



Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard

AGORO CARBON USA CROPLAND PROGRAM



Document Prepared by Agoro Carbon Alliance

Project Title	Agoro Carbon USA Cropland Program
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Project Location	The United States of America
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Project Lifetime	20 May 2021 – 28 February 2042; 20-year lifetime
History of SD VISTa Status	New SD-VISTa project, no historical status
Other Certification Programs	VCS Project 3634-Agoro Carbon USA Cropland Program
Expected Future Assessment Schedule	The initial SD VISTa verification begins April of 2025

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1 SUMMARY OF SDG CONTRIBUTIONS

Table 1: Summary of Project SDG Contributions

Row number	Estimated Project Contribution by the End of Project Lifetime	SDG Target	SDG Indicator	Net Impact on SDG Indicator	Section Reference	Claim, Asset or Label
1)	The project will increase agronomic knowledge and experience of 500 farmers by providing new learning opportunities coupled with direct agronomic support.	4.4	Proportion of farmers with the knowledge and skills to implement more sustainable agricultural practices.	Increase	3.2 #1	Claim
2)	Add at least one additional revenue source for 500 farmers, through carbon payments, while maintaining their existing revenue capacity, as monitored by overall yields.	2.3	Increased farmer revenue sources.	Increase	3.2 #2	Claim
3)	Expected 2,000,000 acres enrolled and implementing sustainable agricultural practices.	2.4	Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture	Increase	4.2 #1 #2 and #3	Claim

4)	6,130,133 ERRs over project lifetime by implementing new sustainable agricultural practices.	13.0	Tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions avoided or removed	Increase	4.2 #4	Claim
5)	2,000,000 acres utilizing regenerative agricultural practices.	13.1	Increase resilience to drought and fire hazards of agricultural ecosystems Number of acres implementing practices that promote resilience to drought and fire hazards.	Increase	4.2 #1 #2 #3	Claim
6)	2,000,000 acres utilizing regenerative agricultural practices.	15.3	Number of acres that are utilizing regenerative agricultural practices to restore degraded soil.	Increase	4.2 #2	Claim
7	Increase in soil organic stocks within the project area by 2% over the project lifetime.	6.4	Water withdrawals from areas that are dependent on irrigation.	Increase	1 4.2 #2	Claim
8	2% average decrease in CO2 emissions per value added for participating growers.	9.4	CO2 emission per unit of value added	Decrease	VCS Project Description	Claim

2 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1 Project Objectives, Context and Long-term Viability

2.1.1 Summary of Project Sustainable Development Objective(s)

The main objective of the Project is to provide the financial, agronomic, and educational support needed for farmers to adopt new farming practices that not only produce agricultural products in a more sustainable way, but also have a positive impact on climate change and ecosystem restoration. Project objectives can be summarized in three main categories.

Emission reductions/removals (ERRs): The project aims to reduce carbon emissions by incentivizing farmers to reduce nitrogen application, and carbon removals through regenerative practices such as the incentivization of reduced or no-till practices and the use of cover crops.

Ecosystem Resiliency: The accumulation of soil organic and mineralized carbon improves the water and nutrient retention capabilities of the soil, which leads to several downstream ecological benefits. Reduced tillage and or the use of cover crops lead to improved soil health. Improved soil health prevents soil erosion and the downstream impacts of erosion. All practices lead to better overall ecosystem health, improving below-ground and above-ground biodiversity.

Farmer livelihoods: Participating farmers receive a diversified revenue source, which, beyond the extra revenue, provides an opportunity to try new practices that would have been deemed too financially risky in the absence of carbon finance. Participation also allows farmers to market their products to buyers interested in regenerative agricultural practices.

2.1.2 Description of the Project Activity

While agriculture accounts for an estimated 10% of the total U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, it also provides opportunities to reduce existing GHGs in the atmosphere. The Agoro Carbon USA Cropland Program will promote improved agricultural land management (IALM) practices, including reduced and zero tillage, cover cropping, and improved nitrogen (N) fertilizer management on cropland in the USA to reduce GHG and decarbonize agriculture. The implementation of these practices will lead to reduced soil disturbance and soil erosion, improved soil health, as well as potentially reducing the total usage of fossil fuels. These practices could, in turn, increase overall fertilizer and water use

efficiency and potentially improve profitability at the farm level, whilst building resilience into farming systems. The Program is a wide-ranging collaborative initiative between Agoro Carbon Alliance 'hereafter referred to Agoro Carbon' and farmers designed to channel carbon offset revenue and agronomic knowledge to farmers willing to transition to regenerative practices.

During the project period, enrolled farmers will be assisted by the Agoro Carbon agronomic team to implement these project activities to transition from a conventional to a regenerative farming system. Agoro Carbon's scientific based Program is designed to overcome existing barriers that prevent the adoption of improved land management practices. Agoro Carbon Program farmers have an opportunity to generate carbon credits as a financial means to support their practice changes. The Project is designed to expand over time and cover a range of farmers and farming activities in the USA to help drive the critical transition to a future dominated by resilient and sustainable agricultural systems.

Farmers who participate in the Project are required to adopt one or more changes to current agricultural management practices. A change constitutes the adoption of a new practice (e.g., adoption of one of the pre-defined agricultural land management practices listed below in this section of this document), cessation of a pre-existing practice (e.g., conventional tillage) or adjustment to a pre-existing practice that could lead to GHG emissions reductions and/or an increase of carbon sequestration.

The Project is designed as a grouped project so that following the validation and registration, new farmers, provided that their activities meet the eligibility criteria defined in section 1.4 of this document, can continue to enroll to be a part of the Project. The initial project activity instances are in the United States involving around 79 farms on an area of roughly 235,204 acres.

The Project activity includes the implementation of the following types of regenerative agricultural practice(s) by the farmers:

Type 1. Tillage Management (reduced tillage and no tillage)

The vast majority of farmers in the United States practice some form of conventional tillage that results in a significant amount of soil disturbance, and thereby an increased CO₂ influx to the atmosphere. Reducing tillage mitigates these negative effects of tillage while improving the long-term soil health of the farmer. This improved agricultural practice includes one of the key concepts as outlined by

USDA-NRCS for improving soil health and carbon sequestration, and it involves the reduction of soil disturbance (usually shallow and without full soil inversion). For the purposes of this project, reduced and improved tillage includes one or multiple of the following specific practices, a reduction in the number of tillage passes, reduced tillage depth, strip-till, and no-till to reduce overall soil disturbance.

The combination of returning crop residues to the soil and reduced soil disturbance, in the long term, improves the carbon content of the soil and thereby improves soil fertility, soil structure, and water-holding capacity.



No-till or zero-till is defined as the absence of tillage operations from the harvest of the previous crop to the harvest of the current crop. Minimal soil disturbance only happens at the time of planting without overturning the soil. As a result, we recommend to farmers who participate in the Project to implement no-tillage to avoid 1) a separate band application of fertilizer, 2) mechanical cover crop termination (except for crimping), 3) tillage to suppress weeds or incorporate residue. Tillage can be implemented for remediating rutted wheel track areas created by irrigation systems.

Type 2. Implementation of cover cropping

Planting cover crops during periods when a cash crop is not being grown effectively sequesters soil organic carbon in addition to improving soil health and water quality. Cover crops are usually planted to protect the soil, retain soil moisture, recycle residual nutrients and sequester carbon rather than for the purpose of being harvested; although they could also potentially be harvested via livestock grazing, which would further enhance carbon sequestration. Cover crops can include grasses, brassicas, legumes, and other broadleaf species, and can be annual or perennial plants. Popular cover crops include cereal rye, clover, vetch, and oilseed radish. They can be mono or polyculture (mixture of many species).



By joining Agoro Carbon USA Cropland Program, farmers are encouraged to plant cover crops to increase soil organic carbon stocks and, depending on the cover crop species, a grower may be able to reduce the amount of synthetic-N fertilizer applied, reducing net N_2O emissions if. Leguminous cover crops are able to fix atmospheric-N and, along with brassica cover crops, provide an optimal ratio of carbon to nitrogen so that their decomposed residues add to the plant-available nitrogen pool in the soil for the next crop.

Type 3. Implementation of Nitrogen fertilizer rate management

Managing nitrogen application rates lowers N_2O emissions to the atmosphere and contributes to an overall reduction of GHG emissions. Agriculture plays a major role in N_2O emissions, because of nitrogen fertiliser application. The application of N fertilizers increases available nitrogen, which enhances both nitrification and denitrification rates

increasing the production of N_2O . The reduction of synthetic and/or organic nitrogen fertiliser application, therefore, results in a substantial net reduction of N_2O emissions. To qualify for a nitrogen rate reduction in the Project, a grower



needs to demonstrate a reduction in their nitrogen rate from baseline.

