Regenerative.Studio - Confidential

Draft five year pilot project concept prepared for Potential Funder by Steven Clift.
Draft Version 1.0

> *Imagine the concepts outlined below like a **menu of choices** - we want some of this idea, extra on the service, that product on the side, and definitely no onions.*
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> *Update: The concept of a powerful "grow together" engine for sustainable/social impact/purpose-driven consumer brands can easily be widened or focused on other niches instead of only "regen brands."*
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> *The impact investor I originally prepared this for was active in the production side of regenerative agriculture. As it turns out, in addition to not investing in consumer brands (which I knew), they also don't invest in promotion or marketing. My take is that without new thinking and models that dramatically increase consumer demand for "good" products and significantly lower direct customer acquisition costs for "good" brands, the progress in recent years will die on the vine.*
>
> *On a positive note, below is an open sourcing of my thinking in case you'd like to help make this happen with me or one way or another. Get in touch: clift@publicus.net*

Core focus:

1. **Grow Consumer Demand for Regen** - Drive public awareness of and demand for regenerative ingredients in consumer products across North America to millions. Do this region by region, fostering momentum for local food system entrepreneurship and regional regen brand awareness, deploying digital-first strategies, tools, and resources.

2. **New Customers for Regen Brands Engine** - Help regen brands gain new customers via digital tools and strategies. Help solve a core growth problem for brands by significantly lowering their overall new DTC customer acquisition costs* to vitaly boost their margins and establish direct relationships with passionate, loyal customers who will advocate for their brand.

   *Revenue growth for the Regenerative.Studio will be driven by savings from digital advertising optimization and scaling as well as by developing the continent's largest first party database of consumers passionate about discovering regen brands.

   Regenerative.Studio is a working title. We own this domain.

The How - Services for Regen Brands:

Prioritize and build the Regenerative.Studio suite of services and initiatives for regen brands from this semi-ranked potential offerings:

1. **Regen Pledge** - Launch a digital campaign to sign-up consumers who pledge **to try one new regen brand a month for a year**. Use email, text (maybe) to educate consumers over the year and showcase brands joining our networked efforts. Start with 10,000 opt-in connections in a test region, optimize the campaign and then add 100,000+ pledges nationally. Grow this “first party” list into North America’s largest database of consumers passionate about regenerative agriculture with potentially millions of members by year five. Creative digital advertising and social sharing will be key to growing this opt-in foundation.

2. **Regen/Purpose-Driven Brand Directories** - Boost organic online traffic to regen brands via a new one-of-kind ecommerce store extension/app that powers “living” high-quality online directories and content for consumers (for the brand’s online store to use with Shopify, SquareSpace, Wix, WooCommerce, etc. platforms). The dynamic system will help regen brands boost their SEO (search traffic) in creative ways through a mix of automatically refreshed directories (e.g. buyregen.com, regendirectory.org) that focus on generating *direct* customers for stores rather than margin stealing online marketplaces. (Sustainable/ethical/purpose-driven brands have already demonstrated that they seek and are willing to pay for online directory listings. Providing a service they understand will generate a vital but accessible “serious about growing and collaborating” monthly fee.) Options for affiliate marketing and trackable discounts to boost sales will be explored to develop content partnerships and support distributed media about nutrient dense and healthy regen products.

3. **Digital Cross-Promotion** - Secure digital services and features that support pre and post-checkout cross-promotion among regen brands via best in class ecommerce apps. From GoodCarts (a company I led for five years, have equity in, and is now under new ownership) and/or Disco post-checkout to Carro and Syncio for pre-checkout cross-selling to MyFlyerInserts in shipped boxes, there are collaborative opportunities to go around margin attacking digital ad providers like Google and Meta or marketplaces like Amazon. Millions have been invested in these apps and ecommerce platforms. Our regen network of brands would function like a digital services purchasing cooperative to use the best tools at the lowest price and aggregate brand demand for functional improvements based on the shared needs of brands. Options to generate discounts as rewards for donations made via partner regenerative/sustainable ag non-profits will be explored.

