



# People & Planet Impact Journal 2023









— CHAPTER 1 —

# Welcome





# Welcome from Katlin, Our Founder & CEO

Welcome to the 2023 People & Planet Impact Journal - and thank you for being on this journey with us!

Helping eaters feel their best has been at the heart of Simple Mills' mission from day one, stemming from a deeply personal realization I had in 2012 about how profoundly food impacted my well-being. I was working as a management consultant, traveling often, and relying on convenient packaged foods to suit my on-the-go lifestyle. In short, I wasn't feeling my best, and when I switched to a diet made up of primarily whole foods, I felt a whole lot better.

I wanted to share this realization with others and be a force for change, especially as I became increasingly aware of the diet-related health crises in our country. I set out to raise the bar on what consumers could expect from the food industry, to make delicious, nutrient-dense food that helps people feel their best— because I believe that people shouldn't have to compromise taste in order to nourish themselves.

Over time, I learned more about the profound impact that food also has on our environment, and the ways that human health relies on planetary health— after all, it's impossible to be a healthy fish in a dirty bowl. In 2019, I took a permaculture course that transformed the way I saw agriculture. The course unveiled some harsh realities about our current extractive food system and the powerful role it plays in determining the health of our planet and the health of people who depend on resilient ecosystems to thrive. It expanded my understanding of Simple Mills' sphere of influence; as the Founder and CEO of a food company, I felt a responsibility to further leverage food for good. In 2020, Simple Mills committed to making food in service of people and the planet to effect real change in the food system. Ever since, we've been unwaveringly committed to carefully selecting purposeful ingredients and crafting our products in a way that uplifts people and stewards our planet.

**“People shouldn't have to compromise taste in order to nourish themselves”**

As you'll read about in the pages ahead, in 2023 we worked diligently to grow our commitment to transforming how our food impacts the health of people and planet. We recognize that this transformation takes time, and we are learning as we go, spending time listening to a diversity of voices, engaging our team in trainings and courageous conversations, and encouraging a dynamic and inquisitive mindset. We are so excited to be on this collective journey - with each other, with farmers, and with you - to nourish people and the planet now and for years to come. Thank you for joining us!

*- Katlin Smith*



# Introduction from Christina, Our Head of Sustainability & Mission

Energized by Katlin’s founding vision and our belief that the health of people hinges on the health of the planet, in 2023 we further amplified our mission to revolutionize the way food is made so it can nourish people and the planet. This mission is foundational to our organization; it ripples across all functions and it’s at the core of everything we do.

At the beginning of the year, our first-ever People & Planet Reunion brought the full company together in Mill Valley, California, and set the stage for a year of impact and vision setting. We spent time together cooking, delving into mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques and the science of the gut microbiome, doing hands-on soil health experiments on a farm, and hearing from experts in regenerative agriculture and human nutrition.

With this grounding, we launched our first Mission Strategic Plan, a three-year roadmap for the human and planetary health impact we aspire to have. We know that the way we source our ingredients and how we make our food is our most material opportunity for positive impact, but we also know that our products alone won’t meaningfully transform the food system. That’s why we’re also working to spark impact beyond the ingredients making it into our boxes, investing in our key sourcing regions to engage farmers in and beyond our supply chain. With that in mind, our strategic plan established three core goals—and we hit the ground running in 2023. We’re committed to:

**1. Changing how food is made** by crafting our products with a variety of nutrient dense and underrepresented ingredients that can help promote biodiversity and dietary diversity.

*In 2023, we introduced butternut squash and red beans to our ingredient portfolio, furthering our commitment to create market demand for underrepresented ingredients that give farmers more options to diversify farm ecosystems and consumers more options to add shortfall nutrients like fiber to their diets.*

**2. Changing how food is grown** by supporting and sharing risk with farmers in their journeys to implement regenerative agriculture principles.

*In 2023, we grew our regenerative agriculture programming by launching The Cocoa Project, a multi-year farmer engagement program in West Africa that helps build awareness around the benefits of diversifying cacao operations with additional tree species to increase farmer income streams and ecosystem functioning.*

**3. Sparking systemic impact** by advocating for food policy reform and engaging in collective action with peers to meaningfully address the climate crisis.

*In 2023, we partnered with the National Young Farmers Coalition to support young and racially diverse farmers to become vocal advocates for more climate-smart and equitable agriculture policy in the 2023 Farm Bill.*

The dual human and planetary health crises we face require urgency, so we’re leaning into progress over perfection, and we’re continuously evolving our approach as we go. We’re embracing organizational psychologist Adam Grant’s advice to be “creatures of discomfort,” relentlessly pursuing forward momentum in service of human and planetary health, especially if it means getting out of our comfort zones. We also recognize that there is much more work to be done. In the months and years ahead we’re looking forward to bolstering our work beyond the farmgate to assess and improve the impact of other supply nodes like packaging and manufacturing.

While we focus the work on the most material part of our business—the way our food is grown and made—we remain equally committed to transparently sharing our journey with and learning from industry peers, eaters, farmers, policy makers, scientists, and everyone else who plays a critical role in positively transforming our food system. This journal is an important part of that commitment. Thank you for tuning into our story, and wherever you sit in our food system, thank you for all you do to create a brighter future for food.

– Christina Skonberg





**100%**  
OF OUR  
PRODUCTS

PROMINENTLY FEATURE  
NUTRIENT-DENSE INGREDIENTS  
With a balance of  
MICRO+MACRO NUTRIENTS

**2,500 FARMERS** ACROSS  
**9,000 ACRES + 4 SOURCING REGIONS**

ENGAGED IN  
REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE  
AWARENESS BUILDING and  
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

**45 UNIQUE CROPS**  
in our INGREDIENT PORTFOLIO  
beyond the most dominant 4  
in our food system, helping bring  
MORE VARIETY to agriculture & diets



**OUR  
PEOPLE+PLANET  
IMPACT  
TO DATE**

MORE THAN  
**90%** of SIMPLE MILLS  
EMPLOYEES  
have attended a  
**FARM VISIT** 

to learn about REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE  
PRINCIPLES in action



**17**  
PRODUCTS

developed at the  
intersection of  
**HUMAN &  
PLANETARY  
HEALTH NEEDS**

in partnership with  
**NATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS COALITION**

We've supported more than  
**100 YOUNG FARMERS**  
to advocate for  
equitable and  
climate-smart  
agriculture Policy 



CHAPTER 2

# What We Stand For

# Simple Mills Vision & Mission

## Vision

A world where  
food creates a  
better tomorrow  
for people and  
planet



## Mission

Revolutionize the  
way food is made  
to nourish people  
and the planet  
(and inspire others  
to do the same!)

