

U.S. Natural Climate Solutions Accelerator

Round 3 Finalist: American Farmland Trust

Initiative: Growing Climate Solutions for Agricultural Lands in California and Illinois

NCS Pathway: Regenerative Agriculture and Cover Crops

U.S. Geography: Midwest, Southwest

15-months Pilot States: California, Illinois

American Farmland Trust aims to accelerate adoption of regenerative farming practices, such as cover crops, and to model impacts on carbon sequestration and reduced greenhouse gas emissions in Illinois and California's San Joaquin Valley. Through the success in these major, but distinct agricultural regions which have the potential to sequester a significant amount of carbon, "**Growing Climate Solutions for Agricultural Lands in California and Illinois**" initiative plans to inform other regional and state efforts, as well as federal policies to scale up regenerative farming practices across America.

How it works: The initiative plans to catalyze cooperation among public agencies and private partners in the Illinois Sustainable Agriculture Partnership and San Joaquin Valley Conservation Collaborative. Coordinating these networks, the team plans to leverage and foster efficient use of financial and technical assistance to increase regenerative practice adoption, while helping to enhance public programs, such as Illinois' Cover Crop Premium Discount Program, and private mechanisms to further accelerate practice adoption.

Innovative feature: The team plans to coordinate with partners and networks in IL and CA to expand and spur effective use of public and private funds for regenerative practice adoption. The initiative will identify opportunities for coordinating and expanding private resources from corporate supply chains, carbon markets, philanthropy, or other sources to spur regenerative practice adoption. With its network partners, the team will develop Action Plans to achieve goals for practice adoption and provide recommendations for enhancing public policies and/or private funding mechanisms.

Scaling/Replication: Based on the experience in California and Illinois - two major agricultural states with distinct commodities and production systems - the initiative will share results to inform other state climate policies on working lands and federal agricultural and climate policy. The team will make recommendations for changes to local, state and federal policies to scale up climate impacts in IL and CA and mobilize partner networks to integrate and efficiently use financial and technical assistance to expand adoption. Improvements to the policy, technical and financial assistance programs, developed through this project could serve as the basis for Farm Bill language that can scale these approaches across multiple cropping systems in states throughout the U.S.

Climate mitigation benefits: The team estimates the regenerative farming practices in CA and IL could provide over 150 million metric tonnes of CO₂e benefits over 30 years of projected landscape scale implementation.

Co-benefits: The initiative aims to generate enhanced soil health, improved air and water quality and water availability, enhanced wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and resilience to climate change. In addition, the initiative will contribute to providing abundant food, fiber, and fuel, and helps to build stronger economies, communities and livelihoods.