having positive planetary impact – in terms of reversing climate change and biodiversity loss, and rebuilding our soils, we need it to be replicated at scale. I believe we should shift our focus beyond creating differentiated regenerative brands and products, to also find ways to rise the tide to lift all products. We need regeneratively produced ingredients to enter every supply chain to ensure a future where regenerative agriculture becomes the new conventional agriculture. We need a smarter, lower input, way for people in vibrant communities to grow nutritious and – let us not forget – delicious food, in harmony with nature.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST THREAT TO THE TRANSITION?

The biggest threat to this movement is for the food industry, investors and government to approach scaling regenerative agriculture as something to be “done to farmers”, for the purpose of achieving narrowly defined corporate carbon commitments. Farmers are critical to ensure the success of regenerative agriculture and they need more than a “seat at the table”.

FARMERS NEED TO LEAD THE TRANSITION TO ENSURE IT IS DESIGNED WITH PURPOSE TO WORK FOR FARMERS, NOT JUST FOR CORPORATE REPORTING.

Of course, not all farmers are the same, their pressures and motivations differ immensely. Not understanding the context and ‘personas’ of the farmers you work with is therefore another big threat to the success of transition programmes. To ensure that farms cycle carbon, restore biodiversity, and improve water holding capacity while



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producing healthy food we must reward these regenerative outcomes.

We need to find ways to support farmers through incentivisation schemes that truly reward regenerative outcomes.

DOES REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE NEED CERTIFICATION?

I don't think so. I cannot think of an example where a certification scheme successfully replaced the status quo as the dominant form of production. Instead, certifications tend to remain niche.

To prevent this from happening to regen ag we need a different playbook to the standard higher attribute theory of change over the last 30 years. If regenerative agriculture in 30 years has the status that ‘certified organic’ has today, our movement will have failed.

This is not to say we don't need robust evidence of regeneration taking place, or that certifications and assurance programmes don't have a role to play. We tend to advocate for certifying a process because it's easier than verifying impact.

However, technology can change this in a way that allows for faster scaling. Instead of certification of a fixed set of standards associated with a particular marketing scheme,

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE SHOULD BE PROMOTED AS A MINDSET THAT ALL FARMERS WILL BENEFIT FROM PURSUING.

The way we will know it takes place is by measuring and documenting how a farm's natural resources are renewed through the process of using them: most notably soil.

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO COMPANIES THAT ARE STARTING ON THE REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE JOURNEY?

We need to act urgently, but we don't have time to rush into regenerative agriculture. Rushing means skipping details. Urgency means paying the right details the respect they deserve, without delay. My advice to companies is to:

START YOUR JOURNEY BY LISTENING, DISCOVERING AND LEARNING.

This includes understanding the indigenous origins of regenerative thinking, listen to and meet the people already doing it, see and experience the impacts they are having, and learn how they got there. Investing upfront in getting your team on the same page will pay off in the long run.

At FAI, we offer corporate cohorts a training package in the Foundations of regenerative agriculture. Pursuing regenerative change requires changes within companies' cultures, processes and procedures as much as it does from the farmers you buy from. Realizing this, breaking down departmental

silos and working together as one team, is critical to ensure a fast and successful transition.

HOW COULD REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE BE MORE WIDESPREAD IN THE FARMING INDUSTRY?

We need to connect farmers with each other and elevate as many farmer transition stories as possible to better illustrate the benefits of regenerative agriculture.

FARMERS' DIFFERENT STARTING POINT AND MOTIVATIONS MEANS DIFFERENT STORIES RESONATE WITH DIFFERENT FARMERS.

The same is true for politicians, investors and company executives - all with a role to play in spreading regenerative agriculture. Some are looking to be inspired by radical changes made by a farmer they can relate to; others need to hear stories that bring their defenses down and addresses their skepticism.

Through our Regen Dairy project, we searched the globe for a variety of regenerative transition stories, and we found some fantastic farmers. This is just the beginning, we need to hear so many more stories to make regenerative agriculture the easy choice for farmers, finance, corporates and policymakers.



WHICH PARTNERSHIPS, TECHNOLOGIES AND INVESTMENTS ARE NEEDED TO FUND AND SCALE HOLISTIC REGENERATIVE PRACTICES EFFECTIVELY?

To make regenerative agriculture the new conventional we need to make it easy and profitable for farmers to get involved, and easy for large supply chains to start buying from regenerative farmers and those in the process of transitioning. The key to achieving this I believe are partnerships, technologies and investments focused on the following three areas:

1. MINDSET SHIFT

We need context specific training and stories in local languages, and peer to peer collaborative learning communities.

2. IMPACT MEASUREMENT

We need a portfolio of technologies that gets us to the 'sweet spot' between affordability and accuracy of documenting impact, especially when it comes to soil health and sequestration.

3. TRACEABILITY

We need meaningful, practical and robust technologies that connect impact on the ground locally with the products sold globally.

IS CORPORATE TRANSPARENCY IMPORTANT IN BUILDING TRUST IN REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE PRACTICES?

Corporate transparency is important for all trust building exercises, including regenerative agriculture. To prevent the much-discussed greenwashing of regenerative agriculture, perhaps we need to put a break on the communications and marketing departments'

eagerness to proclaim a product or company "regenerative." Instead, we must engage business teams including range, supply chain, legal, procurement and C-suite in the demanding work of facilitating a whole-sale transition toward regenerative supply networks.

TO BUILD TRUST IN THIS PROCESS WE NEED TRANSPARENCY AND HUMBLNESS ABOUT WHAT WE MEASURE, HOW WE DO IT, AND WHAT IMPACT WE ARE HAVING.

ABOUT FAI FARMS

FAI's vision is to create positive food systems for people, animals and the planet. For over 20 years we have partnered with some of the most iconic food brands and organisations. Together we have delivered award-winning programmes and results.

Humanity is facing the twin-crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. Food production takes up almost half of the planet's land surface and has impacted every ocean fishery. This affects everyone, but as an industry we have a responsibility and unique opportunity to act.

We are farmers, scientists and consultants. We understand the challenges and the power of cooperation to solve them. Our impacts are well evidenced, and benefit the welfare and health of animals, the environment, business and community.

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**REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE &
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