

CULTIVATING CHANGE

A Collaborative Philanthropic Initiative to Accelerate
and Scale Agroecology and Regenerative Approaches

DISCLAIMER

The Global Alliance for the Future of Food led the co-design and engagement process to develop this document with support from Dalberg Advisors, Pollination, and Presencing Institute. It is intended for use by Global Alliance members and partners to stimulate discussion about critical issues related to food systems transformation and climate change, and to help guide collective action. The Global Alliance has chosen to make it available to the broader community to contribute to the discussion about sustainable food systems reform. It constitutes the work of independent authors; any views expressed in this document do not necessarily represent the views of the Global Alliance and any of its members.

Copyright © Global Alliance for the Future of Food, 2024. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution–Non-Commercial 4.0 International License.

First published in 2023.

Suggestion for referencing: *Global Alliance for the Future of Food. Cultivating Change: A Collaborative Philanthropic Initiative to Accelerate and Scale Agroecology and Regenerative Approaches*. n.p.: Global Alliance for the Future of Food, 2024.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
CONTEXT, COST, AND POTENTIAL FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION	4
Viable and systemic responses to interconnected crises exist	4
The scale of opportunity and need requires greater investment	4
Initial philanthropic partners	7
Andhra Pradesh, India—Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF)	8
Kansas, USA—Regenerative farming among wheat farmers	9
Kenya—Regenerative farming among smallholder farmers	10
Brazil—Sustainable farming for a large beef farm in the Amazon	11
Catalytic investments are required across the transition lifecycle	11
TOWARD A PHILANTHROPIC THEORY OF TRANSFORMATION	12
Aligning and leveraging philanthropic leadership	12
Promoting collaboration and synergy	12
CATALYZING ACCELERATION AND SCALE	14
Emerging acceleration and scale ideas	15
Ecosystem coordination	16
Finance and funding	16
Market development	16
Policy, advocacy, and communications	17
Research, data, and evidence	17
Systems-level implementation	17
CALL TO ACTION	18
ENDNOTES	18
ABOUT THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE	19

FOREWORD

In the summer of 2023, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) released a groundbreaking assessment of the true cost of our global food system. Assessing the debilitating toll on our economies, environments, and lives, the FAO report estimates that this cost surpasses USD 12 trillion every year. As a philanthropic alliance deeply concerned with the impacts of our global food system, the Global Alliance for the Future of Food has been elevating the true cost of food *and* exploring what it would take to accelerate and scale food production approaches that would address these costs and benefits for over a decade. We see regenerative and agroecological approaches as vital pathways to foster greater climate stability, planetary health, and biodiversity.

In 2023, the Global Alliance along with over two dozen philanthropic partners launched an initiative to explore strategies to accelerate and scale these approaches—to transition a costly global food system into one that is regenerative, renewable, resilient, interconnected, healthy, equitable, and inclusive.

In producing this report, it became ever more clear that while the cost to transition to a food system grounded in these principles may seem high, that cost is dwarfed by the true toll of our current system. We found that a tenfold increase in funding for regenerative and agroecological approaches could finance this transition and address these urgent global environmental challenges.

In December 2023, we rallied 25 leading philanthropies toward a joint call to action for such an increase. Based on our analysis, we believe a tenfold increase in funding could be catalytic in supporting the transition of half of all food production systems to regenerative and agroecological approaches by 2040 and toward all food systems transitioning toward more regenerative approaches by 2050.

This ambitious transition aligns us with the 1.5°C (2.7°F) goal of the [Paris Agreement](#). There is an urgent need to phase out fossil fuel use, especially fossil fuel-based agrochemicals in industrial agriculture and fisheries, and evidence shows that the transition toward regenerative and agroecological approaches is a critical element of the pathway forward.

This call to action for more funding to support this transition is grounded in the research you will find in this report. Pulling from analysis and evidence from around the world, *Cultivating Change* assesses what is required for a systems transformation to regenerative and agroecological approaches. We provide a rough estimate of the magnitude of financing needed for this transition, detail barriers to systems transformation, outline investment strategies to accelerate the transition, and identify catalytic acceleration levers to unlock locally led financing and transition pathways.