4. **Digital Advertising Engine** - Identify and develop digital audiences across the regenerative, organic, sustainability landscape that may be leveraged by brands and partners at an attractive price. Further, almost all purpose-driven brands, including

emerging regenerative brands, do not have in-house talent to effectively optimize their initial digital ad spend. As brands develop quality websites, their focus on getting into retail or expanding wholesale distribution eclipses DTC ecommerce. Emerging purpose-driven brands have experienced a trail of tears hiring the wrong talent, using the wrong tools, increasing ad spend without optimizing creative, etc. The Regenerative.Studio will gather the best and cost-effective values-aligned talent at different price points for brands based on their scale. As we help brands reach a goal of at least 10-20%+ of their sales via DTC, we will grow revenue with the success of the regen brands we serve. First party data from the Regen Pledge and our other tools and services will further allow us to reach niche audiences and creatively work to reduce ad bidding competition among our member brands.

5. **Regen Card - Cash Back Gift/Debit Card -** Powered by Karma Wallet or a similar Visa debit card service, brand members of the Regenerative.Studio would be invited into a "collective" within Karma Wallet that focuses special attention on regenerative ag supporting brands. Regen brands would have the option of providing a cash back incentive for purchases made with the debit card. The win-win revenue share would build on shared growth. Imagine a strategic alternative for holiday gifts to Gen Z and Y compared to yet another season with Amazon gift cards.

6. **Marketplace Optimization** - From selling on Amazon to niche marketplaces like DoneGood.co, unoptimized and poorly implemented in-marketplace advertising destroys margins and inhibits growth. While DTC growth is our core goal, brands that do sell on marketplaces need access to services and talent that maximize their profit. In our database of over 200 regen brands, we've identified around 75 who sell on Amazon. One of our first ready to go partnerships is with Better World Products, a unique agency that optimizes Amazon listings and advertising for sustainable brands.

7. **Path to Regional Retail** - The Regenerative.Studio will work to support the growth of emerging regional regen brands tied to local food systems to the greatest extent possible. The carbon footprint of shipping consumer products with regenerative agriculture ingredients thousands of miles may defeat the goals of the regenerative moment. We propose forging a digital-first partnership with INFRA (the network of independent natural food retailers) and National Co-op Grocers which serve the most passionate local food consumers. Both headquartered in the Minneapolis-region where the Regenerative.Studio is based, the national membership of these networks surpass all the Whole Foods and Sprouts locations combined. Helping brands build a base of awareness and first time use via DTC at a critical mass near targeted retail locations will help brands break in with retailers and drive in-store sales. The Regenerative.Studio will add "geo-fencing" tools to our mix that will allow us to target mobile devices that have visited locations that likely indicate an interest in regenerative agriculture (like repeat visits to farmer's markets). We have a relationship with El Toro and are exploring other ad targeting technologies for helping brands reach people beyond the expensive Google/Meta juggernaut.

8. **Additional Ecommerce Services for Regen Brands** - Via vetted high quality partners (generating commission revenue) and direct services we'll help brands secure sustainable packaging options, crowdfunding campaign promotion, sustainability minded ecommerce fulfillment (3PLs) and distribution partnerships region by region where regional regen brands may be cross-promoted pre-checkout and eco-consciously co-shipped.

Additional Services - Supporting Regen Ag Ecosystem

There are additional win-win service opportunities that would serve organizations in the regenerative agriculture transition and development economic ecosystem. These are directly informed by conversations spurred by our strategic sharing of regen brand data with stakeholders. Supporting and reaching regen brands is a significant market gap.

1. **Services for Regen Ag Funders** - Help regenerative agriculture interested foundations educate mass and niche audiences digitally from persuadable farmers to ag and food industry leaders to segments of consumers. Create a viable path to reach millions with cost-effective “Got Regen?” style digital outreach and engagement to dramatically boost consumer awareness and demand that supports continued farmer transition to regenerative and all the steps in the supply chain up to consumption.

2. **Services for Regen Brand Investors** - Gather and enhance data on CPG regen brands to reduce investment deployment friction. Offer matchmaking services informed by data generated by our technology about which brands are generating the most regional and national momentum. Provide virtual accelerator, digital marketing coaching, peer to peer learning and network across brands within a fund’s portfolio on contract.

