

SUSTAINABLE FARMING

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 1

SPRING 2024 | \$9

FILTHY RICH
A WEALTH OF NUTRIENTS
BENEATH YOUR FEET

PLUS
REGENERATIVE VITICULTURE
HOSTING ON-FARM EVENTS
NEW AGW LABEL RULES



STEADY AS SHE GOES



We are now welcoming the first cohort of farmers participating in our USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities grant project. In partnership with Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) and Soil Health Institute (SHI), this three-year project incentivizes producers to implement climate-smart practices, get Certified Regenerative by AGW, and access growing markets. Although the 2023 interest period is now closed, we anticipate another enrollment this summer. To register your interest, please visit agreenerworld.org/climate-smart or email info@agreenerworld.org now.

Regenerative claims continue to dominate the marketplace and there are a variety of regenerative certifications out there—all slightly nuanced in their approach. While the debate rages about what regenerative means (Does it have to be Organic? Can you till at all?), we believe in meeting people where they are on an accountable journey toward improved sustainability. Certified Regenerative by AGW can work well on its own or combined with other certifications, depending on your goals and market needs. Find out more on page 7.

We're attending events like the EcoFarm Conference (CA), Natural Products Expo West (CA) and PASA (PA), doing all we can to promote your farming practices and certified products. This includes conversations at our exhibit booth, meeting with buyers, and discussing market opportunities with retailers large and small

to develop supply chains for AGW-certified products. Don't forget that we can provide materials, talking points, presentation slides, and more to help you promote your products and certification at events you are attending. Get in touch to find out more.

Thanks to everyone who participated in our 2023 Producer Survey. We are using your responses to shape our services and programs for the year ahead, and recently shared highlights on the key takeaways—and the actions we are taking based on your feedback. We know it takes time out of your day to respond, but we are grateful for your opinions and feedback.

Building on our priorities from 2023, we will continue to focus on supply chain development for AGW-certified products and increasing transparency at scale. We look forward to offering retail support for new outlets selling AGW-certified products using your vendor listing submissions. We are focused on recruiting brands, further processors, and new farmers to the program and we're ramping up our communication efforts to educate consumers about the importance of high-welfare, sustainable farming. We are excited about what's ahead, and look forward to working with you in 2024—and beyond.

Emily Moose
Executive Director
A Greener World

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CRASH “COW”?

There's growing investor unease over lab-grown “meat”

Funding for cultivated or lab-grown “meat” startups declined by 78% between 2022 and 2023, from US\$807 million to US\$177 million, according to preliminary data from AgFunder, a global foodtech and agtech venture capitalist.

“The last 12 months have been challenging to say the least for cultivated meat and seafood companies trying to raise capital,” reports food journalist, Elaine Watson, in *AgFunderNews*, blaming a general risk aversion among venture capitalists, as well as rising concerns about scalability and uncertainties about the timescale of achieving cost parity.

“From the very outset, the development of lab-grown ‘meat’ has been marketed to venture capitalists and the public alike as a panacea that will make the care, slaughter and processing of farmed animals a thing of the past—and with them, the environmental harms associated with industrial livestock production,” says Emily Moose, AGW’s Executive Director. “So it’s no surprise to learn that when the environment and sustainability promises fail to appear, private investors become increasingly nervous.”

After early positive coverage of the claimed benefits of lab-grown “meat,” the media narrative has now soured. A recent article in the *New Scientist* journal claims that “Lab-grown meat could be 25 times worse for the climate

than beef” if current production methods were scaled up, while market analysts anticipate 70%-90% of businesses will fail within the next year, with significant market consolidation.

In light of falling private investment, many biotech businesses are calling for government support, arguing that it is essential for future food security. “My concern is that many of these start-ups are now seeking financial support from the government to stay afloat,” says Moose. “Yet there’s absolutely no justification for public dollars to go into this unproven technology, especially when there are viable, sustainable alternatives right in front of us.”

“Thousands of farmers and ranchers could benefit from support to assist in the transition to regenerative practices, with proven benefits to farming families, animal welfare, the environment, and rural economies,” adds Moose. “And while this story might not fit neatly into the venture capitalist narrative, evidence already shows it can work at every scale.”

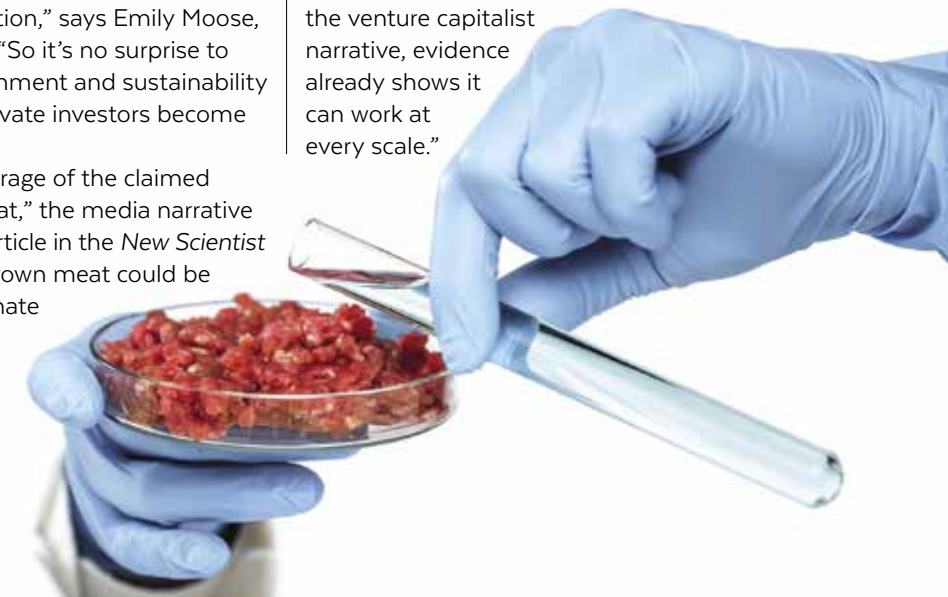


PHOTO: D-KHENE/ISTOCK

IN THE NEWS...

CRISPR PIGS

A British animal genetics company is seeking FDA approval to market genetically engineered (GE) pigs for human consumption.

Genus has used CRISPR-Cas9 technology to create pigs that are resistant to porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) virus, which is estimated to cost farmers US\$2.7 billion a year globally, and claims the development could eliminate PRRS in swine. This would be the first GM animals to be used for large-scale meat production.

U.S. AG CENSUS

U.S. farmland decreased from 900 million acres in 2017 to 880.1 million acres in 2022, according to the latest USDA Census of Agriculture.

Although the number of farms also declined by 142,000 farms (6.9%) in the same period, the total number of producers did not change significantly, holding steady at 3.4 million. The size of the average farm increased by 5%, while the average age of the farmer rose to 58.1 years old, up 0.6 years from 2017.

Visit nass.usda.gov/AgCensus

CLIMATE-SMART

Work is now underway with the first cohort of farmers in the USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities grant.

Awarded to AGW, in partnership with Rural Advancement Foundation International and the Soil Health Institute, this three-year project incentivizes producers to implement climate-smart practices. We anticipate another enrolment period in summer 2024, so get your application in as soon as possible!

