

VOLUME 1

20

REGENERATE AZ ACTION PLAN

23

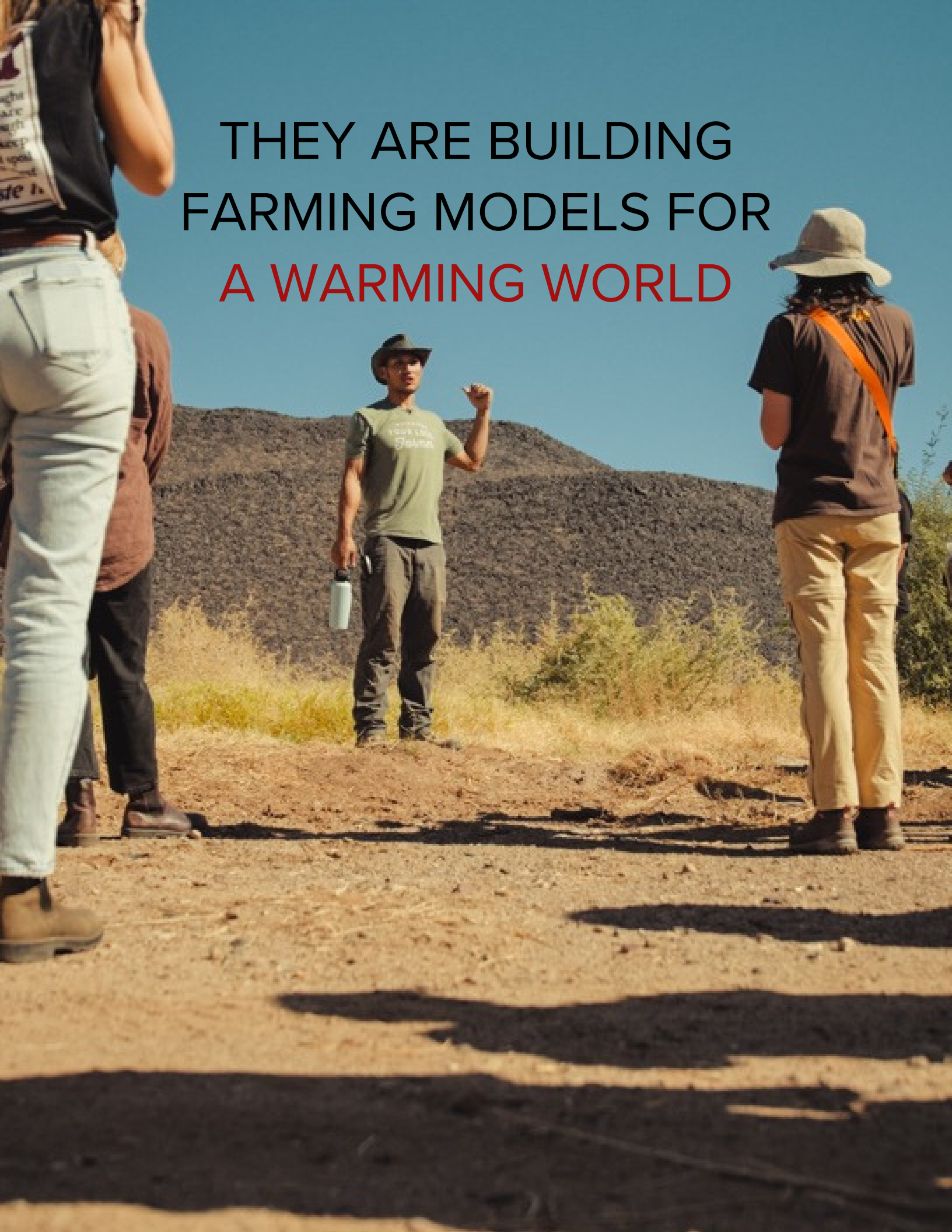


VOLUME 1

**A GROUP OF LEADERS IN
ARIZONA ARE ORGANIZING
TO IMPROVE THE LOCAL
FOOD SUPPLY**

Photos by Ben Shani

THEY ARE BUILDING
FARMING MODELS FOR
A WARMING WORLD



THEY ARE CREATING
SUPPLY CHAINS TO
CONNECT CULTURE, FOOD
AND FAMILIES



AND THEY ARE
COLLABORATING FOR
HEALTHY LAND, PEOPLE,
AND COMMUNITIES



Together, they will create experiences that change mindsets and **increase the market share of local, regenerative foods** in the U.S. Southwest.

HOW?

