

Basil's Harvest Promotes Human and Planetary Wellbeing by Engaging the Power of Local Regenerative Food Systems



Erin Meyer,
Executive Director



A REGENERATIVE FOOD SYSTEM

WILL HEAL our planet through healthier soil, improved water quality, and greater carbon sequestration

CAN SUSTAINABLY feed urban and rural communities with diverse, healthy foods from their own region

WILL IMPROVE community health, wealth and wellbeing by reinvesting in local economies



Kelly Bloodorn, MS (Basil's Harvest, 2023)

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The Story of Healing From the Ground Up

PANELISTS



Chef Erin Meyer, MSFS, RD

*Executive Director & Founder
Basil's Harvest*



Anya Knecht

*Farmer, I-Regen Assistant Director, University of Illinois
Owner & Researcher, Knecht Research Consulting & Design LLC*



Carl Rosier, PhD

*Farmer, Barking Dog Farms
Researcher in Soil Microbial Ecology, Basil's Harvest*



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The Journey from Soil to Human Health



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The Journey from Soil to Human Health

Connecting the Dots

- Grew up farming - both conventional, regenerative and gardening, canning and food preservation.
- Nutrition & Soil Science & Engineering
- Playing in the dirt. Hauling grain.
- You are what you eat.
- Beckman Institute, CABBI, ARPA-E, iSEE, I-Regen
- Cystic Fibrosis



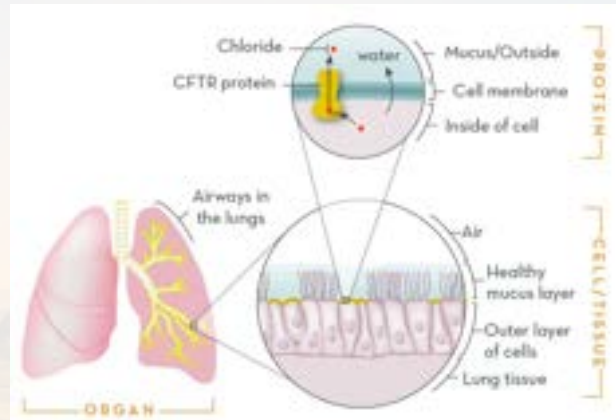
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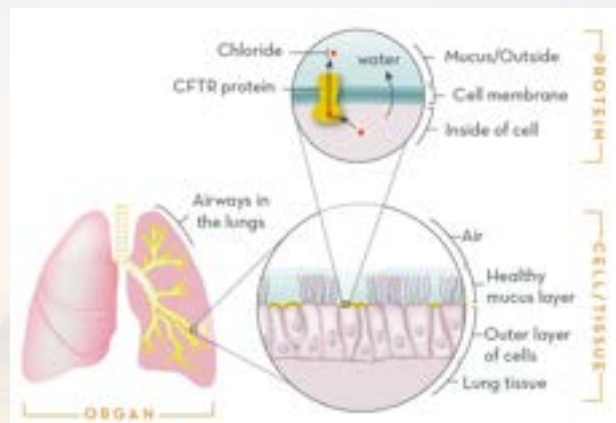
Cystic Fibrosis (CF)

- 70,000 worldwide, 30,000 in US.
- A chronic, progressive, and fatal genetic (inherited) disease, to which there is no cure at present.
- When I was born, the life expectancy for a person born with CF was 14 years old.
- Today it is 37.5 years old for those who were born with CF before 2017.
- The current life expectancy for CF patients born before 2017 is 53 due to new medications and antibiotics. For those of us who were born well before 2017, the damage incurred keeps the life expectancy at 37.5.



