



2024 IMPACT REPORT



our story SO FAR

WHERE THE PAST FEEDS THE FUTURE

Carnation Farms is a historically significant agricultural asset of the Snoqualmie Valley located in King County, WA. The board, staff, and family members have embraced a transformation of the farm's 100-year-plus role and purpose, focusing on regenerative food systems.

In 2024, concurrent with hiring its first Director of Regenerative Agriculture, the farm undertook an extensive business planning process to understand how each of the farm's programs and businesses could be integrated more holistically into a single organization focused on the principles of regenerative agriculture.



In this first Impact Report, Carnation Farms is reporting on its regeneration goals, practices, and outcomes between the years 2023 and 2024. The report contains a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collected on the farm by the Crops and Livestock teams with support from a graduate student in the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences at the University of Washington and the farm's collaboration with regional environmental and stewardship organizations.



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Letter from Eric Popp

Director of Regenerative Agriculture

Thank you for picking up this copy of Carnation Farms' inaugural Impact Report.

In April 2024, I was promoted to the position of Director of Regenerative Agriculture after working my first season as the Farm Manager. I have been growing food for 12 years, and before arriving in the beautiful Snoqualmie Valley, I farmed on the Central Coast of California, producing a range of products using various cultivation methods from conventional organic to biodynamic. I came to Carnation Farms because I believe in the regenerative mission and vision of the farm, as it aligns with my agriculture mission: to leave the land better than I found it.

For us, regenerative agriculture is about relationships. Regeneration on this farm means fostering good relationships between soil and plants, livestock and the landscape, and farmers and eaters.

Through an adaptive approach to regenerative agriculture, we are testing a variety of production methods to uncover what works here. For example, we have learned that on our farm, no-till alone is not a silver bullet when it comes to soil health. When we pair low-tillage with other practices, such as cover-cropping and long rest periods, we see more tangible results that include an increase in stable organic matter.

We have also learned that stable organic matter increased in our fields despite haying, which is usually considered a destructive practice for soil health and equated to tillage in a regenerative system. The level of organic matter in the soil almost doubled when we followed haying with rotational grazing, which consists of frequently moving our animals to new pastures to facilitate rest periods for our fields and soil.

In 2024, almost all of what we produced was consumed by customers right here at the farm—through sales at our farmstand, at events with menus prepared by our Culinary team, and through our CSA and seasonal markets. This is the best way for our farm to connect our local community to this new wave of regenerative farming—here at the farm where the food is grown.

As you read this Impact Report, we hope to inspire your involvement with the regenerative farming movement. If you are local, we invite you to visit our farm to enjoy one of our workshops, farm dinners, or seasonal markets. If you are from further away, we hope you will be inspired to find farms near you working on similar goals as community involvement is crucial to the success of the regenerative movement.

Eric Popp



regenerative agriculture

PRACTICES

Carnation Farms' foundational regeneration goals are building biodiversity, adaptability, and resilience throughout our acreage. Healthy soil is crucial to this mission, and various practices contribute to building organic matter that remains in the soil over the long term, culminating in diverse production rotations that integrate vegetables, livestock, and cover crops. Cultivating a landscape that provides a habitat for pollinators and wildlife also builds biodiversity and regeneration.

Carnation Farms focuses on humus content as a key indicator of soil health. Humus boosts climate resilience by increasing the soil's ability to prevent erosion during floods and hold onto moisture during droughts. Soils with higher humus content can supply more nutrients to plants, thus enabling better nutrient absorption by crops and forage eaten by livestock, which, in turn, contributes to more nutritionally dense food¹ and related health benefits for consumers, as supported by a growing body of research. Healthier soils are also less reliant

Soil Organic Matter: The Basics

Soil Organic Matter (SOM) encompasses all organic compounds in the soil, from fresh plant litter to highly decomposed organic matter, including living organisms like bacteria and fungi.

Humus is the dark, granular and most decomposed component of soil that represents the buildup of long-lasting organic matter over time. Humus is also referred to as 'long-term organic matter' and 'stable organic matter' in this report. Once it forms, humus is relatively stable compared to the other components of soil organic matter like recently fallen leaves or actively decomposing plant residue. This means it contains carbon and is less likely to release it.

Carbon sequestration is the process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide. It can reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to mitigate climate change.

Soils can act as carbon "sinks" by storing more carbon than they release, effectively removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

While the science of tracking carbon sequestration at the farm scale is continuously developing, measuring humus is one approach to indirectly approximate the buildup of carbon in soil. Already decomposed and chemically stable, it is more resistant than other forms of organic matter to further breakdown and carbon release, even in tilled soils.

In this way, building humus may contribute to carbon sequestration, making it less likely to be returned to the atmosphere and quicken climate change.

Bird's Eye View of Carnation Farms



The boundaries of Carnation Farms' 820 acres along the Snoqualmie River in Carnation, WA. Fields outlined in green are discussed in-depth in the 'Assessing Soil Health' section.

on external fertilizers, which can harm waterways if overapplied.