The movement to create a paradigm shift in the food supply in the U.S. Southwest accelerated in October 2023 when 40 leaders collaborated for two days at **Regenerate AZ** at Oatman Flats Ranch, the first Regenerative Organic Certified® operation in the region. The area leaders toured the farm, learned about regenerative growing practices, sampled food made with ingredients from the farm, and worked on a problem-solving program looking at critical issues in the region. The program, one of the first of its kind in the country, concluded as the group decided two key areas needed attention: experience-based education, and regenerative product distribution.



The primary driving force behind Regenerate AZ were the leaders at the **Development of Regenerative Yields (DRY) Cooperative**, an Arizona for-profit marketing association comprised of a wide intersection of individuals and entities focused on food sovereignty, mutuality and service within and without our regional community of the Sonoran desert, city and country.

Contact membership@dry.coop for more information.

Model: Collaboration & Experience Building



Oatman Flats Ranch
Gila Bend, Arizona

The participants at Regenerate AZ agreed: the #1 need in the region is to create experiences in the supply chain, from consumers to farmers, about the **availability of a viable alternative to the mass-produced, imported food supply**. The current industrialized model is feeding 95-98% of the region’s needs, according to a 2019 and 2021 studies by the Maricopa Food System Coalition. By creating quality experiences, we will open up more paths for distribution of locally sourced, regeneratively grown ingredients.

All experiences must integrate leaders across the supply chain, bring people to the farm to learn, and confront difficult topics around health, community, farmer share, and equity.

The opportunities to increase the local market are clear in the overall market size. Currently, 95% of the food grown and purchased locally comes from just 186 farms—less than 10% of all farms in the region. 55% of the farms in the region are currently producing non-food items like cotton or forage crops for livestock.



Key Experiential Gaps & Focus Points

According to a survey of 2023 Regenerate AZ participants, and data from the recent studies by Maricopa County agencies, here are the leading issues preventing expansion of local food and regenerative product markets:

- **Food affordability:** Many people are unwilling to pay more money for food than they currently are today. While food prices have gone up 50% since 2019 in the region, there is little appetite for future food price increases. We will need to educate about the true value of local food and circular economic value chains.
- **Food quality:** Many people are unaware of how overprocessed food compares with locally grown, regenerative ingredients. They are challenged by the lack of sugar, or the inclusion of natural sugars like honey, in regenerative products. Showing how regenerative products are being linked to human health impacts can illustrate the differences. We will put together a collection of these resources to circulate to Regenerate AZ participants.
- **Unfamiliar brands:** Regenerative brands are often unfamiliar to consumers, who do not want to take the time to try something new. Ensuring we are cross-promoting products between individual brands could be one way to expand our marketing reach without adding cost. We will need to explore other ways to generate collective interest in local, regenerative brands with regional leaders in the food supply.
- **More storytelling is needed:** From stories about local farms to recipes using local ingredients, more stories about why regeneration and removing extractive industries are needed throughout the supply chain.



Community Voices

The following quotes are from Regenerate AZ 2023 participants, which comprised of leaders including farmers, ranchers, tribal communities, landowners, input companies, technology companies, food cooperatives, community groups, and university program managers.

Total Attendance of Regenerate AZ 2023: 40

Community Voices on **Regenerative Food** in the U.S. Southwest

“Together, we will distribute food supplies from the farm to the consumer with radical transparency. Land health and people’s health are the most important topics in the conversation.”
— *Yadi Wang, president, Development of Regenerative Yields (DRY) Cooperative; farm manager, Oatman Flats*



“We can help with the processing. We can help with the warehousing, distribution and the marketing. And we can also help with the front-end, placing first-generation farmers on the land and giving them tools to be successful. That’s really our goal. A farmer is way more than just a farmer.” — *Guru Das, founder, Development of Regenerative Yields (DRY) Cooperative*

Community Voices on **Regenerative Food** in the U.S. Southwest

“This is a hands-on endeavor. You have to see it. You have to taste it. You can be inspired by it or overwhelmed by it. It drives action.” — *Dax Hansen, owner, Oatman Flats Farms, Oatman Flats Ranch*



“If I can help teach others, that’s scaling up. I like the old school idea that each neighborhood has its own baker, and has its own grocer, and we’re tapped into the people who are supporting you. Accountability is built into the local food conversation.” — *Molly Carney, owner, Dirt Lady Bread*

Community Voices on **Regenerative Food** in the U.S. Southwest

“The practical thing is we need the money, but a lot of us are done with capitalistic society. The Walton and Rockefeller Foundations are here and looking like they are part of the solution, but they are also the very actors that have helped create the dire situation that we are in and they have—and continue to—benefit the most from it.” — *Danielle Corral, agriculture consultant, bison rancher*