In addition to the practices described above, additional practices eligible under VM0042, such as grazing cover crops and residues, adding a legume species to existing cover crops, and promoting crop rotations, could be implemented in the scope of project activity.

Project Activity Summary

Farmers implementing the individual and combined activities results in GHG emission reductions, carbon sequestration, improved soil health, and an increase in biodiversity and ecosystem health. Additionally, these benefits have secondary benefits. Improved soil health, particularly increases in soil carbon, increases the water holding capacity of the soil which reduces the need for irrigation and makes cropland more resilient to drought and fire.

Participation in the project also has direct benefits for the farmers themselves. The additional revenue farmers receive for implementing practices diversifies their income and makes it less risky to implement further improvements to their farm. The knowledge gained through their participation will also be valuable for the remainder of their careers.

2.1.3 Implementation Schedule

The project start date was determined based on the date on which a farmer purchased equipment to implement project activities. The purchase of the equipment was necessary for the implementation of project activities (reduced tillage) and would not have taken place without the project.

Grower training, stakeholder monitoring and natural capital and ecosystem monitoring activities occur on an instance by instance basis. Once a grower expresses interest in the program, ongoing support, training, and communication will be provided as frequently as the grower desires. Once a grower agreement is signed, baseline data collection begins. Once project implementation begins, data collection occurs usually twice a year, based on the activities implemented, grower preference, and data collection means. Agoro Carbon strives to physically visit each grower and their instances once a year and communicate on a quarterly basis. The other entities contracted by Agoro Carbon Alliance to collect soil samples and test the soil samples for SOC require no training. These entities were selected specifically because they can perform the desired tasks more accurately and proficiently than Agoro Carbon Alliance. Agoro Carbon Alliance provided both the soil samplers and soil labs operational specifications to ensure their work is carried out as per the requirements of the methodology.

Date	Milestone(s) in the Project's Development and Implementation
20 May 2021	Project Start Date: enrolled Farmer in Washington State purchases equipment for him to start his reduced tillage efforts.

01 April 2021-current	Grower Trainings
01 May 2021-current	Stakeholder Monitoring
01 May 2021-current	Natural Capital and Ecosystem Monitoring
19 Nov 2022	First Grower Appreciation Event held in West Texas
01 Nov 2023	Second Grower Appreciation Event held in Oregon
6 Feb 2024	Third Grower Appreciation Event held in South Dakota
11 May 2023	Public Comment Period Starts for VCS project begins
5 May 2023	Initial Kickoff Meeting between Ruby Canyon and Agoro Carbon Alliance for VCS validation
18 Sep 2023	VCS validation site visit conducted by Ruby Canyon Engineering
15 Apr 2024	Initial Kickoff Meeting between SCS Global Services and Agoro Carbon for SD VISTA validation
18 – 28 Jun 2024	Site Visit dates for SD VISTA Validation
June 2025	Planned first VCS and SD VISTA verification
Rolling Basis	Sign up additional farmers

2.1.4 Project Proponent

Organization Name	Agoro Carbon Alliance US Inc.
Role in the Project	Project Proponent
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2.1.5 Other Entities Involved in the Project

This project is developed entirely by the Agoro Carbon Alliance. Agoro Carbon Works with other entities in the facilitation of the project. For soil sampling purposes, we work with Soil Sampling groups Ward Labs and Deveron Labs. We also work with regional “Channel Partners” that aid in our ongoing communication efforts with our farmers. A full list of these other entities have been given to Verra and SCS Global Services in a separate document for their review. The contents of this list are commercially sensitive as it includes contact information for individuals at times rather than larger business entities.

2.1.6 Project Type

Sectoral Scope	14
AFOLU project category	Agricultural Land Management (ALM)
Project activity type	Improved Cropland Management (ICM)
Grouped project?	Yes

2.1.7 Project Location

The project area is the continental United States of America, which excludes the states of Alaska and Hawaii. Coordinates that are the most central to this grouped project instances are as follows;

Latitude: 44.89

Longitude: -93.18

The initial instances are in the following states: Washington, Texas, Iowa, Missouri, Idaho, Minnesota, Kansas, Illinois, South Dakota, North Dakota, Indiana, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Oregon.

2.1.8 Baseline Scenario

Prior to project implementation, farmers enrolled in the Project were implementing business as usual practices on their land. Farmers followed traditional practices, traditional knowledge, and were shaped by various social factors. The project activities listed above were not part of the business-as-usual scenario for the enrolled farmers due to various implementation barriers.

The social, agronomic, economic, and natural conditions at the start of the project have been summarized below. "Farmer-peer community" refers to the community in which farmers operate. This includes other farmers implementing the same practice as one another in the same area. These conditions at times acted as a barrier to implementation to the practices:

Aspect	Conditions in the Baseline Scenario
Social	Farmers typically adopt and continue practices that are in line with their farmer-peer community. They greatly value the overall health and well-being of the environment around them and care deeply about their land.
Agronomic	Most farmers get their agronomic information from their farmer-peer community as well as familial traditions.
Economic	Farmers are typically risk-averse and changing practices comes at a great financial risk. They lack trusted technical, financial, institutional, and peer support to implement regenerative agricultural practices.
Natural Capital	Farmers in our program can be found in 15 different states in the contiguous United States of America, so the conditions can vary greatly. However, the following conditions are more widespread: Water scarcity, especially in the Western States, is driving farmers to assess their participation in initiatives and efficiency switches that will promote more sustainable use of their aquifers. Soil health - After decades, and sometimes more than a century, of cultivation, mostly in a monoculture or two crop rotation, many fields experience nutrient and organic material depletion, soil erosion, soil compaction. These conditions lead to an increased reliance on fertilization to maintain yields. Biodiversity - For the above reasons the above and below ground biodiversity is greatly reduced.

2.1.9 Causal Chain(s)

Please see the Appendix, section 3, for the casual chain.

2.1.10 Threats to the Project

The largest threat to the project's benefits is that farmers stop or reverse the adoption of the sustainable practices. While other threats exist,

floods, drought, fires and other natural disasters, their negative impacts will be short lived as the continuation of regenerative practices will repair what was damaged.

To prevent farmers from abandoning the project and reverting back to conventional practices Agoro Carbon must ensure farmers have improved livelihoods as a consequence of their participation. To do this Agoro Carbon must protect, and if possible, grow farmers yields and income. Agoro Carbon addresses these key factors with a share of carbon revenues and agronomic support.

Agoro Carbon provides farmers with initial and ongoing payments. The initial payments are to offset the cost of transitioning to new practices, which may require new equipment or inputs. Additionally, as farmers transition to new practices there is a threat that they experience yield reductions. The initial payments ensure that if temporary yield declines do occur, they are not financially unstable.

The farmers have access to the Grower Success Team. An exclusive team of senior agronomists who specialize in crops and livestock production, most of whom are producers themselves. This team supports farmers with any agronomic knowledge they may require. By utilizing the Grower Success Team farmers have confidence that they know how to address any situations that arise and maintain or increase their yields.

2.1.11 Benefit Permanence

Based on the team's agronomic experience, we believe that it is highly unlikely that a farmer would revert back to old practices after the 10-year period and contract expiration. The key to the permanence of practice implementation, and therefore the associated SD benefits, is ensuring farmers have the support to continue the practices for the first years. The incentives and support to ensure farmers continue their transition to regenerative agriculture are highlighted in the section above.

The Agoro Carbon Program is intentional in its design to reduce behavioral risk. The project is designed around quality acres, grower and farmer agronomic advisory and financial de-risking, all of which are key to our efforts to reduce the non-permanency risk associated with practice reversal. The effectiveness of regenerative agricultural practices to permanently sequester SOC at scale is dependent on farmers and farmers implementing operational changes year after year in dynamic and often challenging economic landscapes. The carbon payments received that help to more fully pay for the suite of ecosystem services derived from agricultural land, as well as the ability to attain trusted

information, helps ensure practices are implemented successfully without reversal.

Evidence generally shows that growers will continue implementing regenerative practices once they are shown to be effective, eventually eliminating the need for incentives.. Regardless, Agoro Carbon Alliance has additional mitigations to address the permanence of issued credits through approaches below.

