



# **SOIL & CLIMATE ALLIANCE**

Meeting Report | November 15, 2023 | Virtual

**Regenerating Soil**  
**Restoring the Climate**  
**Revitalizing Farm Economics**



# Save the Date!

*In-Person & On-Farm  
Summer Network Meeting*

**June 11-13, 2024**  
**MINNEAPOLIS, MN**



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# MEETING MATERIALS

- [Agenda](#)
- [Participant Map](#)
- [Participant Bios](#)
- [Meeting Website](#)
- [Take Action! Sign up Here](#)
- [Post-Meeting Survey](#)

*Live links to recordings and additional materials are linked throughout the report and you can also find them on the meeting website. Many members tell us they bookmark the Soil & Climate Alliance meeting websites to make it easy to refer to the materials.*

**Confidentiality:** *You are most welcome to share recordings with people in your organization – farm or company. Please do not share or publish them publicly.*

**Take full advantage of these materials – reach out to members, share the recordings with people in your organization, take the post-meeting survey if you haven't already, use the Take Action! link if you'd like to join one of the SCA working groups and bookmark the meeting website.**

# MEETING SPEAKERS



[Kayalin Akens-Irby](#)  
PLANET FWD



[Erica Campbell](#)  
KISS THE GROUND



[Hans Eisenbeis](#)  
THE NON-GMO PROJECT



[Cynthia Ellis Topsey](#)  
GARIFUNA NATION



[Maddie Hamann](#)  
PACHA



[Kiira Heymann](#)  
THE NON-GMO PROJECT



[Kristy Lewis](#)  
QUINN SNACKS



[Greg Lickteig](#)  
OMAHA GRAIN EXCHANGE



[Renee Nickelson](#)  
PLANT BASED FOODS  
ASSOCIATION



[Courtney Pineau](#)  
CLIMATE COLLABORATIVE



[Raiza Rezende](#)  
COALITION OF HEALTH  
PROFESSIONALS FOR  
REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE



[Ken Roseboro](#)  
ORGANIC AND NON-GMO  
REPORT



[Ladd Wahlen](#)  
ROOTS CHIPS LLC



[Tim Webster](#)  
FARMER DIRECT FOODS



[Tim Wise](#)  
INSTITUTE FOR  
AGRICULTURE & TRADE  
POLICY





**Soil &  
Climate  
Alliance**

## **MISSION**

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*Accelerate the transition to a resilient, equitable, and inclusive agriculture system that regenerates soil health, sequesters carbon, and revitalizes farm and rural economics, while improving water quality, biodiversity, food security, and nutrition.*



# SOIL & CLIMATE ALLIANCE GOAL & METRICS

By 2030, 90% of all agricultural acres in North America are on the pathway to regenerative, biologically-based, multi-practice management systems and meet robust soil-carbon outcomes, engaging all supply chain actors to ensure full support for farmers.

## Beginning

30% beginning the journey with:

- Multi-year farm plan created, including multiple regenerative practices and continuous improvement
- Baseline soil health metrics completed, using verified soil health tests including soil health, carbon drawdown, biodiversity, water, reduced inputs

## Progressing

30% achieving verified initial improvements including:

- Verification of 2-4 layered regenerative practices
- Demonstrated multi-year (3+) improvements over baseline using verified tests/standards
- Farm plan for continuous improvement

## Leading

30% excelling achieving significant improvements building on:

- Verification of 4+ layered regenerative management systems
- Demonstrated significant multi-year (5+) improvements over baseline using verified tests/standards
- Farm plan for continuous improvement

# A NETWORK OF LEADERS







# DESIGN TEAM

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## Role of Design Team

- Guidance on network meeting design & initiatives
- Technical support in respective spaces
- Guidance on developments in ag/food sector
- Connections to innovators
- Leaders who can engage others in the collective work

## Design Team

Drew Afton – Nestle

Alisa Gravitz – Green America

Tim Greiner – Pure Strategies

Carl Jorgensen – Plant Based Foods Assn.

