

Nutrients for All: Invigorating Landscapes



Landscapes, soils, and foods that nourish.

Ashoka Fellows and other action leaders worldwide have developed social and economic initiatives that put unconventional agricultural and land management techniques into practice. They enrich soils and streamline food production in ways that nourish crops and foods and ecological systems, and foster more resilient and entrepreneurial farms and communities. We now seek to create a common platform of information flow, business relationships and economic models which enable smallholder farmers, agricultural companies, and citizens to seize these opportunity and benefits.

Fully nourished food crops, reflecting both the content and the bioavailability of nutrients to our bodies, come hand-in-hand with fully nourished soils. Emerging evidence suggests that fully nourished crops may in fact be difficult to achieve otherwise. We are excited about the innovative approaches which can put land- and food-enriching techniques into practice at wide scale, creating, maintaining and supplying a full spectrum of nutrients in landscapes to achieve a powerful set of benefits including the following:

- Provide nutrient-rich food for local and commercial supply chains.
- Reinvigorate degraded soils and reduce topsoil erosion.
- Stabilize and increase recharge of groundwater and watersheds.
- Increase biodiversity.
- Sequester carbon into soils to help mitigate global climate change.
- Reduce pollution and sanitation problems from industrial and residential sources.

Perhaps most important and powerful, then, are economic and social transformations with results such as:

- People along the food chain are more fully nourished.
- Farmers at citizen, community and corporate scale become empowered with more economic choice and flexibility.
- Farms and communities build resilience against risks of adverse economic and weather conditions.
- People reconnect with their land and culture in ways that further inspire a sense of agency and nimble problem-solving in society, resulting in ever higher levels of social and economic entrepreneurship.

In thinking intensively with leading social entrepreneurs about how to trigger these kinds of models and innovations to action at wide scale, we have identified and are proposing two initiatives for co-creation with partners and funders:

1. “Nutrient Banking”

With foresight one can see that investing in a farming landscape or region to produce these results could create immense value, for society and for businesses. Ashoka is proposing development of a business model which assesses, plans and implements these types of generative “nutrient capital” in a region, and then reaps the rewards over time. By nutrient capital we mean not just the known land management techniques, but the economic and social approaches used by leading social entrepreneurs and others to trigger those techniques into action. Such a nutrient banking model would manage, measure, value and channel the benefits along multiple product lines, generating direct impact as well as increasing levels of economy and entrepreneurship over time.

2. “Citizen Soil Action Networks”

Big successes in private and public sector watershed management show that when citizens are enabled to consistently monitor water quality in their rivers, lakes and wells, great things happen: A frequency and volume of data is generated for science, research and monitoring by governments and industry which could not have been achieved otherwise; and people come to understand and begin to innovate around their own water management. This results in efficiencies, innovations and direct benefit to all segments of society. With new devices and protocols being developed for measuring nourishment soils as well as food and people, we believe that active learning networks of citizen and corporate soil testers may achieve these kinds of results for nourishment of the land, agriculture, food and people as well. Ashoka is proposing the co-creation and development of this idea as a promising strategy for triggering the wide range of economic and social effects listed above.

Ashoka is eager to discuss and develop these propositions further.

This is a call to action. [Work with us to create landscapes that nourish.](#)

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