Visit agreenerworld.org/climate-smart

MAPPING TUTORIAL

A new free online tutorial is available to help you create digital maps of your land, thanks to the new Climate-Smart Commodities grant project.

Helen Boniface from the Soil Health Institute explains how to easily and quickly make property and field boundary maps using the Google My Maps, useful for all aspects of farm and ranch management.

Click on this QR link for the video or email info@agreenerworld.org





IN THE NEWS...

FATIGO/STOCK



REGENERATIVE BLOOMING

The regenerative agriculture market is forecast to increase by US\$921.18 million over the next four years, according to a new report from Technavio, a leading global market research company.

Published in January 2024, *Regenerative Agriculture Market Analysis* reveals that major global food and beverage companies, such as General Mills, Nestle SA, Unilever and Danone, are “increasingly looking to incorporate regenerative agricultural practices into their supply chains.”

However, the report suggests that widespread adoption is “hindered by a lack of knowledge among farmers and consumers alike,” and that many farmers, particularly in low-income group areas, “can be resistant to change because of long-standing practices and a lack of awareness of regenerative farming.” Similarly, a gap in consumer

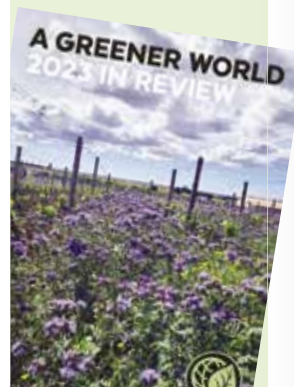
awareness “prevents market growth analysis due to a lack of demand and supply.”

“The growing market presents exciting opportunities for businesses using our trusted Certified Regenerative by AGW label,” says Emily Moose, AGW’s Executive Director. “It’s clear the regenerative market represents an opportunity to create real change at scale and to reconnect food producers and the public in a fair, respectful and transparent way. But as more agribusiness corporations jump on the bandwagon to reap the potential rewards, the need for rigorous, meaningful verification of responsible regenerative practices becomes even greater in order to combat the potential threat of ‘greenwashing’ and ensure consumer trust going forward.”

Visit technavio.com

2023 IN REVIEW

“Our latest annual review highlights our activities and the key successes of over 6,000 farmers and ranchers who we work with, responsible for managing more than 3 million acres of land across the world,” says Katie Amos, AGW’s Director of Communications and Outreach. “We also explore our key goals for the next year—and beyond.” agreenerworld.org/library



RIGHT: MORNING COWS | FAR RIGHT: PEOPLEIMAGES/ISTOCK



GOOD FOOD FINALISTS

Three Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW cheese producers were selected as finalists for the upcoming 2024 Good Food Awards competition at a blind tasting held in San Francisco in mid-January.

Green Dirt Farm’s Prairie Tomme cheese, Tomales Farmstead Creamery’s Buona Fortuna cheese and Liwa cheese, and Working Cows Dairy’s Rinske’s Farmstead cheese (Rinske de Jong pictured above) were all selected as finalists for the highly competitive Cheese category. That is four AGW-certified cheeses out of the 20 finalists.

The Good Food Awards recognize companies dedicated to sustainable, delicious, and responsibly crafted food and drink across the nation. The judges evaluated over 1,650 products across 18 categories in a blind tasting, selecting 311 finalists. Winners will be announced on April 29 at the Good Food Awards Ceremony in Portland, Oregon. Visit goodfoodfdn.org

FARM PHOTOS

Would you like free exposure for your farm and products?

“If you have any new or favorite photos of your animals or farms and ranches, or your AGW-certified products, we invite you to share them with us so that we can help promote your farm and brand,” says Callie Casteel, AGW’s Marketing Services Coordinator.

Send to info@agreenerworld.org

CALLING FOR EQUITY

A new report has identified over 60 recommendations to bring more fairness to policies affecting farming and rural communities in America.

Published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Equity Commission, *Shaping Change at USDA* is a “comprehensive guide for long-lasting change within USDA programs, policies, and procedures.”

The recommendations address a range of long-standing inequity issues, including the care of farmworkers, the implementation of nutrition assistance programs, equity access issues for low-interest farming loans, increasing the development of housing, making it easier for farmers to qualify for conservation programs, and making the language more accessible.

Download the full report at usda.gov/equity-commission/reports



CALLS FOR PARADIGM SHIFT

A move to sustainable food systems could bring US\$10 trillion benefits a year, improve human health and ease the climate crisis.

As reported in *The Guardian*, a new report from the Food System Economics Commission estimates the hidden costs of existing food systems in terms of climate change, human health, nutrition and natural resources at US\$15 trillion. Along with the devastating climate and environmental impacts, the new study predicts a ‘business-as-usual’ approach would

leave 640 million people underweight by 2050, while obesity would increase by 70%.

The researchers call for a shift of subsidies and tax incentives away from destructive large-scale monocultures that rely on fertilizers, pesticides and forest clearance, towards supporting smallholders who could turn farms into carbon sinks with more space for wildlife. The proposed transition would help to limit global heating to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, halve nitrogen run-offs from agriculture, and eradicate undernutrition by 2050.



PESTICIDE FOUND IN MAJOR CEREAL BRANDS

A new study has found residues of the plant growth regulator chlormequat in urine samples of four out of five Americans.

Published in February 2024 in the *Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology*, the researchers detected the presence of chlormequat in over 80% of urine samples taken between 2017 and 2023, and in 92% of well-known oat-based foods purchased in May 2023, including Cheerios and Quaker Oats brands.



Chlormequat is commonly applied to cereal crops in Canada and Europe to prevent lodging. Although not currently approved for use on edible crops in the U.S., treated imported foods are allowed to enter the country and regulators are considering approving its use. Chlormequat has been associated with reduced fertility and harm to developing fetuses in animal studies. However, the researchers note that the levels found in study participants were far lower than maximum safe residues set by regulators in the U.S. and Europe.

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or visit
agreenerworld.org/get-involved/email-sign-up



Your donation creates an environmental legacy

A Greener World is a nonprofit whose work is made possible by donations from people like you. Because we are not dependent on certification fees, we can remain impartial in our auditing, resulting in unrivaled integrity and trust. Your donations help us stay independent. Will you partner with us to build a greener world by giving today?

Find out more at agreenerworld.org/donate

Opinion

REGENERATIVE IS FOR EVERYONE

Organic certification should not be a prerequisite, says Emily Moose

Ever since “regenerative agriculture” emerged as a concept, a debate has raged over exactly what it means.

Perhaps the most inflammatory question is whether regenerative agriculture should first be certified organic. It’s a worthy discussion, particularly as the labeling landscape becomes increasingly crowded and farmer bandwidth to maintain certifications is finite.

To be clear, I believe in the spirit of the organic principles. Many of our AWA standards have roots in EU organic standards and I have great respect for organic farmers. That said, as an organization dedicated to meeting farmers where they are, we have always argued that organic certification shouldn’t be a pre-requisite for regenerative agriculture. Indeed, the opportunity cost of limiting regenerative certification to (already) certified organic farms is more than we (in the broadest sense) can collectively afford.