Renewal of the contract

While the initial contract term is for ten years, it has the ability to renew automatically for another ten years, unless a 6-months notice is given by either party. Alternative monitoring techniques, such as proximal or remote sensing, may be utilized as new approaches are vetted.. At this point, the program is evaluating various methods and awaiting further guidance and requirements from Verra before committing to a specific monitoring approach.

Storage payment mechanism

Storage contracts will be designed to keep growers engaged in agricultural practices to maintain carbon in their soils. While the primary ten-year contract is designed to incentivize maximum practice implementation, the storage mechanism will be focused on identifying the key best practices that will maintain soil carbon. These practices will be different for different growers based on their soil conditions and environment. This contract is targeted to growers that have plateaued in anticipated soil carbon sequestration. . Just as in the contract renewal, alternative monitoring techniques may be utilized pending Agoro Carbon's review of methods and updates from Verra.

Canceled Contracts

While we would like all growers to remain engaged with Agoro Carbon Alliance for the entire project lifetime, we know that some growers may no longer want to remain under any contract. The original contract the grower signed allows Agoro Carbon to continue to monitor the implemented acres according to the requirements of the methodology.

If growers do not want to renew their contract or enter into a storage contract, Agoro Carbon Alliance still has the opportunity to monitor the implemented fields. This will ensure the project can confidently report the permanence of all carbon stocks for the project's lifetime.

2.2 Stakeholder Engagement

2.2.1 Stakeholder Identification

The stakeholder identification process entailed, identifying farmers that were interested in joining the Project, and then identifying individuals impacted by those farmer's participation.

Our team uses a variety of methods to reach potential farmers that include; advertisements on popular local radio shows, social media posts, regional and industry specific trade shows, local events that Agoro Carbon participates in, channel partners and most commonly, word of mouth from friends and family.

When an individual or entity demonstrates interest in the project, Agoro Carbon staff members follow up to answer any questions, describe the project in further detail, and ultimately offer a contractual agreement to participate. This includes an in-person meeting with Agoro Carbon Staff.

Once someone has agreed to participate in the Agoro Carbon Program identification of secondary stakeholders happens through conversations with the farmers and channel partners. Due account of all individuals who will be affected by the Project, upstream and downstream is taken.

Our farmers hear about us through multiple channels including radio and internet advertisements, trade shows, local events that Agoro Carbon participates in, channel partners and most commonly, word of mouth from other farmers. Once interested farmers are identified, Agoro Carbon then identifies individuals associated with the farmers that could be impacted by the implementation of the Program. Once a grower has agreed to participate in the Agoro Carbon Program, identification of secondary stakeholders is conducted through conversations with our farmers and channel partners. We've identified all individuals who will be affected by our project, upstream and downstream.

Identified upstream and downstream stakeholders will not change in the project scenario. The product that is sold downstream will not change in quantity nor intended quality. The inputs needed upstream will only change slightly but from our internal knowledge on this subject informed by several staff members who farm and or ranch themselves, these

inputs will still be purchased from the same wholesalers or distributors. Please see the table below outline upstream and downstream stakeholders more.

	Downstream Stakeholders	Upstream Stakeholders
Description of potential stakeholder identified based on project activity	Enrolled farmers are producing commodities that are sold into larger markets. This includes but is not limited to soy, corn and beef. Downstream stakeholders are third parties who purchase these raw commodities. The product that is sold downstream by the growers will not change in quantity or quality to a degree that would require changes to the entity's operations or finances	In order to run their operations, various inputs are needed by farmers like seed, fertiliser etc. The change in products purchased by the growers will not be substantial enough to impact the operations of the entity's operations or finances.

2.2.2 Stakeholder Description

The project includes stakeholders from across the country, some that work together already, and others that are being introduced to farmers through the project. They are as follows:

Farmers and their families

Farmers are directly impacted through their participation in the project. The project requires that farmers change their existing growing practices to new, more sustainable practices. The transition to new practices introduces benefits and potential risks to the farmers. The benefits are diversified income through carbon credit revenue, experience with new growing practices, improved marketability of their regenerative crops, and the satisfaction of knowing they are improving the quality of the

land they farm. The risks are a decrease in yields for the first few years of their transition as they learn how to master their new practices. The majority of farming families rely primarily on farming revenue to support the household. Additionally, many family members participate part time or seasonally in the farming operations. This is to say that the family members of the farmers experience the same benefits and risks as the farmers, perhaps to a slightly lesser degree.

Chanel Partners

Chanel Partners are third party contactors used to recruit farmers to the Agoro Carbon Project. In most cases, Chanel Partners serve as sales representatives for agricultural equipment, inputs, and/or services, but they can be any individual or organization with existing relationships with a network of farmers. Their local knowledge and connections are integral to our operation in the spirit of building trust and relationships in the communities they have long been serving.

Other than the additional/diversified revenue received from recruiting new farmers, no additional impacts were identified.

Working through a third party always comes with a particular set of risks that are addressed prior to contracting with channel partners. Agoro Carbon conducts an Integrity Due Diligence (IDD) report before working with all business partners as a standard operating procedure. These IDD reports cover the following areas:

- Corruption
- Financial crime
- Sanctions
- Human rights
- Commercial failures

Soil samplers

Agoro Carbon contracts the soil sampling activities out to third parties. These third-party samplers are impacted by receiving further work and revenue. Agoro Carbon is also aware of the potential risks to the soil samplers when collecting samples. A great deal of the project land is in rural, hard to reach areas. Communication between landowners and soil samplers is facilitated by Agoro Carbon so that all parties agree not only on a time and place, but also to ensure soil samplers are aware of potential hazards they may face. However, just as with the benefits, it is unlikely that participation in the project increases risks to the soil

samplers, as these risks are present in soil sampling opportunities outside those provided by the Agoro Carbon Cropland Project.

2.2.3 Stakeholder Consultation

Once a member of Agoro Carbon's Sales Team learns that a potential farmer is interested in joining the project they schedule a call or in person meeting. During that discussion the member of the sales team provides further detail on the Agoro Carbon and the Cropland Project. Before joining the Project, the sales team representative and the farmer discuss:

- Requirements for participation
 - Implementation of new practices (specific to the farmers conditions)
 - the provision and collection of data for validation and periodic verifications
- Benefits of participating
 - Carbon payments
 - Agronomic Support
- Risks of participating
 - Possibility of yield declines
- Support
 - Whom they should seek advice from regarding the new practices.
 - Who and how to contact members of the Grower Success Team and Carbon Team
 - Ongoing communication - make it clear that the farmer can reach out to Agoro Carbon (through their Grower Success Team representative) at any point for questions/suggestions/complaints.

Before joining the Program, farmers must sign a contract between themselves and Agoro Carbon that ensures they understand all possible outcomes of project implementation. During consultation of each potential stakeholder, common questions that arose surrounded Agoro Carbon's end goal with carbon credits generated, project implementation schedule, and scheduling soil sampling appointments. During these conversations, our Grower Success Team and Sales Team, besides answering the queries, addressed the requirement of continuing

to adhere to relevant laws and regulations covering practice implementation and labor rights. During consultation events and smaller, private consultation events, testimonies and examples from our other project participants were highlighted to demonstrate potential risks, costs, and benefits of project implementation.

There is an exhaustive list of activities allowable under VM0042 that can be found in section 4.1 of the methodology. They are as follows;

Reduce fertilizer (organic or inorganic) application;

Improve water management/irrigation;

Reduce tillage/improve residue management;

Improve crop planting and harvesting (e.g., improved agroforestry, crop rotations, cover crops)

Improve grazing practices

There are a finite number of ways to carry out these activities and have successful results. Successful results in this case being defined as having equal or increased yields and the sequestration/ avoidance of CO₂. The above mentioned practices are highly dependent on the geographic location of a field, soil type, climate, and a whole host of other variables that are assessed on a field by field basis by a trained agronomist. The methods of practice implementation are highly tailored to each individual field, therefore, individual practice implementation methods are limited, and input on actual implementation is also limited.

This reality is well understood by farmers and are a part of their baseline knowledge/understandings and habits. Before making any large management decision, farmers will consult with local expertise whether that be local agronomist and or USDA extension agents.

Before practice implementation occurs, stakeholders have the opportunity to speak with Agoro Carbon staff agronomist about their individual fields enrolled and the various nuances related to them. Farmers for the majority of the time are implementing the practices themselves. If the farmers themselves aren't the ones implementing the

practice, it's individuals they've hired themselves to do it on their behalf. This is where costs are discussed. Additional pieces of equipment, types of seed, fertilizer, labor, etc. is discussed and recommendations on where and how to purchase these inputs are given, though more often than not this knowledge is already something understood and acted upon.

