The virtual 2020 Honor the Harvest Forum is led by The Aspen Institute in partnership with U.S. Farmers and Ranchers in Action (USFRA). Its aim is to connect farmers and ranchers with agricultural value chain leaders in food, fiber and energy in order to build a movement to deliver lasting environmental, social and economic sustainability. The invitation-only, multi-day event is a unique experience that allows for targeted discussions and individual contributions – all with the intent of collaborating with peers and directly engaging with each participant during the sessions. The focus of Day 1 was to set the stage of collaborative action, present the Vision, and build connection between leaders across the system.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

By the end of the Forum, we will have ignited a leadership network to take on the challenges of the next 6 months and build the next decade for the food and ag sector.

- “Farmers and ranchers like me are calling on you as leaders to step up and commit to a Decade of Ag.” - Chip Bowling, Chairman, U.S. Farmers & Ranchers in Action (USFRA)

- “It is critical we continue to work together to harness innovation and technology in American agriculture and help our farmers thrive.” - Sonny Perdue, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

- “We’re here to talk about how we’re going to work together and find the solutions to climate change where the food and ag sector can lead.” - Greg Gershuny, Executive Director, Energy & Environment Program, The Aspen Institute

- “In challenges of this magnitude there is no playbook. Our next 30 harvests demand leaders in action and a bold Decade of Agriculture.” - Erin Fitzgerald, CEO, USFRA

BY THE NUMBERS

150+ attendee leaders representing 100% of the food and ag value chain

30 harvests left to feed a population of 9.7 billion by 2050

50% reduction in U.S. agriculture environmental footprint by 2050 (Agriculture Innovation Agenda, USDA)

Welcoming Hosts & Leaders

Chip Bowling, Chairman, U.S. Farmers & Ranchers in Action
Sonny Perdue, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture
Greg Gershuny, Executive Director, Energy & Environment Program, The Aspen Institute
Erin Fitzgerald, CEO, U.S. Farmers & Ranchers in Action
Vision Statement: A resilient, restorative, economically viable and climate-smart agricultural system that produces abundant and nutritious food, natural fiber and clean energy for a sustainable, vibrant and prosperous America.

Participants at the 2019 HTH Forum began the work of creating a shared vision for the food and ag sector, and the Vision has been shared broadly over the last year for further refinement. 2020 participants will work to align on final Vision language. Speakers shared priorities for the four Vision outcome areas, which guide our focus for the supporting Commitment and Action Networks.

Vision Outcome Areas

1. Restoring our environment through agriculture that regenerates natural resources: "Agriculture has the solutions for a changing climate; I can attest to its impact as I call in from Northern California where we are surrounded by wildfires. Although it is morning here it is completely dark outside because of the smoke.” - Elizabeth Whitlow, Executive Director, Regenerative Organic Alliance

2. Revitalizing our collective appreciation for agriculture: “Farmers are the original conservationists. We know how important it is to protect the soil. But farmers alone can't be responsible for this monumental task.” - Addy Battel, 4H Youth Leader

3. Investing in the next generation of agricultural systems: “Investment in technology and innovation is ushering in a new era of food, fiber and energy advancements to deliver climate-smart outcomes.” - Donna Lanzetta, CEO, Founder, Manna Fish Farms

4. Strengthening the social and economic fabric of America through agriculture: "A lot of work needs to be done to address food waste, food distribution and food deserts. When the ag sector is not prosperous it affects entire rural communities. Food security is national security." - Brad Greenway, farmer, former Chairman, USFRA

Support for the Vision

- “The potential to sequester large amounts of carbon presents a tremendous economic opportunity that can be spread to farmland across the country. Every farm, every acre, every voice matters." - Tom Vilsack, President and CEO, U.S. Dairy Export Council, former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture
- "The bold future-forward work that American agriculture is undertaking today is essential as we drive scaled adoption of healthier food systems. Partnerships are fundamental to how we fulfill our vision." - Barb O’Brien, President, Dairy Management, Inc. & Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy

*The final Vision will be available on our website following the 2020 Forum
Imagine yourself in 2030 in a world in which our Vision has been accomplished. How is life different? What leadership characteristics paved the way?

Discussion question 1:
What is the positive core of the system we want to bring forward?

Discussion question 2:
What examples from our history empower us to do this?

Discussion question 3:
What will it take for us to achieve the Vision?

Highlights from leader breakout group discussions which yielded a number of important considerations for focusing and enabling actions that will advance the sector’s shared Vision:

- With 1 in 6 Americans food insecure, it is important to **preserve food affordability**.

- We need to **rethink current financial incentives** in order to foster climate-smart agriculture. To move away from a focus on increasing yield to a broader focus on a range of interconnected outcomes that impact the sustainability of our food system.

- A focus on **science-based systems and research** along with adoption of new technologies is essential to the vision of a sustainable food system.

- Using technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT) throughout the agricultural value chain is essential to **capture critical data** that allows farmers to be paid for their ecosystem services and provides traceability about where food comes from.

- We need to **implement a systems approach for a sustainable food system** that is nimble, flexible and innovative, with farmers at the center as the boots on the ground.