As we build on insights from this report to accelerate and scale regenerative and agroecological approaches, we thank our many philanthropic partners who have been investing in this transition for decades and welcome new funder and donor partners, whether private or public, philanthropic institutions, or mission-aligned investors. Together, we can support the long-term transition strategies so vitally needed by convening partners, increasing awareness of the benefits of this transition, and leveraging new funds.

We believe that the transition to regenerative and agroecological approaches to food and farming systems can help us address some of the biggest challenges of our time, offering enormous possibilities for improving lives, protecting biodiversity, and stabilizing our climate.

We welcome you on this journey.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren Baker".

LAUREN BAKER
Deputy Director
Global Alliance for the Future of Food



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna Lappé".

ANNA LAPPÉ
Executive Director
Global Alliance for the Future of Food

CONTEXT, COST, AND POTENTIAL FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

VIABLE AND SYSTEMIC RESPONSES TO INTERCONNECTED CRISES EXIST

An ambitious transition to regenerative and agroecological approaches* is necessary to preserve global biodiversity, ensure climate ability, and promote planetary health. In order to achieve this transition in the face of urgent and pressing planetary crises, rapid scaling is required across diverse landscapes and geographies.¹

Evidence from around the world has shown that agroecological transitions result in a cascade of positive results, from stable yields, crop resilience, and higher incomes for farmers, fishers, and food producers to improved nutrition, food security, and enhanced biodiversity.

Despite this potential, industrial-, energy-, and fossil fuel-intensive food systems are exacerbating climate change. Food systems account for one-third of greenhouse gas emissions and at least 15% of fossil fuel use.² The fossil fuel industry is investing heavily in petrochemicals to perpetuate the dependence of food systems.³ A shift to agroecology and regenerative approaches would not only substantially reduce fossil fuel dependency but also realize a raft of benefits for people's health, livelihoods, and the environment.

Today, industrial agriculture and food systems are the single largest user of land, a major contributor to the climate crisis, and a key driver of diet-related illnesses and biodiversity collapse.⁴ Regenerative and agroecological approaches represent an opportunity to reverse negative externalities, build resilience, improve nutrition and dietary diversity, and contribute to adaptation/mitigation.

With science and knowledge, scalable practices, and inclusive social change processes, regenerative and agroecological approaches represent some of the most viable and systemic responses to emergencies and interconnected crises, including the climate crisis and biodiversity collapse. These approaches also build social and ecological capital to accrue benefits across societal, environmental, economic, health, and well-being measures, showing a dynamic multifunctionality that can support communities overcoming converging global crises.

THE SCALE OF OPPORTUNITY AND NEED REQUIRES GREATER INVESTMENT

The hidden costs of current industrial food systems globally is at least USD 12 trillion per year.⁵ These externalities, which represent 10% of global GDP, are borne by the public sector. They include the exorbitant and growing cost of hunger and malnutrition, environmental damage, lost worker productivity, and health care. According to the World Bank, this costly system is propped up by USD 635 billion in annual global agricultural subsidies, USD 385 billion of which are considered distortive and result in harmful environmental outcomes.⁶

* For thousands of years, traditional Indigenous foodways have reflected a worldview grounded in principles of reciprocity that nourish health, culture, and nature. More recently, agroecology science, practice, and movements have drawn from and built upon Indigenous wisdom and expertise, and organic agriculture, natural farming, and regenerative agriculture have been widely adopted. Together, this family of approaches offer significant opportunities to advance healthy, equitable, renewable, resilient, inclusive, diverse, and interconnected food systems that are shaped by people, communities, and their institutions. The transformations this initiative seeks are guided by the [13 Principles of Agroecology](#) as defined by the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and aligned with the [10 Elements of Agroecology](#) adopted by the 197 FAO Members in December 2019.

Policy, research, governance, funding, and financial flows need to shift from the most harmful practices: chemical-intensive monocrop agriculture, industrial meat and fish production, and producing and packaging ultra-processed foods. Instead, deep and structural change needs to be incentivized, with a focus on supporting the farmers, fishers, landscape leaders, and organizations driving the change.