Melissa Larsen – RealTime Solutions

Sara Newmark – True Grace Nutrition

Thea O’Carroll – Yield Organic

Cheryl Pinto – Ben & Jerry’s

Ken Roseboro – Organic & Non-GMO Report

Audrey Tran Lam – U of Northern Iowa



*“We must come together in love; to take care of the Earth and each other”*

**Opening Reflection:** Cynthia Ellis Topsey, Founder & Director, Godsman Ellis Garifuna Cultural Center, Ambassador at Large Garifuna Nation.





**Alisa Gravitz**  
Green America



**Kayalin Akens-Irby**  
Planet FWD



**Kristy Lewis**  
Quinn Snacks



**Tim Webster**  
Farmer Direct Foods



# C-SUITE PANEL: Integrating Climate and Soil Health into Company Initiatives

## HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS

### Kayalin Akens-Irby

- PlanetFWD is a software company with a mission to decarbonize the food system emissions. In early 2023, they sold Moon Shot Snacks (a climate friendly snack) to Patagonia Provisions to allow them to fully focus on food system decarbonization.
- They can track carbon at corporate and product level, and model the climate benefits of changing sourcing or processes
- As they are required to measure scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions, large companies will become more interested in regen ag. Manufacturers will be motivated to switch to regenerative inputs, and retailers will be motivated to stock shelves with regenerative products.
- Partnerships and collaboration are critical for driving change. For example, Unilever and Walmart's collaboration allows the companies to share risks and benefits, and provides farmers proper compensated because they have a market for soy and the rotational crops.

### Kristy Lewis:

- Quinn Snacks is a snack food company with a mission to build healthy soil to create nutrient dense foods.
- Regen is still in an early stage. At this moment in time, consumers understand "healthy food" (nutrient density, reduced pesticides) and climate, but not "regenerative".
- Quinn is launching a program to baseline chemical use and track / report progress.
- Building a regenerative supply chain is very difficult, particularly as a small-scale manufacturer. It takes time and bandwidth to align growers, millers, CPG, retailers.
- Would like to see more large companies collaborating with small companies to develop regenerative supply chains.

### Tim Webster:

- Farmer Direct Foods (FDF) began 30 years ago as a farmer's marketing coop (American White Wheat Association), and has been regenerative from the start. In the past year, new ownership launched the FDF to market identity-traced, regeneratively grown artisan quality flour. "The future of farming is regenerative; the future of flour is Farmer Direct Foods"
- For generations, their growers have cared for the soil. Today, FDF rewards growers with a higher price point and profit-sharing opportunities for regenerative practices.
- FDF seeks to produce flour that is better for consumers, growers, and the earth. FDF's focus on soil health and water conservation involves implementing foundational techniques like dry farming, minimizing irrigation and external water sources, alongside low/no tilling practices to reduce erosion, capture carbon, and preserve organics in the soil.
- It is unclear how to communicate their value to consumers, who value the pillars, but don't understand the term "regenerative."
- Charles Rice at K-State is researching wheat root structure and optimal wheat agronomic practices, including rotations.





*“When manufacturers go out to work with growers, they form relationships and partnerships with growers, and communicate their stories externally.”*

**Kristy Lewis**

*Regenerative agriculture is a mission driven model. It leads to a greater well-being for farmers, and engages the next generation of growers”*

**Tim Webster**

*“Large companies have a lot to learn from small companies. Small companies can take risks that large ones cannot, and large companies can create partnerships with small companies for learning and pilots.”*

**Kayalin Akens- Irby**

**C-Suite Panel: Integrating Climate and Soil Health into Company Initiatives**

# FIELD & MARKET INTELLIGENCE

## Highlights from the Updates of Members Across the Supply Chain

### FARMER & FARMER SUPPORT



#### Ladd Wahlen, Co-Owner, [Roots Chips LLC](#)

- Through a college research project, Ladd realized that radishes emit a chemical that mimics the chemical fumigation in potato crops and could lead to the ability to eliminate chemical fumigation in potato crops.
- Runs a regenerative research potato farm in partnership with The Nature Conservancy
- Regen potatoes deliver significant improvements over conventional across all pillars (soil disturbance, roots in ground, soil armor, biodiversity, chemical use, and livestock integration).
- Hoping to be first potato chip that is verified regenerative through the Soil Carbon Initiative.