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Graphic Nature of the Disease

Persistent coughing, wheezing, **difficulty breathing**, repeated **lung infections** causing hospitalizations and need for IV meds (acute exacerbations), bronchiectasis, hemoptysis (coughing up blood), pneumothorax, **collapsed lung**, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) as it relates to CF, frequent/daily fevers due to infections, night sweats, lung pain, inflamed nasal passages or **sinus infections**, foul-smelling and greasy stools, diarrhea, poor weight gain and growth, intestinal blockages/obstruction, rectal prolapse, severe constipation, **nutritional deficiencies/malnutrition**, pancreatitis (inflamed pancreas), diabetes, blocked bile duct, **reproductive failure**, osteoporosis (thinning of bones), and electrolyte imbalances and dehydration. Due to the increased resistance that many bacteria gain, **antibiotics prove less useful over time** in prolonging survival. Many CF patients experience **complications with various organs** due to having to use antibiotics to stay alive.



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Engineer the shit out of it...

- The search for answers
- Why do you do what you do?
- Generated the **Knecht Theory**



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The Knecht Theory

- Enzymes
- You are what you eat.
- Fries or Spinach?
- Why local?



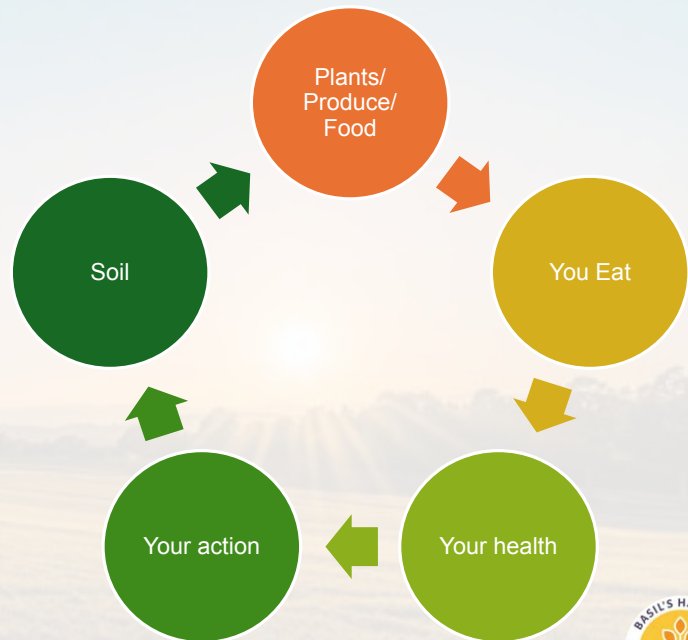
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Soil is Health

- Produce comes from the soil.
- We eat the produce.
- You are what you eat.



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Soil is Survival

- Biodiversity
- Ecosystem



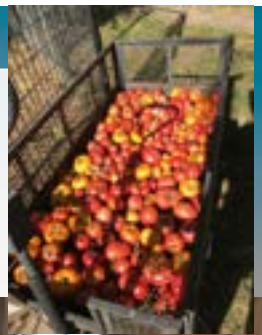
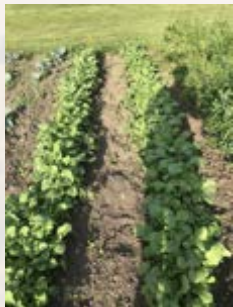
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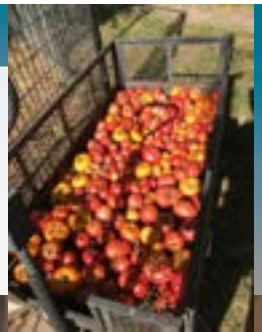
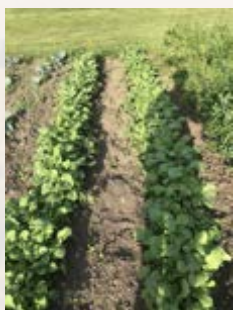
Microbes

- Biodiversity is our margin of error.
- Soil Organic Matter



Microbes

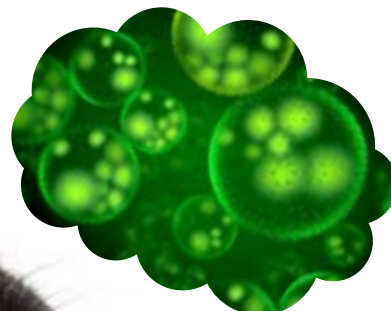
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Damn Nature, you scary!



Damn Nature, you scary!



If...

