

FACT SHEET
The Role of Agriculture in the Green New Deal
Organic Consumers Association

- The Green New Deal (GND) can achieve its ambitious goal of net zero emissions by 2030-2050 only if it includes programs and policies to rapidly scale up *both* the transition to renewable energy alternatives (in order to reduce/eliminate future GHG emissions) *and* the transition to regenerative agriculture and land-use and land-restoration practices (in order to draw down and sequester billions of tons of carbon already in the atmosphere).
- Between 44-57 percent of all global GHG emissions are generated by the global chemical- and fossil fuel-intensive industrial food and farming system. The GND calls for "eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from the manufacturing, agricultural and other industries." Transitioning to regenerative agriculture practices is the most efficient, shovel-ready solution to eliminating GHG emissions from agriculture.¹
- The GND calls for "investing in local agriculture." This would help reduce food transportation-related emissions, though only about 5- 6% of total ag-related emissions are directly related to transportation.² The remainder of food and ag-related emissions—about 44-52%—come from factory farm practices and grain production for factory farms, food processing, packaging, fertilizer and pesticide production, refrigeration, and destructive land-use practices, such as deforestation, heavy plowing, lack of cover crops, and wetlands destruction.³
- The GND calls for "funding massive investment in the drawdown of greenhouse gases." Most of this drawdown can be achieved through enhanced photosynthesis, if we invest in improved organic and regenerative agricultural and forestry practices, including reforestation and steps to improve soil fertility and increase soil carbon content.⁴
- Earth's two major carbon sinks are plant biomass and soils. These carbon sinks have been drastically altered by human activities, including deforestation, biomass burning, soil cultivation, and drainage of wetlands—all of which are related to industrial farming. Agricultural soils today contain 25% to 75% less soil organic carbon than their counterparts in undisturbed or natural ecosystems. Rebuilding soil organic carbon addresses multiple problems, including global warming, environmental pollution and poor nutrition.⁵
- The Lancet Commission on Obesity, experts in agriculture, economics and human rights, says obesity, undernutrition and climate change are the biggest threats to the world

¹ GRAIN, "[Food Sovereignty: Five Steps to Cool the Planet and Feed its People.](#)" December 2014

² ETC Group, "[Who Will Feed Us?](#)" October 2017

³ GRAIN, "[Food Sovereignty: Five Steps to Cool the Planet and Feed its People.](#)" December 2014

⁴ Earth Institute, Columbia University, "[Young People's Burden: Requirement of Negative CO2 Emissions.](#)" by James Hansen, October 2016

⁵ Global Environment and Development Institute, Tufts University, "[Hope Beneath Our Feet: Soil as a Climate Solution.](#)" April 2017

population, linked by profit motives and policy inertia. The report recommends strategies targeting food policy and production to support health, the environment and economic well-being. The GND is the perfect vehicle for creating these policies in the U.S.⁶

- The original GND proposal calls for prioritizing “solutions that end the harms faced by front-line communities from climate change and environmental pollution” could include policies that help farmers currently operating GHG-polluting livestock farms⁷ transition to regenerative livestock practices that restore grasslands and rangelands and their natural capacity to draw down and sequester carbon.⁸
- The consolidation of American farming, with an emphasis on monoculture crops—corn and soybeans—has had profound climate and environmental implications. Mega-sized farming encourages practices that degrade the soil, waste fertilizer and mishandle manure, all of which directly increase emissions of greenhouse gases (CO₂, methane and nitrous oxide). It also discourages practices like “no-till” farming, cover cropping, use of natural compost, and crop rotation that draw down carbon dioxide from the air, store it in the soil and improve soil health.⁹
- The GND’s guaranteed jobs and \$15 dollar/hour minimum wage proposals would mean more income for farmworkers and more money in consumers’ pockets. Consumers would be able to buy more locally produced, nutrient-dense organic food, which would reduce healthcare costs and boost local economies.¹⁰ This systemic change would also generate more income for local farmers and food producers, who under current economic conditions increasingly are being forced into bankruptcy, or having to sell out to big corporations with vast financial resources economies-of-scale advantages.¹¹
- The GND’s call for universal healthcare means farmers wouldn’t have to take on second jobs in order to provide health benefits for their families. This could help improve productivity and financial independence for small, independent farmers, and improve local access to high-quality, nutrient-dense food for consumers.¹²
- The inclusion of public banking in the GND could help young, beginning and small farmers transition to carbon-sequestering regenerative farming. For the past 100 years, these farmers have had to rely on the borrower-owned Farm Credit System (FCS).¹³ The FCS lending could be targeted for, and shaped to support, farmers who provide nutrient-dense food from systems that benefit the climate by sequestering carbon.

⁶ The Lancet, [“The Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition and Climate Change: Lancet Commission Report.”](#) January 2019

⁷ Inside Climate News, [“Factory Farms Put Climate at Risk, Experts Say in Urging Health Officials to Speak Out.”](#) May 2017

⁸ Journal of Soil and Water Conservation, [“The Role of Ruminants in Reducing Agriculture’s Carbon Footprint in North America.”](#) W.R. Teague, et al, March/April 2016

⁹ Inside Climate News, [“Industrial Agriculture, an Extraction Industry Like Fossil Fuels, a Growing Driver of Climate Change.”](#) January 2019

¹⁰ Civil Eats, “Can Organics Help Rural America Rebound?” Twilight Greenaway, April 2018

¹¹ Forbes, [“Here’s Why More American Farms Are Going Bankrupt.”](#) Jesse Columbo, November 2018

¹² Wall Street Journal, [“To Stay on the Land, American Farmers Add Extra Jobs.”](#) February 2018

¹³ Farm Credit Administration, [“History of FCA.”](#) November 2018