**CLOSING REMARKS**

The Forum is not an event as much as it is a moment to stop and reflect on the larger journey we are on together. Here’s to new connections and deepened collaboration over the next several days!

- “We have to be collaborative and inclusive and make sure the Decade of Ag brings in all voices.”- Janie Hipp, CEO, Native American Agriculture Fund

- “Over the next two weeks, put your clarion leadership voice to action.” - Erin Fitzgerald, CEO, USFRA

**UP NEXT**

**September 10:**
**Session 2 / Finance & Investment Action Network**

- Panel
- Breakout sessions
- Small group leadership discussions

Thank you to our Movement, Presenting & Platinum Forum Sponsors.
Climate-smart agriculture practices hold the potential to reduce GHG emissions and drawdown large amounts of carbon into U.S. soils, bringing U.S. agriculture to net neutral and even to net positive, offsetting the emissions of other sectors.

"We are very aware of the pivotal role environmental sustainability plays in the economic sustainability and long-term viability of the sector. As a provider of capital, we play an important part in the ecosystem of stakeholders who are committed to helping companies from farms to major food processors grow and succeed and thrive in the long term. As we virtually gather to honor the harvest, I urge each of you to think about how your organization fits into the sustainable agriculture ecosystem, whether you’re a researcher, investor, customer, farmer or advocate and seek out opportunities to connect with other ecosystem participants to collectively lift up and support innovation and entrepreneurs. The great ideas that you identify and support may be the game changers that are needed to deliver a climate-smart, resilient future for food and agriculture."

— Mary Wenzel, EVP and Head of Sustainability & Corporate Responsibility, Wells Fargo

### BY THE NUMBERS

- **$978 billion**
  - invested in U.S. agriculture

- **19 financial mechanisms**
  - identified to help society realize the potential of agriculture to address climate change

- **2 asset classes:**
  - public equity
  - fixed income
  - offer the greatest opportunities to promote or develop financial mechanisms targeting climate smart agriculture

**Source:** "Transformative Investment in Climate-Smart Agriculture," USFRA, September 2020, USFRA

### Panelists

- **Rob Trice**, Founding Partner, The Mixing Bowl and Better Food Ventures
- **Gary Matteson**, Vice President for Young, Beginning, Small Farmer Programs & Outreach, Farm Credit Council
- **Michael Rinaldi**, VP, Sustainable Development, Rabobank
Investment & Finance is one of the four Decade of Ag Action Networks helping to advance our Vision.* The aim is to unlock and mobilize capital for all U.S. farmers and ranchers to adopt climate-smart agricultural practices. This can occur in a number of ways including: innovative financial mechanisms for getting low-cost capital to farmers and ranchers; carbon and ecosystem services credit markets that provide financial recognition for effective stewardship; catalytic capital/blended capital finance approaches to funding the transition to climate-smart agricultural practices, and value chain financing solutions, where customers partner with producers to co-invest in social and environmental outcomes.

Several themes emerged from our panel of experts for unlocking transformative investment for agriculture:

1. **Balance risk and reward:** “Farmers are taking a high risk with an uncertain reward. We need to change that so that producers feel comfortable adopting climate-smart practices.” - Rob Trice, The Mixing Bowl and Better Food Ventures

2. **Help capital reward more sustainable practices:** “Smart capital avoids risk and seeks growth and all of a sudden, soil is sexy. We want to make sure we hitch our wagon to that, pun intended.” - David Bennell, World Business Council for Sustainable Development

3. **Capture financial flows for sustainable agriculture:** “Almost daily we hear stories from investors looking to place capital into climate solutions, including agriculture, and farmers and ranchers and their industry partners seeking ways in which they can contribute to bringing climate-smart agriculture forward. How can we bend the curve of capital flows to enable the transformation to a climate smart agriculture?” - David LeZaks, Croatan Institute

4. **Encourage beginning farmers as early adopters:** “Beginning farmers are more likely to accept change and more importantly, willing to accept the perceived risks inherent in new marketing and production systems.” - Gary Matteson, Farm Credit Council

5. **Co-invest solutions with farmers:** “A key way we support farmers is providing the technical assistance to ensure they have the most up-to-date information on their own individual path in the conversion to regenerative agriculture.” - Tina Owens, Danone, North America

6. **Overcome barriers to adoption:** “In making these transitions, growers struggle in three main areas: the economics — finding capital; finding markets and third, finding local expertise to support them.” - Erin Heitkamp, Pipeline Foods

7. **Find the right business case:** “We need to approach climate-smart practices through a systems approach. How do we provide a positive business case for solutions?” - Michael Rinaldi, Rabobank

Panelists

Tina Owens  
Senior Director, Good & Agriculture Impact, Danone

Erin Heitkamp  
Senior Vice President – Impact, Pipeline Foods

David LeZaks,  
Senior Fellow, Croatan Institute

*Working Vision 9/9/2020: A resilient, restorative, economically viable and climate-smart agricultural system that produces abundant and nutritious food, natural fiber and clean energy for a sustainable, vibrant and prosperous America."
Participants were encouraged to explore the following questions in breakout sessions:

What's exciting that you're seeing in this area?