# Simple Mills People & Planet Journey

**MAR 2016**

Simple Mills launches Almond Flour Crackers



**JAN 2017**

Katlin is named to Forbes 30 under 30 for her innovative business



**JUNE 2017**

Simple Mills ranks #1 baking mix brand in the natural channel according to 2017 SPINS data

**SEPT 2012**

Katlin Smith founds Simple Mills with a line of almond flour baking mixes made in her home kitchen

**OCT 2019**

Katlin attends a weeklong permaculture design course, learning from experts about the power of food to impact our planet



**APR 2020**

Simple Mills launches the Direct Trade program, establishing direct relationships with sunflower growers in the Midwest to support the adoption of regenerative agriculture, expanding our mission to include planetary health in addition to our human health commitment



**APR 2022**

Simple Mills co-launches The Almond Project: a multi-year, farmer-led partnership to implement and evaluate the outcomes of regenerative principles in California almond systems



**AUG 2022**

Simple Mills launches The Coconut Sugar Project: a multi-year investment in organic coconut farmers in Java, Indonesia, to support the adoption of regenerative agriculture principles



## OCT 2022

Simple Mills is honored as one of Fast Company's Brands that Matter, a list of purpose-driven organizations making industry-wide impact

## MAR 2023

Simple Mills supports the National Young Farmers Coalition to send more than 100 young farmer fellows to Washington DC to advocate for equitable and climate-smart ag policies in the 2023 Farm Bill



## MAR 2023

Simple Mills publishes its inaugural People & Planet Impact Journal, transparently sharing our efforts to positively transform the food system



## APR 2023

Simple Mills' first People & Planet Reunion brings employees together in Mill Valley, California to connect with each other, nature, and our mission

## JUNE 2023

Simple Mills launches The Cocoa Project: a multi-year awareness raising campaign about the economic & environmental benefits of crop diversity in cacao operations in West Africa



## JULY 2023

Simple Mills launches Pop Mmms, furthering our commitment to bring more ingredient variety to agriculture and diets by leveraging underutilized crops with unique benefits to farm ecosystems and human health



## SEPT 2023

Simple Mills launches its Mission Strategic Plan, a roadmap for the ambitious human and planetary health impacts and initiatives we will pursue through 2026



# Our Food Philosophy

Simple Mills was founded on the belief that food has the power to transform how people feel. We also know that the way we make food has tremendous potential to improve the health of our planet.<sup>1</sup> This is why we are unwavering in our ongoing mission to make food that uplifts people and does right by our planet.

**And, we believe that eating in service of human and planetary health should taste delicious, which is why we use wholesome, nutritious ingredients – so you can snack without compromise.** When you open a Simple Mills box, you're part of our journey to raise the bar on what we can expect from our food.



## Simple Mills is a food brand that...



*Seeks to motivate people to live a healthy, full, passion-filled life*



*Is built upon a belief in bio-individuality - every eater is unique; there is no one-size-fits-all*



*Is rooted in fundamental health and wellness principles that stand the test of time*



*Ensures broad appeal for maximum impact, while addressing specific dietary interests*



*Believes the health of people hinges on the health of the planet*



*Leads with integrity and always keeps the consumer's best interest at heart*



## Beyond “Free From” to “For More”

Our commitment to you is that we will never use artificial preservatives, flavorings, coloring, sweeteners, or fillers. Ever. But we aren't solely focused on what our products are free from, we're working to make pantry staples that are **for more**.

Because at Simple Mills we believe that food has the power to help you live your fullest life. We are passionate about harnessing that power. We are raising expectations that food can be both delicious and nourishing so you can thrive!

### NUTRIENT DENSITY

We believe in filling up on the good stuff, so we seek out nutrient-dense ingredients like nuts, seeds, and vegetables that not only deliver great taste, but also nourish your body. 100% of our products prominently feature nutrient-dense ingredients with a balance of macronutrients.

### ONLY PURPOSEFUL INGREDIENTS.

We handpick recognizable ingredients with intention – only including those that nourish you. Not one of the flavors or colors in our products comes from synthetically made ingredients.

### INGREDIENT DIVERSITY

We create products to include a wide variety of ingredients, recognizing that a diverse diet is imperative to feed the many species in our gut microbiome *and* build resilience in farm ecosystems.

### GROWN WITH THE PLANET IN MIND

Where and how our food is grown matters, so we partner with farming communities in the sourcing regions for our highest impact ingredients to support their transitions to regenerative agriculture principles. At Simple Mills, we think about regenerative agriculture as an approach to farming that builds ecosystem resilience through principles that consider the holistic context of the farm system. In short, it's about working with nature rather than competing against it.

More on this in the *How Food is Grown* section!

# Understanding Our Footprint

## Focusing on the Farm-Level to Maximize Positive Impact

### WHAT WE EVALUATED:

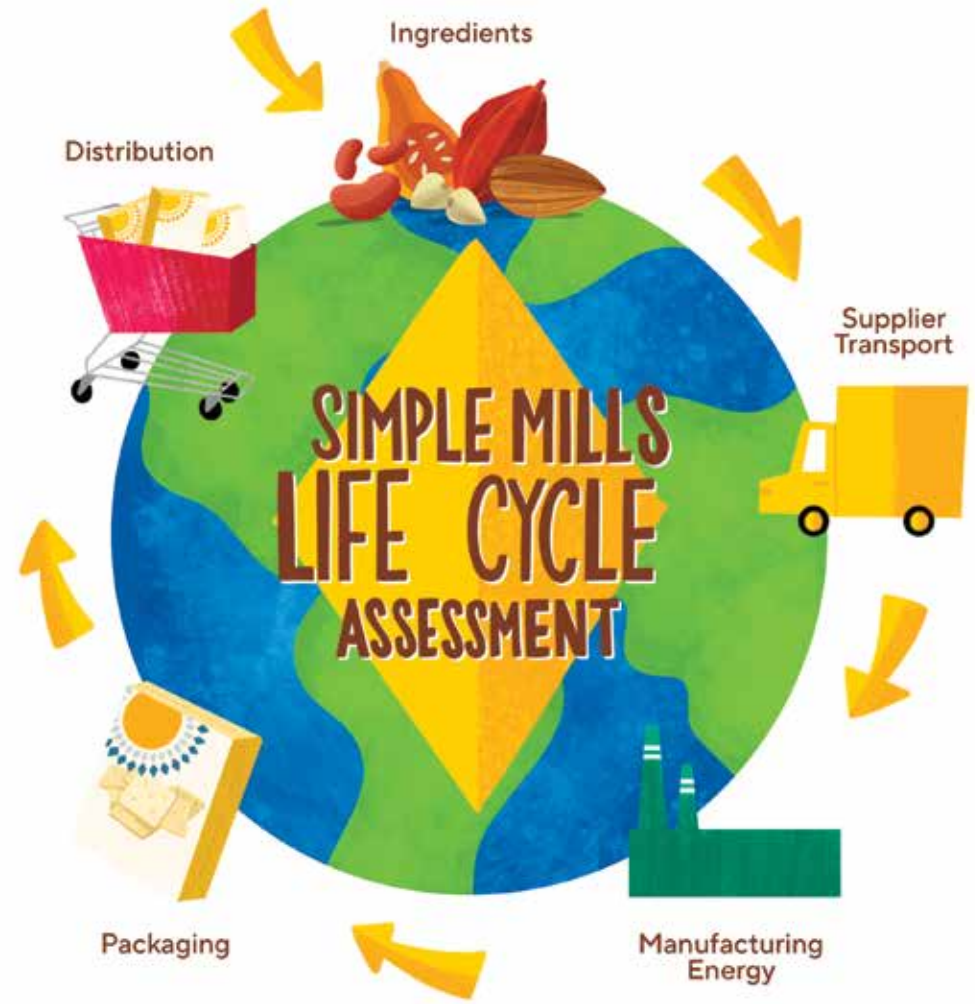
Working to assess, understand, and improve our climate impacts is a critical part of our strategy to positively impact the planet.

