

The background of the entire page is a photograph showing the silhouettes of three people in a field at sunset. On the left, a man wearing a cap is crouching and holding a plant stem. In the center, a woman is also crouching, looking towards the man. On the right, a taller man stands with his hands on his hips, looking down at the woman. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, warm glow that silhouettes the figures. The field appears to be a cornfield.

Advancing Regenerative Agriculture Through Farm Advisors

A COLLABORATIVE ROADMAP
FOR ACTION

Executive Summary

Acknowledgements

We appreciate the generous support of the Walton Family Foundation, which made this Roadmap possible. We are also grateful to the 28 individuals who contributed time, expertise, and ideas to the development of the Roadmap in 2025. Additionally, the partners extend thanks to the many colleagues across the participating organizations who provided valuable guidance and ongoing feedback.

Roadmap Development Team

Luke Petersen

Farmer Advisor Strategy Manager,
The Nature Conservancy

Leif Fixen

Director of Strategic Initiatives,
The Nature Conservancy

Daren Coppock

President and CEO,
Agricultural Retailers Association

Luther Smith

CAO, American Society of Agronomy |
International Certified Crop Advisor Program

Rachel Owen

Principal Consultant and Owner, RKO Consulting,
representing Soil and Water Conservation Society

Roger Wolf

Strategic Advisor,
Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance

Mike Gilman

Senior Conservation Program Manager,
Iowa Soybean Association

Amy Asmus

Owner, Asmus Farm Supply | Past Board Chair,
Agricultural Retailers Association

Mike Perkins

Agronomist, Asmus Farm Supply

Adam Herges

Sustainability Agronomist Advisor,
The Mosaic Company

Ariel Kagan

Climate and Working Lands Program Director,
Minnesota Farmers Union

Christine Jacobs

Facilitator, C Change Studio

Advisory Group Members

Carrie Volmer-Sanders

Field to Market

Kaitlin Sampson Murphy,

Sustainable Food Lab

Elizabeth Reaves

Sustainable Food Lab

Bridgett Hilshey

Dairy Management Inc.

David Townsend

The Fertilizer Institute

Tom Bruulsema

The Fertilizer Institute

Tracy Linbo

AgVend

Elena Bell

Growers Edge

Ryan Heinige

Conservation Technology
Information Center

Harold Cooper

Premiere Companies

Steve Rosenzweig

General Mills

Alyssa Charney

Keystone Policy Center

Danielle Isaacson

Minnesota Farmers Union

Advancing Regenerative Agriculture Through Farm Advisors

Regenerative agriculture systems can deliver meaningful environmental, economic, and production benefits by improving soil health, water quality, biodiversity, and farm resilience. Despite increasing interest and investment, adoption of regenerative practices has not progressed fast enough to meet the scale and urgency of current challenges. Barriers to progress include economic uncertainty, workforce limitations, and insufficient coordination across public and private efforts.

This Roadmap presents strategies to harness the influence of farmers' most trusted advisors to help scale regenerative agriculture. It centers on a critical pathway to driving adoption: technical assistance delivered through the private-sector advisors—including agribusinesses, independent agronomists, and others who shape management decisions across millions of acres. These advisors are among the most trusted sources of agronomic guidance for producers, yet their potential to advance regenerative practices remains underrecognized and under-supported. The key approaches outlined in the Roadmap help elevate and equip individual advisors and agribusinesses, enabling the industry to accelerate on-farm adoption at scale.

The Opportunity and the Challenge

Private sector farmer advisors sit at the intersection of production agriculture and opportunities in sustainability. Their foundational agronomic expertise and existing relationships with farmers position them to integrate regenerative practices into whole-farm decision making, support successful implementation, and translate public and private investment into durable outcomes on the ground. At the same time, these advisors operate within a business environment characterized by narrow margins, market pressures, operational complexity, and risk.

Through the Roadmap process, partners identified four interdependent barriers that must be addressed in coordination to unlock the full potential of farmer advisors:

1. Limited awareness of the role and impact of private sector advisors
2. Unclear value propositions or return on investment for businesses
3. Insufficient expertise and workforce capacity
4. Uncoordinated and unpredictable funding for business transitions

The Roadmap Process and Partners

The Roadmap was developed through a collaborative process engaging thought leaders from across the industry, including agribusinesses, conservation organizations, professional associations, farmer and commodity groups, and supply chain actors—each with direct experience working to support the role of farmer advisors. Partners participated in a series of meetings and an in person workshop to build shared understanding, identify and prioritize barriers based on impact and feasibility, and align on priority areas of work and investment. Draft recommendations were refined through input and iterative discussion with a broader advisory group, resulting in a cohesive framework meant to guide coordinated action, learning, and investment over time.

