



EMBARGOED TO 27 MAY 2020

Growing our Future

From extractive to regenerative: new roadmap reveals potential to transform the US agriculture system and strengthen food supply chain resilience

00:01 EST, New York, 27 May 2020 – Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 crisis, a new report from international sustainability non-profit Forum for the Future highlights the critical role of regenerative agricultural practices in delivering future food system resilience.

Growing Our Future synthesizes wide-ranging insights gathered through a collaborative inquiry that brought together more than 60 major organizations across the food system, to explore the future of regenerative agricultural systems. Their discussions highlighted a number of systemic barriers to change, and resulted in **a seven-point-roadmap** to overcome them.

The report comes as the food system continues to face severe disruption from the COVID-19 crisis, which has dramatically exposed the challenges faced by current agriculture systems and a pressing need to strengthen supply chain resilience.

Our agriculture system is at the heart of major global challenges such as climate change, food security and nutrition, water and soil quality, biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods. Indeed, the US is estimated to lose approximately 996 million metric tons of soil through erosion each year, while the societal and environmental costs of mainstream agriculture amount to \$85 billion.¹ Agriculture systems account for 8-10% of US greenhouse gas emissions, while climate change could reduce the yield and protein value for staple crops². Conventional farming is often financially unsustainable too - farmers filing for bankruptcy rose by 20% in 2019, the highest level in a decade³.

Business as usual is no longer an option and while regenerative practices have the potential to deliver wide-ranging benefits – including the restoration of soil health, water quality and biodiversity; localized and diversified production systems; and equitable distribution of value and of risk throughout the supply chain – progress is fragmented.

Growing Our Future reveals a **seven-point-roadmap** of key actions needed to unlock change across the food system – involving not just farmers and agribusinesses, but shining a light on the role of investors and financial services, research institutions, philanthropists, policy makers and non-profits in working together to accelerate the transformation:

1. Create financial mechanisms and market structures that support regenerative outcomes
2. Empower farmers to build coalitions at the grassroots level

¹ The Nature Conservancy (2019). reThink Soil: A Roadmap for U.S. Soil Health.

² United States Environmental Protection Agency (2019) Greenhouse Gas Emissions. <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

³ The Farm Bureau (2020). The Verdict is In: Farm Bankruptcies up in 2019. <https://www.fb.org/market-intel/the-verdict-is-in-farmbankruptcies-up-in-2019>



3. Shape policy to build a resilient agricultural economy
4. Demonstrate the business case for regenerative practices
5. Engage with consumers to increase demand for regenerative products
6. Prioritize nutritional benefits to enable healthy diets
7. Mobilize landowners to enable regenerative practices to mainstream.

The research revealed that the US food system faces deep and entrenched barriers to change. These include: finance, public health and agricultural policy systems that are siloed and do not reward the value farmers deliver through land stewardship – including carbon sequestration, ecosystem services and access to quality nutrition; mainstream supply chains that often cannot support access to markets for the diverse products from regenerative systems; and disconnection between consumers and the origins of their food.

“Regenerative agriculture has the potential to create more resilient supply chains, restore soil health and enable farmers and businesses to thrive in an increasingly turbulent world. Regenerative practice allows actors across the current food system to use their skills, assets and determination to drive a much-needed transformation. Today, the food system is geared towards efficiency and profit maximisation for a few. What we must create is one capable of putting more back into society and the environment than it takes out, while providing safe, affordable and nutritious food for all,” said **Lesley Mitchell, Associate Director - Sustainable Nutrition, Forum for the Future.**

“COVID-19 has shown just how interconnected the key systems we rely on are and is exposing the vulnerabilities in our food supply chain. By scaling the amazing regenerative practices already out there, we can have a huge impact on the major global challenges we face, but the question is how. Forum’s Growing Our Future report aims to help with that.”

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For more information, interviews or comment, please email Ulrike Stein:
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NOTES TO EDITORS

About the *Growing Our Future* report

The report was written by Forum for the Future’s team of sustainable food experts, with funding from the Walmart Foundation. It draws on extensive desktop analysis, stakeholder interviews and workshops with actors from across the US agriculture system – all carried out over a six-month period from November 2019. Read the report here: <https://www.forumforthefuture.org/scaling-regenerative-agriculture-in-the-us>

The 16 barriers to scaling regenerative agriculture:

- Low consumer demand for regenerative products
- Regenerative agriculture adding complexity to current ways of working
- Higher yields and increased efficiency remaining the default measure of success
- Finance, public health and agriculture systems operating in silos
- Regenerative agriculture going against many cultural and community norms
- Current policy and regulatory frameworks are not supportive of regenerative agriculture
- Transparency of information available throughout the supply chain is insufficient



- Use of metrics and data to measure impact are inconsistent
- Lack of long-term land tenure and supportive landowners
- Supply chain infrastructure has been built around intensive specialized systems
- Market incentives, pricing and economics do not support grower and farmworker livelihoods
- The agricultural research agenda is not driven by farmer needs
- The regenerative agriculture sector is fragmented without a shared vision or narrative
- Farmers are not financially rewarded for the additional value they deliver to society
- Farmers struggle to access funding to support the transition to regenerative agriculture
- Farmers need more reliable, trustworthy information on regenerative agriculture

About Forum for the Future

Forum for the Future is a leading international sustainability non-profit with offices in London, New York, Singapore and Mumbai. We specialise in addressing critical global challenges by catalysing change in key systems.

For over 20 years, we've been working in partnership with business, governments and civil society to accelerate the shift toward a sustainable future. Together we are reinventing the way the world works.

Find out more at www.forumforthefuture.org or by following [@Forum4theFuture](https://twitter.com/Forum4theFuture) on Twitter.

What is sustainability?

Forum for the Future's definition of sustainability is:

"Sustainability is a dynamic process which enables all people to realise their potential and to improve their quality of life in ways that simultaneously protect and enhance the Earth's life support system."