# FIELD & MARKET INTELLIGENCE

## Highlights from the Updates of Members Across the Supply Chain

### INDUSTRY SUPPORT



**Kiira Heymann, Senior Manager, Strategic Partnerships, [The Non-GMO Project](#)**

- Consumer data shows Non-GMO and Organic have highest consumer recognition.
- New initiatives this year: 1) [Grants to BIPOC led brands](#) who need financial support for verification costs; 2) Quarterly group ZOOM on risks of new GMOs / new technologies; 3) launching new program this winter to look beyond the Non-GMO standard, with a focus on improve the health of food and land.



**Renee Nickelson, Policy Associate, [Plant Based Foods Association \(PBFA\)](#)**

- Working to ensure that the Plant Based food industry evolves regeneratively.
- In partnership with the Soil and Climate Alliance, PBFA is in the process of creating a Sustainable Sourcing Community of Practice to develop knowledge and tools to fulfil the promise of plant-based eating for people, planet and animals.



**Maddie Hamann, Director of Marketing and Co-Founder, [PACHA](#)**

- PACHA produces organic gluten free Buckwheat bread, recently launched nationally in Whole Foods.
- Working with the Soil Carbon Initiative (SCI) and John Strohfus, farmer, has helped them contract 1000 acres of regen buckwheat from 5 farms in MN and the Dakotas.
- Buckwheat plays a key role in regenerative ag as a good rotational crop.
- Hope to be one of first brands verified regenerative by SCI (on pack in early 2024).
- Seeking to understand the nutrient density of regen buckwheat, and how to communicate the values of regen to consumers.

# FIELD & MARKET INTELLIGENCE

## Highlights from the Updates of Members Across the Supply Chain

### SYSTEM SUPPORT



#### **Courtney Pineau, Executive Director, [Climate Collaborative](#)**

- Climate Collaborative generates climate action in all areas of grocery through precompetitive collaboration.
- Launching Organic & Regen Transition Community of Practice at end of November.
- Launched the climate action connector that allows companies to connect to tools, resources and precompetitive partners for climate action.
- Their Regen Ag CertScape report provides information on Regen Ag Certifications.



#### **Raiza Rezende, Co-Founder, [Coalition of Health Professionals for Regenerative Agriculture](#)**

- CHPRA promotes the connection between soil health and human health.
- Created a Manifesto to unite all stakeholders and demand action across the healthcare and food industry to solve the four interconnected crises: Soil, Healthcare, Food System, Nutrient Density.
- Manifesto declares that nutrient dense food is basic right; calls on Medical Schools to teach the connection between soil and human health.



#### **Erica Campbell, Policy Director, [Kiss the Ground](#)**

- Regenerate America is focused on protecting gains made in 2023, including: Utilize IRA Conservation Funding to Rebuild Soil, Conservation Education & Resources to Support a Transition, Research Improvements to Prioritize Soil Health, Credit Reform to Protect & Support Borrowers in Adopting Soil Health Practices, Advance Regional Infrastructure and Processing, and Markets, and Common Sense Crop Insurance
- With the current Farm Bill extended to Sept 30, 2024 we have additional time to engage with Members on current marker bills, and build consensus on key pieces of legislation.