Continuous improvement of soil through the build-up of long-term organic matter ensures that the land can be farmed for generations to come. Knowing which practices are most effective at building up healthy soils requires an experimental approach, identifying and selecting what works best at the individual field level. In 2024, fields were rotationally grazed, hayed, or mowed. Some were tilled intensely and then let to rest, while others were farmed with low or no tilling. Some fields were cover-cropped, while others were left fallow. Carnation Farms follows a process of experimentation and learning for continuous improvement.

¹<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8801175/> - This 2022 paper is one of the first national studies producing preliminary results that point to soil health as a more pertinent metric for assessing the impact of farming practices on the nutrient composition of crops and animals than the usual distinction of organic and conventional practices (Montgomery & Bickel, 2021).

cover

CROPPING

Cover crops are planted when fields are not under cultivation, typically between September and April. These include rye, clover, winter peas, and triticale, selected for their palatability to sheep as well as flood tolerance. Cover cropping builds living root systems in the soil, which increases organic matter, sequesters carbon, and maintains a robust microbial environment. This underground web of life not only provides more nutrients to the plants but also to the end consumer.

Understanding changes in soil health over time, including improvements, is achieved quantitatively through field-based data collection, measurement, and analysis, and qualitatively through regular observation throughout the seasons.

crop

SELECTION

Diversity in crop production is critical for resilience at Carnation Farms. The farm grows upwards of 60 different crops for sale across an array of channels, including regional wholesale distributors, through a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program, and an on-site culinary department that prepares food grown here for community events and for sale at the farmstand.

Each crop gives and takes different nutrients to and from the soil, feeding different kinds of microbes. Rotating crops from year to year helps ensure that no single field is depleted of specific nutrients and promotes a well-rounded soil microbiome, which in turn supports soil structure, nutrient cycling, and plant health across the 12 acres of organic cropland. Diverse crop rotations make the farm resilient to pest issues since different crops attract different pests and rotation limits any one pest's access to a consistent food source. Crop diversity also ensures that if one crop fails, others will survive – it hedges against the possibility of any crop or planting failure by offering other sources of revenue.

At the same time, Carnation Farms is narrowing its focus on certain crops that perform consistently despite variable and unpredictable weather conditions, while maintaining a baseline of diversity that is important for regeneration and resilience². Greens like lettuces grow exceptionally well on the farm, even if it's unseasonably hot and dry or cold and rainy. Meanwhile, crops that require excessive care and are especially vulnerable to pests or changing climate conditions are being removed from the cropping plan. Narrowing its focus, the farm continues to maintain the diversity that is important for building healthy soils and a resilient farm system.



Dry-farmed tomatoes flourishing



Lemon cucumbers

² The strategy of specializing in particular crops while still maintaining diversity is coined as 'specialized diversification' and explored in depth in the [MS thesis chapter](#) "Resilience in Diversity - Seed Selection and Climate Adaptation Among Organic Farmers in Western Washington" by UW graduate student Masha Vernik, who contributed to this Impact Report.

livestock and ROTATIONAL GRAZING

Carnation Farms' rotational grazing program aims to create harmony between the land and animals. This is achieved through gradual animal movement across the fields that mimics the movement of non-domesticated herds in the wild. This thoughtful and responsive rotation builds resiliency in the grasslands and creates more ideal conditions for the animals to grow.

To apply regenerative practices that are also financially sustainable, careful consideration is made in selecting the right livestock breeds for the land and climate at Carnation Farms. Western Washington's mild climate lends itself well to grass, which grows in abundance at the farm, where animal selection has shifted from grain-fed poultry to ruminants that like to feed on grass. Regionally adapted animals, coming from nearby herds and well-suited to this particular climate, are also prioritized. There are two species of livestock raised at Carnation Farms: cattle and sheep. The farm maintains a herd of 60-80 Belted Kingshire cows, which through the end of 2024 were unique to Carnation Farms; a herd of 20-40 wool sheep (Romney, Finn, BFL, and Clun Forest), and a herd of 70 hair sheep (Katahdin). In 2025, we plan to have over 200 sheep and will double the herd again in 2026, depending on what we learn from managing a larger flock.

Both beef and sheep are offered organic peas and barley for a period of a few weeks after weaning from their mothers, which helps boost nutrition at a time when they may be under more stress. It also increases starches at a critical time for rumen development; a boost of starch at this life stage creates a rumen that can better absorb nutrients.

In 2024, Carnation Farms' animals moved across 200 acres of pasture, about a quarter of the farm's total 820 acres. The animals graze in temporarily fenced-in pastures that intentionally concentrate the animals and thus their impact in certain fields. Carnation Farms has no 'fixed' pastures, and the animals are moved daily or weekly, depending on the season. Strategically moving the animals between fields across the farm provides them a life that minimizes

confinement and a high degree of varied nutrition, supporting animal health. Constant movement also reduces soil compaction that can come from overgrazing and builds living soils through their natural compost.