This call for transformation is nothing short of ambitious. Philanthropic partners supporting this initiative align around a shared ambition: to catalyze a transition to 50% regenerative and agroecological food production by 2040, and 100% by 2050.**

A rapid redirection of funds—philanthropic, private, and public—is required.

To determine the investment needed to support a transition to agroecology and regenerative approaches—and what is already being invested—this initiative conducted an independent analysis using public databases, desktop research, and stakeholder interviews. It estimates annual transition costs to be USD 250 to 430 billion, which is notably less than current agricultural subsidies.† Current investments in this transition are estimated at USD 44 billion per year, with many farmers, fishers, food producers, organizations, governments, and companies supporting agroecology and regenerative approaches. Philanthropy recognizes the urgency to shift financial flows and is also invested in this transition, contributing an estimated USD 300 to 700 million annually.†† In summary, funds are flowing but not enough, and tools to assess these investments are not being utilized to the extent necessary.

It is not enough to shift financial flows; power dynamics and vested interests holding back change must also be addressed. Local self-determination and participatory, democratic local governance of funding and financing structures are critical to ensuring current and historic uneven power dynamics aren't replicated.

If we want to achieve global climate, biodiversity, and food security targets—and if we are serious about food systems transformation—we estimate that at least **a tenfold increase in current annual philanthropic, public, and private investments will be necessary to support the transition to agroecology and regenerative approaches.**

The cost of transition is high, but the cost of inaction is much higher.

** Dalberg Advisors analysis: These figures align with literature outlining pathways to reach climate, biodiversity, and SDG targets.

† Independently commissioned study by the Global Alliance of the Future of Food. See the Annex for the transition costing methodology.

†† Dalberg Advisors analysis: These global USD figures paint a useful but partial picture. Due to vastly different economies, systems, and structures, the costs of this transition vary significantly between regions. A number of transition case studies were analyzed to develop these figures, which do not include livestock transitions. See the Annex for the transition costing methodology.

ABOUT THIS INITIATIVE

Since May 2023, the Global Alliance for the Future of Food (GA) has been convening partners from philanthropy and civil society to develop a shared vision and plan for action to strengthen and accelerate the regenerative, agroecological transition. Building on a decade of GA work elevating the importance of agroecology and regenerative approaches in food systems transformation, this collaboration addressed the following questions:

- 1. To meet our global targets for biodiversity, climate, and food security, what is the magnitude of action required?**
- 2. What is the cost of transitioning from business-as-usual to regenerative and agroecological production systems around the world?**
- 3. What are the barriers to change?**
- 4. What pathways and systemic drivers support regenerative and agroecological transitions?**
- 5. What are some of the most effective strategies being used by philanthropy and other partners in their funding of regenerative approaches and agroecology?**
- 6. How can philanthropy and other donors/investors align their strategies with each other and with landscape actors/organizations to ensure funds reach the ground?**
- 7. What would it take to accelerate and scale the transition?**

With initial funding from the IKEA Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, and Children's Investment Fund Foundation, the GA led a co-design and engagement process including interviews, meetings, and research, with support from Dalberg Advisors, Pollination, and Presencing Institute.

This initiative seeks to create a deeply collaborative and consultative process that puts landscape actors in the centre, builds alignment across diverse philanthropies, identifies gaps, and fosters opportunities and relationships that will lead to further collaboration and shared action. The GA is coordinating philanthropic engagement for this initiative and seeks to elevate investable opportunities across multiple organizations and acceleration levers.

INITIAL PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS

The philanthropic partners participating in this initiative address issues related to global food and agriculture at different scales, on diverse issues, and from a multitude of perspectives. They are:

