



Transforming Agriculture, Perennially

Summer 2020

Dear Friends,

We are launching a new fiscal year at a moment in history that will not soon be forgotten. 2020 is providing a wakeup call for humanity: survival depends on our capacity to change. This isn't a new idea, but one that we seem to have muddled along the way, as we have conflated the imperative of evolutionary change with an imperative for growth. All to the demise of our soil, our health, and our happiness.

The global pandemic, like the last crisis and the next, has revealed the fragility of our wealth and the systemic injustice upon which it is built. One can't help but conclude we have gotten quite a few things wrong in the development of our society. Perhaps, I've contemplated, we have been rushing around in a futile quest for the wrong things. We've institutionalized a false narrative about what it means to provision a good life and are now being forced to rethink our assumptions. The question is, how deep in reflection are we willing to go, and do we have the courage and endurance to create lasting change? It is a time of great pain and suffering and also one of reckoning, which can lead to transformation, but only with a concerted effort to avoid the reassertion of our old normal.

Never in my lifetime has the work, the courageous collective that is The Land Institute, been more necessary. We were founded with the challenge to think deeply and act boldly to create the systemic change that can only be accomplished over the long term. Over the last 40 years, we have gained clarity about the right things to rush around for and confirmed the feasibility of practical solutions. In many ways we were made for this moment in time. Our work provides a constructive way to deal with the pain and a vision and provisions for a just, sustainable future.

So, in the coming year we will focus on contributing in our unique way to a growing demand for real change, helping to create a diverse and perennial future for agriculture and humanity. Thus, catalyzing a future flow that is aligned with ecological limits, courageous action, whole science, and long-term thinking (and when we say long term, we mean it—not just next year or the next decade, but our lifetimes and beyond). But we will do it with the urgency of the now.

To achieve this, to make serious progress in advancing our vision within a time frame that is useful, will require thousands of partners working in intensified hubs as part of a global network of multi-disciplinary research and localized learning. Plant breeders, ecologists, sociologists, anthropologists, economists, agronomists, and more will ensure that perennial crops are developed for the grain producing regions of the world, that they are grown in ecologically intensified cropping systems, and that they provide a decent living for the farmers who grow them to foster a vibrant and enduring community life for the society that consumes them.

A new strategic framework outlines four key objectives for creating momentum in the coming years. The first is to intensify the core—the research, facilities, infrastructure, and culture of our organization—upon which a global movement can be built. Secondly, is to ignite the movement toward a perennial future on a global scale and to formalize the network of partners and funding streams supporting this work internationally. Thirdly, we will increase investment in outreach to advocate for the vision of the collective through communications and storytelling that inspires and advocates. Finally, we will use our expertise to contribute to addressing climate change, especially through the urgent need to perennialize the landscape and society.

In the coming year we plan to be very busy, rushing around to get things done. We hope they are the right things to rush to, the things that bring about lasting change. We will be rushing to provide local and global leadership and to accelerate the movement toward a perennial future. We cannot achieve our vision alone. Your continued support and energy is needed as much as ever. So, we ask you to act with urgency for the long-view and continue, or start, to give perennially.

With hope for a perennial future,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R Stroer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rachel Stroer  
Acting President