# Soil & Climate Alliance Initiatives: Fall 2023 Updates



[Full Presentation](#)

**Soil Carbon Initiative • Nutrient Density • Kansas Wheat**

## SOIL & CLIMATE ALLIANCE: MAJOR INITIATIVES UPDATE



*And Featuring our newest initiative launched at our June 2023 meeting:*

**Kansas Regenerative Wheat!**





## SOIL CARBON INITIATIVE - PROVEN MODEL



**“The most supportive soil health program that I’ve ever seen! Soil Carbon Initiative helps take the risk out of trying new things.”**  
*- Steve Tucker, Tucker Farms, Nebraska*

 **150,000+ ACRES COMMITTED**  
*...and counting!*

 SOIL  
CARBON  
INITIATIVE

### Farmer Impacts:

- Supports transition to regenerative agriculture
- Provides independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party verification & label
- Across 22 states, diverse crops
- >\$500,000 USD paid to farmers
- >300 hours of agricultural consulting
- Special programs with farmer co-ops in communities of color, including market access

### Company / Consumer Impacts:

- Consumer education: soil, nutrition, climate
- Supply chain development for 5 major crops
- 1st SCI-verified products in market in Q1 2024!

### International Expansion:

- Bahamas, Liberia, India, Ecuador & Guatemala
- Interest from farmer co-ops around the world for verification to access to regenerative markets



# Soil Carbon Initiative: Farmer Reports from the Field on how SCI is Moving the Needle

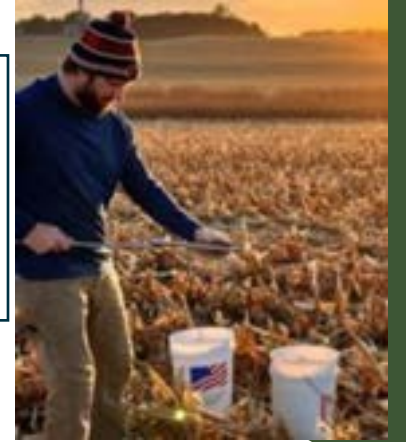


**Breaking it down to the field level reduces risk and allows for trial and iteration**

Curtis Sayles & Pat Einspahr, Seibert, CO

**Informing management decisions**

Graham Christensen Lyons, NE



**Bringing progress to life**

Brian Brhel Denton, NE



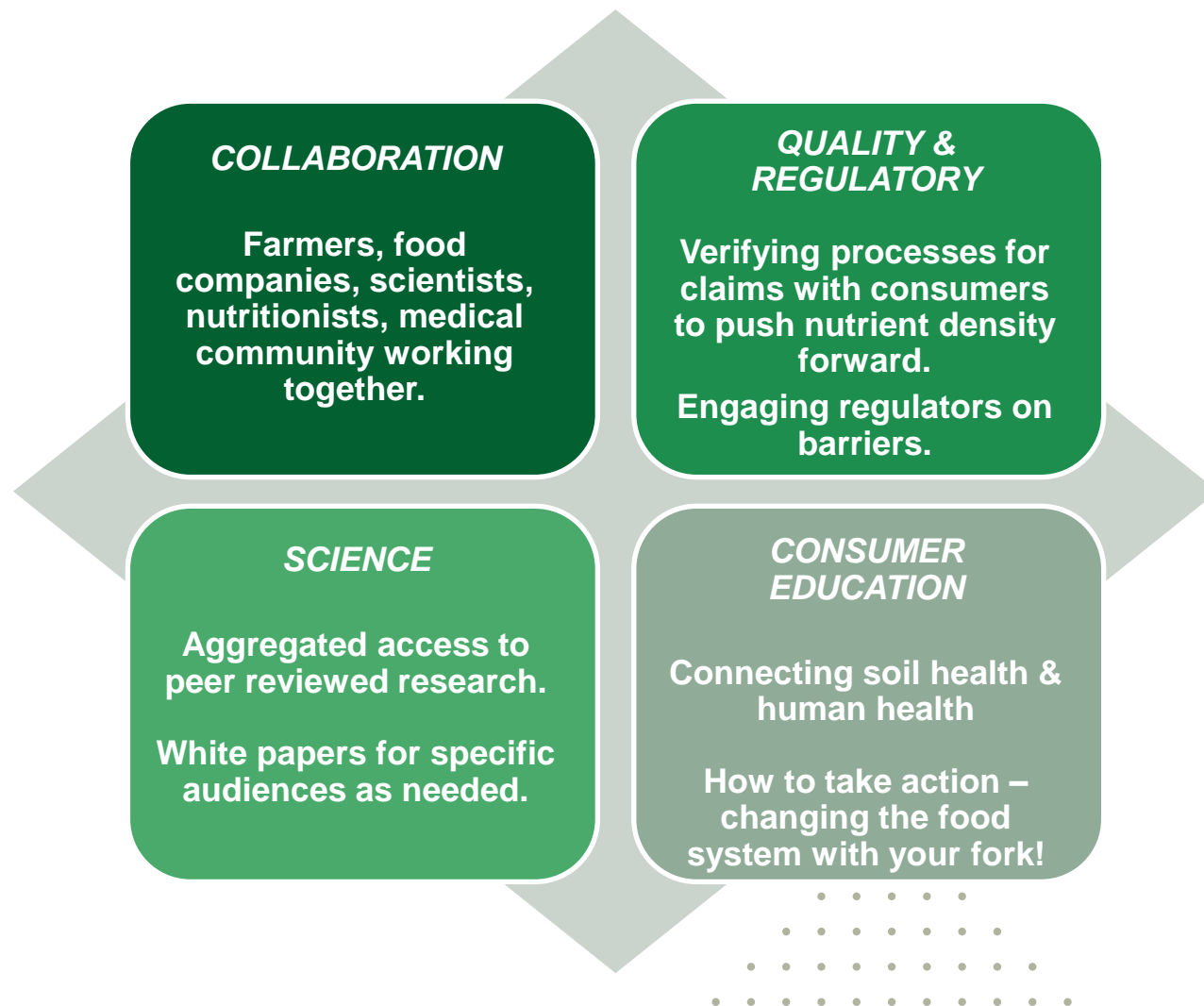
**Farm & financial planning are the foundation of transitioning**