- For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction
- And neither matter can be created nor destroyed
- Then to me it makes sense to figure out how and where things are connected to understand the system and make decisions from there.



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Everyone has challenges!

Whether you have a child with diabetes, you administer healthcare, or you are a farm who provides our food – you are a link in this chain of connections.



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Thrive and Survive!

- Follow my journey on **anyaknecht.com**
- Thank you for your time and attention!



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Carl Rosier, PhD

Farmer & Researcher in Soil Microbial Ecology

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**Connecting Soil Health to Crop Quality
to Human Health**



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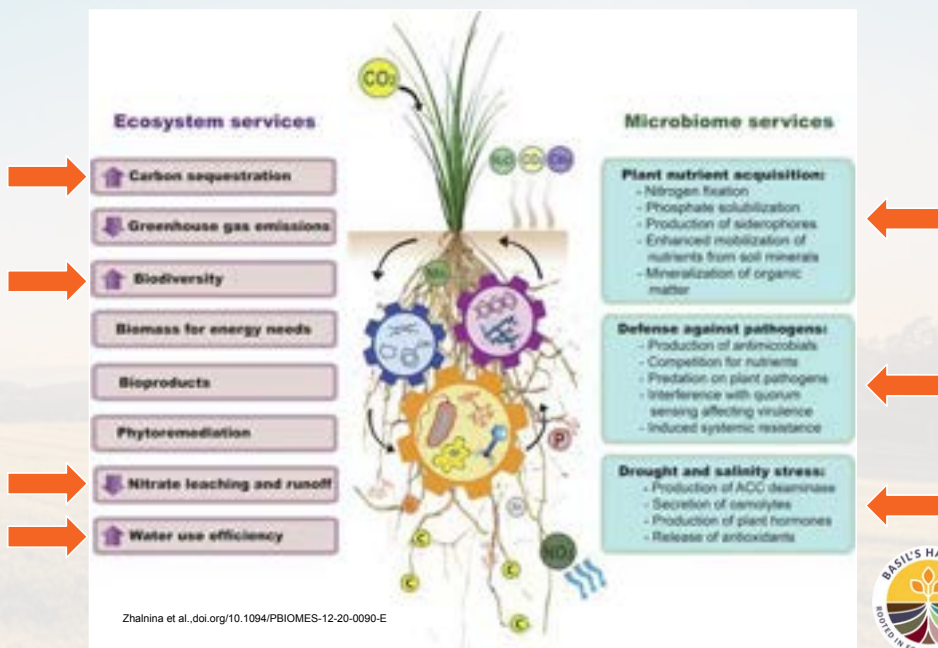
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**Connecting Soil Health to Crop Quality
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The soil microbiome provides a host of both ecosystem and plant services.

The plant microbial community is an continuum of bacterial and fungi living on and/or near plant roots.

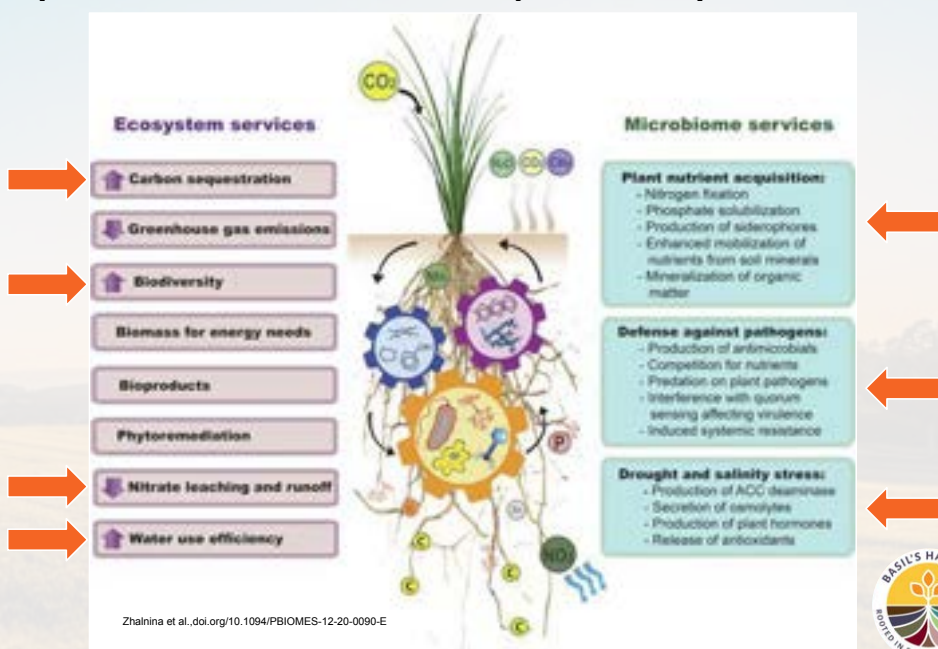
- 1-billion cells in tsp of soil [7.8 billion humans globally]
- Plants actively select their microbiome, extreme abiotic stress can alter its composition [Rosier et al. 2020].
- What about the phyllosphere?