3. **Services for Regen Suppliers and Commercialization Initiatives** - Building on our data on regen brands, trusted relationships, and opt-in communication channels, help those attempting to reach brands do it effectively. From webinars about new regenerative crops to distributing educational materials on securing regenerative ingredients (and navigating regen certifications), a number of organizations have expressed interest in how they network and contact regen brands.

4. **Services for Government Agencies/Funded Efforts Seeking to Boost Farm Direct Value-Added Economic Growth** - Help “farm direct” sellers (mini brands) gain the skills needed to sell their value-added regen products effectively sell online across multiple technologies (with shipping if produced in a commercial kitchens or for pick up/farmers markets for cottage level value-added products). Depending upon the scale, this may better fit below under non-profit economic development. State governments invest millions each year to promote “Grown/Made in X State” initiatives. While every county will not have their own White Oak Pastures, every state could have many. They have to start somewhere and that may be with a value-added product that is directly sold and shipped via ecommerce.

Non-Profit Economic Development for Regenerative Agriculture - Hybrid Model for Greater Impact

Building the full ecosystem to network with and support regen ag brands would benefit from both a companion non-profit and partnerships with existing non-profits, trade associations, foundations, and governments.

If this pilot project secures $5 million dollars over 5 years, 20% or $1 million dollars deployed via the nonprofit would help cement a shared engagement foundation to build collaborative trust and dramatically expand impact. Steven Clift's experience starting and leading a non-profit for 20+ years, having worked in government prior and then most recently for a half-decade leading the GoodCarts ecommerce service start-up, allows this initiative to envision connections and synergies that others would likely not imagine.

1. **Conference/Dedicated Communication Sponsorship for Nonprofits with Purpose-Driven/Regen Brand Connections** - Whether a 501c.3 or a non-profit trade association, existing organizations need to be appreciated to gain profile promotion to their brand members and the larger public. Promoting the incorporation of regen ingredients into the existing purpose-driven consumer product world would be highly strategic. Organizations on our radar (many with which we have relationships) with DIRECT brand connections include the many regenerative certifications efforts, the brand-based Regen Coalition (getting started), Climate Collaborative, Social Enterprise Alliance, American Sustainable Business Network, Upcycled Food Association, Naturally Network (and local affiliates like Naturally Minnesota), the Fair Trade Federation, Fair Trade USA, GoodMarket.Global, Small Business Digital Alliance and others. From sponsoring dedicated newsletters to conference panels introducing regenerative agriculture ingredients to areas of purpose-driven commerce unfamiliar with the opportunity, we'll build bridges for increasing demand from entrepreneurs choosing what to make and sell to their customers.

2. **Service Contracts with Nonprofits as Providers** - Finding opportunities to support the work of the Regenerative.Studio via resource limited, talent rich external non-profits would be highly strategic. For example, this could include field outreach work at a local farmers market (with permission) to both share information about their programming and sign people up for our Regen Pledge (with dual-opt-in). Our non-profit could also partner with regeneration focused non-profits to help them grow their digital audiences via their newsletters, donor base, social media, etc. by leveraging the regen pledge digital audiences far above at a reasonable discount.

3. **Matching Funds for Allied Nonprofits** - Funds for matching established now in anticipation of future government rural economic development opportunities, USDA grants, etc. for activities that specifically interface with Regenerative.Studio initiatives. Whether it's matching Giving Tuesday individual donations or helping a partner non-profit

secure larger funding, as long as their nonprofit activities support and promote our consumer demand for regenerative ingredients focus, we can identify win-win opportunities.

4. **Regen Spark Inclusion Fund - Convening and Collaboration** - Support for emerging regen brands from an inclusion and underrepresented business startup is a large gap that needs many efforts. Equitable economic development likely meets an important charitable goal the Venn Foundation and other PRI related funders require to create funds and bring in contributions from Donor Advised Funds. These are lower interest loans or investments and not grants. The Regenerative.Studio should play a role, along with other stakeholders, to develop on-ramps into the regen ag space that both promote regenerative ingredient access of existing CPG brands started by underrepresented founders as well as new regen brands. A vehicle for DAFs from family offices also investing in regen ag, to boost our related charitable activities would be highly strategic. Special efforts to boost Indigenous-owned as well as rural economic development partnerships that foster value-added regen brands production in rural areas or in tribal communities themselves should be promoted.