Adaptability and observation are critical tenets of regenerative grazing as the animals are moved from place to place. Pastures are constantly changing, and it is important to observe these changes and adapt to them through grazing patterns. For example, if certain plants within a pasture become too vigorous, grazing can be used to tame them. If a field needs fertilizer, animals can be moved there to apply manure. A dedicated livestock team constantly observes the animals. Another reason observation is critical is to reduce the presence of parasites, which can infect animals at any time of the year, but are more present in the warmer months. The livestock team is attentive to their comfort and moves the animals more frequently in summer to reduce grazing near their manure.



Left to right: Farmers CJ Beebe, Taylor Pewitt, and Olivia Longstaff check for hoof health and parasites

Carnation Farms' animals are moved between the Uplands pasture in late fall, winter, and early spring and the lowlands pasture in the warmer months. Because the upland pastures are out of the flood plain, there is no risk to animals when the river ebbs and occasionally floods between fall and spring. Without annual floods, the upland pasture is harder and less susceptible to soil compaction during an extended grazing season. However, during summer, the upland pasture becomes dry and hot, and most of the grasses become dormant. Moving the animals seasonally gives the plants in the uplands pasture time to recover and maintain a strong root system, which protects the soil. On the valley floor, cooler temperatures and wetter soil result in lush, rich grass in the Lowlands that is perfect for summer grazing, helping the animals to gain weight more quickly.

Cattle are harvested between 18 and 30 months, and sheep between 6 and 12 months. Harvest times are determined based on the size of the animal and a preference not to hold them over the winter, which forces the animals to use calories to stay warm rather than continuing to grow. Achieving a high flavor profile is an important outcome of our livestock practices. The Livestock team continuously experiments and monitors the results based on whether the animals graze in the lowlands or uplands before finishing, if they are on hay or grass when finishing, or finishing on different varieties of grasses and legumes.

2024 LIVESTOCK & ROTATIONAL GRAZING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2024 was an important and pivotal year for the livestock program. Several key components were re-imagined, with changes put into place to improve business. In mid-season, the farm pivoted away from raising poultry (chicken, turkey, and ducks) and doubled down on a commitment to ruminants after a thorough financial assessment that revealed what the livestock team suspected: poultry was a big drain, but cows and, especially, sheep had much better margins, along with a growing and dedicated market.

Crops were planted for the first time in fields that had previously been grazed rotationally. While the long-term benefits are yet to be revealed, there have already been reductions in reliance on outside fertilizer, such as by 50% on the tomato crop.

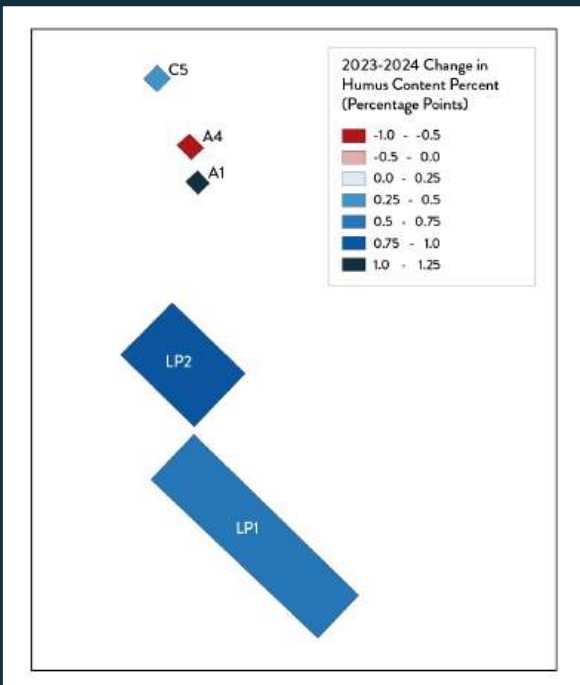
New acreage was grazed, and manure was applied to more spaces than in prior years. Experimental cover crop grazing in vegetable production areas further integrated crop and livestock components of the farm's production system and landscape.

Livestock management is constantly evolving and improving. Average daily weight gains and a focus on improving hoof health across the herds are boosting resiliency in the animals.

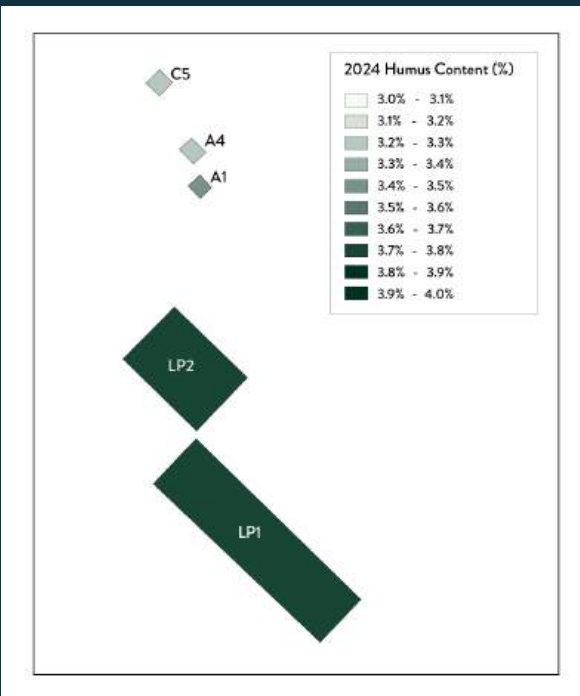
assessing SOIL HEALTH

Carnation Farms is in a pattern of continuous learning regarding what works best for the land through experimentation with different farming practices.