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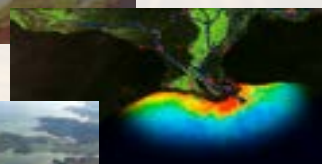
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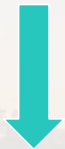


Conventional agricultural methods are not supportive of robust soil microbiomes

- Intensive tillage
- Application of pesticide, herbicides, and fertilizers [residues can persist]
- Removal of crop biomass at harvest
- Lack of cover-cropping

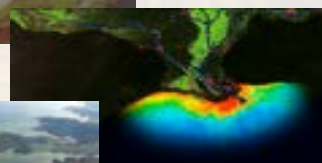


Reduction in soil microbial abundance and function



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Reduction in soil microbial abundance and function



Organic/Regenerative agricultural approaches focus on creating stable soil environment increasing microbial abundance.

- Reduction in tillage/limited deep tillage events
- Application of compost
- Retention crop biomass after harvest
- Use of cover-cropping/legumes



Increase in soil microbial abundance and function



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State of knowledge soil microbial influence on crop quality?

Several studies suggest that crop nutrient content continues to decline [*Mayer, A., 1997, Davis et al., 2004*]



Variability in crop antioxidant and protein content linked to variety selection and management influences on soil environment [*Rosier et al., 2024*]



Several reports show negative effects on beneficial soil microbes, including arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi and nitrogen-fixing *Rhizobium* spp. as a result of glyphosate application (*Van Bruggen et al, 2018*).



Montgomery et al., suggested that organically managed crops maintain greater mineral and phytochemical content than conventional crops.



Huber et al. proposed that diets composed of organic foods might provide greater organism resilience



Our knowledge is constantly evolving and more research is needed.



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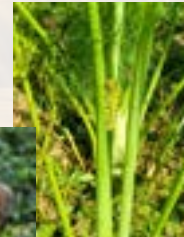
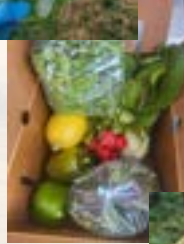
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Challenges continue!

Conventionally produced

- Cultivar variety- engineered for early harvest ["elite varieties"]
- Treated with preserving agents
- Stored/Transported long distance
- Contains pesticide/herbicide residue
- Possible heavy metal residue
- Possible contamination



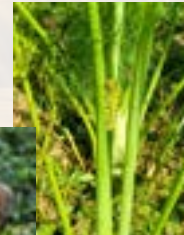
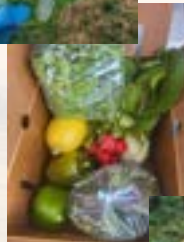
Local/organically produced