Figure 1. The Roadmap Design and Implementation Process



Download the full report at
nature.org/AdvisorRoadmap

For more information, please contact:

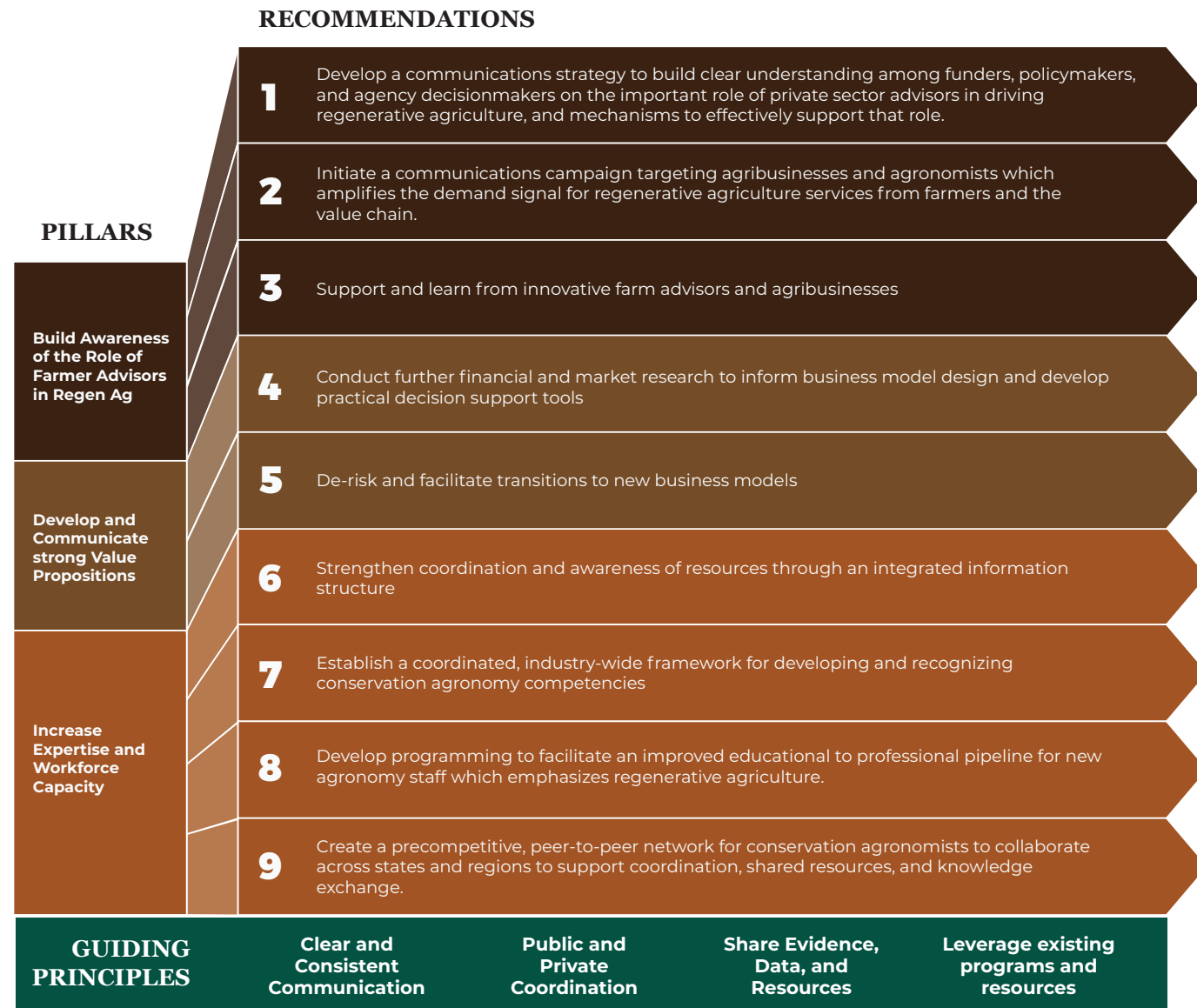
Luke Petersen
luke.petersen@tnc.org

Leif Fixen
leif.fixen@tnc.org

The Roadmap Framework

The Roadmap presents results as three overarching pillars encompassing nine specific recommendations, along with a set of crosscutting guiding principles. Together, this framework highlights where coordinated investment and action are most needed to address the priority barriers and advance regenerative agriculture through trusted advisors (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Roadmap Framework — Change to Pillars, Recommendations, and Guiding Principles



© Erika Nortemann/TNC

Pillar 1: Build Awareness of the Opportunity for Farmer Advisors to Support Regen Ag

Increase understanding among key stakeholders of the role private sector advisors can play in advancing regenerative agriculture, clarify pathways for effective engagement, and amplify farmer and value-chain demand signals for regenerative services.

Pillar 2: Develop and Communicate Strong Value Propositions

Advance financial and market research, develop practical decision support tools, and implement mechanisms that reduce risk and support transitions to services or outcomes-oriented business models.

Pillar 3: Increase Expertise and Workforce Capacity

Equip the current and future workforce with the skills, confidence, and resources needed to deliver regenerative agriculture effectively through training, certification, coordinated resources, and peer learning opportunities.

Recommendations

The Roadmap puts forward nine recommendations which address key elements of each pillar and represent the core actionable results of the Roadmap (Figure 3). In the full Roadmap report, each recommendation includes specific project needs, keys to success, and examples of ongoing progress in that workstream. While not every recommendation is directly actionable for all audiences, each provides valuable context to help understand how each element interconnects to achieve meaningful change together.