AFRICAN CLIMATE FOUNDATION

AGROECOLOGY FUND

**BIOVISION FOUNDATION FOR
ECOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

BUILDERS INITIATIVE FOUNDATION

**CLIMATE EMERGENCY
COLLABORATIVE GROUP**

CHILDREN'S INVESTMENT FUND FOUNDATION

CLIMATEWORKS FOUNDATION

EROL FOUNDATION

EUROPEAN CLIMATE FOUNDATION

FUNDERS FOR REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

**GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR
THE FUTURE OF FOOD**

GRACE COMMUNICATIONS FOUNDATION

IKEA FOUNDATION

INDIA CLIMATE COLLABORATIVE

INSTITUTO CLIMA E SOCIEDADE

INSTITUTO IBIRAPITANGA

LAUDES FOUNDATION

MACDOCH FOUNDATION

MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

OAK FOUNDATION

**PLATFORM FOR AGRICULTURE
AND CLIMATE TRANSFORMATION**

PORTICUS

ROBERT BOSCH-STIFTUNG FOUNDATION

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

SALL FAMILY FOUNDATION

WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION

FOUR TRANSITION SNAPSHOTS

Philanthropy, using a wide variety of strategies and tactics, has an important role to play across the transition life cycle. Although case studies about agroecology and regenerative approaches are plentiful, detailed data and evidence about on-the-ground transition costs are limited. The following snapshots illustrate the potential and positive impacts of catalytic investments supporting regenerative and agroecological transitions.

ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA COMMUNITY MANAGED NATURAL FARMING (APCNF)



A state-wide agroecology program started in 2004 with an aim to transform the farming practices of 6 million farmers that account for 6 million hectares (14.8 million acres) of farmland and 50 million consumers.

COST OF TRANSITION

- Transition period is 5 to 8 years.
- USD 200 to 350 per farmer.
- 80% of the cost requirement is spent on training, monitoring, and measurement.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- Increased crop diversity: APCNF farms showcased greater crop diversity, averaging 4 crops per year versus the 2 on conventional farms.
- Increased yields: Yields of primary crops on APCNF farms, including paddy rice, maize, millet, finger millet, and red gram increased by an average of 11%.
- Higher incomes: Incomes of APCNF farmers increased by 49%, largely due to a 44% reduction in input costs.

Source: GIST Impact Report. [Natural Farming Through a Wide-Angle Lens: True Cost Accounting Study of Community Managed Natural Farming in Andhra Pradesh, India](#) (Switzerland and India: GIST Impact, 2023).



Large-scale wheat farmers in Kansas implemented new farm- and land-management practices (such as crop rotation, reduced tillage, cover cropping, and pesticide reduction), enabling regenerative outcomes that included improvement in soil health, increased water retention, and crop performance.

COST OF TRANSITION

- Transition period is 3 to 5 years.
- Farmers in the study found their profits typically declined USD 86 to 272 per hectare (USD 35 to 110 per acre), due to lower crop yields and the added cost of seeds and new machinery but recovered after the initial transition period.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- Input reduction: Certain farmers achieved a 50% decrease in fertilizer usage and up to a 75% reduction in pesticide application.
- Increase in profitability: Once farmers reach a steady state of regenerative practices, profitability is forecasted to increase by 70 to 120% per year over 6 to 10 years.
- Return on investment (ROI): Compelling long-term business proposition; regenerative practices are estimated to offer farmers a 15 to 25% return on investment over 10 years, as the increase in incomes over the long term offsets the short-term profit loss during the first few years of transition.

Source: World Business Council for Sustainable Development. [Cultivating Farmer Prosperity: Investing in Regenerative Agriculture](#) (n.p.: WBCSD, 2023).

KENYA REGENERATIVE FARMING AMONG SMALLHOLDER FARMERS



Farmer-led grain aggregator enterprise working with 15,000 smallholder farmers to build resilience through the adoption of regenerative practices such as intercropping, reducing tillage, and agroforestry.

COST OF TRANSITION

- Transition period is 3 to 5 years.
- On-farm cost of USD 126 per hectare (USD 51 per acre) per year.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- Increase in yields: Farmers witnessed a significant increase in yields over 3 to 5 years, up to four times the yield obtained through conventional farming.
- Reliable purchaser: Farmers work with aggregators, as there is a guarantee/contract in place to reduce risk of revenue/income fluctuation for farmers.
- Infrastructure services: Community infrastructure such as storage facilities and equipment used for regenerative practices is provided by the enterprise.

Expert interviews with stakeholders. See the [Annex](#) for further details.