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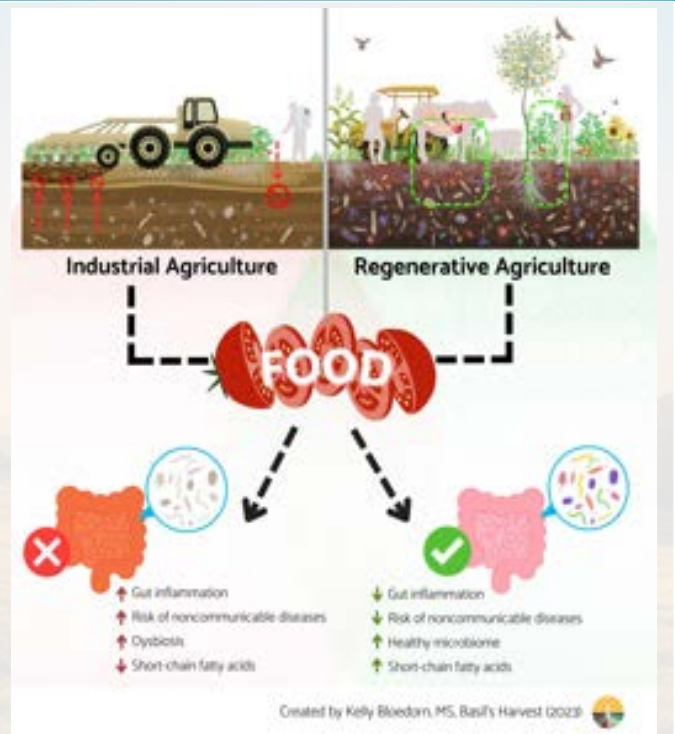
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The microbiome and quality of the crop directly influences gut microbial community

The gut and soil microbiome share similar bacteria

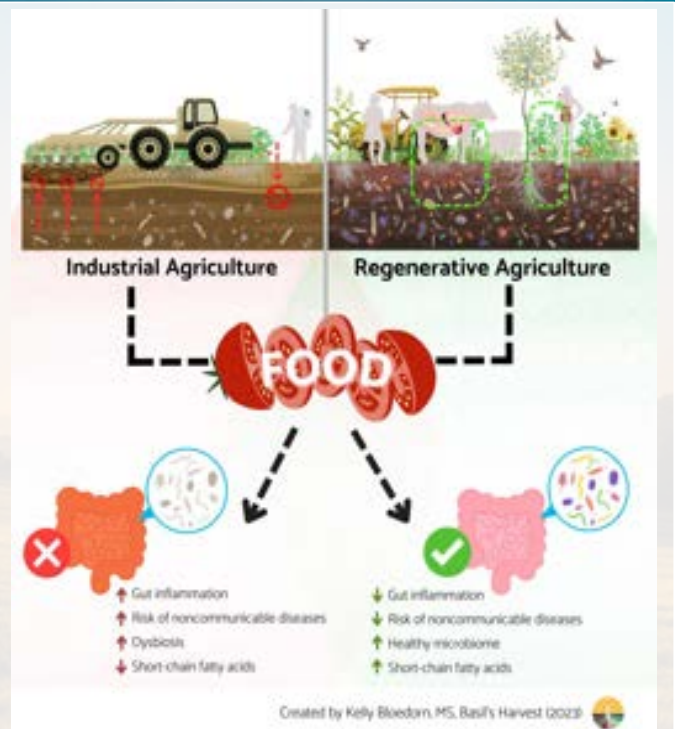
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As a farmer....

- **Consumer:** increased participation in their regional foodshed
- **Market manager:** greater inclusion of beginning farm operations
- **State and local agencies:** increased support for food insecure communities. Colorado sugar tax is a great example.
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- *Executive Director, Basil's Harvest*
- *Clinical Associate, University of Illinois College of Medicine*

Consumers and the Power of Change

Through the Lens of Environmental Nutrition



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Consumers and the Power of Change

Through the Lens of Environmental Nutrition

Consume(rs)

- ★ You are what you eat
28-36 trillion cells-> 330 billion cells
replaced daily
- ★ You vote for a food
system with every bite
and sip
- ★ Your vote ripples



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Ultra-processed food

67% of calories by ages 2-18 yrs

57% of calories by adults

73% of US food supply is ultra-processed foods

Engineered food (industrial prep)

- Hyperpalatable, inexpensive, long shelf life
- Energy dense, chemically enhanced

Possibly addictive (dopamine effect)