Certified organic land represents less than 1% of U.S. farmland; just over 2% in Canada; and just over 9% in the EU. In total, just 1.6% of global farmland is certified organic. With the overwhelming environmental and social challenges facing us, why should our focus be so narrow? What if we could reduce agrochemical use, increase soil cover and biodiversity, lower tillage and emissions, and improve worker and animal welfare on the other 98.4%?

While people often assume organic principles are ‘regenerative’, the organic standards do not require the benchmarking of things like soil health, water or air quality, or wildlife species/habitats, social fairness, nor measurement over time to ascertain improvements (or otherwise).

Certified Regenerative by AGW addresses all of these metrics—and more. And a farm can apply both organic and regenerative approaches simultaneously and maintain both certifications. Certified Regenerative by AGW complements—

and arguably enhances—organic certification and we certify many farms that hold both.

There are numerous differences and overlaps between Certified Regenerative by AGW and organic certification, but the key difference is that Certified Regenerative is outcome-based, focused on regeneration and measured improvements of ecosystem. Organic certification is input-based, focused on the use of non-synthetic materials and prohibiting artificial pesticides and fertilizers.

In our experience, farmers reject organic certification for a variety of (understandable) reasons, including the inability to source affordable organic feed, disagreement with the prohibition on therapeutic antibiotic use, lack of market demand, or incompatibility with existing conservation plans. Many are excited to find an alternative, practical certification that still provides meaningful assurances on the things their customers care about: no GMOs, responsible antibiotic use, emissions reductions, improved ecosystem health, and benefits for people and animals.

Fairly or not, organic agriculture has long had a reputation of being exclusive and has suffered from perceptions about its attitude toward farmers who aren’t certified. Yes, ‘Big Ag’ has certainly stoked this perception, but it’s not entirely unfounded. At AGW, we approach certification as a partnership. While we loudly criticize agribusiness corporations, we never demonize individual farmers.

The practices many now call ‘regenerative’ predate organic, resting on a foundation of thousands of years of indigenous agricultural traditions to which we owe our very existence. While no certification can fully encapsulate this intimate connection to agriculture, we believe Certified Regenerative by AGW is a meaningful, practical and achievable program that brings transparency to food production and the opportunity to create positive change at scale.

Emily Moose is AGW’s Executive Director



LEFT: FAMILLE GASSIER (LEFT) | RIGHT: FRANCKREPORTER/ISTOCK

According to the Regenerative Viticulture Foundation, less than 20% of vineyards around the world have signed up to some kind of sustainability scheme. Of these, just 6% are certified organic, while less than 1% are certified biodynamic. In this context, the state of regenerative viticulture is still embryonic by comparison. Yet, just like regenerative agriculture, the level of interest in regenerative wine production around the world is growing exponentially.

What Is regenerative?

Although humans have cultivated grapevines for thousands of years, it is only in the last few decades that the devastating impact on vineyard soils and biodiversity from the application of intensive production methods and the widespread use of agrochemicals has become so apparent.

Regenerative viticulture is arguably a return to tradition, but in a modern context. At its heart, it is about regenerating or restoring the soil and local environment. The underlying principles focus on working with the environment and its natural fauna (rather than against them) to rebuild soil health, enhance biodiversity, sequester atmospheric carbon, and improve water cycles, as well as consider the human element of those that live and work the land. Key practices include minimal soil disturbance, cover cropping, composting, integrated livestock grazing, agroforestry, and holistic land management.

The overarching goal is to create resilient viticulture systems that can adapt to changing environmental conditions and reduce reliance on inputs while delivering long-term sustainability and productivity and enhancing the lives of those working in the industry. In practice, this includes:

- ▶ Introducing nitrogen-fixing plants as cover crops and/or companion plants
- ▶ Integrating livestock, like chickens or sheep, to produce the manure that is essential to feeding the soil naturally
- ▶ Adopting no- or low-tilling practices to minimize disruption of the soil ecosystem and enhance the water-holding capacity of the soil
- ▶ Reducing reliance on chemical inputs like synthetic fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides
- ▶ Increasing business resilience to climate change.

Terroir

In a recent article on regenerative viticulture in *Sommeliers Choice*, Charlie Leary argues that “soils should be looked after like the treasure for future quality products that they are.” Perhaps the reason why the regenerative approach resonates strongly in the modern viticulture world is that it aligns so closely with the deep-held French concept of ‘terroir’: the idea that a great wine gains much of its character from the particular ecosystem where the grapes were grown. For, as Mimi Casteel of Bethel Heights Vineyard in Oregon says, “the real ceiling on terroir is the biology, the life that built the place that you’re from.”

A toolkit

Speaking at the launch of the Regenerative Viticulture Foundation in 2023, Master of Wine Justin Howard-Sneyd described regenerative agriculture as “a toolkit rather than a prescriptive set of rules.” While the approach of a vineyard owner in England will be significantly different to that of a grower in California, he argues, both can adopt regenerative practices that will help to improve soil health and biodiversity where they are.

A NEW VINTAGE

Regenerative practices are transforming the wine industry. Wayne Copp raises a glass





Phacelia cover crops between vine rows



Sheep control weeds and add fertility



Wild flowers will attract pest-predators

FAMILLE GASSIER (x3)

This sentiment is closely echoed by Dr Jamie Goode in his new book, *Regenerative Viticulture*: “There is no recipe. Rather, it’s about taking the regenerative toolkit and applying it in intelligent ways, taking into account the characteristics of the place.”

While regenerative has become a buzzword in the wine world, there is still some confusion about how it differs from organic (or wider sustainable claims). In a nutshell, organic and sustainable approaches tend to focus on excluding or restricting key inputs, such as synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. But as Jancis Robinson points out, organic or sustainable farming practices “have the potential to be damaging to soils, such as regular tractor use, especially on wet soils, causing compaction, and the use of copper, which causes toxic contamination of the soil.” While people often assume organic principles are ‘regenerative,’ organic standards do not actually require the benchmarking of things like soil health, water or air quality, or wildlife species and habitats, social fairness, nor measurement over time to ascertain improvements (or otherwise). This is not a criticism of the organic movement, which has led the way in promoting sustainable food and farming; it’s simply that these key aspects are not benchmarked or monitored under organic certification.

The regenerative approach arguably builds on this foundation and is broadly focused on regeneration and measured improvements of ecosystems through measuring and monitoring metrics like soil health, water and air quality, wildlife species and habitats, and so on. Of course, a vineyard can apply both organic and regenerative approaches simultaneously (see facing page). But while the strict regime of organic certification may present an insurmountable barrier to many vineyards, it is fair to say that the vast majority could (and should) adopt regenerative practices, and thus begin their regenerative journey.

Certification matters

From a sommelier or wine director’s perspective, it is clear that regenerative viticulture is attracting significant attention in the wine world. Given the high level of interest—and the increasing numbers who claim to practice and deliver its outcomes—the role of independent certification has never been more important. Indeed, the risk of greenwashing (and the ‘Wild West’ of the carbon offsetting market) highlights the need for robust verification of any claims being made.