BRAZIL SUSTAINABLE FARMING FOR A LARGE BEEF FARM IN THE AMAZON



A case study evaluating the transition of a beef farm in Brazil's Amazon to sustainable agricultural practices through rangeland management, sustainable intensification of pasturelands, and intercropping.

COST OF TRANSITION

- Transition period is 3 years.
- On-farm cost of USD 476 to 672 per hectare per year (USD 193 to 271 per acre per year) during the transition.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- Increase in income: Farmers witnessed a 130% increase in income over 3 years.
- Increase in productivity: Beef productivity increased by 5.7%, rising from 228 to 241 kg of live weight sold per hectare (503 to 531 pounds per 2.5 acres).
- Pastureland rejuvenation: The initiative led to the successful recovery of previously degraded pastureland.

Sources: Expert interviews with stakeholders; Aim for Climate; Pedrosa et al. "Financial Transition and Costs of Sustainable Agricultural Intensification Practices on a Beef Cattle and Crop Farm in Brazil's Amazon," *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 36(1): 26–37. doi:10.1017/S1742170519000413. See the [Annex](#) for further details.

CATALYTIC INVESTMENTS ARE REQUIRED ACROSS THE TRANSITION LIFE CYCLE

Early innovators and investors are aligning with the transition life cycle, but significant barriers are preventing even those interested in finding pathways to invest. These include the appropriate scale of financing, investment in infrastructure, as well as direct support, training, and extension. To accelerate the transition, philanthropy has the unique ability to use its funding to support and drive collective and catalytic impact in ways that break down those barriers to deeper, systemic, and transformational outcomes.

TOWARD A PHILANTHROPIC THEORY OF TRANSFORMATION

ALIGNING AND LEVERAGING PHILANTHROPIC LEADERSHIP

This collaborative of 25 philanthropic partners, and growing, aims to leverage investments to unlock new funding and financial flows to accelerate the transition to regenerative and agroecological practices to address some of the most critical issues of our era: growing hunger and food insecurity, inequality, the climate crisis, and biodiversity loss.

These partners have aligned around a shared ambition: **to catalyze a transition to 50% regenerative and agroecological systems by 2040, and to ensure all agriculture and food systems are transitioning by 2050.** This ambition is essential if we want to meet global climate, biodiversity, and food security targets and align with emerging government sustainability targets. Together, these philanthropic partners aim to coordinate funds and resources to support transitions at scale in regions where they are deeply invested, as well as identify additional countries where regenerative and agroecological transitions are taking hold and where additional support could be catalytic.†

Philanthropic partners enlist a wide variety of strategies and tactics to deliver on their food systems transformation goals. Through this initiative, philanthropic partners mapped their focus areas and grantmaking to develop a philanthropic “theory of transformation” that reflects these diverse change strategies to support the transition to regenerative and agroecological food systems.†† These approaches range from shifting markets and mindsets to policy change and direct service provision, among many other levers for change. Philanthropies engaged in this process prioritize inclusivity and strategies that result in funding flows defined by local leaders. Some seek a global narrative for agriculture, fisheries, and food systems that is tailored to diverse regions and bridging global–local connections. Others emphasize the need for shifting power dynamics, landscape leadership, investment in grassroots organizations, equity, self-determination, and guarding against oversized philanthropic influence.

PROMOTING COLLABORATION AND SYNERGY

Philanthropy and other donors are underinvested in this critical work; these philanthropic partners will mobilize additional donors to catalyze blended capital that will drive changes on the ground by filling the public/private sector finance gaps to create the enabling conditions for agroecology and regenerative approaches to flourish.

Indeed, momentum for regenerative, agroecological transitions has been growing for decades through the efforts of many organizations and funder networks, with increasing alignment around the principles of agroecology.§ Working together with landscape leaders; farmer, fisher, and Indigenous People’s organizations;

† Dalberg Advisors analysis provides more details on the process, assumptions, methodology, and financial analysis. See the [Annex](#).

†† For a complete list of philanthropic strategies, please refer to the [Annex](#).