Adverse health outcomes-mental disorders, obesity, cancer, respiratory, GI, metabolic, cardiovascular



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Empowered with MyPlate



MyPlate

- Establish an eating pattern (daily choices)
- Eat a variety
- Eat whole foods, including whole grains
- Reduce added fat, sugar, salt, alcoholic beverages



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Planetary Health Plate

Environmental Nutrition

- Eating patterns that support healthy microbiome
- Eating patterns that support a sustainable food system & planet
- Eating patterns that build resilience
- Envision/build food system for the future (responsive, adaptable, locally relevant)



Eating patterns that

Safeguard soil microbiome (local ecosystem) → gut microbiome (human ecology)



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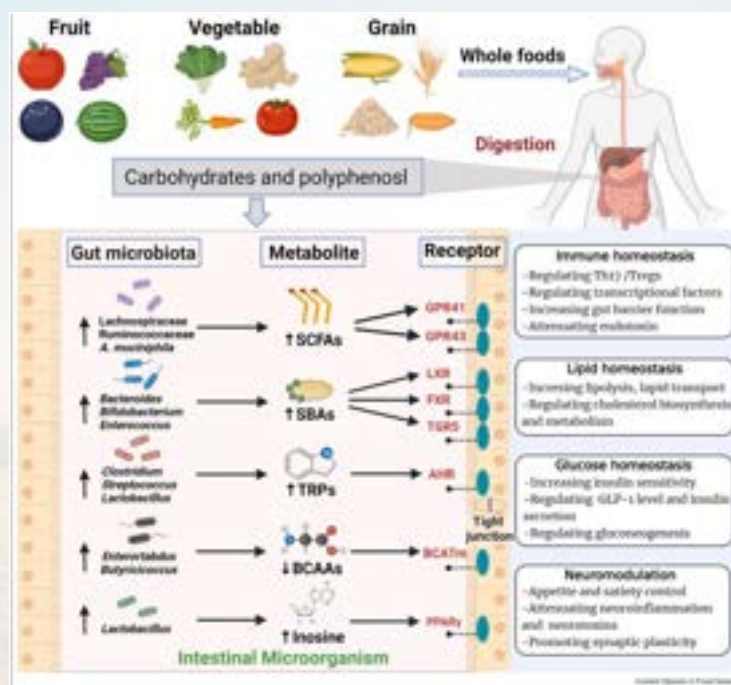
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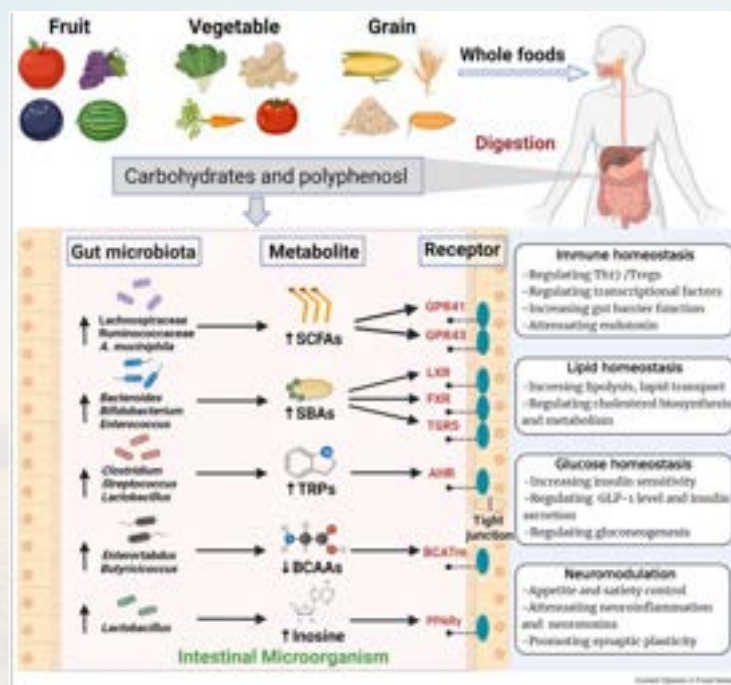
Planetary Health Plate: Empowering your microbiome