What is needed to accelerate progress?

Are there some concrete actions we can take?

Are there ways that people in this group can take action together?

Leadership discussions focused on this question:

What's clearer to me now and what implications does it have for me as a leader?

A number of opportunities for action emerged from breakout group discussions while small group leadership discussions led to recognition that a mindset of collaboration and empathy can help tackle what seems like a daunting undertaking:

• Leverage tech and data to scale adoption of climate-smart ag.
• Invite investors out to the farm for investor days to help activate the financial system.
• Consider opportunities within community development finance. By developing their own loan programs, CDFIs can be tailored to local needs and match investors with local farmers.
• When developing solutions, recognize farmers' expertise because they know what they're doing.
• Get young producers active and funded in this work.
• Farmers don't need more debt. We need to give farmers access to good, positive business cases for implementing sustainable practices and outcomes.
• Seek partners who have a vested interest in putting collective resources toward supporting farmers to achieve large-scale outcomes.
• Through public/private partnerships, conduct farmer-led watersheds, demonstration projects and financial partner listening sessions to help inform investments.

“"We are hearing many different individual opinions in these discussions, but it is clear that we all have a long-term commitment to sustainability.”

CLOSING REMARKS

All the elements of a climate-smart agriculture are in place. Now is the time to align finance and investment with this growing movement to truly scale ambition and meet the needs of the next decade.

SPONSOR REMARKS

“Using data, technology and finance to support climate-smart agriculture is a real opportunity. Based on how Nutri engages directly with growers we are in a unique position to work up and down the value chain to support climate-smart agricultural practices.”—Mike Frank, Executive Vice President & CEO, Retail, Nutrien Ag Solutions

UP NEXT

September 11:
Session 3 /
Data, Metrics & Technology

• Panel
• Breakout sessions
• Small group leadership discussions
The virtual 2020 Honor the Harvest Forum is led by The Aspen Institute in partnership with U.S. Farmers and Ranchers in Action (USFRA). Its aim is to connect farmers and ranchers with agricultural value chain leaders in food, fiber and energy in order to build a movement to deliver lasting environmental, social and economic sustainability. The invitation-only, multi-day event is a unique experience that allows for targeted discussions and individual contributions, to collaborate with peers and directly engage with participants during the sessions. The focus of Day 3 was to help accelerate a convergence in data, metrics and technology to enable players across the food and ag system to collaborate for continuous improvement.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Day 3 focused on the potential for exponential advancement by working together to converge data and metrics to achieve the Vision.* The Agriculture Climate Partnership (ACP) exemplifies this potential. Led by USFRA, the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR), and the World Farmers’ Organisation, it aims to mobilize farmers, ranchers, scientists, data providers, stakeholders and funders to develop and implement climate-smart solutions that are both environmentally and economically sustainable.

"We recognize we have the power to revolutionize agriculture to reduce GHG emissions and be a solution to climate change. The ACP is an unprecedented effort to advance this work." - Dr. Sally Rockey, Executive Director, Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR, Honor the Harvest sponsor)

"Several big ideas came out last year’s Forum. At the core was the need to accelerate science, integrate data, and enable farmers to rapidly respond to climate change and co-create solutions with scientists. We heard the needs and developed them into a 10-year plan for innovation on science, data, and farmer learning." - Erin Fitzgerald, CEO, USFRA

"Science-based decision-making is key for farmers. Whatever we learn from each other can be a step forward for farmers in other parts of the world." - Arianna Giuliodori, Secretary General, World Farmers’ Organisation

BY THE NUMBERS

89% of organizations are creating their own data on the impacts of agriculture across the US that have a direct impact on GHG emission reduction or carbon sequestration in the ag value chain identified through a comprehensive data landscape scan to determine where critical ag and GHG data sits

580 organizations

89% of organizations

Source: Honor the Harvest briefing paper, August 2020, USFRA.

Speakers & Panelists

Dr. Sally Rockey, Executive Director, FFAR
Dr. Lakisha Odom, Scientific Director, FFAR
Dr. Dorn Cox, OpenTEAM, Research Director at Wolfe’s Neck Center & farmer
Dr. Aaron Ault, Senior Research Engineer, Purdue University/OATS & farmer

*Working Vision 9/9/2020: A resilient, restorative, economically viable and climate-smart agricultural system that produces abundant and nutritious food, natural fiber and clean energy for a sustainable, vibrant and prosperous America.
Data, Metrics & Technology is one of the four Decade of Ag Action Networks helping to advance our Vision. Its focus is collaboration between farmers and scientists to achieve net negative emissions for the ag sector. We envision this happening in several ways: 1) farmer and scientist learning networks with access to the latest data/science and collaboration; 2) demonstration/lighthouse farms to test and accelerate the adoption of climate-smart ag; 3) site-specific insights to optimize for economic and environmental outcomes and business intelligence solutions and 4) illuminating and supporting farmers and companies in navigating and harmonizing the landscape of metrics, tech and tools. Through collaboration, science and data sharing, the Agriculture Climate Partnership aims to transform these ideas into action.