To gain a deeper understanding of the environmental impact of our products, we partnered with Pure Strategies to conduct our first Life Cycle Assessment (LCA).

**Life Cycle Assessments estimate the full scope of a product's impact and provide insights that can help improve the environmental footprint.**

With a particular focus on greenhouse gas emissions, a product life cycle assessment includes everything from the farm where ingredients are grown, to transportation and distribution, all the way to the disposal of its packaging.

*Did you know? Estimates suggest that our food system accounts for more than a third of global greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>2</sup>*





# Here's what we learned from our Life Cycle Assessment:

These findings are in line with the rest of the food Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) industry, where the majority of a given product's greenhouse gas impact tends to occur on the farm.<sup>3</sup> Farm-level greenhouse gas emissions can stem from agricultural practices like deforesting natural landscapes to convert to farmland, soil disruption from activities like tillage, and the production and use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides.<sup>4</sup>

Because the majority of our greenhouse gas impact is skewed toward the farm level, our planetary health journey is deeply focused on enabling positive impacts in agriculture.

This understanding shapes our entire approach to leveraging business as a force for good and helps us prioritize our efforts for maximum impact. Read more about how we are supporting farmers on their regenerative agriculture journeys in the How Food is Grown section!

Appreciating that our packaging represents 16% of our GHG impact, in 2024 we're spending time identifying opportunities to improve the impact of our packaging. We have enrolled in the How2Recycle program, a transparent, universally recognized, and harmonized on-pack label which helps build consumer understanding around end-of-life packaging disposal best practices.

In 2024, we're also looking forward to developing our first Climate Action Plan, a roadmap for specific actions and greenhouse gas reduction milestones we aim to reach in our effort to meaningfully address the climate crisis. Stay tuned for more details as we develop our science-based approach!



# Charting Our Impact Roadmap: 2026 Mission Strategic Plan

In 2023, we put a stake in the ground and created an ambitious roadmap for the impact we seek to have on human and planetary health through 2026.

**The way we make food and source ingredients is at the core of our strategic plan. An equally important element of our approach is positively influencing the broader food system beyond our direct supply chain.**

Looking ahead, our aim is to drive more widespread impact through activities like advocating for improved agricultural policies and engaging with farming communities within and beyond our value chain. As we like to say, contribution is more important than attribution; **we believe that contributing to the positive transformation of the food system as a whole has a far greater impact than exclusively focusing on achievements within our own product portfolio.**

# 3 focused strategies will propel our mission of nourishing people & the planet

## WE'RE CHANGING HOW FOOD IS MADE

We are leaning into bold creativity, crafting 100% of our new product lines at the intersection of human and planetary health by using a variety of nutrient-dense ingredients that can promote dietary diversity & biodiversity.

### 2026 GOAL:

25 products developed at the intersection of human and planetary health needs

## WE'RE CHANGING HOW FOOD IS GROWN

We're supporting farmers' transitions to regenerative agriculture starting with our top 5 highest impact ingredient categories that together represent 75% of our ingredient volume: almonds, coconut sugar, sunflower seeds, cocoa, and cassava. Some of our programs in key sourcing regions for these five ingredients will reach farmers growing crops directly for Simple Mills, while some will reach farmers well beyond our own supply chain—and that's intentional. While we work to positively influence the ingredients that end

up in our boxes, we also want to spark impact beyond any one food company. If the farmers in our programs use regenerative principles to grow ingredients that ultimately make their way into another company's products, we're happy to know that the impact is spreading!

### 2026 GOAL:

7,000 farmers and 40,000 acres engaged in Simple Mills regenerative agriculture transition or awareness building programs, both in and beyond our supply chain—this is equivalent to the estimated total number of acres needed to grow all of our ingredients!

## WE'RE IGNITING POSITIVE IMPACT BEYOND SIMPLE MILLS

We are striving to catalyze systemic change through collective action by inviting eaters and the food industry to join our journey, advocating for more equitable and climate-smart agriculture policies, and addressing our climate crisis through industry collaboration.

### 2026 GOAL:

200 young leaders supported to train as advocates for more equitable and climate-smart agriculture policy