In September 2023 and December 2024, soil samples were collected and tested across the farm to serve as a baseline for future years. Eighteen fields representative of different production methods were tested across a range of tillage, cover cropping, and grazing practices. Humus content is used as the primary metric to indicate when farm practices are building healthy soil.



Map displaying the change in soil humus percentage points for each field between 2023 and 2024.



Map displaying what percent of each field's soil was humus in 2024.

Test results helped shape tentative theories about when certain practices can build healthy soil, made by people who are intimately familiar with the land. The purpose of soil testing at Carnation Farms, collected on production fields that have not been part of a controlled experiment, is to gain enough insight to inform future decisions on the farm, rather than to draw conclusions about the overall effectiveness of specific practices.

Between 2023 and 2024, eight out of eighteen tested fields saw increases in humus, or long-term organic matter; seven out of eighteen fields saw little change; and three out of eighteen saw decreases in stable organic matter. Neutral or positive changes in most fields indicate that soils are either getting better or staying the same in their resilience to floods and droughts, availability of nutrients to plants, and sequestration of long-term carbon that is resistant to further breakdown.

SOIL ORGANIC MATTER FINDINGS

The largest increase in long-term soil organic matter occurred in control field A1, illustrating what recovery can look like following years of heavy tilling. In early 2023, the field hosted annual vegetables. After the 2023 harvest, it was lightly tilled and then cover-cropped. In 2024, the field was not tilled and was rotationally grazed. From 2023 to 2024, humus content jumped from 2.4% to 3.5% in the field, a gain of 1.1 percentage points representing a 46% increase relative to 2023 levels. This is a large increase over a single year, as humus typically builds up slowly over many years. It also supports the hypothesis that rest, combined with rotational grazing and cover cropping, can help build soil organic matter.

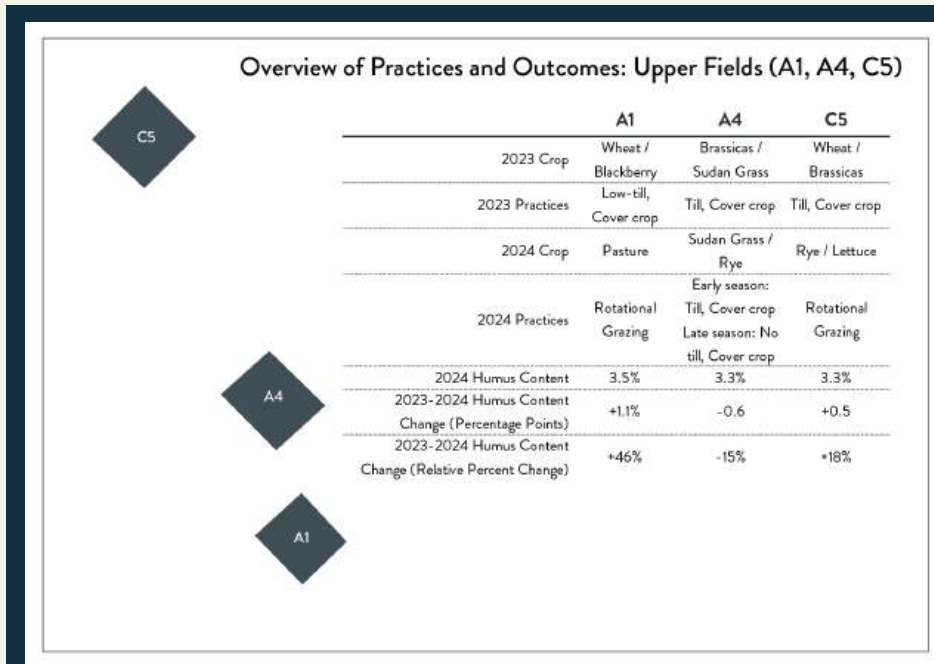
Other fields tell a different story about no-till practices. Field A4, home to brassicas, lettuce, and cucumbers in 2023, was tilled then cover-cropped with rye grass at the end of the season. In early 2024, the rye grass cover crop was terminated and replaced with Sudan grass. At the end of the summer season, this field was flail-mowed and planted with Austrian winter peas in a no-till setting with

noticeably poor germination rates. Instead of the increase in long-term soil organic matter expected from no-till management practices, the field's humus content dropped from 3.9% in 2023 to 3.3% in 2024, representing a 15% decrease. Without tilling, the winter pea cover crop was unable to establish itself amidst the Sudan grass and the decomposing material from past crops that was already on the field. This resulted in a poorly established winter pea cover crop that did not adequately build organic matter.