Several themes emerged from our panel of experts about how to use the Agriculture Climate Partnership to leverage the potential for better integration of data, metrics and technology for the benefit of all stakeholders:

1. **Democratize innovation:** “We need to make it possible for anyone who has an idea to try it out and build it collaboratively as a community.” - Dr. Aaron Ault, Purdue University/OATS & farmer

2. **Prioritize farmer-led stewardship:** “We need to focus on what is realistic on the ground for stewardship opportunities, and that often includes engaging the wider community such as local watershed programs.” - Nick Reinke, Truterra at Land O’ Lakes

3. **Build in transparency:** “We need transparency on science-based metrics tools so people understand what’s happening, what the environmental outcomes are and how to improve on those outcomes.” - Allison Thomson, Field to Market

4. **Move from theory to practice:** “We need to translate data to something that is useful at the farm level.” - Dr. Dorn Cox, OpenTEAM

5. **Find the data that matters:** “The connection between decision-making and data is difficult. We need to shine a light into complex systems and processes and the decisions that farmers make every day.” - Dr. Marty Matlock, University of Arkansas

6. **Invest in trust and relationship building:** “There needs to be a human element of building trust and relationships. Getting farmers involved in designing data metrics improves the science and makes it more actionable.” - Allison Thomson, Field to Market

7. **Make data sharing pre-competitive:** "We need to treat this space as pre-competitive. We are all in this together." - Nick Reinke, Truterra at Land O’ Lakes

8. **Overcome the privacy barrier:** "The rural broadband push will be a gamechanger for data but this also highlights the barrier that privacy of data can pose." - Dr. Aaron Ault, Purdue University

9. **Demystify data collection:** "Keep it simple and make it work for farmers so that they can get the tools and support they need." - Nick Reinke, Truterra at Land O’ Lakes

**Sponsor remarks**

- "We know that climate-smart agriculture starts on the farm with the farmers. It is imperative that changes and adaptations are farmer led and they need to make sense for the farmer." - Anne Meis, Nebraska Soybean Board

**Panelists**

Dr. Marty Matlock, Executive Director of the Resiliency Centre, University of Arkansas  
Allison Thomson, Vice President, Science & Research, Field to Market  
Nick Reinke, Downstream Sustainability Manager, Truterra at Land O’ Lakes

*Working Vision 9/9/2020: A resilient, restorative, economically viable and climate-smart agricultural system that produces abundant and nutritious food, natural fiber and clean energy for a sustainable, vibrant and prosperous America.*
Participants joined one of five different breakout sessions:

1. How to use academic research and data to get practical farm-level insights
2. Challenges and opportunities in data interoperability
3. Understanding and overcoming hurdles to farmer adoption of data platforms and tech
4. Using science to inform what we measure on the ground
5. How can we maximize the value of data collection for farmers?

We posed this question in small group leadership discussions:

What’s clearer to me now and what implications does it have for me as a leader?

A number of opportunities for action emerged from breakout group discussions, captured in the following highlights:

- Rethink the role of cooperative extensions as a trusted partner to help farmers translate research to practices on the farm.

- Develop communities of practice, open source software and a pre-competitive approach can help address and scale data interoperability.

- Build a value proposition for both large and small farms. Recognize generational differences as a possible barrier to use of technology.

- Create a data system of value to farmers by making it burden-free for them and addressing privacy concerns.

- Put data in the hands of the grower to be an entrepreneur with that data.

- We need a variety of tools and resources and to move from just measuring to modeling.

- Give farmers visibility to the challenges in data collection so that they’re involved in all the steps along the way.

- Recognize data is needed at different scales: for the farmer at a micro level and for researchers with longer time frames.

"Farmers are at the center of making a big contribution and need to be rewarded and incentivized for what they do."

- Brett Begemann, CEO, Bayer Crop Science (Honor the Harvest sponsor)

Closing Remarks

Leader participants were fired up as they shared personal and sector implications for the day’s discussion. Here are a few comments we captured:

- "As a farmer, I need to keep showing up at events like this to provide my feedback."

- "We need clarity, rooted in science, to show the power and contribution of the farmer to provide nutrition and environmental leadership."

- "We must pay farmers for outcome-based performance, and farmers have to lead those efforts."

- "I commit to sustainable agriculture in the purchases I make as a retailer."

- "We need to find the right place to hold data, keep it private...and use it to tell the story of the work farmers and ranchers are doing every day."

Up Next

September 15:
Session 4 / Workforce & Livelihoods and Communications & Storytelling

- Two tracks for discussion
- Sharing in plenary
- Small group leadership discussions
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Day 4 focused on the final two Decade of Ag Action Networks: Communications & Storytelling and Workforce & Livelihoods. U.S. agriculture has an outsized role in helping achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The sector has the potential to build and empower the workforce, accelerate climate change action, enhance and scale responsible management of agricultural systems and more, as described in a new USFRA report, "U.S. Agriculture’s Opportunities to Contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals."