CHAPTER 3

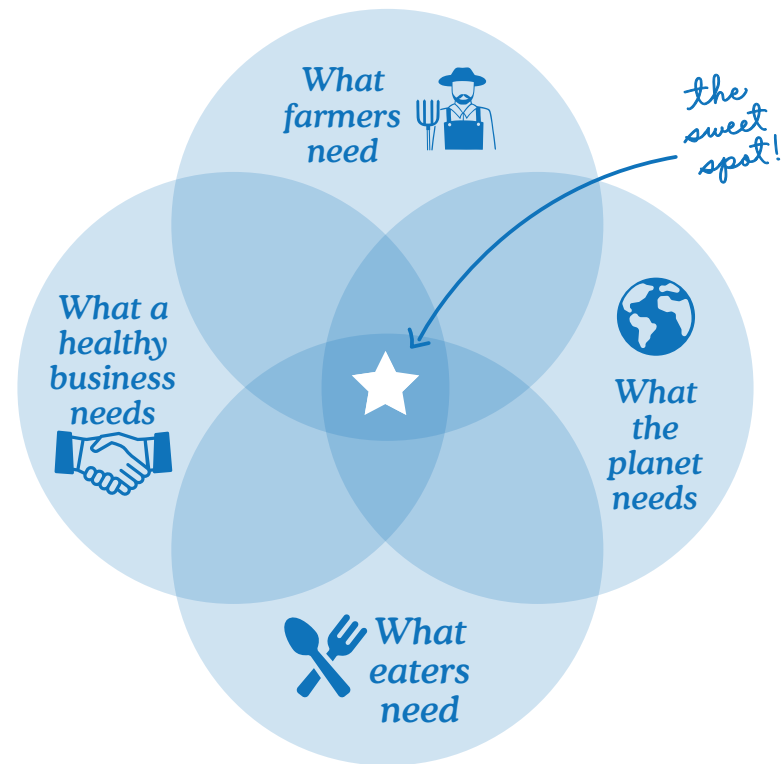
# Changing How Food is Made





# Making Our Food with People & Planet in Mind

Purposeful ingredients are at the core of our mission to revolutionize how food is made. We're leaning into bold creativity, crafting 100% of our new product lines with human and planetary health in mind by using a variety of nutrient dense ingredients that promote dietary diversity & biodiversity. All of our products prominently feature nutrient-dense ingredients with a balance of macronutrients.



WE INNOVATE AT THE INTERSECTION OF HUMAN & PLANETARY HEALTH NEEDS

# Building Biodiversity for Planetary Health

## What is biodiversity and why is it so important to human health and resilient ecosystems?

Biodiversity refers to the various forms of life, big and small, that are critical to our living planet. Biodiversity not only enhances ecosystem stability but also serves as a foundation for human survival.<sup>5</sup>

Despite its critical importance, biodiversity faces increasing threats primarily due to human activities like deforestation to clear the way for agricultural land, monocropping, (the cultivation of only one or a limited number of crops), and use of agrichemicals, (synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides), that can be harmful to plants and animals.<sup>6,7,8,9,10,11</sup>

But our food system can also be a powerful lever for fostering biodiversity by prioritizing practices like planting a variety of crops, integrating grazing animals into cropping systems, and planting pollinator habitats. We were thrilled to see these and other food system solutions take center stage at global convenings in 2023 like [COP 28](#) and the [UN Food Systems Summit](#).



### *Did you know?*

*The global food system is the primary driver of biodiversity loss, with agriculture alone being a threat to nearly 86% of species identified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as at risk of extinction.<sup>12</sup>*

**By creating product homes for underrepresented ingredients in our food system like beans, buckwheat, and squash, we're on a journey to bring more variety to agriculture and more biodiversity to our ecosystems.**

# Cultivating Dietary Diversity for Human Health

Dietary diversity is linked with maintaining a longer healthy life and reduced risk of many age-related diseases, such as diabetes and cognitive decline.<sup>13</sup> A varied diet is also correlated with improved gut health, a wider array of microorganisms that live in our microbiome, and increased micro- and macronutrient intake.<sup>14,15</sup> Research increasingly shows that gut health is also linked to mental health and cognitive regulation.<sup>16,17</sup> Yet, **only 3 crops—rice, wheat, and maize—account for nearly half of global calories!**<sup>18</sup>

**We craft products that make it simpler and tastier for people to enjoy a wider variety of nutrient dense ingredients.**

By broadening our ingredient portfolio beyond the most dominant ones in our food system, we aim to diversify the source and type of macro- and micronutrients served up in tasty ways that celebrate nutrient-density, texture, and flavor in every bite.



Each year Simple Mills hosts an internal learning series for the full organization that invites experts in human and planetary health to share about a topic in their given field. One of our four annual learning modules in 2023 was hosted by **Dr. Rachel**

**Cheatham** who gave an in-depth talk on the science of dietary diversity with tips for practical application in everyday life.



*Did you know? Our gut is home to a vast network of over 100 trillion microbial cells that play a significant role in our metabolism, nutrition, immunity, and overall health.<sup>19</sup>*

# Innovation for Human & Planetary Health

We're committed to crafting 100% of our new product lines at the intersection of human and planetary health needs using one of the five pathways shown below:





# What Does Innovating for Human & Planetary Health Look Like in Our Products?

Since we codified a framework for Human & Planetary Health Innovation Pathways in 2021, we have evolved our pathways and launched 17 products designed with rigorous human and planetary health guidelines. We're on a journey to increase that number over time, both through new innovation and by partnering with farmers and suppliers to improve the impacts of ingredients in our existing products.



**Sweet Thins** feature **watermelon seed flour** from a variety of watermelon grown specifically for its seeds rather than its flesh. By finding a home for this ingredient, we're hoping to bring more crop diversity to agriculture and human diets, all while delivering protein, beneficial fats, and micronutrients to your plate!



**Pop Mmms'** nutritious veggie blend includes **butternut squash**, which delivers Vitamin A and fiber, **and red beans**, which deliver minerals like potassium and fiber. Butternut squash is a big leaf crop that can armor soil from direct sunlight and weeds, and red beans can help build soil health by fixing nitrogen.<sup>23, 24</sup>



**Sandwich Cookies** feature a farmer favorite: **buckwheat!** Buckwheat grows quickly, outpacing weeds and providing protection for the soil between plantings, and it's also a great habitat for pollinators like bees and butterflies.<sup>22</sup> Buckwheat delivers fiber, minerals, complex carbohydrates, and antioxidants.



**Organic Seed Flour Crackers** are made with a nutrient-dense seed flour blend of **organic sunflower, pumpkin, and flax seed** that delivers protein, fiber, and antioxidants to fuel your body. Sunflowers can be a helpful addition to traditional temperate rotations, supporting pollinators while improving soil health and water storage with their deep taproots.<sup>25</sup>



CHAPTER 4

# Changing How Food is Grown

**We're supporting farmers' transitions to regenerative agriculture starting with our top 5 highest impact ingredient categories that together represent 75% of our ingredient volume: almonds, coconut sugar, sunflower seeds, cocoa, and cassava.**

We're intentionally working within our key sourcing regions to spread this impact beyond our own supply chain.

We want this work to transcend the confines of our brand, and we believe that helping expand the use of regenerative principles in agriculture should be our highest priority, whether or not the enrolled farmers supply directly to Simple Mills.

At the same time, we also partner directly with farmers growing identity-preserved ingredients for our products to deepen our connections to the people and places growing our ingredients and to bring our farm-level work to life in the food we make.

**Our goal is to meet farmers where they are and learn from them.**

We celebrate and resource farmers innovating at the forefront of regenerative agriculture and those just getting started on their regenerative journey. In the same way that our innovation process thrives on curiosity and experimentation, we believe farmers and their ingredients have better impacts on people and planet when given space to innovate creatively.