5. **Regen Ag Ingredients and Institutional Purchasing** - Many of the long established nonprofits mentioned above are involved with the Purchasing with Purpose initiative. It is working with major corporations and other institutions to boost purpose-driven **procurement**. There is a significant public interest opportunity to promote both regenerative agriculture ingredients and finished value-add products from regen brands. (Regen is not yet on the agenda of long established ethical consumerism efforts.)

6. **Regen Fiber & Friends Made in USA/North America** - Develop connections among non-food Made in the USA/North America consumer product brands to promote the awareness of fibers, leather, and other regenerative farm and forest produced products and the advantages of sourcing materials and marketing their support for regenerative agriculture. Efforts could include networking with Growing Grass and companies like Other Half Processing which have supplied Timberland with cattle hides from regenerative farms for Timberland. We are keen to surface examples like “solar wool” from entrepreneurial efforts like Cannon Valley Graziers. For the most part, there is no connection among the vast majority of Made in USA consumer product manufacturers that we know and regenerative agriculture messaging.

7. **Regen Internships and Talent Incubator** - The Regenerative.Studio will build a dynamic educational on-ramp for students seeking to gain experience assisting regen brands, building digital marketing skills for impact businesses and more. - Potentially in partnership with the ImpactHub’s Interns for Impact program (or similar), we’ve seen this as a vital source of entry-level talent that can work beyond the internship. Further, we envision specific outreach to interns who grew up on a farm and may be working remotely part-time from their family farm in the summer. We will recruit heavily from agricultural communication programs like at the University of Minnesota. This could be

expanded to develop a rural-based work from home “on-farm” base of digital marketing talent for our initiatives as well as fee for service for the brands we serve. (Exploring funding from or relationships with rural broadband and economic development initiatives would be explored. Steven Clift hosted the Digital Inclusion Network in the 2000s.)

8. **Consumer-Centric Discovery of Other’s Existing Regenerative Agriculture Content** - There is no shortage of existing content about regenerative agriculture that informs and motivates consumer purchases. However, our domain RegenDirectory.org could build the SEO for content from our partner nonprofits, member brands, and others. Counter-intuitively, a reliable almost Craigslist-like starkly boring curated directory on content, newsletters, videos, etc. about regenerative agriculture and “what’s new” from across the field is an unmet need and opportunity for “free” Google search traffic.

9. **Regen Boosting Online Communities** - It’s all about generating **local-up** connections for the regenerative movement. Support existing online communities and build new ones to fill the gaps that connect new and diverse communities interested in regenerative agriculture. Develop creative partnerships that create many places online, often connected to geography/biomes **for regen loving people to belong**. From regional LinkedIn groups like our own Regenerative Agriculture North group to creating directory pages for state/regional “farm direct” Facebook Groups to exploring a new Discord channel in collaboration with youth involved with the Future Farmers of America or 4H focused on regen. The Buy Nothing Facebook Groups movement may even be a template for a Be Local/Buy Regen cause to build deeply grassroots consumer to consumer peer support as we go on a journey together to integrate regeneratively grown food and products into our lives. With 30 years of experience with the effective launch and facilitation of online communities that started with the E-Democracy.org 501c.3 (Steven Clift is founder and Board Chair of this now all volunteer effort), this knowledge presents an opportunity for unique adaptation toward the Regenerative.Studio's goals and companion nonprofit’s mission.

10. **Regen Today App - Podcasts and Videos** - Building upon the regen directory concept, we can explore aggregating podcasts and video channels to showcase “what’s new” about regenerative agriculture mobile-centric audiences from farmers to consumers to investors and everyone in-between. This would leverage Steven Clift's existing “MediaBase” technology that supports niche automated content curation. We would likely use the RegenPodasts.com domain that we own. Our sister “side-hustle” the TV News App has generated over 3 million downloads on Google Play. MediaBase is a new aggregation platform that is supporting the Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality App aggregating around 50 high quality YouTube channels and Podcast series that meet their interfaith mission: https://spiritualpod.org (Alpha - Try on Mobile/narrow browser window) - Regen Today could be promoted to the Regen Pledge audience. As an aggregator, we would generate good will with regen ag content producers by sharing our audience with them.