§ These organizations and networks include but are not limited to the Agroecology Coalition, Funders for Regenerative Agriculture, and the Agroecology Fund, which are guided by the [13 Principles of Agroecology](#) as defined by the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and aligned with the [10 Elements of Agroecology](#) adopted by the 197 FAO Members in December 2019.

civil society; governments; research institutions; public sector donors; and the private sector is critical, as is linking with local and national regenerative and agroecological transition strategies.

Given the critical global challenges related to food systems and the need for rapid transformations at scale, we need to ensure philanthropic strategies promote collaboration and synergistic efforts versus strategies that are duplicative and disconnected from communities.

Diverse and grounded solutions that lead to deep systems changes will come from philanthropy better supporting coordination among themselves, civil society leaders, Indigenous Peoples organizations, policy makers, and the private and public sector.

Philanthropic leadership and catalytic investments aim to leverage significant shifts in financial flows to accelerate this transition with:

- MORE funding: Working across the finance ecosystem to catalyze new investments.
- DEEPER funding: Shifting from incremental investments to more transformative, long-term investment.
- GROUNDED funding: Directing more funds to support Indigenous peoples and local communities.
- FLEXIBLE funding: Adapting to changing conditions on the ground.
- ALIGNED AND LEVERAGED funding: Ensuring that philanthropic dollars align for impact, unlock private investment, and repurpose public dollars.

Longer-term support needed includes regional implementation and transition funding and financing, the identification of pilots, research, capacity-building, as well as operational, programmatic, and coordination funds for the organizations and landscape leaders involved. Longitudinal research and evidence-building work needs to be supported. Alongside investments in agroecology and regenerative approaches, engagement and campaigns to shift food systems away from harmful industrial practices and phase out fossil fuels use is required. Consumer-focused communications strategies and campaigns need to be developed.

The effectiveness of this work will rely on synergistic interactions of other varied stakeholders from the private sector, public sector, NGOs, and social movements, as well as formal and informal networks learning from and with each other. There is an opportunity to work with non-food agricultural sectors (textiles, fashion, cosmetics) to ensure a systems approach. This theory of transformation cuts across national borders and intervention silos, across sectors and specialized interests, connecting local and global, and sustaining across time. The Global Alliance aims to facilitate convergence around a shared vision and values to build critical mass and momentum behind tipping points that lead to healthy, equitable, renewable, resilient, inclusive, and culturally diverse food systems that dynamically endure over time.

CATALYZING ACCELERATION AND SCALE

Through a co-design process with partners on the ground in key geographies and who have long histories of supporting landscape transitions, we have identified key acceleration and scale levers. While co-design processes take time, it is important to ensure that actions taken are contextually relevant and impactful, leading to higher success and implementation rates. Importantly, co-design processes also surface existing initiatives that can be supported and scaled across all levels and levers, prioritizing coordination and amplification over duplication.

PRINCIPLES THAT INFORM OUR WORK

Principles for WHAT we want to achieve include:

- **Prioritize transformation:** Focus on catalyzing deep regenerative* and agroecological approaches by matching strategies and funds across the transition life cycle, from incremental to transformational.
- **Participatory and inclusive:** Center the needs and perspectives of land stewards, Indigenous communities, local cooperatives and institutions, and marginalized communities.
- **Outcome-focused flexibility:** Emphasize transparent outcomes, allowing for local adaptation.
- **Catalytic funding:** Target opportunities with strong and holistic returns on investment and additionality; bolster innovation through institutions and inventive approaches.

Principles for HOW we work together include:

- **Foster locally led adaptation:** Adopt principles developed by the International Institute for Environment and Development.
- **Promote power shifting to local leadership and organizations:** Ensure all stakeholders, including farmers, Indigenous communities, and grassroots organizations, are involved in acceleration strategies.
- **Amplify, don't duplicate:** Coordinate and amplify existing efforts, avoiding duplication.
- **Uphold diverse evidence and holistic outcomes:** Base decisions on quantitative and qualitative case studies and data-driven insights.
- **Multisectoral collaboration:** Encourage collaboration across sectors, bridging the gap between agriculture, fisheries, health, environment, and more for holistic impact.

* We are using the [13 Principles of Agroecology](#) to define “deep regenerative.”