# Our Regenerative Agriculture Approach

While regenerative agriculture has been capturing headlines in recent years, it reflects a set of farming and land management methods that have been practiced by Indigenous communities for generations. Our current food system presents myriad barriers for farmers to implement regenerative principles—from policy disincentives to diversify crop rotations to gaps between consumer demand and what farmers want to grow to create resilient farm systems—and our goal is to help remove some of those barriers.

**At Simple Mills, we think about regenerative agriculture as an approach to farming that builds ecosystem resilience through principles that consider the holistic context of the farm system. In short, it's about working with nature rather than competing against it.**

Four outcome areas and six management principles guide our regenerative agriculture approach. We recognize and honor the variability that exists across farms, ecosystems, and communities. With variability in mind, we avoid a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all approach by elevating general principles that provide flexibility in how growers approach management practices. These principles are adapted from sources including Understanding Ag, the NRDC, and leaders like Robin Wall Kimmerer.<sup>26, 27, 28, 29, 30</sup>

## FOUR OUTCOME AREAS GUIDE OUR WORK:



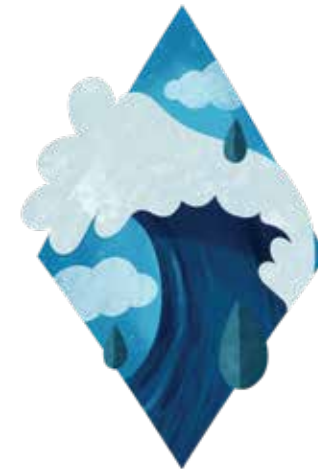
**Improve  
soil health**



**Increase  
biodiversity**



**Instill farm  
community resilience**



**Improve  
water health**

# Six Principles Guide Our Regenerative Agriculture Work



**Honor place** by making decisions that consider the unique ecological and social context of each operation



**Minimize mechanical & chemical disturbance** to improve soil structure and function and protect against erosion



**Keep a living root in the ground year-round** to store carbon in the soil and foster symbiotic relationships between plants and microbial communities in the soil



**Maximize crop diversity** to support biodiversity, improve nutrient cycling, and reduce pest and disease pressure



**Keep soil covered** to protect it from the elements and enhance water infiltration



**Build relationships between land & animals** to improve soil health and microbial density, reduce chemical inputs, and increase carbon sequestration

## A NOTE ON ORGANIC FARMING

# Organic Farming as a Strong Foundation of Regenerative Principles

Regenerative and organic agriculture share many of the same goals, which is why we believe organic farming can benefit people and farm ecosystems. The National Organic Program is a federally enforced, rigorous standard that encourages practices associated with positive outcomes including reduction of synthetic chemicals harmful to people and the environment, cover cropping to protect and enrich the soil, diverse crop rotations to break pest and disease cycles, and organic soil amendments that can stand in for chemical alternatives.<sup>31</sup> We believe that regenerative outcomes can manifest in organic as well as conventional systems, and we see the certification as one path to encourage the implementation of management techniques that have the potential to benefit human and planetary health.





## What About Regenerative Certification?

We applaud growers who pursue one of the many new, innovative regenerative certifications *and* we recognize that many leading-edge farmers implementing regenerative principles opt not to certify, a choice we honor.

**We celebrate farmers at all points along the spectrum of their regenerative journeys, and we aim to play a role in removing barriers for them along the way.**

In short, we are prioritizing an inclusive approach to expanding the adoption of regenerative agriculture across a diversity of growers, ingredients, and regions while also celebrating the farmers and ingredients at the very tip of the spear who are achieving and certifying regenerative outcomes.

# The Almond Project



As Founding Members of The Almond Project, we're collaborating across the food industry to make California almond farming more resilient by implementing and evaluating the outcomes of regenerative soil health practices.

Launched in 2022, The Almond Project began with the development of a five-year study in California's Central Valley, implementing and researching a variety of soil health practices. The Almond Project's founding members represent a rare coalition of cross-functional advocates: spanning from third-generation almond growers (Pacific Ag Management) and processors (Treehouse California Almonds), to pioneering food brands (Simple Mills, Daily Harvest, and Cappello's), and non-profit conveners (White Buffalo Land Trust). The collective has since grown to include several additional partners and further programming.

The Almond Project farm partners are trialing and testing the outcomes of soil health practices on

**160 acres**

of almond orchards.





The project activities include planting multi-species cover crops, integrating grazing sheep into the orchards, applying compost, and minimizing chemical inputs like pesticides, herbicides, and synthetic fertilizers. **With observed soil structure benefits in the first couple of years, the farmers expanded cover crop planting beyond the research plots to over 2,000 acres!**



In 2023, The Almond Project received the New Hope Regeneration & Sustainability Award, which recognized our collective efforts to promote sustainable almond farming methods.

## AMPLIFYING THE WORK

To share our learnings so far, in 2023, The Almond Project founding members hosted an on-farm experience for media professionals and influencers, granting them a hands-on, deep dive into the project's essence. Attendees embarked on an immersive orchard tour and actively participated in water infiltration demonstrations, a bee suit experience, and got to witness the sheep grazing in the orchards. The event was made unforgettable by our host and farming ally, the Gardiner family.

**Learn more at [thealmondproject.com](https://thealmondproject.com)**



# The Coconut Sugar Project



## Enabling regenerative agroforestry in Indonesian communities.

The Coconut Sugar Project is a multi-year partnership we launched with agroforestry experts at PUR, a leading organization that aims to regenerate and preserve ecosystems and support local farming communities. The project is designed to help diversify land and income streams through agroforestry implementation and soil health training programs.

Agroforestry refers to planting a variety of trees and other plant species in agricultural landscapes. The practice can enhance biodiversity, improve soil health, and provide additional sources of income for farmers.<sup>32</sup>



Since the project's inception, more than

**1,300 households**

have benefited from kitchen renovations and tool upgrades,

**1,800 farmers**

have been engaged in training related to agroforestry and food safety, and

**10,000 trees**

across 10 species have been planted on

**7,000 acres.**

The growing, harvesting, and processing of the organic coconut sugar we use in our products is led by small shareholder farmers in Java. That's why we've invested right at the source to support farming communities directly.

One exciting element of the project involves trialing a new species of mini coconut palm trees (pictured above) that can help increase harvesting safety, yield, and farmer income to support the long-term sustainability of organic coconut sugar production.



In 2023, the Simple Mills team had the opportunity to join PUR in Java to visit organic coconut sugar farms in the region and deepen relationships with the farmers enrolled in our regenerative program.





# The Cocoa Project



We're supporting farmer awareness campaigns in our main cocoa sourcing region of West Africa to build community knowledge of the ecological and economic benefits of diversifying cacao fields.