At least annually, farmers meet with Agoro Carbon staff agronomists to check in on their practice implementation and give feedback. They'll have the opportunity to give feedback directly to Agoro this way. In these instances, feedback on implementation, contract terms, and ideas for other practices are heard and noted.

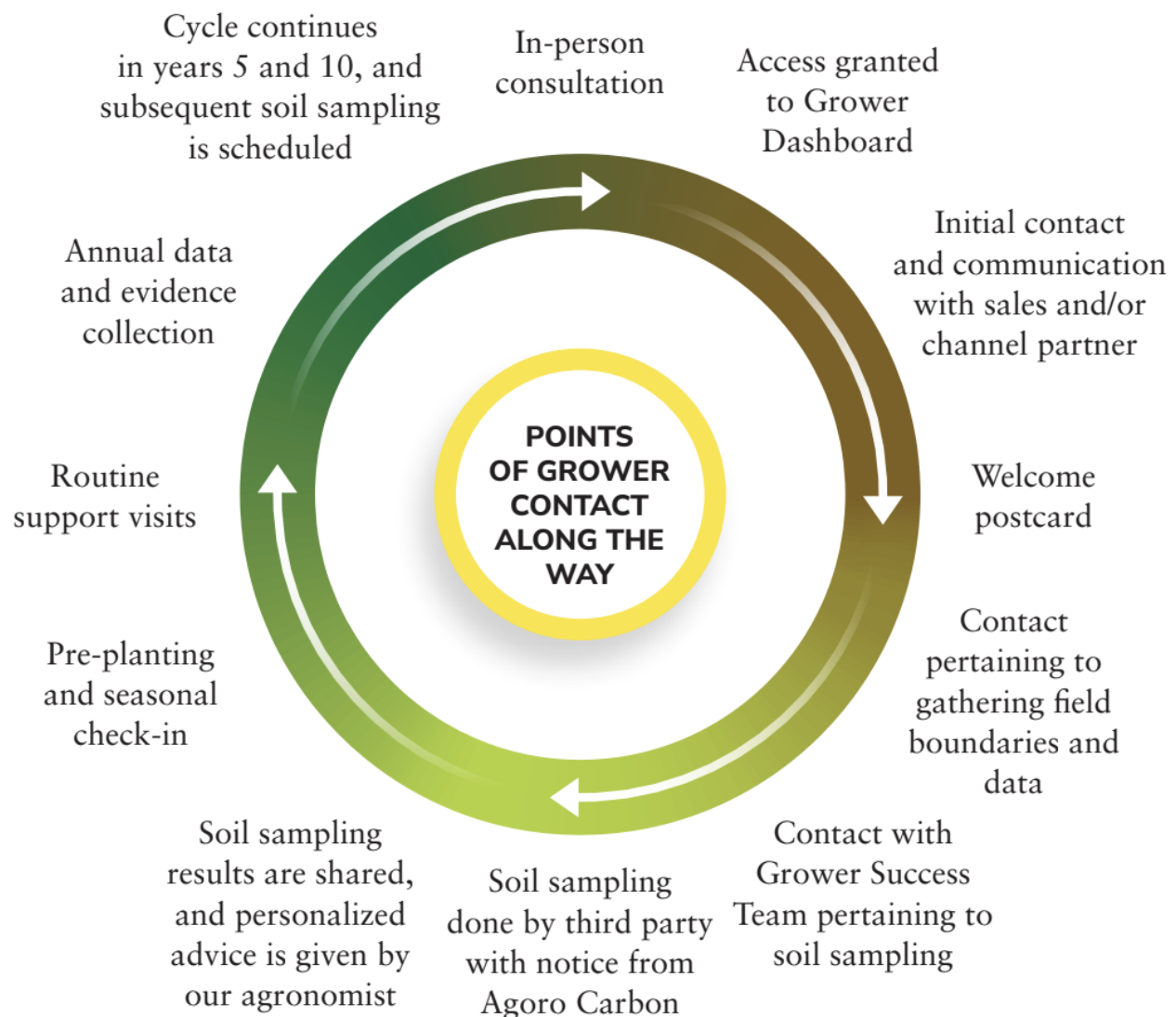
With this understanding, the largest area in which a stakeholder can influence broader project design is through feedback on the contract they sign with Agoro Carbon, specifically regarding the incentives they receive for practice implementation. Since project start, there have been a total of 16 contract iterations. Before the onset of the project, Agoro Carbon partnered with a private consulting firm to conduct stakeholder workshops and surveys on the contract design. These workshops and surveys were conducted with existing and potential growers to ensure the incentives were amenable. The results of the stakeholder consultation lead directly to substantial changes to the grower contract. Since then, the need for substantial changes to the grower contract has not been necessary, but smaller changes to the grower contract still take place as needed based on grower feedback. Feedback is most often given at time of signing their initial fields up to be apart of the grouped project and during the addition of new fields, but we encourage feedback on contract conditions on a rolling basis. These highly commercially sensitive contracts have been given to the VVB for their review, to highlight the changes that have occurred since the inception of the project.

2.2.4 Continued Consultation and Adaptive Management

As soon as a farmer joins Agoro Carbon's Project, an in-person meeting with the Grower Success Team is scheduled. This will be their first point of contact since they have been handed off from the Sales Team, and the beginning of communication during the contract lifetime.

Each farmer has direct contact with an Agoro Carbon staff member from initial contact throughout the entire contract period to answer all

questions, as well as provide Agoro Carbon Program Project updates. For questions specific to carbon markets and our interactions with Verra and others, farmers are able and encouraged to contact members of the Carbon Team. Additionally, Agoro Carbon provides a “What to Expect” document that lays out the expectations of both parties, serving as a guidance document for the farmer. This document includes contact information in the form of an email (growersuccess@agorocarbon.com) as well as “QR Codes” that farmers can scan and be brought to a [contact form](#). Farmers will already have personal contact information for Grower Success Team members as well as Sales Team members. This document further outlines what is to be expected throughout their contract period in our project. At time of receiving the document, Agoro staff can and will answer all questions they may have pertaining to the guidance and contact information.



Input from the farmers and others in the US agricultural space informed every aspect of project design. Agoro Carbon has carefully catered the contracts with farmers to ensure the project activities fit the specific needs and are in fact additional.

Our approach of continuous contact with the farmers isn't limited to their one-on-one contact with Grower Success Team members, but can be found through mailers, and various regional events. Agoro Carbon hosts "Grower Appreciation Events" which all farmers are invited to. Here, farmers can meet other farmers as well as other members of Agoro Carbon staff that can answer any questions as well as share contact information for any further questions. A full transcript of the event which includes location details, a summary of attendees, and organizations has been provided to the VVB.

Obtaining and acting upon ongoing feedback is something we are committed to and proud to have the opportunity to do. In periodic check-ins with our growers (that happen at least once a year but more often than not happen much more depending on the grower preferences) we garner feedback and have open, and frank discussions pertaining to practice implementation as well as our overall project design. We utilize Salesforce to document feedback and then during regular internal meetings, feedback and its merit is discussed. Addressing the concern of the grower often takes the form of further education on a particular matter and or bolstering Q&A / FAQ documents as well as raising the suggestion and or concern with the management team. How their feedback was incorporated into our project design is then communicated back to the concerned stakeholder for their input.

Agoro Carbon also uses "Tradewing", a social media website akin to LinkedIn where growers and Agoro staff can post content relating to sustainable agriculture in their region and interact directly with other farmers and Agoro staff via direct messaging and commenting/sharing of posts.

2.2.5 Anti-Discrimination

Agoro Carbon follows all state and federal laws pertaining to discrimination. US Federal law prohibits discrimination based on an individual's national origin, race, color, religion, disability, sex, and familial status. US Federal Laws prohibiting national origin discrimination make it illegal to discriminate because of a person's birthplace, ancestry, culture, or language.

Besides following state and federal laws pertaining to anti-discrimination, Agoro Carbon has robust internal ethics and compliance mechanisms

like our New Business Partner Code of Conduct which further ensures compliance with applicable laws by Agoro Carbon staff and those that we have business contracts with (found in section 2.1.2). Our code of conduct ensures that all who we work with are properly following such applicable laws as well as adhere to our standards of business conducts, including anti-discrimination.