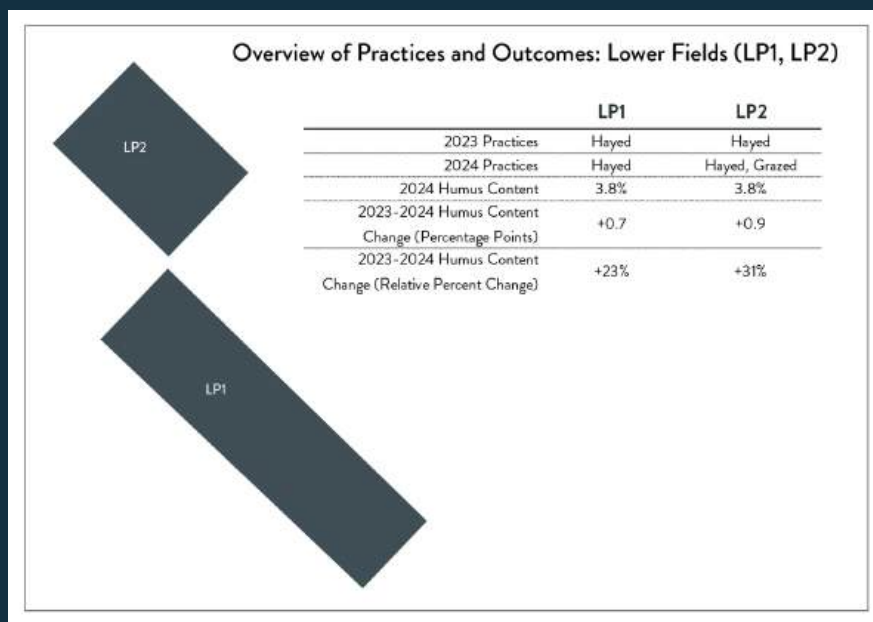
Field C5, which served as a pasture, was heavily tilled, cover-cropped, and allowed to rest in 2023, then rotationally grazed in 2024. Despite the heavy tilling, the field saw humus content rise from 2.8% in 2023 to 3.3% in 2024 – an 18% increase in long-term organic matter over a single year, notable given the slow pace of buildup. This suggests that heavy tilling followed by a long rest period, rotational grazing, and properly seeded cover crops can be beneficial to soil health. It is possible to see increases in long-term organic matter under high-till conditions when properly paired with other regenerative practices. The belief that tilling is always harmful to soil health is popular among the community of regenerative agriculture practitioners, and our findings are contrary to this line of thought.

Soil tests at Carnation Farms are also telling an interesting story about haying and grazing. In hayfield LP1, long-term organic matter rose from 3.1% to 3.8% between 2023 and 2024, representing a 23% increase – despite being hayed without cover cropping or grazing. This was a surprising result given the expectation that haying removes organic matter from fields that are not replenished with amendments or manure.

A different hayfield, LP2, was grazed in addition to being hayed. It saw a slightly larger increase in humus content between the two years, from 2.9% to 3.8% constituting a 31% increase relative to 2023 levels. This suggests that grazing can help cycle organic matter in hayed fields, as animals add manure, informing the use of rotational grazing at Carnation Farms in 2025 and beyond. Changes in LP1 and LP2 could also be a result of the elk that free range on those pastures.



Visualization of upper fields A1, A4, and A5. Table summarizes each field's 2023 and 2024 crops and practices, alongside 2024 humus content and change relative to previous year.



Visualization of upper fields LP1 and LP2. Table summarizes each field's 2023 and 2024 practices, alongside 2024 humus content and change relative to previous year.

Beef Program Lead, CJ Beebe offers some observations from the fields:

“ In 2024, manure decomposed at a much higher rate than in 2023. Within a day of deposition of cattle manure, I observed what appeared to be beetle bore-holes. Within a week, manure loses its internal structure and crumbles. By 3-4 weeks, pats are unrecognizable and almost completely gone. I've seen a similar process with sheep manure - it decomposes and is completely gone by 2 weeks post-deposition. In 2023, this was a process that would take anywhere from 45d-90d for cattle manure and 30-60d for sheep manure.”

LESSONS LEARNED

These lessons teach that no-till practices on their own are not a silver bullet for regenerative agriculture outcomes. While no-till can certainly be associated with increases in organic matter, so can tillage when paired with other regenerative practices, like cover cropping and rest periods. Similarly, long-term organic matter can increase despite haying, especially when paired with rotational grazing. While these are tentative theories, only continued testing every September will confirm how regenerative practices contribute to soil health on the farm.



CJ Beebe transfers lamb, Acorn, to pasture for weaning



Sheep enjoying fresh pasture after shearing day.

habitat

DEVELOPMENT

BUILDING BIODIVERSITY

Regenerative practices build biodiversity across the entirety of Carnation Farms, including integrating annual hedgerows that attract beneficial insects and pollinators, controlling erosion by protecting waterways, and supporting healthy ecosystems through sustainable wildlife management. Important improvements were made on the farm in 2024.

The Ecological Health Index (EHI) is a metric developed by the Savory Institute to measure ecosystem health on farms. In 2024, Carnation Farms saw its EHI score rise to a 'medium' rank of 5 from its 'low' ranking score of -12 in 2023. This growth in the EHI score reflects more diverse grasses in the farm's pastures and more habitat through hedgerows, riparian buffers, and wildlife corridors throughout Carnation Farms' acreage.