Sponsor remarks

“The decisions we make today will have impacts on ag’s prosperity tomorrow, requiring unprecedented collaboration.” – Karianne Fallow, CEO, Dairy West

“We need to bridge the gap between our farms and food and do a better job of sharing how agriculture can be a solution.” – Jill Kolling, Vice President for Global Sustainability, Cargill

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to demonstrate to consumers that we care about the same things that they do.” – Lucas McKelvie, Global Farmer Program Manager, McDonald’s

BY THE NUMBERS

$2.96 trillion

the contribution of agriculture and food sectors to U.S. GDP

15%

of U.S. workforce employed by the agriculture and food sectors

7

of the 17 SDGs*

where U.S. agriculture can have an outsized positive impact

*UN Sustainable Development Goals

Source: U.S. Agriculture’s Opportunities to Contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals,” September 2020, USFRA

Decade of Ag's Four Action Networks

Investment & Finance

Unlock and mobilize capital for all US farmers and ranchers to adopt climate-smart agriculture practices
- Innovative financial mechanisms for getting low-cost capital to farmers and ranchers
- Carbon and ecosystem services credit markets that provide financial recognition for effective stewardship
- Catalytic capital / blended finance approaches to funding the transition to climate-smart practices
- Value chain financing solutions, where customers partner with producers to co-invest in social and environmental outcomes

Data, Metrics & Technology

Collaboration between farmers and scientists to achieve net negative emissions for the ag sector
- Farmer & Scientist learning networks – access to latest data/science, collaboration
- Demonstration / Lighthouse farms to test and accelerate the adoption of climate-smart ag
- Site-specific insights to optimize for economic and environmental outcomes / business intelligence solutions
- Illuminating and supporting farmers and companies in navigating and harmonizing the landscape of metrics, tech and tools

Communications & Storytelling

Use digital storytelling and dialogue to build relationships and share ideas across the ag sector and the country
- Connect general public with farmers and ranchers in new and positive ways
- Recognize the leadership of farmers and ranchers in addressing climate change
- Tell farmers’ and ranchers’ stories
- Shape and inform public perception of US agriculture
- Generate positive peer pressure between farmers/ranchers to continue innovating and making progress

Workforce & Livelihoods

Develop and support the current and the next generation of farmers and ranchers
- Opportunities for young people from all backgrounds to get experience, education, mentorship
- Expand diversity in ag broadly
- Support for new farmers getting started
- Ensuring decent livelihoods for farmers and farm workers
- Protect farmworker rights and safety, end labor trafficking
- Stress management / mental health support for all workers in food and ag supply chain

*Working Vision 9/9/2020: A resilient, restorative, economically viable and climate-smart agricultural system that produces abundant and nutritious food, natural fiber and clean energy for a sustainable, vibrant and prosperous America.
To explore the possibilities within the Workforce & Livelihoods Action Network we invited four leaders to inspire and facilitate the discussion: Dr. Quentin Taylor, Associate Dean and Director for Diversity Equity and Inclusion and Acting Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Administration at Michigan State College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Advisory Board Chair, MANRRS; Emma Newell, Young 4-H Alumnus; Zach Ducheneaux, Executive Director of the Intertribal Agriculture Council and Don Cameron, Terranova Ranch and California Department of Food and Agriculture Board. There was an opportunity for breakout group discussions and then sharing top insights in plenary. Several actions to support the current and next generation of farmers emerged, with highlights captured below.

1. **Ensure farmers and ranchers can make a decent living:** We need to get farmers and ranchers out of their second and third jobs and back on their land, and agriculture has to offer a sustainable livelihood to attract talented people. One suggestion is to remove the middlemen in the supply chain and in financial transactions to put more profits in the hands of farmers. Another idea is for farmers growing commodities to also produce specialty crops that can be sold at higher margins and improve overall profitability.

2. **Expand the workforce:** In order to attract a wider agricultural workforce, focus on training for new skills and bring those opportunities to everyone so that people from a range of backgrounds can see a pathway to a career in agriculture.

3. **Seize the opening for system change:** The pandemic has brought massive disruption and made people more aware of the fragility of food systems. While this has been challenging for all, there is an opening now to bring people together across the food and ag sector to collaborate on solutions, putting the producer at the center.

4. **Align incentives with stewardship:** There is a potential to restructure government agricultural support to financially reward farmers and ranchers who drive efficiencies and steward natural resources. These can provide farmers with an additional revenue stream—and allow them to better pay their employees.

5. **Engage communities not just individuals:** In order to attract the younger generations and more diverse people we need to recognize that farming is a community activity, not an individual one. Farmers are sustained and supported by their relationships and their communities. It isn’t enough to bring a diverse individual into agriculture—we need to create supporting networks.

6. **Be an educator:** There is an untapped opportunity to engage our educational institutions to explain the potential opportunities in the sector. Farmers could volunteer their time and bring their experience to the classroom, and schools can use examples from agriculture to bring science, math, engineering and technology curriculum to life.

7. **Interconnection with Communications & Storytelling:** Many young people don’t know about the range of different jobs within agriculture and have an outdated understanding of what being a farmer or rancher means.

“We need to look at who is not at the table. We have to rebrand what we offer folks.”