In 2023, Simple Mills launched the Cocoa Project, a multi-year partnership with PUR and local production group ALMA to produce engaging and accessible theater performances, film screenings, and radio shows with the goal of spreading awareness in cocoa farming communities about the importance of reforestation and diversifying cocoa farms with other native or naturalized tree species (such as avocado tree, orange tree, and akpi).

In 2023, the campaign engaged more than

**900 farmers**

operating more than

**1,000 acres**

in theater productions and radio shows about the benefits of diversifying cacao farms with additional tree species.



Regions conducive to cacao tree growth, particularly rainforests, host a rich diversity of life.<sup>33</sup> However, this biodiversity is at risk from farming practices that focus on the cultivation of only one or a limited number of crops, also known as monoculture or monocropping.<sup>34</sup> Monoculture can lead to soil nutrient depletion, loss of soil organic carbon, increased soil erosion, pest and disease buildup, and decreased soil biodiversity—all of which put farmers at a higher risk of crop failure, low yields, and resulting economic hardship.<sup>35, 36, 37</sup>

**Diversifying species within working cacao fields, around field perimeters, and in non-working areas on farmers' properties is a powerful way farmers can build ecological resilience and diversify their income streams.<sup>38, 39</sup>**

Our hope is that the awareness building campaign will lead to an increase in the number and diversity of tree species planted in West African cacao systems. As the project progresses, we'll be supporting studies to assess the in-field impact of the awareness building program. Stay tuned for updates on what we learn!





## Direct Trade



We're working directly with farmers to reimagine the commodity agriculture system and support farmers' transitions to regenerative agriculture.

So far, we've worked with **13 farmers** across more than **1,000 acres** in **3 states**

Through our Direct Trade program, we're aiming to bring eaters closer to the source of their food by forging direct, meaningful connections with growers. We're helping our partner farmers reduce risk by covering the cost of planting seeds, providing stipends for farmers to use toward implementing regenerative practices like cover cropping, and by structuring contracts to provide more certainty to farmers about when they can expect market demand for their ingredients. We invite continuous farmer feedback and have evolved the program structure over time with this feedback in mind.

Because our approach to regenerative agriculture is context-specific, we encourage our Direct Trade farmer partners to select practices suited to the unique needs of their operations. For this reason, our partnerships and the practices we are helping to finance look slightly different from farm to farm—and we celebrate that variability!

# Direct Trade in our Products

So far, we've focused our Direct Trade program on organic sunflowers – a beneficial addition to traditional temperate crop rotations and a good food source for pollinators. In 2022 we began integrating sunflower seed grown through this program in our Organic Seed Flour Crackers.



In 2022, we were able to source over

**26%**

of the sunflower seed used in this product from our Direct Trade farmer network



In 2023, we were able to source over

**60%**

of the sunflower seed used in this product from our Direct Trade farmer network

# Growing the Movement

This year, Simple Mills partnered with one of our Direct Trade growers, Luke Peterson of A-Frame Farm (pictured right), and like-minded food CPG brands to host a regenerative field day in the sunflower fields of Minnesota. The transformative event brought together more than 100 individuals, including farmers, industry representatives, chefs, and various other stakeholders.

Our Head of Sustainability Christina Skonberg participated in a live panel discussion that illuminated the importance of disrupting the commodity food system by creating direct relationships between food companies and farmers. During the trip, we visited four of our direct trade farmer partners across Minnesota and Wisconsin, deepening our relationships with growers and learning about the challenges and opportunities they face in implementing regenerative principles.







Photo courtesy of Tom Cotter

## Meet a Direct Trade Farmer

Tom Cotter is a fourth-generation farmer, located in Austin, MN. He is a leader in the regenerative movement and has dedicated his life's work to both implementing and educating others about the power of regenerative principles to restore and protect the health of our food system and communities. A member of Simple Mills' direct trade network since 2022, 40% of his operation is organic, and 60% is no-till. Tom raises a diverse rotation of crops such as sweet corn, sunflowers, hemp, oats, peas, and soybeans alongside grass-finished beef cattle. We're so proud to partner with and learn from leading farmers like Tom!



CHAPTER 5

# Igniting Positive Impact at Simple Mills & Beyond

We're proud of our strong focus on our own supply chain and the way we make our food as the most material opportunities for positive impact. At the same time, we know that no single company can move the needle alone in building a stronger food system. So, we're striving to catalyze systemic change by mobilizing our team around our mission, inviting eaters and the food industry to join our journey by transparently sharing our approach, advocating for better agriculture policy, and partnering with our food industry peers to engage in collective climate action.



# Employee Engagement & Well-Being

We believe that our employees are our greatest asset. Their holistic well-being is integral to our success.

## IMPACTS OF OUR 2023 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & WELL-BEING PROGRAMS

**20,000+**

hours spent with family, friends, and on self-care thanks to half days on Fridays year-round

**16 Weeks**

paid maternity leave for birthing parents (an increase of 4 weeks in 2023)

**10**

meditation sessions hosted for employees

**6 Hours**

of People & Planet Learning Modules for employees to learn from preeminent experts in sustainable agriculture & nutrition science

**8 Weeks**

paid parental leave for non-birthing parents (increase of 4 weeks in 2023)

**\$500**

allocated to each employee's wellness stipend every year

**2 Sessions**

lasting an hour on Financial Wellness from an external Financial Advisor to increase employee's personal finance comfort, awareness, and education

**1 Week**

dedicated to regenerative agriculture learning & wellness practices at our first Mill Valley People & Planet Reunion

**70%+**

of premiums paid across employees' healthcare plans are covered by Simple Mills

# Our First People & Planet Reunion

To foster connection with each other and deepen our understanding of human & planetary health, in 2023 Simple Mills hosted a full-company immersive reunion in Mill Valley, California. The event brought our team together for practical workshops and activities focused on our people & planet mission.



Starting our journey with a hands-on farm tour



Exploring mindfulness and meditation with Stanford Professor **Mark Abramson**



Sharing meals under the redwoods



Research Dietician **Dalia Perelman** teaching us about the gut microbiome



Author **Sophie Egan** leading a discussion on how to be a conscious eater



**Crystal Wahpepah** of Wahpepah's Kitchen sharing about Indigenous foodways before our team enjoyed a delicious meal celebrating Indigenous foods like bison and blue corn

# Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging

At Simple Mills we focus not only on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion but also on the importance of belonging in the workplace, understanding that this commitment is crucial to our mission of advancing the holistic health of the planet and its people.

Fostering a sense of belonging is about creating an environment where every employee feels valued, heard, and connected to the company's mission and to each other. This sense of belonging is cultivated through shared values, mutual respect, and the recognition that each individual brings a unique lived experience, perspective, and set of skills that taken together enhance our collective creativity, productivity, and overall impact.