2.2.6 Worker Training

Agoro Carbon Alliance has several experienced agronomists on staff. We also have a team of scientists who have, amongst other accolades, published work and taught as professors in academia. These individuals all work together to provide the most up to date knowledge and insight on our practices to the farmers. Agoro Carbon works with independent soil samplers who take soil samples and process them. Once these samples are processed, the results are presented and explained in further depth to the farmers. From there, recommendations from the aforementioned experts are given on how to best implement activities. If these recommended activities that will further reduce and or sequester carbon match those that are offered through the Project, technical assistance will continue to be provided throughout the project lifetime.

In addition to insight and recommendations on how to implement project activities and efficiency switches from our agronomist and Science Team, Agoro Carbon has a "[Knowledge Hub](#)" that has content including written articles, videos, and recorded interviews on topics ranging from practice implementation to carbon markets. This is paired with Agoro Carbon "[Carbon Farming Podcast](#)" which hosts industry experts and creates tailored content for the farmers. This content can be found on our website as well as a separate portal. Growers also have access to "Tradewing", a social media platform where they can interact with Agoro staff and other farmers alike and discuss practice implementation and speak message directly with Agoro staff.

Agoro Carbon in conjunction with the channel partners host and will continue to host "Grower Appreciation Events" that invite guest speakers from relevant industry experts like the NRCS to speak about practice implementation as well as speak to agronomic regional issues.

2.2.7 Equal Work Opportunities

Input from stakeholders is considered at all levels and at all stages of the project. Feedback garnered from our stakeholders on a rolling basis informs changes in internal Agoro Carbon structure and practices. Agoro

Carbon does not employ farmers who are enrolled in the Project and does not own the land in which the project instances are on. Agoro Carbon does not own any associated materials and machinery used to implement the Project. Therefore, Agoro Carbon does not and cannot influence decision making with regards to employment on individual farms.

2.2.8 Workers' Rights

Internally, Agoro Carbon is dedicated to being an equal opportunity employer as defined by the ILO. The ILO Convention defines discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion, or preference made on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation."

The ILO requires ratifying states to declare and pursue a national policy designed to promote, by methods appropriate to national conditions and practice, equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation, with a view to eliminating any discrimination in these fields. This includes discrimination in relation to access to vocational training, access to employment and to occupations, and terms and conditions of employment. The United States is a ratifying state of this convention.

The standards set by international organizations like the ILO, all farmers and those contracted with Agoro Carbon must adhere to all state and federal laws pertaining to labor practices.

2.2.9 Occupational Safety Assessment

Agoro Carbon provides guidance and training to farmers and all stakeholders to help mitigate all risks associated with implementing new practices. Along with efforts by Agoro Carbon, state and federal laws are strictly enforced and adhered to.

It should be noted that the implementation of the recommended regenerative agriculture practices does not introduce equipment or practices that have a higher risk for injury than conventional agriculture.

Please see the table below for a more detailed view of Occupational Safety issues and how Agoro Carbon intends to broadly mitigate them.

Stakeholder Category	Stakeholders Identified	Risk To Stakeholder Category	Risk Mitigation
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Farmers and their families	All participating farmers	Bodily harm with new practices if not carried out properly.	Agoro Carbon gives information to mitigate these risks in the form of on the ground training, access to web-based training, as well as encourages communication with their local USDA Agricultural Extension Agents.
Service Providers	Agoro Carbon works with several channel partners. A full list has been made available to the validation body. At this time the Agoro Carbon Alliance is working with two soil sampling bodies. Ward Laboratories Inc. and Deveron	When visiting farmers, bodily harm can occur when on rough terrain.	Communication between all parties is facilitated and proper maps and warnings are given when entering land of farmers. Internal SOPs surrounding health and safety when selecting companies to conduct soil samples.

2.2.10 Feedback and Grievance Redress Procedure

At the onset of participation in the Agoro Carbon Project, all project participants meet members of the sale and Grower Success Team. Contact information is exchanged, and an open line of communication is established. In the event of grievance or general feedback, farmers are encouraged to either call, write, text, or email Agoro Carbon staff members to communicate via the previously mentioned mediums or to set up an in-person meeting.

Farmers may also elect to air grievances and feedback to Channel Partners who will then pass the message along to Agoro Carbon staff. Agoro Carbon additionally hosts “Grower Appreciation Events” where farmers not only can speak with members of the Grower Success and Sales Team, but other members of Agoro Carbon to speak to other attributes surrounding the Project. One example was in West Texas where several farmers expressed their interest in knowing more about Verra and

Verified Carbon Standard, as well as nuances surrounding voluntary and compliance markets.

If the grievance is not resolved through communication with the Grower Success Team or a Channel Partner, the farmer may request the grievance be elevated to the Agoro Carbon team directly. The Agoro Carbon team will then act as an independent mediator or contact the local USDA Agricultural Extension Agent to act as an independent mediator if the Agoro Carbon team does not believe they may maintain independence.

2.2.11 Feedback and Grievance Redress Procedure Accessibility

The feedback and grievance redress procedure are explained in the 'What to Expect' document that is given to farmers at the onset of their participation in the Project, as well as made available online on our website. Onboarding materials also include information on how to access Agoro Carbon staff members or Channel Partners.

2.2.12 Stakeholder Access to Project Documentation

A core part of the project is regular communication with the farmers. As project documentation is made publicly available on the Verra Registry, our Grower Success Team alerts participants via email. All the farmers at this time have access to the internet and will receive email communications from us. In the event new farmers are added that do not have access to the internet, or limited access to the internet, emails pertaining to Project documentation and other matters will be transcribed over the telephone and documents physically mailed per the farmer's request.

When members of the Grower Success Team and Sales Team periodically visit and contact farmers (see "Stakeholder Consultation" section of the project description for further information on cadence) Project documentation will be discussed, and feedback will be garnered.

2.2.13 Information to Stakeholders on Assessment Process

Information on the assessment process is provided in the 'What to Expect' document provided to farmers as part of their onboarding, so they are aware at the onset that an onsite assessment of their farming operations and/or soil sample collection will be required. Agoro Carbon, or a representative of Agoro Carbon, will never show up at a farmer's land uninvited.

Agoro Carbon uses third parties to conduct soil samples as well as a third-party validator per Verra rules and requirements. Communication between landowners, the Validation Verification Body and soil samplers is facilitated by Agoro Carbon so that all parties agree not only on a time and place, but also to ensure soil samplers are aware of potential hazards they may face. As soon as a third party indicates interest in visiting a particular project location, farmers are made aware of this right away in order to give ample lead up time.

This grouped project is made up of multiple stakeholder groups as well as various Agoro Carbon support staff. Agoro Carbon coordinates with VVBs for validation/verification cycles in sharing contact information of all stakeholder groups, allowing VVB's to independently contact any stakeholder. All stakeholders have phone and email access so no facilitation is necessary. That being said, the geographic area of the project covers 4 time zones, and, according to the Köppen climate classification system, 9 different climatic areas. Planting and harvesting cycles, and cow and calf operations occur at different intervals throughout the project area, and in an effort to be sensitive to stakeholder commercial needs, a concerted effort is undertaken between Agoro Carbon and VVBs to coordinate stakeholder visits and subsequent communication for times that do not disrupt stakeholder operations. Before the SD VISta validation or verification site visits, the assessors and Agoro Carbon will hold a kickoff meeting to discuss standard operating procedures and rules and norms for site visits. During this meeting specific locations of site visits will be chosen. While the VVB ultimately holds the right to select any stakeholder to visit, Agoro Carbon will provide input on the likely availability of stakeholders given the time of year and likely operations. The availability of stakeholders will likely be a critical factor in deciding the timing of site visits. At the onset of the site visit, another kickoff meeting is recommended and Agoro Carbon standard operating procedures and rules and norms for site visits will be reiterated before the visits commence. Agoro Carbon staff will introduce the assessors to project participants on site visits which is culturally imperative to ensure an open and free dialogue between assessors and

stakeholders. Agoro Carbon staff explained the carbon project lifecycle to the stakeholders once more, and how this site visit was a part of that project lifecycle. Once the introductions were made, and the stakeholders felt comfortable with assessors on their property, Agoro Carbon made room to allow for dialogue between stakeholders and assessors without our presence. Once an agreed upon date and time is set for the site visit, Agoro Carbon staff calls project participants ensuring they will be available that date and time. This will be done at least a month before the visit. The week of the visit another call will be made and a call the day of will be made to remind project participants of the upcoming audit.

2.3 Project Management

2.3.1 Avoidance of Corruption

Agoro Carbon has a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption. All Agoro Carbon employees must follow the Yara (parent company) Code of Conduct, and all external partners (farmers, channel partners, soil sampler) must follow and agree to the terms of the "Agoro Carbon's Code of Conduct for Business Partners". Both the internal and external codes of conduct provide examples of the various forms of corruption, how to avoid corruption when possible, and how to respond when in a situation that is or might be a form of corruption.