“The impact of the local food supply will only happen through partnering and supporting, and we have to show others what we’re talking about. This is a tipping point moment.” — *Tucker Garrigan, founder, Enlightened Soil Corp.*

“People out there have money and capital and resources and want to do good things, and want to make sure the projects have integrity. And they get done. The opportunity is to bridge that gap ...” — *Sophie Waechter-Cass, aspiring farmer*



Community Voices on **Regenerative Food** in the U.S. Southwest

“The community aspect is a big component. It’s a big missing piece of food production. The industrial revolution killed the idea of people cooking together. We’re too individualistic. Everything became so convenient, but it has a huge impact of isolation. We rely on corporations, not communities, for our food. ... We are uniquely passionate about the uplifting of poor, indigenous and black communities. The change of the world is going to look unified, and we are going to work together on key issues. I constantly get to places where the voices in the room that should be there that are not there.” — *Tito Romero, co-founder, Flowers & Bullets*





Opportunities & Regional Case Studies

The following case studies reflect work that is actively going on in the U.S. Southwest that are addressing critical needs around regenerative education, community building, collaboration and organization, and storytelling and promotion. These models can be adopted by any community interested in accelerating changes toward more local food and regenerative farming systems.

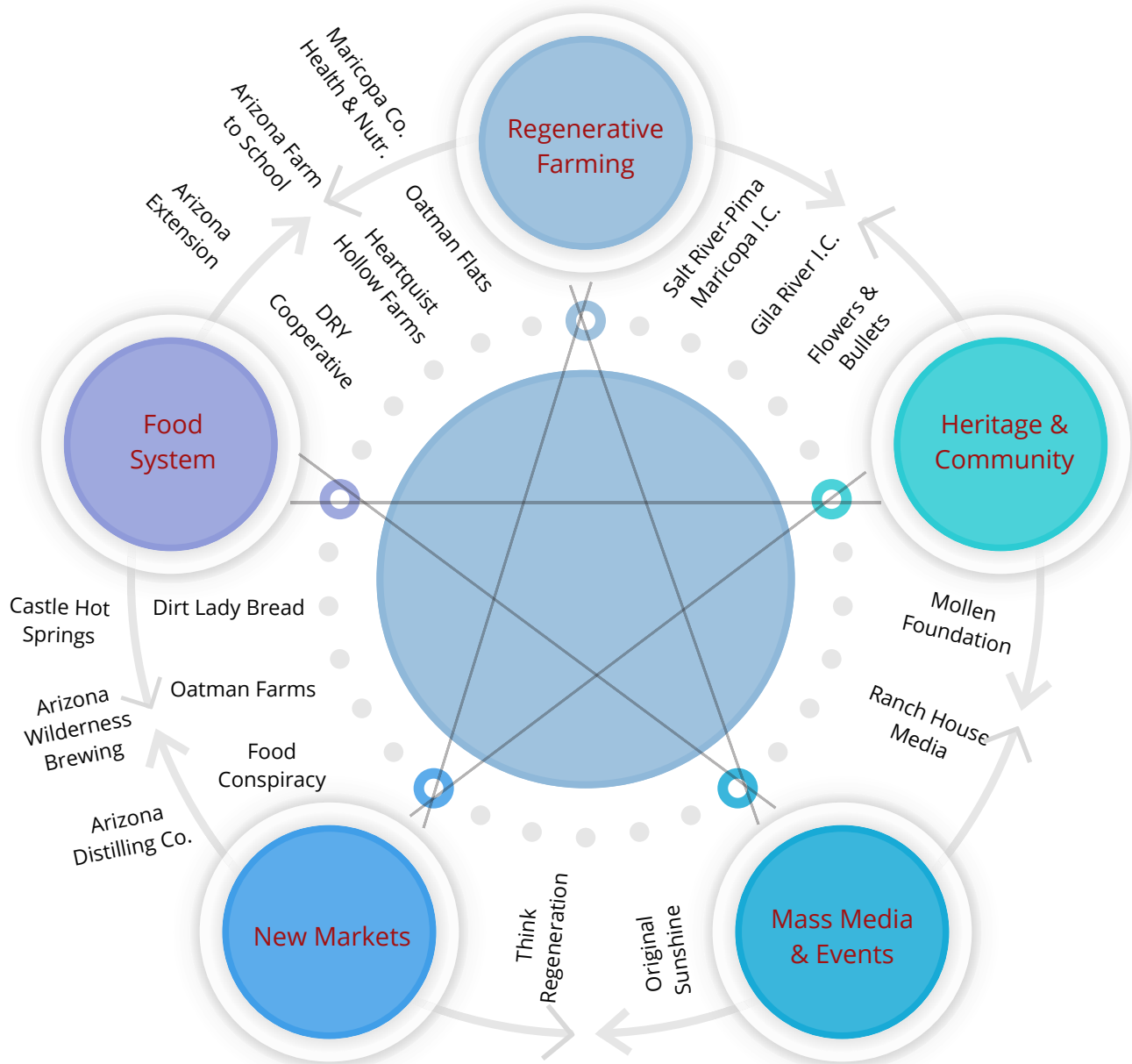
Current local food market size: \$126,358,000 (MARCO Report, 2019)