## Key insights from our 2023 Engagement Survey related to mission, connection, & belonging:

- 98%** The mission of Simple Mills resonates with me personally
- 96%** My co-workers want to see me succeed
- 92%** I have been able to build meaningful relationships here
- 84%** I feel like I can be my authentic self at work
- 83%** I feel like I belong here at Simple Mills

Each year we explore new ways to enhance our diversity, equity, and inclusion practices. We continue to look for ways to embed inclusion and belonging in our culture and ways of working - using live forums and anonymous surveys to gather perspectives from our team members and authentically engage and empower our team to achieve our mission together. In 2023 we focused our efforts externally, piloting a partnership



## Who we are:

- **4 out of 4** C-Suite leaders identify as women
- **3 out of 7** Board members identify as women
- More than **4 out of every 5** employees identify as women
- More than **1 out of every 5** employees identify as Asian, Hispanic, African American, or having two or more racial identities
- Our employees span **multiple generations**, representing Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Gen Z

with an organization that utilizes technology and extensive networks to aid recruitment outreach, allowing companies the opportunity to enhance sourcing of diverse candidates.

We are on a journey to foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization, connected by a powerful sense of belonging, and motivated by our shared commitment to our mission!

# We're helping our team members become better allies

For three years, Simple Mills has had the honor of partnering with Brave Space Alliance, the first Black-led, trans-led LGBTQ+ center located on the South Side of Chicago. Through workshops led by Brave Space Alliance, our team has learned invaluable insights and tools to build and nurture an environment that champions the unique voices and experiences of all Simple Mills team members. This is an ongoing journey, with plenty of progress to be made and we are grateful to collaborate with Brave Space Alliance to continue that work.



## Dedication across teams

Over the past year, we've been dedicated to identifying actions that allow every team at Simple Mills to integrate DEI&B objectives into their unique roles.

*"We actively seek and celebrate diversity in our vetting process for manufacturing partners, elevating operations that uplift talent from all backgrounds, especially those historically underrepresented."*

*- Manufacturing Team*

*"Embracing and learning from diverse diets and food philosophies, our product development, consumer research, and internal culture reflect inclusivity."*

*- Innovation Team*

*"Diversity and representation are key priorities across all marketing channels and we believe it is paramount for consumers to see themselves represented in our content and communications. We partner with, support, and celebrate BIPOC Registered Dietitians and health practitioners who are often underrepresented in wellness."*

*- Marketing Team*

# Investing in the Future of Farming: Young Farmers



In 2023 we partnered with the National Young Farmers Coalition to support young and diverse farmers in their work to advocate for more equitable and climate-resilient agricultural policy.



*Did you know? The 2022 National Young Farmer Survey found that 86% of young farmers report practicing regenerative farming techniques.<sup>40</sup>*

Policy reform is foundational to creating a more equitable and climate-smart food system. In March of 2023, Simple Mills supported an effort to send over 100 young farmer leaders to Washington DC to meet with lawmakers to advocate for Farm Bill 2023 policies that advance equitable land access and climate resilience in agriculture. Our team even joined the young farmers at the Capitol to cheer them on!

**To invest in young farmers is to invest in the future of regenerative agriculture.**

According to the American Farmland Trust, more than 40% of US agricultural land is owned by individuals aged 65 and older and NYFC anticipates that nearly half of all US farmland will change hands over the next decade as farmers retire.<sup>41,42</sup> This shift makes it imperative to get land into the hands of young, diverse, regenerative agriculture leaders. This is the generation poised to jumpstart a more resilient food system.

**The young farmers' advocacy work in 2023 contributed to the passage of a significant bill securing \$300 million in USDA funding for land access for young and diverse farmers, addressing systemic barriers within the food industry.<sup>43</sup>**



# Coming Soon: Our Climate Action Plan

## Setting the stage for a climate-resilient future



As a food company, we know that we have an important responsibility to contribute to a climate-resilient future. This includes both reducing greenhouse gas emissions – recall from the *Understanding Our Impact* page that estimates suggest that our food system, from production all the way to consumption, contributes more than a third of global greenhouse gas emissions<sup>44</sup> – and helping the food system become more resilient in the face of a changing climate.

Supporting regenerative agriculture—with its myriad potential benefits ranging from improving soil health and fostering biodiversity, to pulling carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in the ground<sup>45</sup>—has been the first step in our holistic climate action journey. Now, with data from our first Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) to help us understand where our biggest environmental hotspots and emissions reduction opportunities lie, **we are embarking on a formal Climate Action Plan that will outline concrete initiatives and goals that Simple Mills will undertake to support both GHG emissions reductions and a regenerative, resilient agriculture system.**

Our approach focuses on contributing to the positive transformation of the food system as a whole, which we believe has a far greater effect than exclusively focusing on achievements within our own product portfolio. In other words, we know that we are one company in a large ecosystem of players that need to work together to collectively create a climate resilient future—brands, policy makers, consumers, farmers, and more. As we build our Climate Action Plan in 2024, we are heeding findings from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and prioritizing opportunities to engage in collective action across the food industry.

**As a first step, we're proud to be partnering with leading sustainability intelligence firm, HowGood, to track our corporate and supply chain greenhouse gas emissions, identify our biggest opportunities for emissions reductions, and use that information to implement updated practices across our business.** HowGood's work is highly aligned with our approach to embed regenerative principles into product design, and we're excited to utilize their deep subject matter expertise as we deepen our understanding of our own GHG emissions and translate that into company action. Stay tuned for more in 2024!



# Amplifying Impact & Building Awareness with Eaters

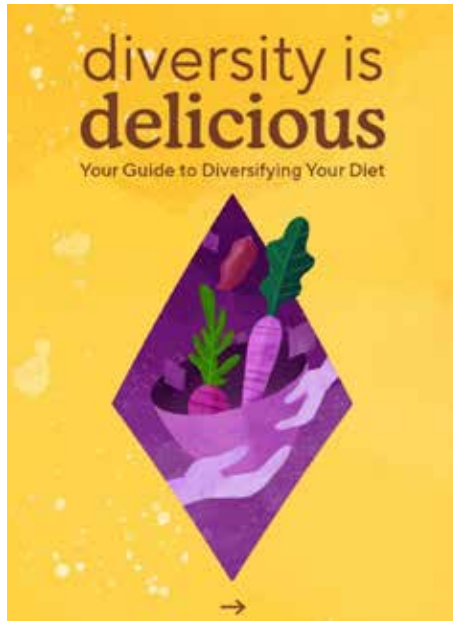
At Simple Mills, we transparently share our journey to advance our mission with eaters, retailers, and peers to drive collaboration—and invite feedback—in solving the world’s most pressing issues.