Certified Regenerative by AGW offers a unique, plan-based approach with standards that encapsulate the main pillars of the practice, namely the stewardship of soil, water, air, and biodiversity, and the care and context of humans in this space in an ethical and community sense.

Accredited to ISO 17065, we offer an objective and credible verification and seeks to ‘meet producers where they are.’ Our unique ethos is one of partnership, rather than direct prescription. We will work with you to develop your own comprehensive management plan, which identifies realistic and meaningful goals for improvement across the main regenerative pillars that can be measure and monitored over time. We fully recognize that a vineyard in the U.S. will have very different growing dynamics and challenges compared to one located in the south of France. Our innovative approach takes into account the unique nature of different systems, soil types, climate, aspect and management of operations. An annual on-site inspection ensures the producer is on track for the journey as originally agreed.

We’re already working with some of the top viticulturists in the world. If you are looking for a trusted, respected, global regenerative certification, we are ready to work alongside you to help you achieve your goals.

With thanks to Plumpton College, East Sussex, UK. Wayne Copp is AGW’s Executive Director Europe

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Regenerative Viticulture Foundation is a global nonprofit body made-up of wine producers, scientists, educators, agriculture advisors, and environmental organizations working to help reverse climate change. Find out more at [regenerativeviticulture.org](https://www.regenerativeviticulture.org)

Regenerative Viticulture by Dr. Jamie Goode is the first book specifically to address regenerative viticulture, written from a scientific perspective but in a very accessible, readable way. Self-published via Amazon



Isabel and Michael Gassier produce regenerative wine par excellence

Famille Gassier is one of the most renowned estates in France’s Southern Rhone appellation of the Costières de Nîmes. The Gassier family has been producing wine at the estate for five generations and Michel and his daughter, Isabel, have recently embraced regenerative practices:

“Merely transitioning to organic practices in 2007 proved insufficient. Though we ardently uphold organic principles, the European certification process is too prescriptive. Some of its regulations hinder our efforts to enhance the resilience of our vineyards and ecosystems.

“Isabel’s enthusiasm for regenerative viticulture blossomed during her tenure at Enterprise, a California vineyard management company committed to this approach.

“As I learned more, the shift to regenerative agriculture seemed like a natural progression for us. Drawing inspiration from both local and international winemakers and farmers, we embraced regenerative methods when Isabel returned home while maintaining our organic principles.

“To achieve our goals, we chose A Greener World, a certification program developed by and for farmers, known for its personalized technical support. Certified Regenerative by AGW provides a clear framework for identifying, measuring, and monitoring our own targets, with a unique regenerative plan and annual auditing to independently verify progress. It demands transparency from vine to bottle, ensuring our entire operation adheres to measurable and quantifiable objectives.

“Balancing ecology with economics is central to our business approach and regenerative agriculture helps us achieve our environmental and economic goals by focusing on vineyard autonomy,

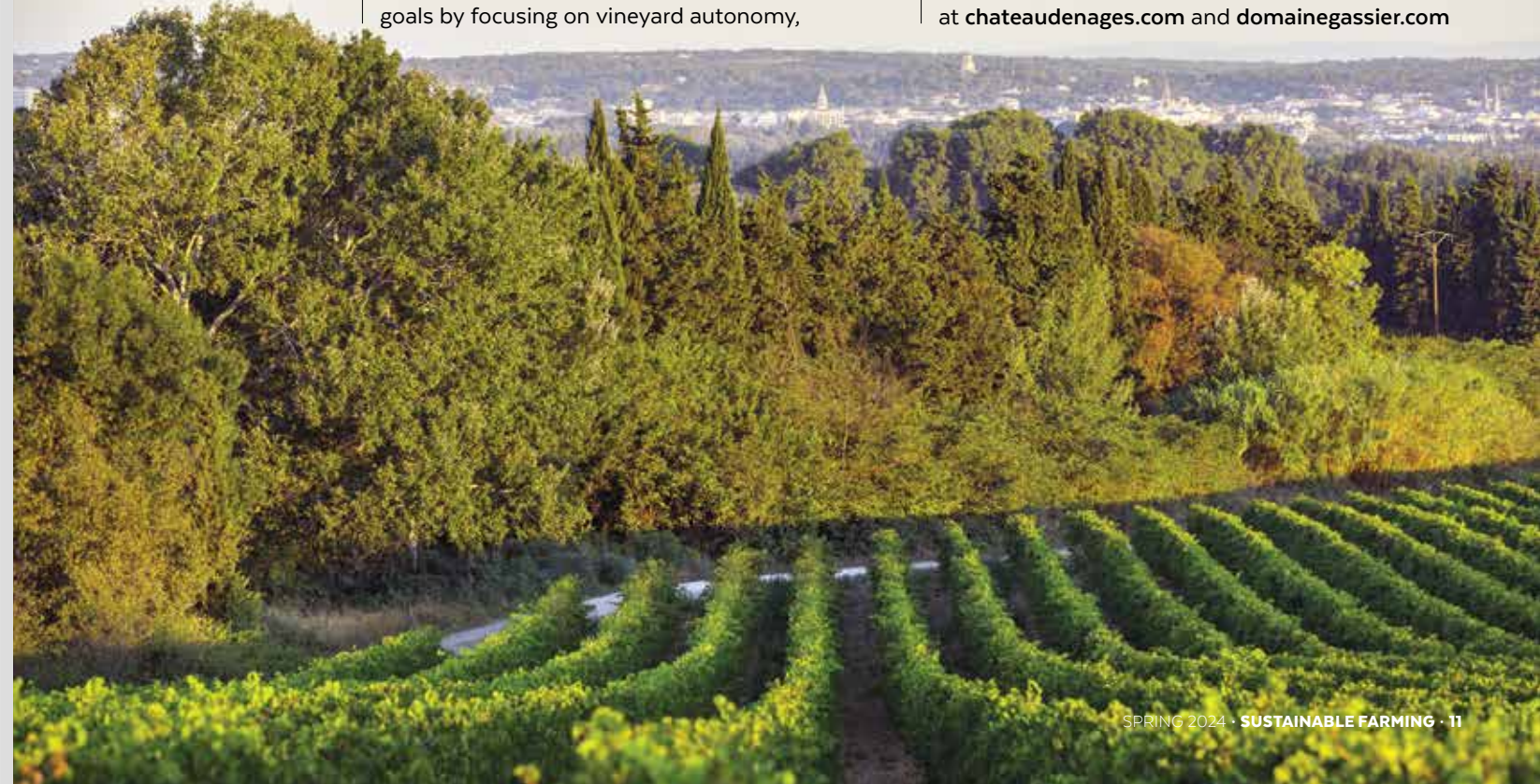
ecosystem biodiversity, quality of workplace life, and profitability.

“One of our key concerns is the impact of climate change—both locally and globally. We are adopting practices to improve soil structure and water retention, which also aids carbon sequestration, water quality enhancement and biodiversity. Focusing on soil regeneration also bolsters the vitality of our vines, enhancing grape quality and allowing our wines to exemplify their true expression of terroir.”