Current local food market share: 2%-5%

Case Study Relationships

Organizations Transforming the Supply Chain

This complex graphic involves organizations that attended Regenerate AZ 2023, or participated in the following case studies. It attempts to show just one way the concepts involved in this action plan are connected. Within the context of this piece, we can also illustrate how organizations involved in this movement are filling the gaps between farming and community, media and new markets, food systems and farming systems.



Case Study

Experience New Markets

COMPLEXITY: HIGH

POTENTIAL: HIGH

COST: MEDIUM

SUMMARY:

At the heart of regeneration is food that is grown in the region and is important to the local culture. By creating an event around Chinese chorizo, project organizers will introduce a popular cultural food into a mainstream market. Feng-Feng Yeh, the leader behind the Chinese chorizo festival, is aiming to build an employee-owned brand that not only provides food for the community, but also provides equity back to the employees for circular, community wealth generation. Chinese chorizo is fusion food created by immigrant groups in the Sonoran desert from the 1880s to 1960s.

Setting: Tucson

Why this matters: Creating local food markets that are popular enough to replace commoditized, overprocessed food is one of the biggest challenges we will be working on. By tapping into companies and organizers who are already actively working on this issue, we can help them by identifying farmers in the region to grow their ingredients, share the word about the food's popularity, and bring them into the discussion about larger infrastructure needs.

Who we are targeting: All residents in the Tucson and Phoenix metropolitan areas

What is the potential? The potential is expand the markets of regenerative growers like Oatman Flats Ranch outside of Tucson, which will use its Regenerative Organic Certified® wheat as a substrate to grow mushrooms, which will be used as the main ingredient for a vegan version of Chinese chorizo.

What are the short-term outcomes? To collaborate on a product and ingredient list that can be sourced locally in the Phoenix-Tucson region.

To learn more: Check out their website at www.chinesechorizoproject.com.

Case Study

Experience the Food System

COMPLEXITY: HIGH

POTENTIAL: HIGH

COST: MEDIUM

SUMMARY:

The Arizona Farm to School Network, Maricopa County Department of Public Health, Arizona Cooperative Extension Ag Literacy & STEM program and the Mollen Foundation are partnering in 2024 with local farmers and growers to create a hub of activity that will support grower education, consumer awareness, agri-tourism, and supply chain development and training. This work is a multi-regional effort in collaboration with Fearless Farmers, a nonprofit that activates community-based regenerative programs. This project’s aim is to increase the amount of available local food in the regions through a collaborative, region-wide approach, including representatives throughout the supply chain who will be helping create real, educational experiences around food and farming. For example, a restaurant could host a small-group educational workshop connecting the dots between nutrition, ingredients, and farming. Look for updates involving Dr. Yadi Wang, the Development of Regenerative Yields (DRY) Cooperative, and others from Regenerate AZ, who are participating in this exciting new project, to share how you can participate.

Setting: Varied, from farm to board room

Why this matters: In order to open new markets for growers and solve food desert issues in the region, a vast array of agencies and organizations must be working together with common goals to educate families in the region about nutrition, local food, and local farming.

Who we are targeting: Area youth, school district students, first generations, and communities who care about local food supplies

What is the potential? To train supply chain entrepreneurs, and new and future farmers, about how to grow food for communities in need, school districts, and other markets as available. By converting mindsets, we will create more markets for regenerative ingredients.

What are the short-term outcomes? To build a cohesive organization and set of goals focused on grower education, consumer awareness, and supply chain development. This organization will move quickly to create real outreach to attract consumers into the education environment.

To learn more: Stay tuned for updates from the Developing Regenerative Yields (DRY) Cooperative about programs you will be able to support a variety of ways.