Levi Kokes Crook, CO





# NUTRIENT DENSITY ALLIANCE: STRATEGY





## Overview

**POWER OF THE NETWORK:** In May 2023, SCA members Liz Haney & Rick Clark told the SCA team that they were hearing growing interest in regenerative wheat. "It's time to scale – let's make it happen!" **And the initiative was born at the June SCA meeting in Omaha**

### What We've Accomplished

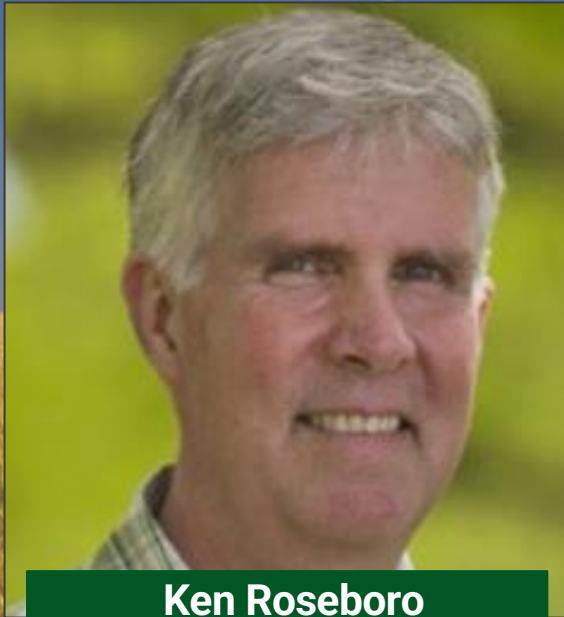
- Multi-Stakeholder Engagement
- Scope of Work
- Framework for Measuring & Verifying Regen Wheat

### Where We're Going

- Analyze landscape (demand, supply, storage, technical assistance needs, financing, etc.)
- Connect players to bring regen wheat to market







**Ken Roseboro**  
The Organic and Non-GMO  
Project



**Hans Eisenbeis**  
The Non-GMO Project



**Tim Wise**  
IATP



**Greg Lickteig**  
Omaha Grain Exchange



# **MEXICO'S GMO BAN AND THE FUTURE OF TRADE**



## HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS

Mexico proposed to ban the import of GMO corn into the country. Their stated intent is to create sustainable, healthy, and competitive agriculture and food systems, and reduce use of agrochemicals, citing growing concerns about safety of glyphosate and GMO threats to Mexico's staple corn crops. The US government is arguing that the ban is a violation of trade agreements, and the ban is going before a Mexico/Canada/US dispute panel.