Ecological Outcome Verification

EHI was developed as part of Ecological Outcome Verification (EOV)* monitoring, a test administered by the Savory Institute's Understanding the Voices of the Ecosystem Hub to holistically track regenerative agriculture outcomes. As an aggregated index of ecosystem health, EHI combines ecological indicators associated with water cycling, mineral cycling, energy flows, and ecological community dynamics. Examples of tracked indicators of ecological processes include bare soil, insect diversity, and water erosion, among many others. EOV monitors is a third party audit and offers perspectives on how farming practices are influencing ecosystem health, above and below the ground. Carnation Farms partially attributes its EOV test score improvements to expanded rotational grazing practices and longer rest periods between plantings.

*Learn more about EOV monitoring at <https://www.uvehub.com/eov-monitoring>

HEDGEROWS

Annual hedgerows are cultivated to provide important habitat for natural pest predators like ladybugs and hover flies, as well as food for pollinators such as native bees, honey bees, and wasps. The crops that are selected, such as cilantro, dill, and fennel, were initially planted as production crops, not for attracting beneficial insects. Over time, these crops began to attract desirable insect species and became the farm's hallmark annual hedgerow crops. As beneficial species lay their eggs within these crops, they are allowed to overwinter, creating a repository for beneficials in future seasons. For example, the annual hedgerows grown in 2024 will only be mowed and tilled in 2025 after they have mostly decomposed. In the future, perennial hedgerows will be planted as optimal locations for them are identified.



Flowering dill

WATERWAYS

The Snoqualmie River provides irrigation water for cover crops and pastures, as well as rich nutrients through seasonal flooding. Erosion is a concern along the riverbank of the Snoqualmie River, which negatively impacts multiple farms in the area and degrades the river’s overall health and biodiversity through increased sediment. The Snoqualmie River runs along the border of Carnation Farms, which necessitates a holistic approach to waterway stewardship.

The riparian buffer—a strip of vegetation along the riverbank—is being restored in collaboration with Stewardship Partners to control erosion, filter pollutants from entering the river, and provide habitat for wildlife. Currently, vegetation lining the riverbank tends to be monocultures of invasive plant species such as Japanese knotweed and Himalayan blackberry or forest fragments without ecosystem diversity.

Efforts have been made to revitalize a healthy, biodiverse riparian buffer in certain areas of high concern for erosion along the riverfront. These efforts will include planting deep-rooted trees and sprawling ground cover in the winter of 2025 and integrating elderberry to create a dual-purpose, harvestable buffer.

Protecting neighboring waterways also means minimizing Carnation Farms’ water footprint – limiting water drawn from the river and preventing contaminated water from returning to it. When it comes to our water resources, Carnation Farms is a “zero waste” facility, recycling 100% of water from events and facilities to irrigate plants. This water is then refined to become Class B Reclaimed Water, which allows its use for organic haylage production to feed livestock. Between 3 and 5 million gallons are recycled annually, with 2024 totaling 3,209,000 gallons responsibly reused.

Carnation Farms’ holistic approach to stewarding the Snoqualmie River is exhibited through participation in the Salmon Safe certification, a third-party accreditation recognizing the farm’s efforts beyond regulatory requirements

to protect water quality and wildlife habitat for a keystone species. The farm’s commitment to the protection of salmon in the Puget Sound region benefits wildlife and biodiversity along its waterways, extending Carnation Farms’ commitment beyond its boundaries across the region.

“By expanding and restoring the buffers at Carnation Farms, we will ensure a much more diverse and healthier riparian buffer that will improve water quality and habitat for local fish and wildlife such as the coho salmon. In addition, restoring these buffers will bolster the riverbank to further help prevent erosion.”

—Chris LaPointe (he/him), Director of Ecological Restoration, Stewardship Partners



WILDLIFE

Wildlife is often seen as a nuisance—or worse—in agricultural settings. Current ecosystem imbalances harm the environment and create competition for resources between wildlife and agricultural production. It is estimated that wildlife conflict costs Carnation Farms an average of \$50,000-\$80,000 annually in lost production and facility damage. In 2024, partnering with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Carnation Farms removed its status as a game reserve, making way for species-specific management to help direct wildlife to its proper habitat and population size.

This redesignation led to the formation of the Carnation Farms

Wildlife Committee, responsible for assessing wildlife species that live on the farm, determining the important role they play, and designing systems that balance coexistence between animals and farming for a healthy ecosystem.

The committee not only seeks to create balance but also to improve the landscape where applicable. Discussions are underway with local habitat restoration specialists to improve wildlife corridors along the Snoqualmie River that also stabilize river banks, crucial for maintaining salmon habitat. The hope is that this holistic approach sets the stage for many more successful habitat improvements across the property.

“Adaptive wildlife management efforts were needed to move towards the abatement of wildlife damage. WDFW and CF maintain a working wildlife management relationship where various conflict reduction techniques are being implemented over time to reduce agricultural damage on the site.”