Case Study

Experience Regenerative Farming

COMPLEXITY: MEDIUM

POTENTIAL: MEDIUM

COST: LOW

SUMMARY:

In 2023, 40 leaders in the food supply met to learn, discuss issues, and experience life on a regenerative farm. Our key takeaway was that more on-the-farm collaborative events are needed in the region to stimulate discussion, open markets, and encourage more regenerative growing practices. While the program may vary wildly, the need for buyers to connect directly with farmers and ranchers to discuss ways to open new markets, build stronger relationships, and collectively problem solve are needed. These can be done at a small scale, one-on-one, or on a larger scale involving hundreds. We will explore more models with future Regenerate AZs to maximize the impact of education, networking, and collaboration.

Setting: On the farm/ranch

Why this matters: Various stakeholders in the supply chain are often siloed in their “industries” and do not have consistent access to collaborative spaces with other links in the chain. Bringing diverse interests together to discuss common goals can often lead to solutions, but also challenges to overcome. In year 1, we connected breweries with landowners, new farmers with experienced growers, and nonprofits, tribal communities, and select national organizations.

Who we are targeting: Farmers, ranchers, landowners, restaurants, distributors, wholesale buyers, retailers, community builders, advocates, media

What is the potential? The potential is two-fold: to activate real, positive changes in the U.S. Southwest; to create a national model for others to follow.

What are the short-term outcomes? To inspire creativity, collaboration, and action. We will release the first action plan generated through group discussion and 1:1 interviews with participants, as well as accompanying video/photo media, to create more awareness of the group’s work and to open doors for more collaboration, discussion, and action.

To learn more: Sign up for newsletters at dry.coop or ThinkRegeneration.com to stay in touch with updates on the 2024 event.

Case Study

Experience Mass Media & Events

COMPLEXITY: LOW

POTENTIAL: MEDIUM

COST: LOW

SUMMARY:

The Development of Regenerative Yields (DRY) Cooperative, Original Sunshine, and Think Regeneration will be releasing video demonstrating the concepts and ideas behind Regenerate AZ on our social channels, and incorporating the video in talks around the country. DRY Cooperative is working with Common Ground/Kiss the Ground to create a film showing in Phoenix in 2024. The power of these events are giving ideas and inspiration to new mindsets, and to new efforts to create change. For example, the Center for Agriculture Resilience (CFAR), whose leadership attended Regenerate AZ, will be hosting an on-farm educational program in March at White Oak Pastures in Bluffton, Georgia.

Setting: Anywhere

Why this matters: Creating experiences can be defined as a way to deliver marketing, public relations, and ideas to the community, which means storytelling and education are essential to catalyze change. By working together with local and national groups to explore the most effective storylines, and bringing professional stories to illustrate that regeneration is happening today in their communities, we aim to normalize regenerative mindsets, and inspire others to join this movement.

Who we are targeting: Consumers, wholesale buyers, retailers, policymakers, media, and community leaders

What is the potential? The potential for reach is high, but education will not open distribution points inherently. Those will come through networking around educational programming, something emphasized as a need to increase in future events in the region.

What are the short-term outcomes? We will bring awareness of the coordinated efforts of the people and organizations involved in Regenerate AZ to thousands of people around the country.

To learn more: The Action Plan will soon be available at www.RegenerateAZ.org. Videos from the event are available on YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Case Study

Experience Heritage & Community

COMPLEXITY: HIGH

POTENTIAL: HIGH

COST: MEDIUM

SUMMARY:

Regenerate AZ participants from Flowers & Bullets, a Tucson nonprofit, regularly educate their communities by inviting them onto their 10-acre farm and land rehabilitation project for volunteer programs, free food giveaways, and other collaborative programs. Their goals to expand their operations by completing the cleanup of an old school building, and purchasing key distribution points that will help them improve their community relationships, grow their nonprofit, and provide healthy food for their neighbors.

Setting: Tucson

Why this matters: Local models of regeneration can often have the most impact, one of the strengths of Flowers & Bullets, a unique model that has been able to evolve and shift as the community needs evolve and shift as well. While they are still getting on their feet financially, they've received enough donations to purchase a 10-acre plot, and begin to create a demonstration farm and accompanying distribution spokes.