Goals and commitments established in the Gassier regenerative plan include:

- ▶ Boosting soil organic matter by 50% by adopting a number of practices, including applying 600 tons of their own compost and going no-till on at least 40% of their vineyards, a real challenge in the Mediterranean climate.
- ▶ Diversifying crops and reforesting certain areas of the estate, experimenting with mixed fruit farming and planting tree lines on the north side of their crops.
- ▶ Creating natural habitats by planting over 500 meters (1,640 feet) of native hedges annually, allocating at least 20% of the land to pastures and meadows, and restoring the natural course of the stream that runs through our property.
- ▶ Introducing animals into the system by extending grazing agreements with local shepherds and encouraging pest predators, such as bats and birds, by installing nest boxes.
- ▶ Paying staff fairly and providing quality accommodations and appropriate shelter and facilities, especially during hot weather.

Find out more about the estates of Famille Gassier at [chateaudenages.com](https://www.chateaudenages.com) and [domainegassier.com](https://www.domainegassier.com)



GET ON MY LAND!

Opening up your gates to the public can enrich the farm and foster sustainable connections, says Suzanne Kapral

If you were to see a path leading to new opportunities for your farm, would you take it? What if this path included proven steps to widen your outreach, cultivate new customers, and increase your bottom line?

The creative blend of farming and tourism known as 'agritourism' can open an exciting gateway to untapped potential for you, your farm, your family and your community. And you don't need to spend a ton of money or hours of precious downtime to make your on-farm event successful. Read on to see if agritourism is a good fit for you.

Creating connections

As a farmer, you are no stranger to hard work and the ever-present need to navigate the changing landscape of agriculture. Agritourism offers an opportunity to not only educate and entertain, but to forge lasting connections with a diverse range of like-minded people.

Imagine welcoming visitors to your farm, offering them a unique firsthand experience of rural life, and igniting their passion for sustainable agriculture. By inviting guests to step into your world and witness the beauty and authenticity of farming, you have the power to cultivate a devoted community of followers, supporters, and patrons.

Whether you're looking to expand into farm tours, host farm-to-table events, or offer workshops and educational programs, the opportunities are vast with exciting rewards. You can transform your farm into an immersive destination, attracting visitors from your local area and beyond; those

Take a tractor ride

who seek hands-on experiences and a deeper connection with the origins of their food and clothing.

Raising awareness

Let's begin with some proven steps to catch and keep the attention of the people you want to attract. Targeted and creative pre-event marketing is the hook and net that will move people from a place of passive "sounds cool" to active "sign me up!" Before you launch your event marketing outreach, think about "why" someone would want to head over to your farm for an event. What's in it for them? Plenty ...

Reconnect with nature: Agritourism provides a refreshing escape from the often-crushing intensity and speed of life.

Support local economy: Agritourism provides the public with an opportunity to directly support local farmers and contribute to the revitalization of rural communities. By purchasing farm-fresh products, participating in farm-based activities, and spreading the word about the farm experience, visitors become advocates for sustainable agriculture and agents of positive change.

Health and wellbeing: Spending time on a farm engages the senses and offers an experience that promotes mental and physical wellbeing. Carefully interacting with animals, participating in outdoor activities, and breathing fresh air creates a positive impact on overall health, sleep patterns, and happiness.



Strengthening the bond with food: Agritourism deepens the connection between consumers and their food. By watching the production process and understanding the values and practices behind it, guests can make more informed choices about the food they consume that will in turn support sustainable and ethical farming practices.

Health and safety

Even the smallest farm-related accident or illness can potentially wreak havoc with your reputation and potentially impact you economically as well. Yet the benefits of agritourism far outweigh any possible downsides for you or your business.

While we obviously do not want the public to perceive farms as an acres-wide petri dish of lethal diseases and mechanical threats, everyone is best served by taking the following steps for any on-farm event:

Contact your current insurance provider: Discuss details of what is planned with your insurance providers. Share specifics, including anticipated number of guests (are children attending?), interactions with farm animals, any farm equipment used (such as tractor wagon rides), if alcohol will be served (such as a BYOB farm-to-table dinner), health and safety measures, and so on. Insurance riders are typically not high and can provide additional coverage 'just in case.' It takes only a few minutes to place the call or email and will provide peace of mind in the unlikely event of an accident.

Farm fresh ice cream

Develop a biosecurity and safety plan: Partner with your veterinarian to create a biosecurity plan that clearly outlines the measures to be taken before, during, and after the event to protect the health of both humans and animals. Are your fences hot? Are there tools or equipment within reach of guests? Can visitors gain access to dangerous machinery or high-risk areas? Do you have stocked first aid kits at hand? Without a plan, there can be no accountability for actions.

Check animals before the event: Assess the health status of participating animals. Only include animals that are up to date with vaccinations and show no signs of hesitation or illness. Operate with the understanding that no animal is bombproof.

Communicate to guests: Provide clear verbal (and ideally written) instructions to farm guests on general farm safety, specific no-go areas, livestock awareness, and so on, as well as hygiene practices and biosecurity protocols, emphasizing the importance of following the measures for both humans and animal safety. Display signage, such as "This is a working farm," "Do not enter," "Do not touch livestock," or "Wash your hands," "Parking," "Restrooms," as appropriate.

Visitor control measures: Establish designated entry and exit points, limit access to animal areas and any specific locations of higher risk, and provide handwashing stations (or hand sanitizer) throughout the event site.

Maintain clean and sanitized facilities: Regularly clean and disinfect equipment, tools, and facilities to reduce the spread of pathogens during the

event. This demonstrates your commitment to the proper treatment and welfare of animals.

Use proper waste disposal methods: Promptly remove and dispose of animal waste, used bedding, and feed to minimize disease transmission and reduce odors. Proper disposal contributes to a healthier environment for both humans and animals (and sets a good example).

Require proper footwear: Open-toed shoes should not be permitted. Disposable shoe covers are recommended. If shoe covers are not available, a sanitizing footbath mat is another option. Discuss with your veterinarian.

Protect animals from potential stressors:

Provide ample space to prevent overcrowding and minimize stress. Explaining the natural behaviors and needs of animals during the event encourages compassion and empathic understanding.

Monitor animal health during the event: Be aware of signs of illness or stress in participating animals and take appropriate action.

Adhere to biosecurity regulations: Familiarize yourself with all relevant local and national biosecurity laws and guidelines to ensure your event aligns with the recent safety standards.

Promoting your event

Here are some top tips for advertising your event:

Social media is still the leader of the pack, with the majority of platforms being free. Facebook, Instagram, and Eventbrite are ideal tools to reach the masses. Photographs and short videos are



surefire ways to stop user scrolling and catch attention. Include a scenic area of your farm, a newborn animal, or an up-close smiling farmer! Humans are visual creatures and we are attracted to pleasing images. Next, tie-in your photo to your event. Your message is best when short. For example: Get ready to immerse yourself in the fascinating world of farming! Join us for a day filled with fresh flavors, a bit of hard work, and farm-fueled fun. Or, “Put on some old jeans and boots then head over to the farm for a day knee-deep in nature’s wonder.” Create an event page on all three platforms mentioned above with details, directions, and contact information.

