Comparing the sense of community strength and the provision of social benefits between regenerative agriculture/organic farming practices in the Northeast to conventional agriculture practices through the Long Island-based Garden of Eve Farm

Elise Birkett
Environmental Studies Honors Seminar Thesis

Abstract

Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of society throughout the world. It is what sustains us as a country and as a global community. However, land today all over the globe is degraded to such a serious degree that if we continue to operate with current conventional, industrial agriculture practices, it is estimated that we will have only 60 years of farming left. Research suggests regenerative agriculture can rejuvenate land, repair damaged soils, and provide greater overall environmental benefits than conventional agriculture, but the social benefits afforded to farmers and farming communities are less clear. Through a case study participant observation at The Garden of Eve farm located on Long Island, New York which included in-person interviews and conversations, and a comparative archival/media analysis between regenerative and conventional agriculture, this study seeks to answer the following question: how does regenerative agriculture and organic farming in the Northeast compare to conventional agriculture practices (in terms of community strength and providing social benefits)? The preliminary results from this research suggest that regenerative agriculture-based farms provide more and greater social benefits to farmers and communities than conventional agriculture-based farms. In particular, it appears a potential emergent trend is that regenerative agriculture specifically provides more education, engagement with food and land, and greater long-range economic planning. This research also suggests that there is a stronger self-identified sense of community on regenerative agriculture farms and within the community than on conventional agriculture farms. Finally, it offers evidence in support of conducting future research in this subject on other case study sites, both regenerative and conventional, and suggests what that research might look like and trends that might be found.