The internal and external codes of conduct require the signatory to comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, codes, and sanctions, and in particular relating to human rights, bribery, corruption, money laundering, accounting and financial controls, and anti-terrorism.

2.3.2 Statutory and Customary Rights

Agoro Carbon only works with farmers who already have the rights to farm on the land. A mandatory attestation letter is required in the "Carbon Credit Generation Agreement", whereby farmers declare the uncontested property interest and title to the land (ownership, lease, or other commercial arrangement) and their ability to implement the practices in those fields. Farmers further covenant and declare that such rights shall remain in place during the term of the agreement.

2.3.3 Recognition of Property Rights

Agoro Carbon only works with farmers who already have the rights to farm on the land. A mandatory attestation letter is required in the "Carbon Credit Generation Agreement", whereby farmers declare the uncontested property interest and title to the land (ownership, lease, or other commercial arrangement) and their ability to implement the practices in those fields. Farmers further covenant and declare that such rights shall remain in place during the term of the agreement.

Farmers enrolled in our program that are living within the boundaries of a Federal Indian Reservation must demonstrate that they have consent from relevant tribal authorities to carry out project activities and receive payment from the Agoro Carbon Alliance for doing so. Project activities are not limited to project interventions, they include scheduled soil sampling, and check-ins from our Grower Success Team.

2.3.4 Free, Prior and Informed Consent

Agoro Carbon does not implement the project activities directly, instead relies on participating farmers. All farmers must sign the "Carbon Credit Generator Agreement" and therefore all activities implemented on the land are agreed to through the agreement. As stated above, Agoro Carbon only works with (has agreements with) farmers who can demonstrate rights to the land. Farmers are required to produce information pertaining to these rights, which includes the length of the agreement. This is done either in writing or verbally. Therefore, the free prior and informed consent was obtained from all participating farmers.

Farmers enrolled in our program that are living within the boundaries of a Federal Indian Reservation have demonstrated that they have permission from relevant tribal authorities to carry out project activities and receive payment from the Agoro Carbon Alliance for doing so. Agoro Carbon will not enter into an agreement with a farmer if they cannot produce evidence from local relevant tribal authorities that they have explicit consent to operate on tribal lands, implementing practice changes and subsequently receiving finance for doing so.

2.3.5 Restitution and/or Compensation for Affected Resources

Upon signing a contract with Agoro Carbon, farmers acknowledge there is a risk that project practices, though highly unlikely, may result in lower than expected yields. Payments that are made upon signing in effect cover this risk. If at any point in time the Project is not working for a farmer, they may exit the Project.

2.3.6 Property Rights Removal/Relocation of Property Rights Holders

Project ownership is proved by an enforceable and irrevocable agreement with the holder of the statutory, property or contractual right in the land, vegetation or conservation or management process that generates GHG emission reductions or removals which vests project ownership in the Project Proponent.

Agoro Carbon does not own nor control any farmer land or means to manage it (e.g. equipment, livestock, physical barriers like fences, etc.). These resources are owned solely by farmers. Project activities cannot and will not lead to the removal and or relocation of farmers and their families.

2.3.7 Identification of Illegal Activities

Producers are also required to comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, codes, and sanctions relating to this Agreement, and in particular relating to human rights, bribery, corruption, money laundering, accounting and financial controls, and anti-terrorism, including Agoro Carbon's Code of Conduct for Business Partners.

A mandatory Standards of Business Conduct questionnaire needs to be answered and signed by producers as part of the "Carbon Credit Generation Agreement", to ensure that both parties will be operating ethically and within the law. The aim of this document is to identify any potential risks before entering the contract.

2.3.8 Ongoing Conflicts or Disputes

A mandatory attestation letter is required in the "Carbon Credit Generation Agreement", whereby farmers declare the uncontested property interest and title to the land (ownership, lease, or other commercial arrangement) and their ability to implement the practices in those fields. Farmers further covenant and declare that such rights shall remain in place during the term of the agreement.

2.3.9 National and Local Laws and Regulations

The Agoro Carbon Program is designed and implemented in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, statutes, and regulatory frameworks ("Applicable Laws"). The project proponent has further determined that the activities and approaches of the proposed project are not prohibited by any Applicable Law.

All producers participating in the project agree and are contractually obligated to comply with any applicable laws relevant to that farm. The

applicable laws applicable to any given farm may include, without limitation, those related to labor and employment, land use, water use, protection of the environment, and others. Relevant environmental laws that may apply to individual farms, depending on activity, may include:

- U.S. Safe Drinking Water Act
- U.S. Clean Water Act
- U.S. Endangered Species Act
- U.S. Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act
- Bureau of Land Management Permit and Lease Requirements
- Brucellosis testing for interstate shipment or international export of cattle

Each farm has a legal and contractual obligation to comply with any applicable laws. There are no laws, regulations, or other requirements at the federal, state, or local level that require the adoption and implementation of the regenerative agriculture and other practices contemplated by this Project. As a result, the Project can demonstrate a regulatory surplus in accordance with VCS requirements.

When external labor is employed, it is a requirement of our Code of Conduct that we only partner with growers who strictly adhere to all state and federal labor laws. Our contract ensures that growers follow all relevant state and federal labor laws. Agoro Carbon is committed to full compliance with all federal and state laws. For more details, please visit the "Privacy and Legal" section on our website.

2.3.10 Project Ownership

Agoro Carbon has the ownership and legal right of the project activities. The project ownership consists of a "Carbon Credit Generation Agreement" whereby each farmer transfers title to the credits and its environmental attributes to Agoro Carbon. Agoro Carbon has the ownership and legal right of developing and presenting the projects leading to the GHG emission reductions or removals, and each farmer has the legal right to control and operate the project activities occurring at farm level either via ownership, lease or other title to the land. This is demonstrated via an attestation of property rights attached to the Carbon Credit Generation Agreement, certification that is signed individually by each farmer.

Project ownership is proved by an enforceable and irrevocable agreement with the holder of the statutory, property or contractual right

in the land, vegetation or conservation or management process that generates GHG emission reductions or removals which vests project ownership in the project proponent.

Farmers enrolled in our program that are living within the boundaries of a Federal Indian Reservation must demonstrate that they have consent from relevant tribal authorities to carry out project activities and receive payment from the Agoro Carbon Alliance for doing so. Project activities are not limited to project interventions, they include scheduled soil sampling, and check-ins from our Grower Success Team.

2.3.11 Grouped Projects

The project includes multiple locations or project activity instances and is developed as a grouped project.

- ☐ The project includes a single location or installation only
- ☐ The project includes multiple locations or project activity instances, but is not being developed as a grouped project
- ☒ The project is a grouped project

The inclusion of new project activity instances into the Project will be eligible for the inclusion in this grouped project if they demonstrate applicability of the eligibility criteria below:

Criterion no.	Inclusion Criterion	Means to Determine inclusion
1	The farmer has entered into a legal relationship with Agoro Carbon and signed the contract for the enrollment into the Project. A new project instance must introduce or implement one or more new changes to pre-existing agricultural management practices- zero tillage, reduced tillage, nitrogen management or cover cropping.	Farmer signs a contract with Agoro Carbon. Management records are assessed by Agoro Carbon staff to determine baseline set of activities.
2	Project activities of the project instance must be implemented on land that is cropland at the project	Only cropland is included in the project activity. This is regulated by the contract with

	start date and remains cropland throughout the project crediting period.	the farmers enrolled in the program. Additionally each field is assessed on this metric before inclusion into the project using a host of satellite imagery including OnX mapping software for example.
3	The project area of the project instance must not have been cleared of native ecosystems within the 10-year period prior to the project start date.	Agoro Carbon utilizes USDA definitions and boundaries for its determination of land cover prior to project implementation. Specifically, the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Cropland Data Layer (CDL) , which is an annual raster, geo-referenced, crop-specific land cover data layer produced using satellite imagery and extensive agricultural ground reference data. The program began in 1997 with limited coverage and in 2008 forward expanded coverage to the entire Continental United States. This is done in tandem with our team's "Change Detection" method of ensuring conformance. This is the process our team takes when analyzing changes that have occurred in the land surface or features over time using satellite or aerial imagery. By combining the use of multiple data layers, as well as the manual change detection method used by the team, we are able to

		confidently ensure conformance. Besides due diligence that occurs internally, we also take a contractual approach to this as well. Prior to signing a contract with Agoro Carbon, growers are interviewed by Agoro Carbon representatives to confirm that the land they are enrolling has not been cleared of native ecosystems at least 10 years prior to their inclusion in the project. After this interview is conducted, and a grower wants to join the project, they legally confirm in a contract that their acres enrolled into the project have not been cleared of native ecosystems within the 10-year period immediately prior to the project start date.
4	The project instance shall occur within the geographic area defined in the project description and be defined using a unique geodetic polygon recorded as a KML/shape file and may be aggregated with multiple landowners.	Farmers submit shapefiles of their land prior to enrollment. If they do not have these readily available, they are drawn by Agoro Carbon staff using property deed information.
5	The project activity of the project instance is not expected to result in a sustained reduction of greater than 5% in productivity, as demonstrated by peer-reviewed and/or published studies on the activity in the region or a comparable region.	Yield data is collected at baseline data gathering and then subsequently annually to ensure conformance to this criteria.