Who we are targeting: Consumers, wholesale buyers, retailers, policymakers, media, and community leaders

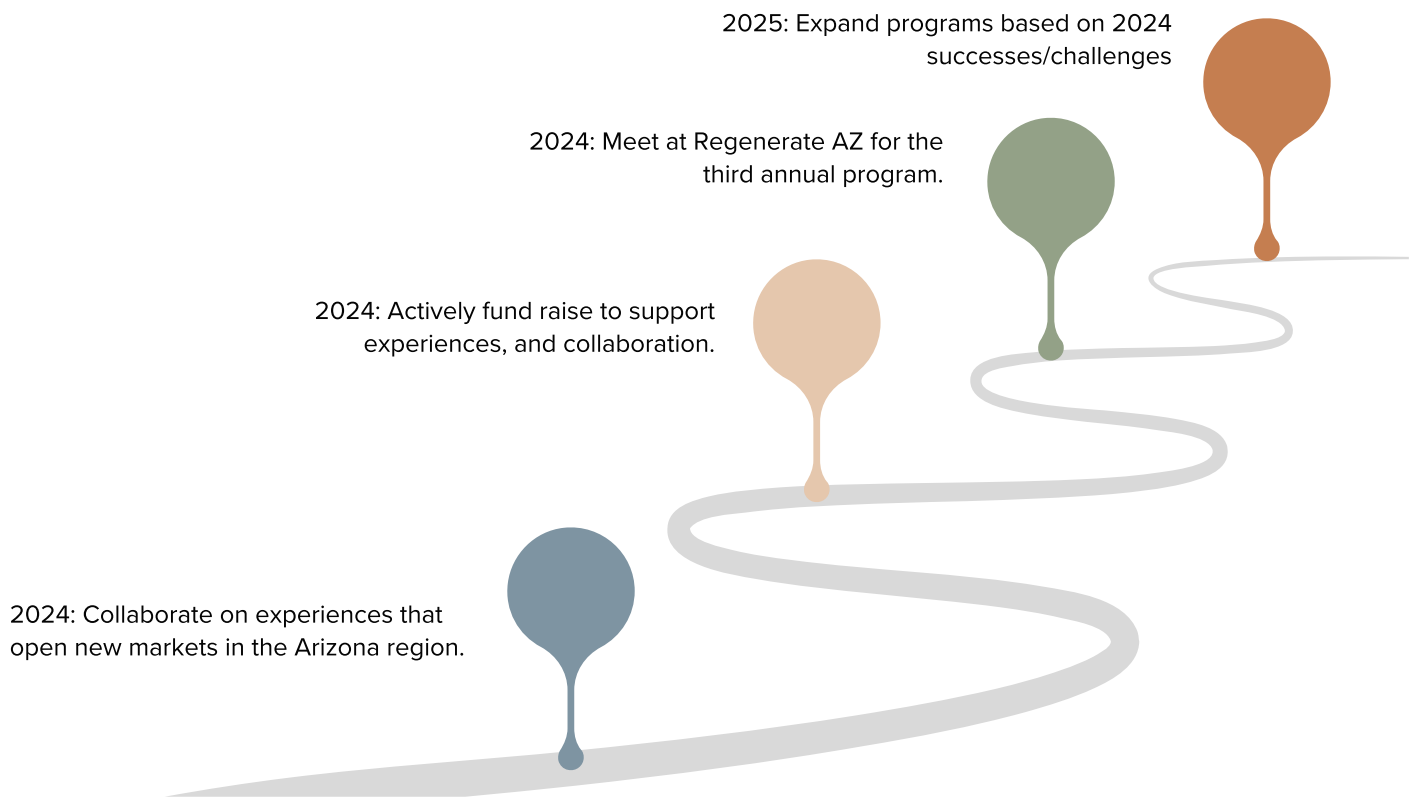
What is the potential? The potential is large to regenerate land that was neglected and convert it into a regenerative hub of food, health, and community. If we can find a path to wild success, models like this are replicable around the country. Plus, the organization's leaders are thinking about how they can transform the food supply in Tucson, and to also connect new markets in Tucson to new farmers and food companies through Spanish-language labeling, as one example.

What are the short-term outcomes? The team at Flowers & Bullets are aiming for true sustainability and full-time, paid support. Their recent acquisition of a 10-acre site to build a farm and rehabilitate an abandoned school site could transform their immediate surroundings, provide an educational facility for the community, and become an epicenter for community health. They are also planning educational visits for community members to explore and learn at Oatman Flats Ranch.

To learn more: Visit www.FlowersandBullets.com

Next Steps ...

On the path toward a *paradigm shift* in food



Appendices

4 Best Practices for Regenerative Experiences

- 1 Recognize Regenerative Agriculture as the best use of land:** Show how these biologically smart farming systems store water, create ecosystems, and provide more long-term resilience.
- 2 Highlight Regenerative growers:** Show who is managing these systems and why their mindset helps drive the management plan on the land, and guides them toward the end result of a healthy community.
- 3 Representation matters:** Ensuring the community is reflected in the program through its participant demographics, subject matter, food, and setting, is absolutely essential.
- 4 Connect the dots:** Illustrate how buyers and restaurants can support farmers and ranchers in the region, and why that matters to their customers.