—Chris Anderson, District Wildlife Biologist
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Elk grazing pastures meant for Carnation Farms' sheep and cattle

Our Partners

Stewardship Partners is a non-profit that works with communities to implement solutions that help them become caretakers of the land and water.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is responsible for management of Washington State's fauna from hunting regulation to conflict management, monitoring, and habitat improvement. WDFW seeks to improve the interplay between citizens, wildlife, and habitat.

farmer

LIVELIHOODS

Healthy communities are as vital as healthy ecosystems. The long-term sustainability of Carnation Farms depends on ensuring that employees have the resources, stability, and opportunities to thrive. The following practices were conceived and operationalized to strengthen individual resilience and the long-term vitality of the farm.

COMPREHENSIVE BENEFITS

Carnation Farms offers a generous benefits package; employees have access to three tiers of medical coverage, including dental, vision, and flexible spending accounts. Both traditional and Roth 401(k) retirement plans are available, with an employer match, to help staff build long-term financial security. Additional protections include life insurance and extended short- and long-term disability coverage, providing additional protection for employees whose work is more physically demanding.

Staff also receive discounts on farm-made products and admission to community events, and are invited to take home produce that cannot be sold to the public. Whether this surplus comes directly from the fields or from unsold items in the farmstand, it gives employees free, nutritious food and reduces waste.

FAIR AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing costs are high and continue to increase in the Snoqualmie Valley. With several residential buildings on premises, Carnation Farms is uniquely positioned to offer discounted rents to farm workers and their families. Beyond the economic benefit, living on-farm helps our employees retain more of their salaries and reduces the stress of commuting. On-site housing also fosters a sense of community.

ACCESS & OPPORTUNITY

Carnation Farms creates professional pathways for people to grow and succeed. Working with local organizations such as re-entry programs that support formerly incarcerated individuals, youth development initiatives, and culinary schools results in a diverse talent pool. Once here, every employee participates in a bi-annual review and goal-setting process. Mentorship and funding are provided to support the pursuit of these goals. Staff can also participate in the farm's industry events, including the James Beard Foundation's Chef Bootcamp for Policy and Change, Farmpreneur, and regional agricultural conferences, which provide access to nationally recognized leaders and innovative ideas in food and farming, offering professional development opportunities rarely available in farm employment.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Seasonal and year-round farming, as takes place on Carnation Farms, is physically and mentally demanding. A commitment to balance and recovery is part of the farm's workplace culture. Full-time employees are given a generous amount of paid holidays, floating days, and vacation time. The farm encourages staff to use this time, and most do, regularly taking the chance to step back and recharge. Whenever possible, the use of overtime is limited to create a workplace culture where recovery is valued and people can stay healthy, engaged, and connected to the work they care about. Just as the land thrives when it has time to rest, so do the people who tend it. Supporting that balance is at the heart of our regenerative approach.

feeding PEOPLE

The principles of regeneration at Carnation Farms extend beyond the field, pasture, and hedgerow. An important part of our education mission is to provide opportunities for people to experience the results of our work across the farm, which is achieved through the food we harvest, prepare, and serve across a range of venues and experiences. These include the farmstand (and its many pop-ups); the farm's CSA and Meat Shares; culinary events that include classes, demonstrations, and dinners; on-farm events such as seasonal markets and wilderness workshops; and a range of events to connect with and draw in the community. The farm also hosts large events, such as weddings, retreats, and conferences, which attract participants from a wider geographic range.

The design is intentional: to bring products produced on the farm directly to people, to feed them well, and share our mission with visitors and customers, and provide resources to learn about the what and why of regenerative agriculture.

CROP PLANNING

The first step in this process begins with crop planning. Next to decisions made based on further Carnation Farms' regeneration goals are those made jointly by the farm's Director of Regenerative Agriculture and the Culinary Director. Early each year, Eric Popp and Chef Kristen Schumacher review the prior season's crops, how they were prepared and sold across the farm's venues, customer response, and how they maximized culinary preservation techniques to minimize waste. They also discuss new products or menu ideas for the coming year. Carnation Farms also purchases products from neighboring farms and promotes their stories, which include information about their regenerative and/or organic agriculture practices.

Throughout the season, the Directors discuss harvest schedules and product inventory— information the Culinary Director uses to design menus focused on seasonal crops and availability.

FARMSTAND

The farmstand is a vital cog in the farm's circular internal economy as well as its "billboard" to the public - the first place most people engage with the farm. The farmstand provides a retail outlet for the crops and culinary departments, supplemented by external vendors, and has a selection of prepared foods and beverages for on-site consumption.



Eric Popp (front) & Chef Kristen Schumacher inspect the parsley crop

While regenerative practices are still new and evolving across all food product lines and procurement guidelines, the farmstand prioritizes products that are certified or otherwise known to be regenerative, organic, sustainable, minimally processed, lacking chemical additives, local, nutritious, and supportive of local, women, minority, and BIPOC-owned businesses.

These principles also guide decisions beyond food, including those for selecting packaging, paper, and cleaning supplies; managing waste streams, including minimizing wastewater, composting, and recycling food waste and packaging; supplier relationships; customer relations; and staff training, including plans for professional development and advancement.