Leverage local community resources and contact local community organizations, such as farmers’ markets, agricultural cooperatives, or community centers, and ask them to help spread the word. They may be willing to share the event details in their newsletters, on bulletin boards, or through word-of-mouth among their members.

Partner with local businesses and cross-promote. Reach out to businesses and explore opportunities for collaboration. Consider co-hosting the event with a related business that like you supports sustainable agriculture and animal welfare.

Online directories. Submit the event details, including date, time, location, and a short but creative description, to relevant online directories, event listing websites, and local community event calendars. This will increase the event’s visibility and attract attendees who actively search for local events or activities.



TAW RIVER DAIRY

Traditional outreach methods. Despite the abundance of digital marketing, traditional advertising methods remain effective, which is a bonus for a tight budget. Design and print an eye-catching flyer or poster and distribute them in strategic locations around the community, such as grocery stores, libraries, schools, and local businesses, including restaurants.

Local print and broadcast news. Pitch your story to the local press. Readers and viewers who want community connection will pay attention to what is happening around the region. Ask for an opportunity to talk with a reporter so you can share in your own words why your farm event is the place to be.

‘Meet your farmer’. Offer a session that includes a sit-down face-to-face conversation with the one who knows farming best—you.

Remember, regardless of the methods you use, it is important to clearly communicate the unique selling points and benefits of attending. Highlight activities, interactive experiences, or educational sessions that attendees can look forward to, as well as any special offerings, such as locally sourced food, live music, or farm tours to attract a wide range of audience.

Finally, if you are like most farmers, you already have a multitude of daily sun-up-to-sun-down responsibilities. You may be wondering how you are expected to find the time and creative bandwidth to market your event! Depending on where you live, chances are you have a



wealth of free resources nearby. Local colleges and universities are filled with marketing, communications, advertising, public relations, media, and journalism students who are actively looking for work experience opportunities. Reach out to them.

Enjoy!

Planning an on-farm event is more than just organizing a day out. It’s an opportunity to facilitate critical engagements among guests, farm staff, and even farm animals. Your farm event can be far more than a public gathering: it can lead to positive psychosocial outcomes for people, while educating them about the ethical treatment and welfare of animals and the importance of sustainable farming. They’re great fun, too!

Further information

- ▶ The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers a wealth of online agritourism resources
- ▶ The National Agricultural Law Center has an extensive online agritourism resource library
- ▶ The Farming Landscapes Project’s *Farming Landscape Toolkit: A guide to running farm events.*
- ▶ The British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture’s *Farm Diversification Through Agri-Tourism: A Manual to Guide Agri-tourism Development.*

Suzanne Kapral is the Director at The Lands at Hillside Farms, Shavertown, PA. Visit thelandsathillsidefarms.org



HORTON HOUSE FARM



THE LANDS AT HILLSIDE FARMS



AZMAN/JAKKA/ISTOCK

START WITH THE SOIL

Looking to reduce reliance on inputs and increase outputs? The place to start is beneath your boots. Caitlin Aguilar digs down

Soil nutrient management is a vital part of regenerative farming and applying climate-smart practices can reduce the environmental impact of your operation while improving its resilience—and profitability.

The ‘four rights’

Knowing the basic nutrient profiles of available fertilizers, composts, and manures is fundamental when planning soil improvement. However, employing appropriate application methods is equally important in preventing unintended environmental damage.

To put this into context, while the application of nitrogen-rich poultry manure may be a great addition to deficient soil, applying it on sloped ground two days before forecast rain is neither climate-smart, nutrient-smart or financially smart, as the risk for runoff pollution is quite high.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) defines nutrient management (code 590) as a climate-smart practice that requires farmers to, “Manage rate, source, placement, and timing of plant nutrients and soil amendments while reducing environmental impacts.” This can be summarized as the ‘Four Rights of Nutrient Management’ or 4Rs:

- 1 ▶ Right nutrient sources
- 2 ▶ Right rate
- 3 ▶ Right time
- 4 ▶ Right place

As you begin to build your management plan, remember that strict adherence to the 4Rs will not only help you manage and improve your soils, but can protect you from potentially disastrous unintended consequences of poor decisions.

Right nutrient sources

The application of natural manure fertilizers,



Earthworms are a key indicator of soil health

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

composts and soil conditioners is a common nutrient management strategy and can have a huge impact on soil fertility—as well as the bottom line. However, some materials are more useful as soil amendments rather than fertility builders.

For example, it's very important to assess and evaluate any bought-in compost before application. While it can help add organic matter to the soil, poorly made compost can contain material treated with harsh agrochemicals that can have an impact on crop or grass growth, while the unbalanced addition of high-carbon ingredients like woodchips and straw can actually ‘lock up’ nitrogen in the soil.

Similarly, while farmyard manure is a valuable and cost-effective material, keep in mind that manure nutrient profiles can vary significantly, so nutrient testing is recommended. If you are unable to test, however, you'll easily find estimated nutrient values for animal-derived manures online that provide a general idea of nutrient availability.

Of course, animals will also apply manure (and urine) to the land as they graze, and you can easily find manure management figures (based on animal species, age, and size) online and in books to help determine the volume of manure produced when prescribed grazing is employed. For many AGW-certified farmers, utilizing prescribed grazing is a favored climate-smart practice that increases availability of soil nutrients, maintains living roots (which help to stabilize soil health and structure), sequesters carbon and more. Living roots can also be encouraged through additional climate-smart practices such as planting cover crops like clover, vetch, peas and beans, which supply added benefits of increased soil fertility and reduction of erosion risk, as well as increased farmland biodiversity.

Ensuring plant diversity in cover crops and through crop rotations can help to improve soil structure and soil biological activity, as well as



Farmyard manure: valuable and cost-effective

CHRIS HENRY/ISTOCK

stabilizing soil. No-till and low-till farming systems can also help to reduce erosion risk and encourage living roots.

Right rate

Balancing soil nutrient availability and crop nutrient demand can often feel like a game of chess, but this is where the baseline soil scorecard should come into play. Cross checking crop yields against input rates will help to determine if your nutrient management plan is on track. Annual soil testing can also provide a broad picture of improvement (or otherwise) over time. And with rising costs of fertility builders, these cross-checks will also identify if you're getting the most bang for your buck.

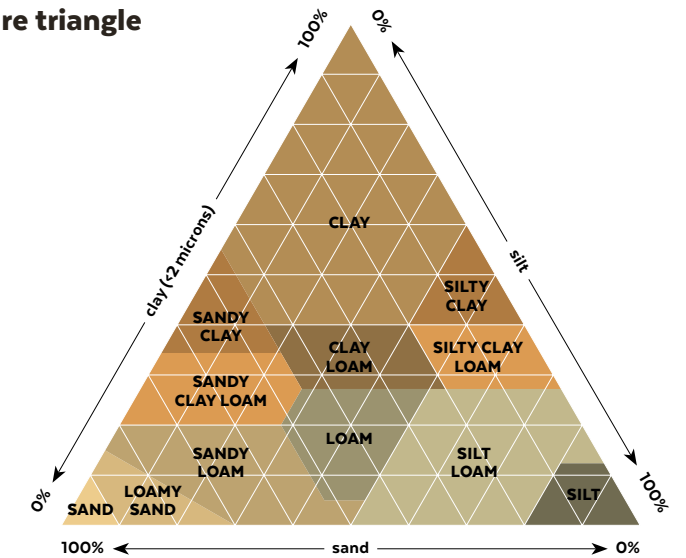
Nevertheless, while nutrient management plans often focus on the addition of soil nutrients and other inputs, it's important to pay close attention to what is being removed from the soil, either by cropping or grazing. Naturally, productivity shifts when land becomes tired and exploited to the point of depletion, so it's especially important to ensure soils are bolstered appropriately. Prescribed grazing is a profitable fertility building practice, for example, but can also lead to issues such as soil compaction, overgrazing and excessive application of nutrients if not timed and managed properly.