6	The project activity does not occur on wetlands.	Farmers are interviewed prior to their inclusion into the project to confirm that their hectares are not wetlands. The contract for their inclusion into the program also stipulates that hectares they are enrolling into the program are not on wetlands. Finally, we overlay their hectares on USFWS's National Wetland Inventory to ensure none of the enrolled hectares overlap with wetlands.
7	The baseline of the project instances will be the continuation of pre-project agricultural management practices, which is the most plausible baseline scenario. Project practices have not been already implemented on the acres enrolled in the Project within the past 3 years.	Management and yield records are reviewed by Agoro Carbon staff before inclusion into the program.
8	Carbon sequestration potential of the project instances, including estimation of the project baseline, project emissions and leakage, will be done in the consistent manner using modelling and/or measurement approaches, as specified in the PDD.	Standard operating procedures are put into place for each enrolled field.
9	Project instances will follow the Monitoring Plan established in the PDD and meet the applicability criteria of VM0042 methodology.	This parameter is legally agreed upon in the contract.
10	Project instances will face the same barriers for implementation as	Common practice assessment is carried out prior to contact

	defined during the project additionality assessment in Section 3.5 of the PDD and will also fulfil the requirements to the common practice analysis defined on the project level.	of prospective new project participants and their acreage is considered additional or not prior to contact.
11	The farmer implementing a project activity is not receiving and will not receive any other third-party or governmental Carbon Credits or payments in exchange for undertaking the regenerative practices on the acres submitted in the Program. The farmer also has not sold or transferred the carbon rights in relation to the implementation of the project activity(ies) to any third party and the project instance is not a part of any other carbon project.	This parameter is legally agreed upon in the contract.
12	Project instances will have a start date at the same date or later than the grouped project (i.e. the Project) start date.	This parameter is legally agreed upon in the contract.

3 BENEFITS FOR PEOPLE AND PROSPERITY

3.1 Condition of Stakeholders at Project Start

Farmers and their Families

Conditions at Project Start Date

Farmers and their families can be found in small to medium size tight-knit agricultural communities throughout the United States. Strong emphasis is put on family and community bonds. Acreage and land ownership patterns of farmer land vary greatly. A large portion of those enrolled in this Program have long withstanding, familial traditions, and continuous operations for generations.

Generally traditional ways of farming have been passed down multiple generations, and in large part, perfected and cherished. Others in their communities likely carry out the current baseline practices for similar reasons, re-solidifying their rationale for continuation of the pre-project baseline scenario.

Federal and state entities promote improved and sustainable practices but often lack the budget and capacity to fully aide in the transition to new practices. For this reason, farmers are fully aware of the regenerative agricultural practices promoted by the Agoro Carbon Program but are reluctant to adopt them due to financial and cultural barriers. The financial baseline of farmers and their families can be characterized by small profit margins and great fluctuations in income. Therefore, deviating from the business-as-usual scenario that has been practiced in some cases for generations, poses an unattractive risk. In recent history, there has been no substantial change to this baseline scenario. References for the condition of farmers and their families at project start were gathered directly from farmers themselves in interviews and conversations they had with Agoro Carbon staff. Additionally, the majority of Agoro Carbon Grower Success and Sales Team staff is made up of farmers and ranchers alike who not only grew up in these communities but currently work and live in them.

Interactions

There is a great deal of social and commercial interaction between project participants. Social interactions consist of school community, family, and religious gatherings and commercial interactions happen

pertaining to sharing of agricultural knowledge. External interactions, characterized by those that happen outside of farmers' immediate community, include interactions with USDA agronomist, federal land entities like the Bureau of Land Management and state entities. External commercial interactions, include salesman, wholesalers, and others related to supply chains that pertain to their agricultural output. These interactions inform farmers decision making when implementing their baseline practices. External Partners.

3.2 Expected Impacts on Stakeholders

Impact #1	Increased Agricultural Knowledge
Type of Impact	Positive, predicted, direct
Affected Stakeholder Group(s)	Farmers and their Families
Resulting Change in Well-being	Access to Agoro Carbon Alliance's set of online and in person tools builds agricultural knowledge through insights and interviews from agronomist and other experts in the field.

Impact #2	Diversified income (increase in revenue sources)
Type of Impact	Positive, predicted, direct
Affected Stakeholder Group(s)	Farmers and their Families,
Resulting Change in Well-being	Agoro Carbon provides growers a variety of payment options to suit their needs. Payments options include upfront payments after signing a contract, ongoing payments, or payments at the time of VCU issuance. Soil samplers and channel partners will also receive an income stream they did not have at the onset of the project.

Impact #3	Improved access to market
Type of Impact	Positive, predicted, direct
Affected Stakeholder Group(s)	Farmers and their Families,
Resulting Change in Well-being	Being involved with the Project not only broadens a farmers network, but it also gives them the opportunity to use the project as an “added value” proposition to their end product. Being involved in a regenerative agricultural project can also help soil samplers and channel partners broaden their network and advertise their services in a different light.

Impact #4	Possible changes in yields
Type of Impact	Negative, predicted, direct
Affected Stakeholder Group(s)	Farmers and their Families
Resulting Change in Well-being	Implementation of new practices can possibly lead to changes in yields. This possible outcome is negative as implementation of new practices can possibly lead to decreased yields. There is always a risk when deviating from baseline practices of lower yields.

3.3 Stakeholder Monitoring Plan

Please see the Appendix , section 1, for the Stakeholder Monitoring Plan

3.4 Net Positive Stakeholder Well-being Impacts

Farmers and Their Families

Inclusion into our grouped project and successful practice implementation may in turn lead to lower-than-expected yields. In agriculture, anytime there is a deviation from the business-as-usual scenario, there is an inherent risk. This risk is mitigated by receiving carbon payments which can help offset any possible yield declines, thus leading to net positive well-being in our project scenario. This is in tandem with other associated benefits of joining our project, like broadening of their networks, increased agronomic knowledge, and a diversified revenue stream.

4 BENEFITS FOR THE PLANET

4.1 Condition of Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services at Project Start

The conditions at the start of the project are described as an environment dominated by conventional (non-regenerative) agricultural management practices.

Soil

The soil at the project start can be generalized as depleted. Years or decades of tilling allowed for the decomposition of soil organic material and with it, naturally accumulated nutrients containing nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. This led to an overreliance on the application of synthetic nutrients, which in turn, sped up the decomposition of soil organic material. Depleted soils have less capacity to hold onto nutrients and water, furthering the need for synthetic nutrient applications and reliance on irrigation. Depleted and tilled soils are also more prone to erosion from wind and rain (Rust & Williams, 2022).

Biodiversity

Conventional agricultural practices prescribe the use of a single species per field per season and rotating between two or three different crops. After a field has been harvested, residues are removed and the field is left barren until the next season, which can be several months later. These practices reduce the above ground and below ground biodiversity, not only in the species introduced (crops grown), but in how introduced species impact the conditions for other species. This is particularly important for below ground species that maintain the soil ecosystem and soil health.

The result of this is that the lack of biodiversity in agricultural practices only further exacerbated the stresses placed on the soil described above. The above ground biodiversity at the project start is limited to the crops grown. (FoodPrint, 2021)

Rust, B., & Williams, J. D. (2022). How tillage affects soil erosion and runoff (Technical Note). USDA Agricultural Research Service.

FoodPrint. (2021, February 17; updated 2024, February 28). Biodiversity and agriculture.

