

## Promote regenerative agricultural production and regionally based food systems in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed (Recommendation 5)

Agriculture has a major influence on water quality, local economies, communities, and ecosystem health both in local waters and in the Chesapeake Bay. Supporting a shift to regenerative food production methods and regionally based food systems would simultaneously improve climate mitigation and resilience, water quality, economic and community health, and environmental justice and equity, holistically improving the health of our watershed.

**Impact to how we work:** This is a long-term recommendation that, to fully realize, would require a systems-based, sustained approach. However, incremental steps to lay the groundwork will also benefit the partnership's current water quality and watershed restoration efforts.

- Increase collaboration with the growing network of producers, processors, distributors, local, state, and federal government, businesses, nonprofits, and institutions working to develop and support a regenerative and regionally based food system. Collaborative efforts could include improved utilization of market-based approaches to deliver systemic change. There is a strong foundation for this work through programs like the [Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities](#) and others.
- Use educational, behavioral science and marketing resources to ensure that producers and consumers understand the value of regenerative and locally sourced food for watershed restoration and have mechanisms to effectively support the transition.
- Develop mechanisms to address issues of regional carrying capacity and nutrient mass imbalance to support healthy and equitable food access and incentivize a circular approach to food and manure waste management. These mechanisms could draw from existing regional examples, including efforts to install [anaerobic digestors](#) and to [increase recycling of food waste](#).

**Impact on Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement:** The current Agreement does not have any goals specific to agriculture. Without changing the agreement, management strategies for some existing goals and outcomes could be modified to incorporate efforts to build and sustain soil health and support the broader effort to expand regenerative and regional food systems. Over the long term, a new goal could be set to promote regenerative and regional food systems, and an associated soil health outcome could be developed.

**General Level of Effort: High:** Level of effort is associated with the commitment of partnership, staff and other Bay stakeholders to evaluate new structure, processes and resources needed to enhance coordination and develop support for regenerative and regional food systems, including marketing approaches, social science, education and communication strategies.

### How to Strategies (Phase 2 Actions):

- Determine how the partnership's scientific research, workshops, modeling, monitoring, prioritization, regulatory standards and methods, outreach, communication, education, workgroups and advisory committees, including the newly proposed agricultural advisory committee, could be more strategically utilized to support regenerative and regional food systems.
- Identify specific stakeholders to engage who are currently involved with efforts to develop regenerative and regional based food systems across multiple sectors, for example [Appalachian Sustainable Development](#).
- Evaluate the potential to develop a soil health outcome and new indicators to measure success that take carbon storage, sequestration, emissions reductions and other benefits into account. Outcome should apply to all soil related activities including food, fiber, forestry and lawn care.