Figure 3: Summary of Recommendations, Key Projects, and Relevant Stakeholders

Recommendation		Primary Pillar	Cross-Cutting Pillars	Key Projects & Investment Areas	What This Enables	Most Relevant To
1	Develop communications to clarify the role of private-sector farm advisors	Pillar 1: Build Awareness	Pillar 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted briefs and workshops for funders and policymakers Case studies on effective models 	Clear understanding of why and how to engage ag retailers as delivery partners for regen ag	Philanthropic Funders; Supply Chain Companies, Policymakers and Agency Decisionmakers
2	Amplify demand signal for regen ag services	Pillar 1: Build Awareness	Pillar 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmer and value-chain demand surveys Advisor-facing communications showcasing successful service models 	Stronger demand signals that encourage advisors to proactively offer regen services	Agribusinesses; Downstream Food and Ag Companies; Philanthropic Funders; Farmers
3	Support and learn from innovative farm advisors and agribusinesses	Pillar 1: Build Awareness	Pillar 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation and comparison of existing innovative business models Incentives for early adopters to keep innovating and share lessons learned 	Faster diffusion of innovations across the industry	Agribusinesses; Philanthropic Funders; Supply Chain Companies
4	Conduct financial and market research to inform new business models and support tools	Pillar 2: Develop and Communicate Value Propositions	Pillar 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scenario-based financial analyses by geography and system 	Reduce risk and enable profitable regen service offerings	Philanthropic Funders; Researchers; Agribusinesses
			Pillar 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical tools for business planning 		
5	De-risk and facilitate transitions to new business models	Pillar 2: Develop and Communicate Strong Value Propositions	Pillar 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitional funding and cost-share mechanisms Innovation incubators and risk-sharing tools 	Accelerated adoption of new business models	Philanthropic Funders; Agribusinesses; Policymakers and Agency Decisionmakers
6	Strengthen coordination and awareness of resources for regenerative agriculture	Pillar 3: Increase Expertise and Workforce Capacity	Pillar 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An integrated information platform connecting existing and new tools, funding, and training Align public and private TA and cost-share programs 	Simpler navigation of available resources for advisors and farmers	Philanthropic Funders; Agribusinesses; Agency Decisionmakers; Farmers
7	Establish an industry-wide framework for conservation agronomy competencies	Pillar 3: Increase Expertise and Workforce Capacity	Pillar 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardized competency framework for conservation agronomists Coordinated certification pathway building on CCA infrastructure 	A credible, consistent conservation agronomy workforce valued by farmers and employers	Agribusinesses; Philanthropic Funders; Agency Decisionmakers
8	Invest in programs that strengthen the education-to-profession pipeline	Pillar 3: Increase Expertise and Workforce Capacity	Pillar 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of regen ag into education pathways, professional development, and internships Entrepreneurship support 	A robust and diverse workforce equipped to support the farming of the future	Philanthropic Funders; University Partners; Policymakers and Agency Decisionmakers; Agribusinesses
9	Create a pre-competitive peer network for conservation agronomists	Pillar 3: Increase Expertise and Workforce Capacity	Pillar 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination of existing and emerging regional and national peer-learning networks Standardization of resources, while maintaining local relevance 	Stronger coordination of efforts, advisor confidence, and effectiveness in delivering TA and services	Philanthropic Funders; Agribusinesses

How to Use This Roadmap

This Roadmap is intended to support action across a range of stakeholders by providing a shared framework and clear priorities for investment and collaboration.

- **Funders and investors** can use the Roadmap to identify high-impact areas for investment and support coordinated initiatives to scale regenerative agriculture through farmer advisors.
- **Agribusinesses and advisors** can use the framework to assess opportunities and partnerships that align regenerative agriculture with business objectives, and as an evidence-based resource to pursue support for innovation and business transitions.
- **Policymakers and agency decisionmakers** can draw on the Roadmap to inform design of programs and public private partnerships to effectively deliver high-quality technical assistance and conservation funding to farmers.
- **Supply chain and downstream companies** can identify pathways to engage advisors as delivery partners for sustainability goals.

Across audiences, the Roadmap is designed to function as a common reference point that supports shared understanding, reduces redundancy, and enables more strategic collaboration.

The Importance of Coordinated Investment

In addition to the specific recommendations, the Roadmap underscores the importance of coordinated and predictable funding for advisors and organizations to fully test, refine, and scale new approaches. Greater alignment among funders, paired with support for continued learning and innovation, can significantly increase the durability and impact of investments across all pillars of work.

This body of work highlights the key role trusted, private-sector farmer advisors have to play in accelerating the pace and scale of regenerative agriculture adoption. Achieving this potential will require coordinated action informed by shared priorities, concerted and sustained investment, and continued collaboration across sectors. By aligning efforts around the framework and recommendations outlined here, stakeholders can support farmers, strengthen technical assistance pathways, and accelerate progress toward resilient agricultural landscapes.



© Harlen Persinger