EMERGING ACCELERATION AND SCALE IDEAS

This collaborative philanthropic initiative will support ecosystem coordination and shift more capital—philanthropic, public, and private—toward the drivers of systems change. Philanthropy can align to scale and mobilize additional donors through their national–global influence as well as catalyze creative investment vehicles to drive market and ecosystem changes on the ground by filling the public/private sector funding gaps to enable landscape-level transformation. The following initial and preliminary acceleration and scale ideas have emerged through the co-design process:

ECOSYSTEM COORDINATION

Coordinate in regions and across ecosystems, uplifting the voices of traditionally marginalized land stewards and identifying priority areas for action.

FINANCE AND FUNDING

Connect, support, and develop financing channels and ecosystems that enhance local- and national-level organizations' access to funding and financing.

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Support circular and local economies that improve consumer access and generate demand via private and public sector purchasing.

POLICY, ADVOCACY, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Addressing threats and barriers that address lock-ins and promote participatory and democratic local food governance systems that shift narratives, policies, and subsidies that lock in the status quo.

RESEARCH, DATA, AND EVIDENCE

Increase availability and access of relevant data and insights to inform best practices and policies and address evidence gaps, narratives, and mindsets.

SYSTEMS-LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

Increase capital, capacity, and technical assistance for transitioning farmers and support for scaling of existing technologies and practices.

ECOSYSTEM COORDINATION

- **Support a neutral entity** to: 1) facilitate coordination across vertical and horizontal levels in regions and across ecosystems; 2) identify priority areas for action, and measure effectiveness of interventions to improve coordination; and 3) address power dynamics and uplift the voices of traditionally marginalized land stewards.
- **Country/regional acceleration platforms** linking national governments, farmer/fisher, civil society, and Indigenous Peoples organizations, social movements actors, research institutes, and others responsible for implementing national and landscape transition strategies.
- **Convening body** to align decision-making, identify key priorities, disseminate evidence, and develop strategic communications, as well as support horizontal ecosystem coordination within and across transition geographies.

FINANCE AND FUNDING

- **A multilayered finance approach includes:** 1) connecting, supporting, and developing financing ecosystems that enhance local- and national-level organizations' access to funding and financing; 2) developing, socializing, and capturing learnings from financial instruments, templates, and best practices; and 3) leveraging environment and climate-development financing and incentive programs.
- **Finance unlocking mechanisms** including grants, pooled funds, direct investment, blended capital, patient capital, direct investment, and ecosystem service payments with a focus on addressing key barriers related to pipeline development, connecting projects, organizations, farmers/fishers to the right forms of funding, investment and capital, de-risking capital, project preparation, technical assistance, demand aggregation, and supply–demand matching.
- **Mapping of effective financing mechanisms and structures** by landscape, stakeholder type, instrument type, etc.

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

- **Market development mechanisms** focused on enhancing supply chains, developing participatory guarantee systems, improving consumer access to markets, supporting circular and local economies that foster strong territorial market systems, and generating at-scale demand via private and public sector purchasing.
- **Regenerative, agroecological value chain development** by helping farmers, fishers, and intermediaries understand regenerative requirements, guaranteeing minimum prices/volumes and supporting local infrastructure development.

POLICY, ADVOCACY, AND COMMUNICATIONS

- **Policy platform** that mobilizes funding; establishes, enhances, and redirects (esp. distortive) policies and subsidies; promotes participatory and democratic local food governance systems; and shifts narratives at the global and local level, especially horizontally across local markets.
- **Global, regional and national policy advocacy** on increasing/reallocating subsidies toward agroecology and regenerative approaches and reducing distortive subsidies.

RESEARCH, DATA, AND EVIDENCE

- **Locally informed centralized and open-source data platform** that is continuously updating and building in data points from across programs, regions, and levels of transition. Providing tailored insights to relevant stakeholders (farmers, investors, governments, etc.) to promote transparency; address evidence gaps, narratives, and mindsets; inform best practices and policies.
- **Technical research and development** working closely with country acceleration platforms and national research centres.
- **Digitally enabled infrastructure** focused on innovation and social capital.
- **Peer-to-peer learning initiatives** that enable learning and exchange, especially with youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples organizations, and enable effective knowledge generation and dissemination.