- Dr. Quentin Tyler, Associate Dean and Director for Diversity Equity and Inclusion, Michigan State College of Agriculture
Communications and Storytelling, one of the four Action Networks, offers an opportunity for each one of us to get involved in using digital storytelling and dialogue to build relationships and share ideas across the ag sector and the country. To help inform and facilitate the discussion, we invited the following thought leaders: Joe Koss, President & CEO, Culver Franchising Systems, LLC; farmer Jay Hill, Managing Partner, Chaffhaye Inc.; Helena Bottemiller Evich, senior reporter at Politico covering the intersection of food policy and politics, and Megan Van Someren, Global Brand & Food & Beverage Chair at Edelman. Breakout group discussions followed, inspiring a host of themes and ideas for answering the question: How can we use stories to build our movement and fulfill our vision?

1. **Honesty and transparency matter**: Trust is at the heart of storytelling. People want to be educated about their food, but they don’t want to be lectured. Let people see the faces of the people making the food.

2. **Tap into curiosity about food**: Everyone has a connection to food, but people have very little experience of how it is produced. Most of us are a generation or more removed from the farm. Step in to fill that void by making farm and ranch life come alive through candid, human stories.

3. **Win hearts and minds by being proactive, not defensive**: Too often the ag sector can be defensive, even secretive, but the most important thing is to be open and not be afraid to engage in the conversation. Tell your own story, don’t let others tell it for you.

4. **We’re all in this together**: Some farmers may shrink from telling their stories for fear of backlash and misunderstanding. But those with the courage to speak their truth need to be supported by other farmers, who can help push out the good stories and help change the narrative.

5. **Connect the dots**: Collaborate across the food and agriculture supply chain to tell ‘complete solution’ stories. There is strength in numbers in presenting the story to audiences which may not see the big picture. Bring the entire ecosystem.

6. **Lead by example**: Farmers can be more sustainable as agriculturalists, but that conversation is not always easy. Deploying climate-smart practices like cover cropping might puzzle your neighboring farmers but can also spark curiosity—and build a movement.

7. **Size is only part of the story**: The stories of larger farms may be told differently than the stories of smaller farms, but all of these stories matter equally. Innovation is evident on many smaller farms, but larger farms can tap into economies of scale when deploying climate-smart practices.

“We are all linked by one common thread and that is soil.”

- Jay Hill, farmer, owner of Chaffhaye

USFRA’s 2019 docudrama, 30 Harvests, earned the Grand Champion Award at the 2020 National Agri/Marketing Association Awards and was a 2020 Webby Awards honorable mention from the International Academy of Digital Arts. Please view and consider sharing this powerful story featuring Jay Hill. See the HTH Amplify toolkit for simple content creation.
Participants joined one of four breakouts in the Communications & Storytelling session:

1. How can restaurants and retailers connect the hearts and minds of consumers to their food production
2. How can farmers spread the word to other farmers to adopt climate-smart ag practices
3. How can the media support the Vision of a resilient, restorative, economically viable and climate-smart agricultural system
4. What is the role of food brands in connecting the Vision concepts with consumers

We posed this question in small group leadership discussions: What’s clearer to me now and what implications does it have for me as a leader?

A number of opportunities for action emerged from breakout group discussions from both tracks, captured in the following highlights:

- Elevate the human story and move beyond telling stories to taking action. Actions build trust and is critical to building those storytelling relationships.

- It’s not whether the story of food and agriculture will be told but whether you will be the one to tell the story or let someone else do it for you.

- Recognize that there will be trial and error in applying climate-smart practices; this is an opportunity to educate and share lessons learned.

- Address the gap between the public and private sectors in getting agriculture acknowledged as a powerful solution to climate change.

- Reducing the waste and loss in the system is key to increasing on farm profitability while also decreasing environmental impact.

- I’m going to bring agricultural funding mechanisms up in every conversation no matter what it is about, because until we stop using our grandparents’ financing models to trap farmers into unprofitable systems, we can’t make any other progress.

- When farmers step up, it is often as a volunteer, which takes away time from the farm, often costing them. It’s about finding a balance between making our voices heard and running our business.

- There need to be economic incentives for farmers to put ecosystem services into their business models.

CLOSING REMARKS

"As a leader in action, be prepared to support and ignite our shared vision through communications," USFRA CEO Erin Fitzgerald urged participants. For many leaders, the day’s conversations prompted several personal and sector implications, a few of which we capture here:

- "Farmers make decisions that are science-based but we live in a society where science doesn’t always matter and decisions are often based more on emotion."

- "We’re already making plans about the farmers we’re going to see to talk to about all these issues and what our farms could look like if we implemented these ideas."

- "A big part of sustainability is economic sustainability, and we need opportunities of scale to be economically sustainable."

UP NEXT

September 16:
Session 5 / Commitment Groundwork Working Session

- Breakout sessions to brainstorm key levers and potential units of measure
- Sharing in plenary
- Small group leadership discussions

Thank you to our Movement, Presenting & Platinum Forum Sponsors.
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Day 5 focused on moving towards a set of coordinated sector-wide commitments by stakeholder type to achieve our Vision and drive progress towards our desired outcomes. We explored the key considerations for each part of the agricultural value chain to contribute, but more importantly, how to transcend those divides and widen our perspective beyond our own specific place in that value chain. Leaders were challenged to stretch their thinking about what is possible when we coordinate across the system.