### **The dispute could help advance our understanding of Non-GMO Health risks**

- The US demands scientific proof that GMO's offer health risk, but declined Mexico's offer to engage in joint research
- There is no evidence of safety for consuming great quantities of minimally processed GMO corn (noting that Mexico consumes a much greater quantity of minimally processed corn than US consumers)

### **This is a market opportunity for US farmers.**

- There is significant demand in Mexico for Non-GMO products. The Non-GMO Project can verify products in Mexico for sale in Mexico and has 55 brand clients in Mexico. They hope to be able to report on sales numbers in the new year.
- US based non-GMO farmers, brands and consumer advocates support Mexico's right to a ban of non-GMO corn.
- On the US government side, the proposed non-GMO ban doesn't appear to be a free trade issue, but more about maintaining markets for US agriculture system.
- Opportunity:
  - Even if Mexico's proposed ban fails, buyers in Mexico can demand non-GMO corn.
  - The US is the natural scale supplier of Non-GMO corn to Mexico: we can grow, provide identity preservation, and observe rule of law.

### **The real potential loser in the ban is the biotech industry.**

- The farmers and the supply chain can adapt to supply more non-GMO corn to Mexico.
- There is a risk that the ban could spill out to other countries, with further market loss for biotech producers.



*"Mexico is going to present a raft of science about the risk of consuming GMO corn. We should all take note. US support of GMO corn is not based on science."*

**Tim Wise**

*"This is an opportunity for the US to take leadership on Non-GMO Corn Production. It's a market opportunity for US Farmers."*

**Greg Lickteig**

*"More and more farmers are going back to non-GMO corn because they are finding they just don't need the traits and GMO seeds are expensive"*

**Ken Roseboro**

*"We are all aware of the risks of industrial agriculture production and its reliance on chemicals, but that never enters into the conversation about the "science" of GMO safety. We stand in solidarity with CPGs and consumers in Mexico who want Non-GMO."*

**Hans Eisenbeis**

# **Mexico's GMO Ban and the Future of Trade**





*Breakout Groups Summary:*  
**SCA Members Reflect on  
the Current & Future Direction of  
Regen Ag**





# Summary of Themes from the Breakout Groups: Reflections on Recent Successes & Ongoing Challenges

## Successes:

- **Education and awareness**
  - There has been an increase in educational programs and a growing awareness of agriculture's role in climate mitigation including significantly increased engagement from farmers
- **Collaboration**
  - Collaboration between climate and ag spaces has expanded to promote climate solutions including agroecology and regenerative agriculture
  - Soil health and regenerative ag are often hope giving beyond the work itself
- **Government support**
  - There has been some increased support from government entities including NRCS and conservation districts (though spotty)
- **Corporate engagement**
  - Companies like Planet FWD that support data platforms for planning and reporting are a game changing resources for companies seeking data for sustainability goals

## Challenges:

- **Limited progress on systemic changes**
  - There continue to be systemic challenges related to financial barriers, policy, market dynamics, lack of education, and infrastructure issues.
- **Consumer awareness**
  - Many consumers do not understand what regenerative agriculture is or its value regarding planetary and human health – though they increasingly want healthier, more climate-friendly food, where they know who the farmers are
- **Social acceptance**
  - There has been a relatively slow acceptance among farmers, brands, and politicians given fear about how regen ag can jeopardize economic well-being. There is a risk in being the first one in your community
- **Evolving and sometimes co-opted definition of "regenerative."**
  - There can be challenges with ensuring the term is not greenwashed or narrowly defined. Agreeing on a more universally accepted definition, which exists, can help all stakeholders collaborate more effectively



# *Summary of Themes from the Breakout Groups:* **Reflections on Next Steps Needed to Accelerate Regen Ag**

## **Political and Policy Alignment:**

- Ensure political leaders understand and align with the regen ag movement
- Build consensus for policies that support regen ag, and highlight its connection to broader climate and environmental discussions
- Address implementation challenges related to government policies, crop insurance, and farm service agencies