The Need for Regeneration

Baseline Numbers & Statistics

14%

Population that is food insecure

21%

Children who are food insecure

104°

Average high temperature (Aug)

7%

Houses with no vehicles

29%

Obesity rate

10%

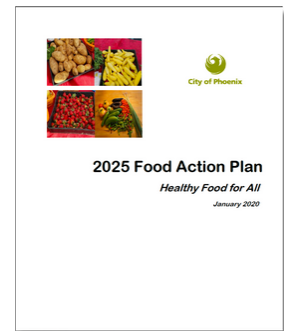
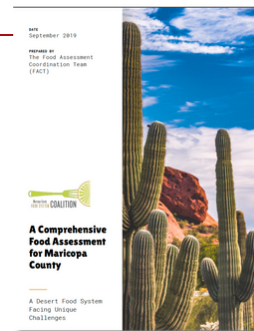
Diabetes rate

12%

Households that receive SNAP

\$1.80

In activity for every dollar of food spent



Resource: A Comprehensive Food Assessment for Maricopa County

Maricopa County Food System Coalition, or “MarCo”, is an independent, voluntary coalition comprised of 225 individuals and 110 organizations advocating for the regeneration and advancement of a community-based food system in the region.

Resource: 2025 Food Action Plan

The Phoenix 2025 Food Action Plan was prepared by the Office of Environmental Programs in partnership with the Phoenix interdepartmental food action team, the Maricopa County Food System Coalition, the Valley of the Sun United Way, the Health Improvement Partnership of Maricopa County and with input from many food system stakeholders.

Future Funding

Upcoming Food Supply Grants

1. The Regional Food Business Centers

Local First Arizona, along with the state's Department of Agriculture and University of Arizona, are building USDA Regional Food Business Centers to support a more resilient, diverse, and competitive food system. These Regional Food Centers will support producers by providing localized assistance to access local and regional supply chains, including linking producers to wholesalers and distributors. They will provide technical assistance needed to access new markets, access to federal, state, and local resources, and will assist small- and mid-sized producers in overcoming barriers to market access, with a focus on underserved farmers, ranchers, and food businesses.

USDA Regional Food Business Centers will have three main responsibilities: Coordination, technical assistance and capacity building.

Learn more: RegionalFoodCenters@usda.gov

2. The Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program

A total of \$3.2 million is coming to the Arizona Department of Agriculture over the next 4 years for this program. Through this program, the funding will be available for competitive subaward grants to support the development of the middle-of-the-supply-chain for Arizona-based food and farm businesses.

These funds support expanding capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of local food products including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.

Learn more: www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/rfsi

3. Purchase Local AZ

Purchase Local AZ is a \$15 million funding stream as part of a three-year grant cycle (2023-2026) whose purpose is to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resilient. The program provides farmers with an opportunity to gain access to more local and diverse market channels such as food bank programs, schools, and organizations that reach underserved communities. Arizona producers can apply [here](#).

Learn More: www.purchaselocalaz.org

Participant Reference Desk

Arizona Distilling

Arizona Distilling Company is committed to sharing Arizona with the world, one glass at a time. We devote ourselves to every spirit with exceptional ingredients and the utmost care.

www.azdistilling.com

Arizona Wilderness Brewing Co.

At Arizona Wilderness Brewing Co. in Phoenix, their hope is that the beer inspires people to start thinking about how they can save water and support the businesses that are being proactive about sustainability.

www.azwbeer.com

Castle Hot Springs Resort

Castle Hot Springs is a historical icon, nestled in a rugged and remote desert location northwest of the Phoenix/Scottsdale metro area.

www.castlehotsprings.com

Center for Agriculture Resilience

The Center for Agricultural Resilience (CFAR) was built to educate individuals and organizations on the environmental, economic and social benefits of building resilient animal, plant and human ecosystems that can nourish our communities.

<https://thecfar.org/>

Development of Regenerative Yields (DRY) Cooperative

The Development of Regenerative Yields Cooperative is an Arizona for profit Marketing Association comprised of a wide intersection of individuals and entities focused on food sovereignty, mutuality and service within and without our regional community of the Sonoran desert, city and country.

<https://dry.coop/>

Dirt Lady Bread

Dirt Lady Bread is a cottage bakery providing artisanal sourdough and fermented yeast loaves to the Tucson community.

www.dirtladybread.com

Enlightened Soil Corp.