Whole Foods →
Prebiotic (feed
microorganisms) →
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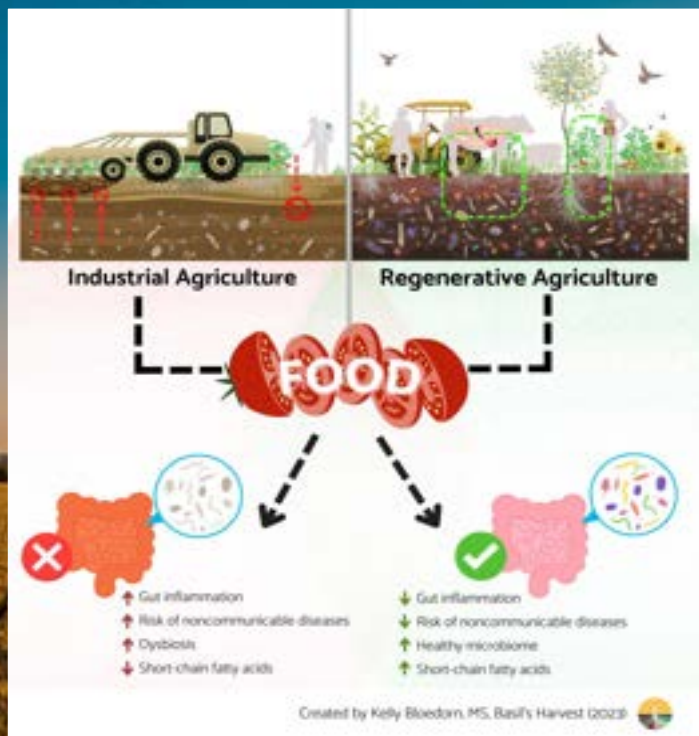
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- Fruits
- Nuts
- Whole grains
- Beans



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Eat Local Regional Food

Microbiome friendly

- Close to harvest=highest nutrients and phytochemicals
- More variety of cultivars
 - Heritage varieties
 - Local control of seeds
 - Support local ecosystems
- Talk with the expert grower
 - Production practices
 - Cultivar differences
 - Preparation tips



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Nourishing Your Community From Field to Tray

Rosalee C. Blumenthal, K. Blood, D. Carlisle, S. Knecht, A. Frelken, N. Meyer, E.



THE STUDY

Connecting regenerative/organic farmers in Central Illinois with a local hospital system is a farm-to-institution (F2I) model. Basil's Harvest explored the connections between farm, food, and health systems. Studies allowed us to draw these connections between the health of the soil and the nutrient quality of the food.

When food service and environmental professionals at community institutions like hospitals, universities, military bases, etc. look to their regional foodshed for local food choices, communities can see amplified benefits—social, and environmental benefits. Institutions seeking responsibly and regionally-grown food also support a market pathway for regenerative/organic farmers, thus revitalizing the community's wealth & health and reducing its environmental footprint.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 REGIONAL & ORGANIC/REGENERATIVE FOOD SOURCING CAN EMPOWER COMMUNITIES.**
By offering local/regional & responsibly sourced food at your institution, you are supporting your local community and creating a space where people can easily make healthy choices.
- 2 REGIONAL & ORGANIC/REGENERATIVE PRODUCTS SEE A BOOSTED NUTRIENT PROFILE.**
Regenerative- and organically-grown foods have an increased nutrient quality profile than those of industrially-grown foods. For example, one serving of cornmeal has more dietary fiber, or baking beta-glucans and plant proteins when compared to industrially-grown oats.
- 3 CHEAP FOOD IS VERY EXPENSIVE.**
We are ultimately paying more for industrial food. If we consider costs to the health of humans, environments, and communities.

For each dollar spent by this food system, consumers spend an additional **3X** the amount to cover the hidden costs that result from an industrial food system.

(Basil's Harvest, 2022)



SCAN TO GET YOUR COPY!



