

Notes on Group Discussion of **Kiss the Ground**

A small, but enthusiastic group conducted a discussion of the documentary movie *To Kiss the Ground* on Friday April 29.

Participants praised the video and thought it was entertaining and a well-presented partial solution to the intensifying issue of climate disaster, based on excessive greenhouse gases. A major point is that even if we curtail the ongoing use of fossil fuels, the existing quantities of pollutants, with long half-lives in the atmosphere, will continue to degrade the climate for many years into the future. *Kiss the ground* argues better agricultural and conservation practices can rejuvenate the soil, resulting in a major carbon sink to sequester vast quantities of CO₂ significantly reducing the greenhouse effect. The principal is called **Regenerative Agriculture**. This refers to the management of land for carbon sequestration, crop resilience, soil health, and nutrient density. It links sustainable business with agrarian principles.

Soils are vast reservoirs of carbon. They hold three times the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere. Intensive crop cultivation can reduce soil carbon by 25-50% in just 30-50 years. Over the past 10,000 years, the agricultural conversion has reduced soil carbon globally by 840 gigatons and many cultivated soils have lost 50-70% of their original organic carbon.

We discovered that many of the practices could be applied to even small scale agricultural operations in Rhode Island such as sod farming, farmer market suppliers, community gardens, and even our own personal backyard gardens.

Much of the following discussion centered about why the approach has not been widely accepted. Some of the likely reasons are:

- Many farmers are wedded to their usual standard methods and are reluctant to adopt to new ideas.
- Science has evolved, leading to new approaches in conflict with older beliefs, but the earlier thinking still persists among many.
- Strong lobbying efforts on the part of many agricultural chemical companies to promote the use of their products (excess fertilizers, pesticides, etc.).
- Likewise major lobbying efforts on the part of large scale commercial agricultural enterprises are only interested in maximizing profits,
- Misguided government subsidies support farm products not in best interest of soil health as well as human health (e.g., corn for ethanol and livestock feed, etc.).
- Failure to understand that good farm practices lead to improved and more reliable profits in the long term.

Our discussion group concluded by agreeing to explore ways to take future action. Ideas are still under consideration but several suggestions are to:

- Promote educational programs, especially with our youth.
- Collaborate with several other groups to develop a broader educational reinforcement of the regenerative principles (e.g., with Casey Farms, the Farmers Daughter, and others) and meet with others in the community.
- Form alliances and cooperative programs with the URI Cooperative Extension, and other organizations such as the Farm Bureau, NRCS, RINLAA, etc.
- Contact government officials at the local, state, and federal levels.

We hope to further develop our goals shortly and begin to execute some action. Others are asked to join us in our effort.

As promised, here are several additional links that I think you will find useful and interesting.

<https://www.greenmatters.com/p/kiss-the-ground-netflix>

The Ted talk by Allan Savory: how to stop & recover deserts-arid land

https://www.ted.com/talks/allan_savory_how_to_fight_desertification_and_reverse_climate_change?language=en

<https://savory.global/> background on the Savory Institute

<https://www.ewg.org/interactive-maps/2021-farm-subsidies-ballooned-under-trump/> Farm subsidy programs, a site researched by Darlene.

Prepared by Don Hermes, with help from Darlene.