At Enlightened Soil Corp, we understand that your land and water are not just valuable resources but also a financial investment, and our goal is to help you protect it with responsible stewardship.

www.enlightenedsoil.com

Participant Reference Desk

Flowers & Bullets

Flowers are the art and bullets are the struggle. We are organizers creating outlets for under-served youth and communities, which highlight the life we live and the places that we come from. By sharing skills, promoting place-based connections in the barrio, and listening to each other's stories we promote sustainable ways of living.

www.flowersandbullets.com

Gila River Indian Community

The Gila River Indian Community is an Indian reservation in the U.S. state of Arizona, lying adjacent to the south side of the city of Phoenix, within the Phoenix Metropolitan Area in Pinal and Maricopa counties. Established in 1859, the community is home for members of both the Akimel O'odham (Pima) and the Pee-Posh (Maricopa) tribes.

www.gilariver.org

Green Cover Seed

Specializing in highly diverse, custom, cover crop mixes, Green Cover has become a leading, national source for those seeking to improve soil health and biodiversity through cover cropping.

<https://greencover.com/>

Heartquist Hollow Farm

Heartquist Hollow Farm currently provides hormone-free, steroid-free, and antibiotic-free grass-fed and grass finished beef, pork and lamb to the community in addition to our pasture eggs and pickled veggies. We sell our goods at the farmer's markets and locally owned businesses in the Phoenix and Tucson Valleys.

<https://www.heartquisthollowfarm.com/>

microBIOMETER

microBIOMETER®, based in the Pacific Northwest, is an in-field measuring tool for soil health that supports farmers of all soil types around the world. It allows farmers to understand soil-to-fungal ratios in almost real time.

www.microbiometer.com

Oatman Farms

Oatman Farms™ is a fearless food company with a mission to revitalize and sustain family farms in hot and dry desert environments, including our own Oatman Flats Ranch, the Arizona farm that has been in my family for four generations.

<https://oatmanfarms.com/>

Participant Reference Desk

Oatman Flats Ranch

Our mission is to develop the first Regenerative Organic Certified™ farming business model for hotter and drier climates. Owned by Dax Hansen, the ranch served as the setting for Regenerate AZ 2023.

<https://www.oatmanflatsranch.com/>

Original Sunshine

At Original Sunshine we are redefining gluten free to deliver the rich taste and texture you love from wheat-based goods, gluten not included! Join us at our table as we take gluten free where it has never gone before.

<https://www.originalsunshine.com/>

Ranch House Media

A media and production company based out of Tucson, Arizona, focused on music, arts, sustainability, and community development.

www.ranchhouse.media

Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community (SRPMIC) is a sovereign tribe located in the metropolitan Phoenix area. Established by Executive Order on June 14, 1879, the Community operates as a full-service government and oversees departments, programs, projects and facilities.

www.srpmic-nsn.gov

Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems

The Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems at Arizona State University develops innovative ideas and solutions to the many challenges of current food systems.

<https://sustainability-innovation.asu.edu/>

Think Regeneration

A nonprofit 501(c)(3) accelerating change in the food supply through our regenerative agriculture programs, expertise, and partnerships.

www.ThinkRegeneration.com

White Oak Pastures

White Oak Pastures is Radically Traditional Farming. Every day, we butcher meat from animals raised in a regenerative manner using humane animal management practices. This is no easy task, but it is our passion.

<https://whiteoakpastures.com/>



THINK REGENERATION

www.ThinkRegeneration.com

Report prepared by:

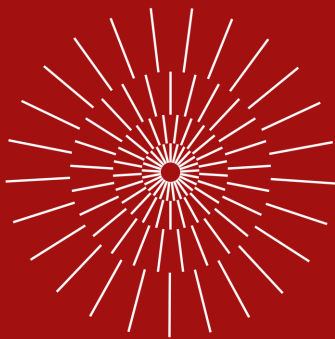
Think Regeneration is 501(c)(3) nonprofit coalition of organizations, farmers, ranchers, scientists, researchers, and philanthropists who want to accelerate on-the-ground regenerative food supply projects. Our programs support projects that repair food-growing ecosystems, reverse trends in chronic disease rates, elevate the voices of regenerative growers, and build more community resilience.



All photos provided by Ben Shani. Special thanks to Original Sunshine for their media support.

SPONSORS/SUPPORTERS





THINK REGENERATION

 www.ThinkRegeneration.com

 970.389.5218

 info@think-regen.com

 thinkregeneration

 23843 Kings Dr., Colona, IL 61241