SYSTEMS-LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

- **Multipronged systems-level implementation support**, including investments in context-specific research, development, and knowledge dissemination; increased capital, capacity, and technical assistance for transitioning farmers; and support for scaling of existing technologies and practices.
- **Open-source database** of holistic landscape-level metrics (tracking relevant environmental, social, human, and economic outcomes), transition costs, yield fluctuation, and change in metrics post transitions to refine definitions, measure progress, and evaluate transition costs and outcomes across landscapes.
- **Longitudinal research** to track outcomes over 5- to 10-year transition cycles.

Regional engagement to ground truth acceleration priorities is starting in geographies where transitions are underway and philanthropy is currently most active: India, Brazil, East Africa, USA, and EU. Additional engagements will happen in more geographies over time. Analysis in the different geographies is being undertaken to understand current funding flow mechanisms and the transition ecosystem.

CALL TO ACTION

There is no time to wait. The acceleration of regenerative and agroecological approaches is centrally important to addressing multiple and interconnected global crises we face. We know that transformation is multidimensional, multifaceted, multilevel, multisectoral, multinational, and augmentative. Transformation will require multiple interventions flowing together to generate mammoth changes in global systems. Facilitating convergence around shared visions and values and building critical mass and momentum toward tipping points is crucial. Philanthropy has a role to play connecting and coordinating to support and enhance the many collaborations, alliances, and movements aiming to accelerate regenerative and agroecological approaches.

Our call to action is to catalyze significant new funding from a range of financial actors to support the transition to 50% regenerative and agroecological systems by 2040, and to ensure all agriculture and food systems are transitioning by 2050.

This requires a tenfold increase in current annual philanthropic, public, and private investments for regenerative and agroecological transitions to address urgent global agricultural and environmental challenges.

Most immediately, philanthropic partners are organizing regionally to gain a deeper understanding of transition processes underway. Regional convenings to discuss and define acceleration levers, mechanisms, and needs are planned, including cross-regional collaboration and early communications and narrative work. Network mapping will elevate key implementation partners in specific countries and regions where there is interest from donors. Donor and private/public sector outreach and engagement is required, as well as continued investment in transparent and holistic outcomes frameworks that can be adapted across contexts.

Regenerative and agroecological approaches are vital pathways to foster greater climate stability, planetary health, and biodiversity. Ensuring a swift and systems-wide transition to these approaches will require all of us coming to the table, including those funders who helped launch this initiative as well as new public-sector donor agencies, philanthropic institutions, and mission-aligned investors. With a focus initially in key regions where there are opportunities for coordination, we will build on successes, integrate lessons learned, and elevate case studies of impact to further hasten the transition. Together, we are eager to build support all around the world for the strategies required for this much-needed transformation.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Steve Brescia (ed.), *Fertile Ground: Scaling Agroecology from the Ground Up*. Oakland, CA: Food First Books, 2017; and Mateo Mier y Terán Giménez Cacho et al., “[Bringing Agroecology to Scale](#)” (pp. 637–665), 2018.
- 2 Global Alliance for the Future of Food, *Power Shift: Why We Need to Wean Our Industrial Food Systems Off Fossil Fuels*, 2023.
- 3 Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), *Fossils, Fertilizers, and False Solutions: How Laundering Fossil Fuels in Agrochemicals Puts the Climate and the Planet at Risk*, 2022.
- 4 Benton et al., “Food System Impacts on Biodiversity Loss: Three Levers for Food System Transformation in Support of Nature,” (2021). doi 10.13140/RG.2.2.34045.28640.
- 5 FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture*, 2023.
- 6 World Bank, *Detox Development*, 2023.



ABOUT THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE

The Global Alliance for the Future of Food is a strategic alliance of philanthropic foundations working together and with others to transform global food systems now and for future generations. We believe in the urgency of transforming global food systems, and in the power of working together and with others to effect positive change. Food systems reform requires that we craft new and better solutions at all scales through a systems-level approach and deep collaboration among philanthropy, researchers, grassroots movements, the private sector, farmers and food systems workers, Indigenous Peoples, government, and policymakers.

www.futureoffood.org