As co-moderator John Whalen put it: "There is a certain magic that happens in the human act of stepping up and saying, 'I commit to this.' This is the time to push against the limits and put stakes in the ground."

Our guest speaker, Karen Ross, Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, articulated it brilliantly when she said:

"The opportunities that are before us today are there for us to seize but we can’t do it as individuals. We could, but it wouldn’t go as far as it could. We need collaboration and building partnerships. If you look at the roster of people contributing to this event, and the folks who put together the vision, it is unlike anything I have ever been part of. All the way from the land and the farmer to the heart of the farmer to the biggest brands possible and all the players in between.

One of the most profound opportunities we have is to break down those silos, and to think about it from the perspective of a farmer. That shared future has to have long-term thinking about all the complex choices a farmer has to make every day under constantly changing circumstances, so that the farmers are able to say, when they finish their good fight, 'We did it,’ and they had the power of the value chain behind them.”
COMMITMENTS
WORKING SESSION

With an Ag Sector Commitment, we have an opportunity to define the roadmap for food and agriculture's leadership to address the challenges of a changing climate. To that end, we asked leaders to meet in working groups according to their role in the system to begin to hammer out a sector-wide commitment. Farmers and ranchers were invited to join any of these conversations to lend their perspective. While we acknowledge the numerous commitments that have been made across the sector so far, and that will continue to be made, when the sector comes together as a whole, the world will take notice. Below, we capture several potential levers for action that emerged from these lively discussions.

Livestock & Crop Inputs: Create products that meet sector climate-smart goals. Provide technical assistance, training and education around best practices for product stewardship. Develop better value proposition, e.g., facilitating payments for ecosystem services.

Agriculture Renewable Energy: Provide the economic trigger and demonstrate benefits of investments, for example, reaping the economic value for sharing cleaner fuels data, farm self-sufficiency with on-site renewable energy production or using manure and methane for on-farm anaerobic digestion.

Information technology and equipment: Share interoperable data (water, energy, inputs, etc.) across value chain, and use appropriately with clear benefits for information-sharing and soil health practices. Funders economically reward producers' sustainable practices.

Processing and Brands: Show commitment through advocacy and purchasing, marketplace incentives, standardization of credits and platforms, risk sharing, and pay-for-performance. Offer farmer support via education, training and technical assistance.

Retail, Restaurants & Foodservice: Communicate positive stories, empower employees as change agents and focus on reducing environmental footprint in consumption. Offer financial support, drive transparency and leverage scale through purchasing power, product requirements and other means.

Media & PR: Adopt a unified ag voice to move the needle, with an ecosystem view that includes consumers, workers, not just climate and environment. Highlight ag's key contribution to achieving the SDGs. Leverage consumers' emotional connection to food to get message across about how food chain works. Amplify voices and visibility of those who are taking action and stepping up.

Finance & Funders: Fund basic scientific research on plant and animal science; ensure alternatives to VC funding more focused on people, soil health and other non-financial returns. Develop better credit risk frameworks to enable funding for novel applications of finance. Share across value chain. Fund efforts to create standardized ways to measure soil health. Catalyze ag carbon markets.

Academic Research & Science: Increase data integration and diversify the research base, with focus on interdisciplinary learning and teaching. Pursue farmer participation centered research, including pilot/test research projects. Ensure research is systems-based and collaborate with international researchers and stakeholders. Develop trust and protocols for data collection and data sharing.

CLOSING REMARKS

"When we consider Sustainability 2.0, it is about setting goals that can lift up the entire sector," USFRA CEO Erin Fitzgerald noted in her closing remarks. "We've begun that journey and tomorrow is a big day for moving towards our Vision."

"Agricultural sustainability has never been more important. I challenge us as ag leaders to press ever harder to accomplish our shared goals." --Anne Alonzo, Senior Vice President, External Affairs and Chief Sustainability Officer, Corteva, HTH sponsor

"People really care about how food is grown, raised and sourced. The stories food brands tell must change and it has to start further back in the supply chain." --JoDee George, Executive Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Bader Rutter, HTH sponsor

UP NEXT

September 17:
Session 6 /Vision Alignment and Action Commitments

• Recap of days 1-5
• Review vision and test for alignment
• Commitment roadmap
• Leadership challenge

Thank you to our Movement, Presenting & Platinum Forum Sponsors.
The final day of Honor the Harvest 2020 was a culmination of all the work that had preceded it. We are happy to report overwhelming alignment around a first-of-its-kind food and agriculture sector-wide Vision. Together, we made this possible. Thanks to hard work, we now have the platform in which to move forward in championing this movement as we take it to our wider networks.

