



General Mills Comments to the Members of the Special Committee on the Climate Crisis June 19, 2020

On behalf of General Mills, I am responding to the open letter requesting information and input from stakeholders to inform the Special Committee as it considers recommendations for policies, strategies and other activities to mitigate climate change. General Mills applauds the Committee's efforts to address the climate crisis and we believe that regenerative agriculture practices could be used as a component of climate mitigation strategy.

General Mills is a major packaged-food manufacturer engaged for over 150 years in the development and production of food products including ready-to-eat cereals, yogurts, soups, snack bars, refrigerated dough, pet foods and numerous other products. Our company's purpose is simple but powerful: we make food the world loves. Embedded in this purpose is a deep respect and sense of service to our consumers and a commitment to understanding their needs and expectations. Our mission is to be a force for good: good for our children; good for our communities; and good for our planet.

At General Mills, we are committed to treating the world with care, not just today but for generations to come. The health of our business depends on the health of our planet. The areas of greatest environmental impact in our supply chain – including more than two-thirds of the greenhouse gas emissions and 99 percent of water use – occur outside General Mills' operations, primarily in agriculture. We collaborate to drive change by promoting environmentally and socially responsible practices across our entire value chain from farm to fork and beyond.

The imperative is clear: Business, together with governments, NGOs and individuals, needs to act to reduce then reverse the negative human impact on climate change. Government policies that provide proportionate and clear guidance on mitigation and adaptation are essential for large scale progress. Cross-sector investment in innovations that help reduce natural resource use, sequester carbon and create energy alternatives is essential to reaching scalable levels of impact. Likewise, developing the right mix of market-based incentives to encourage and accelerate practice adoption is key. And, helping individual consumers make more sustainable choices is critical to reducing the collective human impact on the environment.

Our sustainability pillars and actions are outlined in greater detail in our [Global Responsibility 2020](#) report. Briefly, our pillars and actions include:

- STABLE climate by reducing climate change impacts, beginning on [page 25](#)
- HEALTHY watersheds through water stewardship, beginning on [page 31](#)
- STRONG ecosystems through regenerative agriculture and sustainable sourcing, beginning on [page 33](#)

Regenerative Agriculture

As part of the food industry, we recognize that agriculture contributes to some of our most pressing sustainability challenges, and we believe that the most promising solutions start with healthy soil. We are on a journey to bring soil back to life through regenerative agriculture practices, which protect and intentionally enhance natural resources and farming communities. We believe that to generate positive impact at scale, all types of agriculture—organic and conventional—should be part of the conversation. That's why we have committed to advancing regenerative agriculture practices on 1 million acres of farmland by 2030.

Regenerative agriculture offers a hopeful solution for addressing climate change, through its potential to sequester carbon in the soil and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere. Regenerative agriculture works with nature

to pull carbon from the air (CO₂) and store it in the soil, where it nourishes a network of life. The foundation of regenerative agriculture is based on six key principles inspired by the way natural ecosystems function. They include: understanding context on the farm, minimizing soil disturbance, maximizing crop diversity, keeping the soil covered, keeping a living root in the ground throughout the year and integrating livestock.

To begin advancing our one-million-acre regenerative agriculture commitment, we have partnered with Understanding Ag to activate pilots across three of our priority ingredient regions – oats in North Dakota, Saskatchewan and Manitoba; wheat in Kansas; and dairy Michigan. You can learn more about what General Mills is doing in regenerative agriculture [here](#).

Agriculture Policy

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Farm Bill) strengthened a number of voluntary conservation programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Prioritization of soil health within the conservation programs will benefit farmers and Private public partnerships will increase funding research, farmer training and coaching to adopt regenerative agriculture practices like no-till and cover cropping that mimic nature to improve overall ecosystem health and function. A few examples included:

- **Funding for new soil health demonstration trials within the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) portion of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).** Farmers are more likely to adopt regenerative agriculture practices when they learn about them from other farmers. In 2017, General Mills made a three-year \$2 million commitment to the Nature Conservancy, Soil Health Institute and the Soil Health Partnership to support the development of tools and resources for farmers, landowners, and supply chain leaders to achieve widespread adoption of soil health practices. We also partnered with the National Wheat Foundation to support research and education outreach on soil health practices to benefit 125,000 wheat farmers across the great plains states.
- **Designating cover crops as a good farming practice under the Risk Management Agency.** By issuing more detailed rules for termination farmers will be more willing to adopt cover crops on their farm. This lessens fears from farmers about the ability to plant cover crops while still being eligible for crop insurance.
- **Continuation of Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR).** General Mills has been a long-time partner to FFAR. We are excited about the recent \$10.3 million grant from FFAR to support the Ecosystem Services Market Consortium (ESMC). General Mills and grant partners will match the \$10.3 million FFAR grant for a total investment of more than \$20 million. The ESMC will pay and recognize farmers and ranchers who adopt conservation management practices that improve soil health and water usage and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The ESMC will provide the research necessary to create a scaled, efficient, cost-effective marketplace that works for farmers and ranchers.

To strengthen the ESMC, General Mills supports bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Stabenow, Whitehouse, Braun and Graham. The Growing Climate Solutions Act would establish a *Greenhouse Gas Technical Assistance Provider and Third-Party Verifier Certification Program* through which USDA would provide endorsement of third party verifiers and technical service providers that help private landowners generate carbon credits through a variety of agriculture and forestry related practices. As the demand for carbon markets grows it is imperative that we have qualified technical advisors helping famers develop the most beneficial practices for their land.



General Mills believes that regenerative agriculture is a powerful tool to sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We are leading the charge on regenerative and sustainable agriculture with industry-leading investments of over \$5.5 million to help transition our supply chain to more sustainable practices. Policy is a critical tool to advance this work. We encourage Congress to strengthen collaboration between organizations, components of supply chains and domestic agriculture producers to meet ambitious sustainability goals.

If you have any follow up questions, please contact Drew Felz at (202) 741-2149 or drew.felz@genmills.com

Thank you for your consideration.

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