As a brand with products in over 30,000 stores and thousands of loyal fans, our product packaging and communications represent an important lever to engage passionate eaters about the power of food to benefit both people and planet. We seek to create ripple effects when we amplify messages about how the well-being of people hinges on that of our planet.

We use our channels as a megaphone for impact by sharing tips from registered dietitians on topics like reading food labels, how to get more fiber in your diet, and the importance of a diverse diet for gut health.

We use our channels as a megaphone for impact by sharing tips from registered dietitians on topics like reading food labels, how to get more fiber in your diet, and the importance of a diverse diet for gut health.

We use our product packaging to communicate about the essential nutrients found in our ingredients.



Marissa Meshulam, MS, RD, CDN @mpmnutrition



# Supporting Organizations Building a More Inclusive Food System

At Simple Mills we are working to create a ripple effect of positive change. One of the ways we do this is by supporting organizations that advance equity in the food system and improve access to whole foods.

WE ARE PROUD TO HAVE SUPPORTED THESE ORGANIZATIONS IN 2023:



The Ron Finley Project is a nonprofit organization that champions urban agriculture and food justice by providing educational programs, gardening workshops, and advocacy.



FEAST for All is a grassroots organization dedicated to combating food insecurity through community-driven initiatives like food education, access, and support, ensuring equitable access to nutritious meals for all.



Urban Growers Collective (UGC) uses urban agriculture and community food system development to dismantle inequities and structural racism, which prevent communities of color from living healthy, vibrant lives. UGC cultivates nourishing environments in Chicago's historically disinvested communities, seeding pathways to freedom while supporting residents' health, economic development, healing and creativity through urban agriculture.



CHAPTER 6

# Onward

# The Journey Continues!

Thank you for joining us for the 2023 edition of our People & Planet Impact Journal. We're proud of the progress we've made on our people & planet journey so far, and we know there is much more work to be done. As we look to the future, we have exciting plans in the works, including:

- **Adding a wider variety of nutrient dense and climate-smart ingredients to our product portfolio**
- **Launching our Climate Action Plan, our commitment to tracking and improving our greenhouse gas emissions impact over time**
- **Further extending our regenerative agriculture programs to more ingredients, sourcing regions, farmers, and acres**
- **Supporting cutting edge research on the link between regenerative agriculture and crop nutrient density**
- **Expanding our policy advocacy work to support the next generation of regenerative farmers**
- **Identifying and pursuing the heaviest hitting opportunities to improve the impact of our packaging**

As we continue to evolve and grow our People & Planet work, we warmly welcome feedback. We'd love to hear your thoughts on our approach and any ideas for future impact opportunities. You can get in touch by sending an email to [info@simplemills.com](mailto:info@simplemills.com).

# Learn More and Get Involved!

Some of our favorite people and planet resources and a few ways to take action



## FILMS

### **Gather**

Provides an intimate portrait of the growing movement amongst Native Americans to reclaim their spiritual, political and cultural identities through food sovereignty, while battling the trauma of centuries of genocide.

### **Kiss the Ground**

Reveals that, by regenerating the world's soils, we can completely and rapidly stabilize Earth's climate, restore lost ecosystems and create abundant food supplies.

### **Living Soil**

Tells the story of farmers, scientists, and policymakers working to incorporate regenerative agricultural practices to benefit soil health for years to come.

### **Common Ground**

This sequel to the film Kiss the Ground, explores the next steps in regenerative agriculture, focusing on the global impact of these practices on climate change, food security, and ecosystem restoration.

### **Live to 100: Secrets of The Blue Zones**

A documentary that explores the lifestyles, diets, and cultures of the world's Blue Zones, regions known for their high concentration of centenarians, to uncover the secrets behind their longevity and health.



## BOOKS

### **Regeneration: Ending the Climate Crisis in One Generation**

By Paul Hawken

### **All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis**

Edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson & Katharine Wilkinson

### **Braiding Sweetgrass**

By Robin Wall Kimmerer

### **What Your Food Ate: How to Heal Our Land and Reclaim our Health**

By David Montgomery and Anne Biklé

### **The Good Gut: Taking Control of Your Weight, Your Mood, and Your Long-Term Health**

By Justin Sonnenburg & Erica Sonnenberg, PhDs

### **Farming While Black**

By Leah Penniman

### **Fiber Fueled**

By Dr. Will Bulsiewicz



## BOOKS

### **The Third Plate**

By Dan Barber

### **Intuitive Eating**

By Evelyn Tribole MS RDN CEDRD-S & Elyse Resch MS RDN CEDRD-S FAND

### **Genius Foods: Become Smarter, Happier, and More Productive While Protecting Your Brain for Life**

By Max Lugavere

### **The Blue Zones Secrets for Living Longer: Lessons From the Healthiest Places on Earth**

By Dan Buettner

### **In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto**

By Michal Pollan

### **Food: What the Heck Should I Eat**

By Dr. Mark Hyman



## PODCASTS

### **How to Save a Planet**

Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson & Alex Blumberg

### **Gastropod**

Cynthia Graber & Nicola Twilley

### **New Food Order**

Food+Tech Connect & AgFunder

### **The Heritage Radio Network**

### **Food Talk with Dani Nierenberg**

**(by Food Tank)**

Danielle Nierenberg

### **The Doctors Farmacy**

Dr. Mark Hyman

### **Huberman Lab**

Andrew Huberman

### **The Genius Life**

Max Lugavere

### **What's the Juice**

Olivia Amitrano

### **Feel Better. Live More**

Dr. Rangan Chatterjee



## EXPERIENCES

### **Kiss The Ground**

#### **Introduction to Regenerative Gardening Class**

Kiss the Ground's Introduction to Regenerative Gardening is a comprehensive 8-module course designed for all skill levels, covering the history of gardening, soil and plant understanding, troubleshooting, and harvesting, led by Tashanda Giles-Jones and featuring various experts to empower students to start or enhance their regenerative gardening journey confidently.

#### **IndigiKitchen Cooking Classes**

Cooking classes from IndigiKitchen provide an immersive experience in preparing traditional Indigenous foods, emphasizing sustainability and cultural heritage.

#### **Ron Finley Gardening MasterClass**

Ron Finley's MasterClass on gardening teaches the art and science of growing your own food in any space, focusing on urban gardening and community empowerment.



## ACTIVISM

### **Invitations to Engage From**

**The National Young Farmers Coalition:**

**Tell Congress to Invest in Equitable Land Access for Young and BIPOC Farmers**

**Tell Congress to help young farmers protect water and build climate resilience!**

**Become a Member of the National Young Farmers Coalition!**

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