4.2 Expected Impacts on Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

Impact #1	Increased biodiversity
Type of Impact	Positive, predicted, direct
Affected Natural Capital and/or Ecosystem Service(s)	Natural capital: Soil microbiome. Ecosystem services: regulating services (pollination / seed dispersal, carbon sequestration, soil quality), supporting services (habitat and genetic diversity), cultural services (birdwatching) ecosystem resilience (to drought and fire)
Resulting Change in Condition	Cover cropping and reduced/ no-tillage improve biodiversity by providing habitat for a variety of plant and animal species, enhancing soil health and microbial activity, and reducing soil erosion, which collectively create a more diverse and resilient ecosystem. Cover crops and reduced/ no tillage have been shown to increase soil organic matter, which improves overall soil structure as well as allowing more water to infiltrate the soil which can reduce runoff which in turns helps store more water, making fields where this occurs more resilient to drought and fire hazard. No-till farming can reduce evaporation at the soil surface, thus allowing more moisture to remain in the soil which helps mitigate water retention issues and provide for a more fire-resistant environment.
Impact #2	Reduced soil disturbance and soil erosion
Type of Impact	Positive, predicted, direct
Affected Natural Capital and/or	Natural Capital: Soil and water management. Ecosystem services: provisioning services (food,

Ecosystem Service(s)	forage, fiber), regulating services (soil quality, flood prevention)
Resulting Change in Condition	Reduced/ cessation of tillage reduces soil disturbance and thus reduces the opportunity of erosion through wind and rain. Cover crops reduce erosion via providing soil cover and root stability in the off season. Reduced soil erosion and disturbance from practices like reduced/ no tillage and cover cropping help to increase soil organic carbon by preserving the soil structure and enhancing its ability to retain organic matter. These practices promote the accumulation of plant residues and roots, which contribute to SOC through decomposition and microbial activity, ultimately improving soil fertility and health. Additionally, cover crops improve nutrient cycling and protect the soil from erosion, further enhancing carbon sequestration in the soil over time.

Impact #3	Improved Soil Health
Type of Impact	Positive, predicted, direct
Affected Natural Capital and/or Ecosystem Service(s)	Natural Capital: Soil and water management ^{1,2,3} . Ecosystem services: provisioning services (food, forage, fiber, fresh water), regulating services (soil quality, carbon sequestration, flood, erosion, drought control)
Resulting Change in Condition	The combination of project practices and their direct and indirect impacts leads to improved soil health.

¹ Liptzin et al., An evaluation of carbon indicators of soil health in long-term agricultural experiments, *Soil Biology and Biochemistry*, Volume 172, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soilbio.2022.108708>.

² Norris CE, Bean GM, Cappellazzi SB, et al. Introducing the North American project to evaluate soil health measurements. *Agronomy Journal*. 2020; 112: 3195–3215. <https://doi.org/10.1002/agj2.20234>

³ Dianna K. Bagnall, Elizabeth L. Rieke, Cristine L.S. Morgan, Daniel L. Liptzin, Shannon B. Cappellazzi, C. Wayne Honeycutt, A minimum suite of soil health indicators for North American agriculture, *Soil Security*, Volume 10, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soisec.2023.100084>.

Impact #4	Emission reductions and or removals
Type of Impact	Positive, predicted, direct
Affected Natural Capital and/or Ecosystem Service(s)	Natural Capital: greenhouse gasses. Ecosystem services: regulating – carbon sequestration.
Resulting Change in Condition	Successful implementation of project activities will lead to emission reductions and or removals from the baseline scenario

4.3 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services Monitoring Plan

Please see the Appendix , section 2, for the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services Monitoring Plan.

4.4 Net Positive Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services Impacts

The focus of the project activity is to increase soil carbon. However, the benefits associated with the carbon sequestering practices, and the additional carbon in the soil, have numerous secondary effects that improve soil health and biodiversity. Through the implementation of the project activity, we expect the soils to retain more nutrients and water^{4,5} (and by extension, require fewer inputs), be less susceptible to erosion, and be more biologically diverse.

While short term yield declines may be expected (provisioning services) the long-term improvement in the soil health is expected to outweigh these impacts and produce a net positive benefit to natural capital and ecosystem services.

⁴ Bagnall, D. K., et. al.,(2022). Carbon-sensitive pedotransfer functions for plant available water. *Soil Science Society of America Journal*, 86, 612–629. <https://doi.org/10.1002/saj2.20395>

⁵ Bagnall, D. K., et.al. (2022). Selecting soil hydraulic properties as indicators of soil health: Measurement response to management and site characteristics. *Soil Science Society of America Journal*, 86, 1206–1226. <https://doi.org/10.1002/saj2.20428>

1. APPENDIX

1.) Stakeholder Monitoring Plan

Impact	Impact Action	Monitoring Action	Unit of Measurement	Stakeholder Group Affected	Frequency
Increase in Agricultural Knowledge (SDG 4.4)	Access to Agoro Carbon Alliances "Knowledge Hub" builds agricultural knowledge through insights and interviews from agronomists and other experts in the field.	Posts and content are monitored for interactions with users. Click rate and email open rate statistics are taken.	Click rate and email open rate statistics	Farmers and their families	Rolling basis.
	Practice implementation advice and guidance from Agoro Carbon Alliance staff.	Yield data is collected from farmers on a yearly basis. Communication on a rolling basis occurs pertaining to practice implementation.	Yield data varies per crop type. Typically, in bushels.	Farmers and their families	Yearly
	"Grower Appreciation Events" held yearly with guest speakers from federal agencies like the NRCS.	Invitations are sent via multiple mediums. Attendance is tracked to events and contact is logged by Agoro Carbon Alliance team members and Channel Partners.	Number of attendees	Farmers and their families	Yearly
	Access to "Tradewing" social media network where Agronomist and farmers alike can share questions	Posts and content are monitored for interactions with users. Click rate and email open rate statistics are taken.	Click rate and email open rate statistics	Farmers and their families	Rolling basis.

	and experiences.				
	Check-ins with Grower Success Team Contact	Check-ins occur over the phone or in person.	Discrete check in event	Farmers and their families	Yearly at a minimum, but all stakeholders may request a higher frequency of meetings/ ad hoc meetings.
Diversified Revenue Stream (SDG 2.3)	Carbon payments, and in some cases initial payments for participation.	Payments are made and confirmed by Agoro Carbon Alliance at a predetermined frequency.	USD	Farmers and their families	Payments are made at the onset of farmers participation in some cases, and in year 5 & 10.
	Sustained farming revenue	Farming yields	Yield data varies per crop type. Typically, in bushels.	Farmers and their families	Annually
Possible Changes in Yields	Change in agricultural practice from the baseline	Annual check-ins and soil sampling every 5 years to understand the efficacy of project activity.	Yield data varies per crop type. Typically, in bushels.	Farmers and their families	Annual check-ins + soil sampling in years 5 and 10 of their tenure in our project.

Improved access to market (SDG 9.4)	Expanded network in the agricultural space	Conversations between channel partners, soil samplers, and other growers are facilitated by Agoro Carbon	Discrete events	Farmers and their families	Interactions between all parties are recorded internally.
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2.) Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services Monitoring Plan

Impact	Project Intervention	Monitoring Action	Unit of Measurement	Frequency
Increased Biodiversity	Cover cropping and reduced/ no-tillage improve biodiversity by providing habitat for a variety of plant and animal species, enhancing soil health and microbial activity, and reducing soil erosion, which collectively create a more diverse and resilient ecosystem.	Implementation efficacy. Annual checks on enrolled farmers to ensure proper practice implementation.	Area enrolled in acres	Annually
Reduced Soil disturbance and soil erosion	Reduced/ cessation of tillage reduces soil disturbance and thus reduces the opportunity of erosion through wind and rain.	Implementation efficacy. Annual checks on enrolled farmers to ensure proper practice implementation.	Area enrolled in acres	Annually

	Cover crops reduce erosion via providing soil cover and root stability in the off season.			
Improved Soil Health	The combination of project practices and their direct and indirect impacts leads to improved soil health.	Implementation efficacy. Annual checks on enrolled farmers to ensure proper practice implementation. Soil organic carbon tests	Area enrolled in acres Amount of SOC sequesterd.	Annually and for SOC tests, Soil Sample taken at year 1 for Baseline and then again every 5 years.
Emission Reductions and or Removals	Successful implementation of project activities will lead to emission reductions and or removals from the baseline scenario	Soil sampling. Soil sampling and measuring for SOC at the onset of the project, and then again every 5 years.	ERRs, metric tonnes of CO2 Amount of SOC sequesterd.	Soil Sample taken at year 1 for Baseline and then again every 5 years.

3.) Causal Chain