Right time

Correct timing can be the determining factor between a bumper crop and flushing your money down the drain (not to mention polluting the wider environment). Planning fertilizer application will typically depend on factors like crop demand (which is usually near planting season) or seasonality (such as time of year and forecasted weather events). Other factors such as odor can also play a role in deciding the appropriate application time.

In some regions, early fertilizer application can be beneficial, while other areas where soils are still

The soil texture triangle



Establishing your baseline

Developing a nutrient management plan can feel daunting, but getting started doesn't have to be complicated. A great way to establish the foundation of your plan is to identify your baseline soil metrics through testing, and then incorporate this information with the known history of the land.

Though opinions on ideal testing methodologies differ, a quick web search will provide many basic DIY and professional laboratory options for the evaluation of soil pH, macronutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, calcium and sulfur), micronutrients (boron, chloride, copper, iron, molybdenum, manganese, zinc and nickel), soil carbon, and much more.

In addition to exploring chemical characteristics, it's well worth considering the biological and physical characteristics of your soil to build the bigger picture. If you are unsure of your soil type(s), for example, simple tools like the Soil Texture Triangle (above) can help you to identify and understand what percentages of sand, silt and clay contribute to your soil classification.

Many biological tests are also available and range from simple earthworm counts to laboratory microbiological assessments and soil organic matter (SOM). With a little elbow grease, a spade shovel, and a few household implements, it's easy to assess the physical characteristics of your soil, such as soil structure and soil compaction, or to undertake a ‘slake test’ for soil stability, or an infiltration test to estimate the rate at which runoff will infiltrate, or pass through, soil.

By combining these chemical, physical and biological metrics, you can create a baseline soil scorecard that can serve as a launchpad for your nutrient management plan. Just don't forget to accurately mark and map your testing locations so you can return to exactly the same spot to monitor improvements.

cold and/or saturated from spring rain will result in poor nutrient retention and runoff.

Note: Certified Regenerative by AGW farms must identify pollution risks, such as the potential for runoff, and have mitigation plans in place as part of their annual audit.

Right place

Targeted application of soil inputs can also mean the difference between success and failure. Slope, soil characteristics, and nearness to root zones are crucial components to consider when determining location and positioning of fertility treatments. It is essential to consider proximity to rivers, creeks, ponds, and other watercourses (and post-application weather conditions) before any application to avoid runoff risk. If you notice an abundance of nitrogen-loving plants at the base of your slopes, it's worth undertaking a risk assessment to ensure that manure is being effectively managed to prevent runoff and reduce nutrient loss.

The appropriate storage of your chosen inputs is also essential to ensure nutrients aren't wasted,

as well as to minimize pollution risks. Ideally, store manure under cover and at an appropriate distance from waterways to prevent leaching and contaminating nearby land and watercourses.

Resources

The Certified Regenerative by AGW standards contain multiple annexes with useful reference materials to help guide your evaluation endeavors. For example, 'Annex B Assessment, Monitoring & Testing Methods' is a great resource for developing baseline metrics for your nutrient management plan, providing extensive (but not exhaustive) lists and links to testing information. Certified Regenerative by AGW standards are available online for review.

For more information about certification resources, requirements, and grant opportunities to implement nutrient management planning or prescribed grazing, get in touch at 1-800-373-8806 and info@agreenerworld.org

Caitlin Aguilar is AGW's Director of Quality



Filling sample bags for laboratory analysis. Remember to accurately map and mark your testing sites!

🌍 Certification news

LABELED FOR SUCCESS

Katie Amos offers her expert advice on displaying AGW logos on your packaging

Katie Amos is AGW's Director of Communications and Outreach

Market research shows that today's consumers are increasingly interested in knowing where their food comes from and how it is produced. Many now actively seek out independent third-party certifications they can trust so they can feel good about the food they purchase.

The great news is your certification ticks all the right boxes. As an AGW-certified business, you've earned the right to use some of the most valuable and meaningful labels in the marketplace today. And you're ideally placed to meet the growing demand for high-welfare, sustainable, locally produced food.

Raising awareness

To help us increase consumer recognition and awareness of AGW-certified businesses, we now require all certified operations to display the appropriate AGW logo(s) on all certified products, unless otherwise agreed with AGW.

If you're already using a AGW logo, we need to approve logo use on all product labels (see the Traceability section of the relevant AGW standard), so please send us a digital copy of your product labels for rapid approval via email (see details below). All labeling designs will also be subject to audit review.

Updating designs

If you are not already using the logo on existing packaging, we understand the updating process may entail additional time and cost, so get in touch to discuss an appropriate timeline to replace any pre-printed packaging stock or if you need help adding the logo to your existing designs.

Various options are available for adding the AGW logos to packaging, including redesigning your existing product label or purchasing high-quality AGW-branded logo stickers (available in English and French). We can also offer professional

assistance with packaging redesigns and can even design a completely new label. Contact us to find out more about these services.

Using the logo

You will find full guidelines on how to display the AGW logo on your packaging in section P5 of our *Policy Manual*. You can also download AGW logos on our website (or just get in touch).

In some cases, you may have valid reasons why you cannot use the logo. For example:

- ▶ Your business is not yet certified.
- ▶ Your processor refuses or is not legally able to affix the logo.
- ▶ Your retailers/buyers/wholesalers do not allow it.
- ▶ Branded stickers are not practically possible due to volume or adhesion issues.
- ▶ Your business has taken action to seek regulatory approval and approval is pending.