“Our work together has been thoughtful, meaningful, and tangible. The next 30 harvests will determine failure or success in meeting the needs of future food production. We need to rally every farmer, every acre, and every voice.” – Polly Ruhland, CEO, United Soybean Board, (Honor the Harvest Sponsor)

VOICES OF THE FUTURE OF THE FOOD AND AG SECTOR

“Our generation is the key to unlocking the future of agriculture. I challenge you to be innovators, scientists and decision-makers and disrupt the agricultural industry we know today.” – Kayla Braggs, third-year food science student, Florida A&M University

“I encourage you to reach out to young farmers and ranchers and listen to their goals and dreams. Many of us are hard-working entrepreneurs. It is people like me and my friends who will be solving the next generation of challenges and stepping up as leaders.” – Hannah Borg, Assistant Manager, Borg Farms, sixth-generation Nebraska farmer

The Vision statement:
A resilient, restorative, economically viable and climate-smart agricultural system that produces abundant and nutritious food, natural fiber and clean energy for a sustainable, vibrant, and prosperous America.

To learn more and share the Vision statement, principles and outcomes, visit our Vision website.
Our goal was to craft a vision for the future of U.S. food and agriculture that is inclusive, motivating, and which can guide and inspire our individual and collective work going forward. We each devoted considerable time and effort to get it right. To acknowledge our appreciation in a special way we created a Challenge Coin* for each leader. With the motto, “Honor the Harvest: Planting the Future,” it represents agriculture’s potential to be a solution to climate change. The colors and symbols align with agriculture’s contribution to all 17 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. And inside there is an embedded lapel pin depicting a bee, a physical acknowledgement of the hive mindset that made this incredible leadership possible. We hope it will spark many more conversations as we build this movement together.

Below we capture some of the excitement around the 2020 forum and the vision shared by our leaders during this final session.

"I want to thank you for including young people and their voices...It has been amazing to have so many young voices as part of this forum. They show how agriculture is a vibrant, exciting and innovative sector to be in!"

"Congratulations on this beautiful effort. We are thrilled to be part of this conversation and to support this vision. There are challenges without a doubt, but our collaboration will give us a stronger voice."

"I appreciate everyone coming together to change the world and make our food supply stronger, healthier and better for us all."

"As a farmer, I so appreciate the diverse group that showed up every day. And I also want to share that we have an open gate policy at our farm. Reach out and come for harvest: the best time to visit our farm."

"This was amazing leadership and process to build consensus among this diverse and powerful group!! Congrats USFRA!!"

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pay it forward. Our youth speakers Hannah and Kayla showed us why our future is in good hands."

"Really pleased to be part of something that is working to unify rather than divide."

"Erin [Fitzgerald’s] leadership has been visionary and game-changing. Congratulations to all of the USFRA team leaders and to all of these leaders!"

"I am very emotional right now because I have never been part of something like this before. Participating in Honor the Harvest has given me renewed energy to push forward with strategies around climate change."

*The Honor the Harvest Challenge Coin
LEADERSHIP DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Leaders were asked to consider two critical questions in their small group leadership discussions:

1. What’s one thing about your experience at this Forum that inspires you or gives you hope?
2. What’s one action you can take as a leader to build momentum and grow the movement in the next week?

We also invited leaders to share their appreciations for each another; this comment captured a widely shared sentiment:

"I want to extend appreciation to the farmers who inspired us to remember to continually value farmers as the key to adoption and innovation and movement. Farmers are the ultimate entrepreneurs, risk takers and movement makers!"

We wanted Honor the Harvest 2020 to conclude with a palpable feeling of excitement and energy, with everyone prepared to take action to propel the movement forward. These comments shared by leaders following their small group discussions is a sign that we succeeded, while acknowledging that the journey has just begun.

- This strong collaboration has really been refreshing especially coming out of this COVID time. How can we collectively bring these ideas together as policies and collectively take that next step forward?
- This conference has been timely, pointed and productive. I want to introduce USFRA and the Vision to others in the sector, in this country and globally.
- We have a broad Vision here but what I heard in the breakouts is that leaders will take it to their networks and share it. The ripples are going to start happening.
- What struck me was the diversity of leaders across the whole food value chain who took part and that we need to be inclusive going forward.
- As a farmer, I am going to keep farming and adapting.
- I am going to get my organization aligned with the Vision. This is such an important part of the work; it is hard work but I am committed.
- This is only the beginning. There will be working groups and actions to follow and we must remain committed.

CLOSING REMARKS

As the 2020 Honor the Harvest Forum comes to a close, we can’t wait to see what this unprecedented collaboration will achieve. Commitments—which include actions already in progress—will be solidified over the next year to advance the outcomes of our Vision through focused investments, optimized data, metrics and technology, authentic storytelling and workforce development. We look forward to coming together again next year to assess our progress and continue to grow our vision and our movement!

- "The sustainability challenge in front of us is very large but I am very confident that U.S. farmers and ranchers will rise to meet it."—John Johnson, National Pork Board, Honor the Harvest Forum sponsor
- "We are committed to the agriculture industry and the rural economy that depends on it. We all need to roll up our sleeves and continue the work for the long term." -- Tom Halverson, President and CEO, CoBank, Honor the Harvest sponsor

NEXT STEPS

How leaders can help accelerate our shared Vision now:

- Make it official – Endorse the Vision as a leader in action
- Grow support – Enlist your organization to endorse and help advance our shared Vision
- Shape commitments – Compile existing individual commitments; contribute to stakeholder group commitments

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