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(Basil's Harvest, 2022)



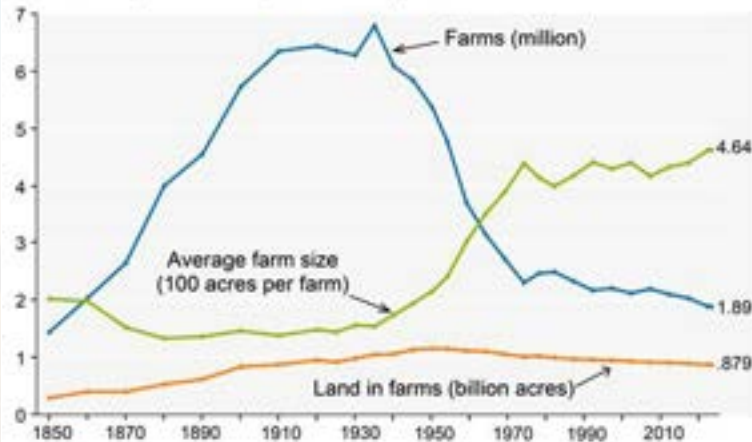
SCAN TO GET YOUR COPY!



Action: Support regenerative organic farmers

Farms, land in farms, and average acres per farm, 1850–2023

Million farms, billion acres, or 100 acres per farm



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Census of Agriculture (through 2022) and Farms and Land in Farms: 2023 Summary (February 2024).

USDA 2023 Farm Census

In 5 years:

We lost 150,000 farms & farmers.
And 21 million acres of farmland.

Farmers are 3.5 times more likely to die by suicide than the general public.

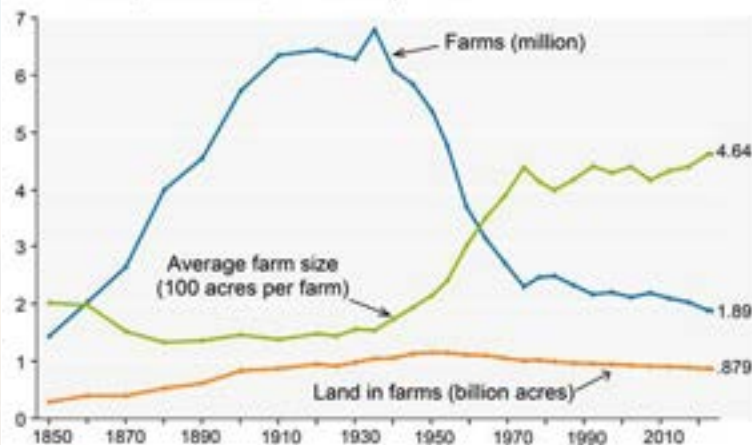
No Farms, No Food



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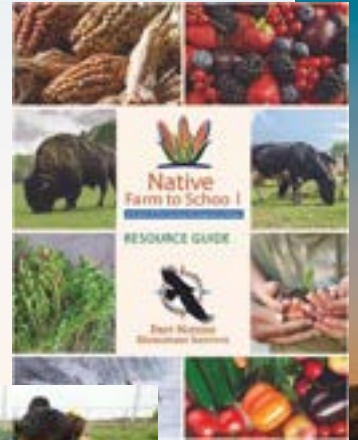
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No Farms, No Food



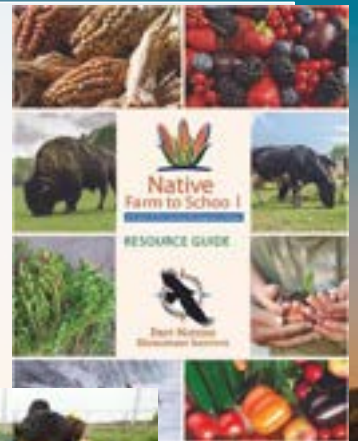
Action: Regional Food System Everywhere

- Farm to School
- Farmer's Market
- Farm to Institution
- Family Grocery Stores



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Thank you!



How we support and lead

- STRATEGY & COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT
- EDUCATION & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP
- OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

SCAN TO KEEP UP WITH
BASIL'S HARVEST!



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Thank you!



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