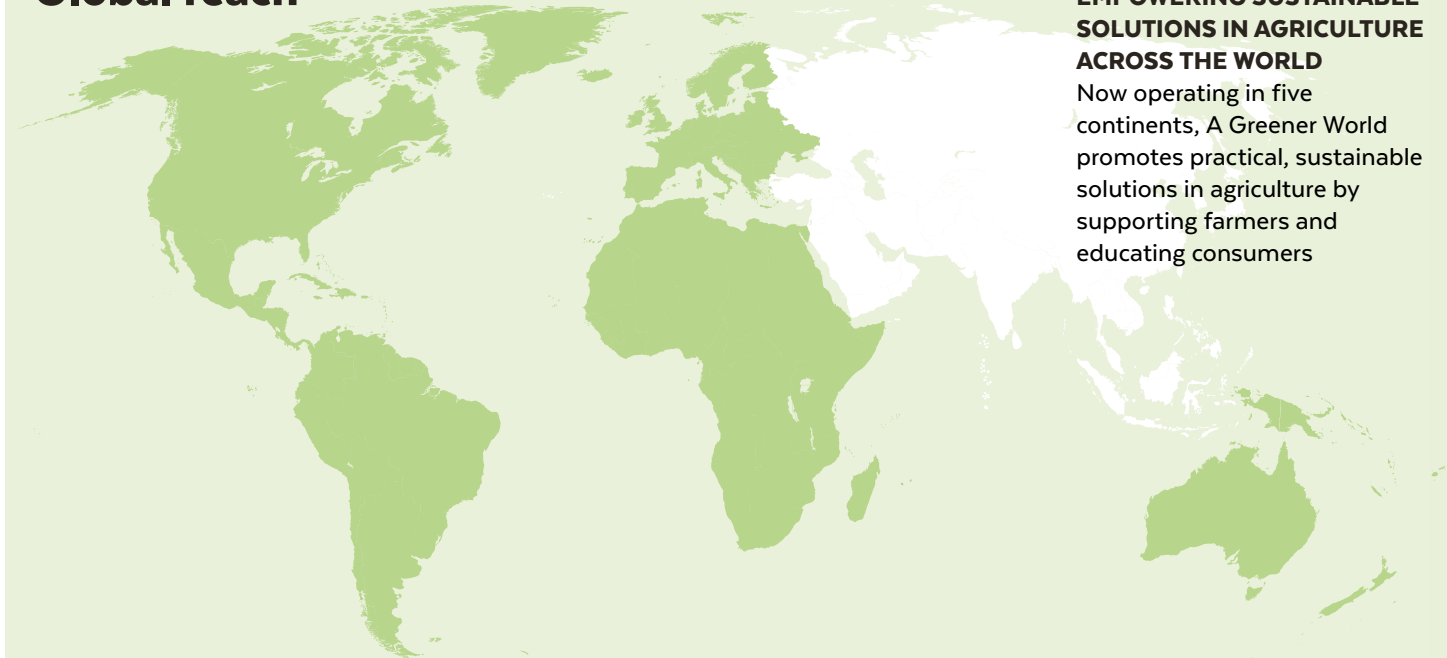
Labeling regulations

Most countries regulate food labeling to ensure packaging includes key information (such as the ingredients, weight, and safety advice) and that all information is accurate, easy to read and understand, and is not misleading in any way. However, labeling requirements will differ according to the country, the product and ingredients, and the regulating agency. It is important to understand all legal obligations for labeling and ensure you are complying with all appropriate regulations. If you have any questions, please get in touch. We look forward to working with you on your labels.

For more information—or if you'd like to submit a digital copy of your label for approval—contact info@agreenerworld.org

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ORDER EGG CARTONS

The Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW-branded egg carton is now available in two colors: blue and green.

The egg carton is made with 100 percent reclaimed paper and holds a dozen medium, large or extra-large eggs. The low-cost carton features AGW's flagship logo and clear messaging that the eggs are from pastured, high-welfare hens, and includes space for a farm-specific label.

200 dozen-egg branded cartons cost \$36 plus shipping via UPS. Please allow 10–14 days for delivery.

Visit agreenerworld.org/shop-agw



Promoting A Greener World

AGW is proud to offer low-cost branded promotional materials to help raise awareness of your certification and better communicate the wider benefits of your farming practices. Every purchase also supports our work to educate and inform consumers—and helps keep your certifications affordable.

For more promotional materials—and to place an order (with shipping)—visit agreenerworld.org/shop-agw

From Canada, please call +1 541-526-1119



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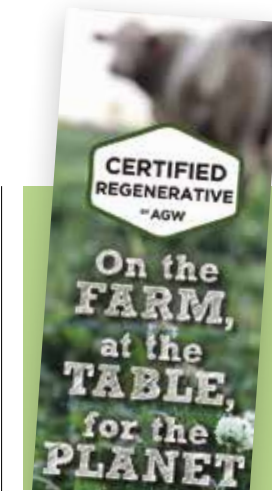
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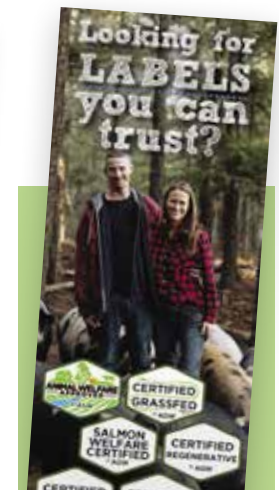
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🌱 Meet the farmer

MESSAGE IN A BOTL

Danielle Larese and Nick Weinstock own BOTL Farm, located in Ashford, Connecticut, where they raise Certified AWA by AGW pigs and chickens, and Certified AWA and Certified Grassfed by AGW sheep and goats. They sell directly to customers at local farmers' markets and an on-farm store.

How did you get into farming?

It was a surprise! We're both first-generation farmers and our backgrounds are in construction project management and theoretical chemical physics. We had started careers in our respective fields but had a mutual love for food and cooking, which led us to seek out higher and higher quality ingredients, leading us to local farms. We started volunteering on a pasture-based livestock farm and the next thing we knew we were writing a business plan to start our own farm.

Where do you farm?

We're a pasture-based, sustainability-focused livestock farm in northeast Connecticut—also known as the 'Quiet Corner'. Situated on 41 acres of transitional silvopasture, we designed and developed our system so our animals can express their natural behaviors. We farm 60 Large Black/Mangalitsa/Berkshire pigs, 200 laying hens, 15 Icelandic sheep, and 15 Kiko goats, selling pork, chicken and eggs, and grassfed lamb and goat meat. These traditional breeds thrive in our New England climate of hot summers and cold winters, and have flavor, nutrition and fat qualities that have been lost in industrial farming.

Describe a typical day

A big part of why farming is both fun and hard is because every day has unique challenges. That said, our days are bookended with daily chores: each morning and evening the animals need to be checked on, fed, and watered. We spend lots of time answering customer questions and inquiries, as well as working on maintaining or building infrastructure.

How did you hear about AGW?

As first-generation farmers, we didn't particularly know how many linear feet of roost bars a flock of 200 hens needed. Naturally, we googled it and found AGW's standards. We started using them as a technical building reference as we built our farm infrastructure. Applying for and receiving a FACT grant to support certification helped us across the certification finish line.

Sustainable farming: why does it matter?

We're trying to save the world, one pork chop at a time!

What is the biggest threat to the sustainable farming movement?

'Big Ag' and stubborn commodity subsidies from the government.

What's your vision for the future?

We like to envision a magical future where sustainable farms are wildly profitable but somehow make products that most people can afford.



BOTL FARM (x2)

AT A GLANCE

Certification date:

September 2020

Size:

41 acres

Soil type:

Sandy/silty loam

Altitude:

700 feet

Annual rainfall:

60 inches

Enterprises:

Certified Animal Welfare Approved pigs and laying hens; Certified Grassfed sheep and goats

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“In researching other non-GMO programs, we decided that A Greener World was the best fit for us, and the team has been so wonderful to work with throughout the certification process.”

Blake Gerard, Cahokia Rice, Alexander County, IL

COVER PHOTO: NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

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