Pantry items packaged for the Farmstand

CULTURE OF HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is a core aspect of human interaction transported across cultural and geographic boundaries. Values of warmth, kindness, generosity, and inclusivity towards others are cornerstones of a positive hospitality culture. Our customer service goals include authenticity, community connection, consistency, personal attention, knowledge, and sharing stories. These align with Carnation Farms’ overall values of empathy, teamwork, excellence, accountability, and resilience. These practices are applied to every culinary experience across the farm, from the farmstand to pop-ups to seasonal markets to private events, including weddings and retreats.



Guest chef Sonya Cote answers questions about a dish served at a farm dinner

building a COMMUNITY HUB

Carnation Farms' community engagement plan aims to strengthen its role as a leader in regenerative food and agriculture with programs to engage farmers, chefs, local organizations, and the wider community to promote education, collaboration, and regenerative practices across the Snoqualmie Valley.

The ultimate goal is to build a connected food system that supports farmers, nurtures the land, and inspires future generations through sustainability, fresh food, and meaningful experiences. As such, the farm's programs are focused on deepening education on regenerative practices and organic farming methods; building networking and collaboration opportunities for farmers and chefs to exchange ideas and support one another; providing access to food distribution systems for local farmers; and creating community events and activities that celebrate agriculture, culture, and the sense of place in the Snoqualmie Valley.

Professional workshops are hands-on, interactive sessions that focus on regenerative agriculture, soil health, livestock management, and culinary skills, catering to various skill levels. In 2024, these included animal harvest and butchery workshops attended by professional and home cooks. Farmer and food professional activities included hosting the James Beard Foundation's Chef Bootcamp for Policy and Change, the Seattle Culinary Academy Retreat, Washington State Sheep Producers' lambing workshops, and the Farmpreneur summit.

Events to align with the farm's regeneration goals included a community Lamb Roast, Seasonal Markets, Snoqualmie Tribe Collaborative Meetings, Skillshare Activity Days, and the Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance/Taste of the Valley. Other community education programs included butchery workshops, Meat and Greets, Cooking Classes, Field Walks, SnoValley Tilth farm tours, and a Future Farmers of America (FFA) Livestock Tour. Culinary events include farm-to-table dinner experiences and workshops that showcase regional food innovation, connecting chefs, farmers, and the community.

Success towards Carnation Farms' community goals is measured quantitatively through tracking the number of programs offered and the number of attendees of mission-based programming; growing the farm's partnerships and collaborations; increasing engagement levels at events, through social media, and the farm's e-mail campaigns; and increasing farmstand sales, particularly on event days. A Participation Tracker was launched in 2024, providing a baseline year of community engagement data. Next year's impact report will include 2025 data and an analysis of changes year-to-year.



Farm employees Olivia Longstaff (left) and Alex Hagapietros tabling at the Harvest Market

looking AHEAD

Carnation Farms is constantly learning through experimentation with different practices, holding onto what works and leaving behind what does not. While this first Impact Report does not definitively prove that some practices are better than others, the trends and data from comparing 2024 data and observations to those from 2023 help guide current and future operational decisions.

In 2025 Carnation Farms is expanding the practices that led to improvement in organic matter from 2023 to 2024. In the cropping program, there was a heavy tilling event, followed by robust cover cropping and long rest. The farm has increased rotational grazing in areas previously only hayed. More consistent soil testing in September will take place in a broader set of field locations.

Diligent testing paired with careful attention by Carnation Farms' Crops and Livestock teams contribute to decision-making, building living soils, and nurturing abundant biodiversity. In agriculture, as in nature, change is slow and constant. Fine-tuning what works best for the land is a continuous journey that requires all on the farm to adapt as conditions change in the climate and in the markets.

Looking ahead to next year's Impact Report, more robust data sets and observations by Carnation Farms teams' day-to-day engagement with the land, waterways, hedgerows, and wildlife will continue the story of the farm's continuous improvement towards its goals of regeneration.



A rainbow captured over the northeast pastures

acknowledgments

This report was a collaborative effort among Carnation Farms team members and trusted advisors.

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A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

As a non-profit farm, driven by a mission to transform to regenerative practices and education, Carnation Farms can take higher risks and be more experimental in its farming approaches than a for-profit production farm. As important as designing and testing regenerative agriculture practices, so is disseminating them to help build the body of knowledge among the regenerative community. This is possible thanks to the contributions of our generous funders.

Remembering a Friend

Carnation Farms wishes to take a moment to acknowledge the passing of Jeff Rogers, the owner of Snoqualmie Valley Lambing, in December 2024. Jeff was a tenant shepherd at Carnation Farms. Beyond that, Jeff was a mentor and a friend to all who worked and engaged with him. His willingness to share the knowledge accrued over decades as a shepherd left its mark on our operation as well as others across the valley who were interested in learning about organic lamb production. Jeff will be remembered for his development of the Avondale breed, arguably the most well-adapted sheep to the Pacific Northwest. Today, his wife, Katya, and his two border collies, Rob and Silt continue to care for the Avondales in Jeff's memory. Thanks for all you gave us, Jeff – we miss you, buddy!





www.carnationfarms.org