## **Economic Foundation and Producer Engagement:**

- Emphasize outcomes over practices, which will make it easier to engage more farmers and companies in regenerative agriculture
- Establish the economic foundation of regen ag by quantifying and promoting its benefits to growers and investors
- Consider the complexities of navigating carbon markets and sustainability measures

## **Research, Education, and Infrastructure:**

- Conduct more research to validate the economic, environmental, and health benefits of regen ag
- Collaborate with health institutions to understand and communicate the impact of farming practices
- Develop infrastructure to support regen ag, including federal funds for local investments
- Address challenges with certain biased influences on farm associates and land grant institutions
- Explore avenues beyond retailers for disseminating information. There is a need to effectively engage and educate consumers, especially young people
- Increase handling and processing infrastructure to support scaling of regen ag





# *Summary of Themes from the Breakout Groups:* **Reflections on Opportunities for the SCA network to Support Essential Next Steps**

## **Challenges and Advocacy:**

- Farmers face challenges with access to support (financial and other) provided by existing policies and programs, so there is a need for collective advocacy to make them more accessible and usable

## **Data, Education, and Storytelling:**

- Address the gap in education with the large food companies regarding the impacts and connections between food and agriculture
- Continue to use hard data from farmers and leading brands to educate on the difference between regen and conventional ag across all groups

## **Collaboration and Communication:**

- Connecting the entire supply chain is crucial to address challenges, share experiences, and build community in the regen ag movement as the system scales
- It is important to create a space for farmers to make farm-specific decisions
- Consider how we can incorporate regenerative mindsets at the organizational and individual levels



# **SOIL & CLIMATE ALLIANCE ACTION AGENDA**

Network Initiative Overview



# 2023-24 PRIORITIES: SOIL & CLIMATE ALLIANCE

## Soil Carbon Initiative

- Pilots & Market Roll Out
- Finalize: Acre Footprint Calculation, Company Program Details
- Expand SCI Farmer Fund

## Nutrient Density Alliance

- Expand awareness of the link between soil health & nutrient density
- Coalesce on unified definition of nutrient density
- Build brand case studies

## Domestic Policy Advocacy

- Farm Bill 2023 Monthly Meeting: Regenerate America Campaign
- National Policy: American Sustainable Business Network
- State Policy: Healthy Soils Legislation Tracking With Steven Keleti

## Regen Ag Market Development

- Working groups & communities of practice to accelerate regen market development
- Kansas Regenerative Wheat

## Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

- Land Access Strategy & Supplier Diversity
- Expand diverse voices in the Network; engage with BIPOC farmers to ensure SCI works for all farms & farmers



# MAKE THE MOST OF THE NETWORK!

Connect with the Soil & Climate Alliance team and other members to advance your work toward our shared mission of **regenerating soil, restoring the climate, and revitalizing farm economics.**

If you're not already a member of the Soil & Climate Alliance, please connect with us to learn more. Network meetings are by invitation only; if you haven't previously attended one of our network meetings, please contact us:

**Jessica Hulse Dillon**

Senior Director, Soil & Climate Alliance

[jhulsedillon@greenamerica.org](mailto:jhulsedillon@greenamerica.org)



# YOUR SOIL & CLIMATE ALLIANCE TEAM



JESSICA HULSE DILLON

Senior Director



JUSTINE GHAI

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LINDSEY JOHNSON

Program Coordinator



TINA OWENS

Senior Fellow





# THANK YOU

To our 100+ network members from across the food and agriculture system, Design Team members, guests, and presenters – thank you for sharing your wisdom, passion, and commitment to the network's mission of regenerating soil health, restoring the climate, and revitalizing farm & rural economics.





# Save the Date!

*In-Person, On-Farm  
Summer Network Meeting*  
**June 11-13, 2024**  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA





# Soil & Climate Alliance

[www.soilclimatealliance.org](http://www.soilclimatealliance.org)