

# The Radical Collaboration Manifesto for Regenerative Food Systems

*A call to collaborative leadership for meaningful transformation*

*Draft for co-creation: this manifesto is offered as a starting point—please adapt, challenge, and improve it together.*

*The radical collaboration manifesto is a call to transform food systems, across production, distribution, consumption, and waste. It argues that lasting change requires diverse actors to work across the full chain with respect, trust, open communication, equity, shared accountability, and interest-based negotiation, while building the inner skills (self-awareness, humility, empathy, presence under tension) that make collaboration possible.*

## Radical Collaboration as a Living Standard

Food systems sit at the center of the defining challenges of our time: climate instability, biodiversity loss, inequality, and a fraying relationship with the life-giving land that sustains us. From production and processing to distribution, retail, consumption, and waste, our choices ripple through livelihoods, ecosystems, and health. The crisis is not technical, but fundamentally human and systemic, and thus it is a human challenge to transform food systems.

This manifesto is an invitation to a different way of working: **radical collaboration**—a disciplined, daily practice of uniting diverse perspectives to co-create solutions that are equitable, regenerative, and credible at scale. It rests on respect, trust, and open communication—but it also depends on **inner skills**: self-awareness, humility, empathy, and constructive courage, the ability to stay present when tension rises. When we cultivate these capacities, we turn differences into strengths, challenges into opportunities, and ideas into innovations.

Developed by the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), a collective of 38 organizations pursuing the transformation of agriculture worldwide, the radical

collaboration approach has provided fertile ground for the creation of shared governance structures, while strengthening the commitment to co-creation and enabling transformational collective impact.

By bringing together diverse voices and sharing accountability, responsibility is not diluted but deepened. Outcomes become jointly owned, transparently stewarded, and equitably recognized. And thus, we achieve meaningful, lasting transformation. Let us set radical collaboration as our living standard, one that reflects both who we are and how we succeed.

## Radical Collaboration Benefits Everyone

- **For corporates and decision makers**, it means using procurement, pricing, and finance to reward regenerative and equitable outcomes.
- **For consumers**, it means remembering that what we buy and normalize shapes livelihoods and pushes us towards more intentional choices.
- **For farmers and Indigenous Peoples**, it shapes livelihoods and the future of the planet.
- **For policy makers**, it means ending subsidy systems that favor industrial agriculture and redirecting public incentives toward regenerative agriculture—so the economics of farming rewards restoration rather than extraction.

## Steps Towards Radical Collaboration

### 1. Developing the Skills

Food systems change happens through people: through conversations, negotiations, trade-offs, and shared courage. That means the quality of our collaboration is limited by the quality of our awareness.

Radical collaboration requires inner skills we can practice: noticing defensiveness early; choosing curiosity before advocacy; holding complexity without collapsing into certainty; and listening for what might be true in a view that challenges our own. These capacities are not “soft” add-ons—they are key foundations that enable trust, fairness, and collective intelligence.

This is the work of **collaborative leadership**: convening the right stakeholders, holding a shared purpose through uncertainty, and designing processes where power is acknowledged and trust can grow. It is also the work of **conscious organizational**

**cultures**—cultures that reward learning, transparency, and repair; that make it safe to speak the truth; and that treat relationships as mission-critical infrastructure rather than a “nice to have.”

## 2. Choosing the Principles

- **Respect as a discipline:** We listen actively and search for what might be true in perspectives that challenge our own.
- **Trust as something we earn:** We do what we say, share evidence of progress, and surface risks early and openly.
- **Open communication with purpose:** We communicate clearly about decisions, commitments, and learning so others can build on it.
- **Equity, reciprocity, and fair distribution:** We make power visible, share voice and benefits fairly, and ensure those closest to the land help shape decisions—including how costs, risks, and rewards are allocated across value chains and landscapes.
- **Negotiate interests, not positions:** We look beneath demands to understand needs, constraints, and values—expanding options for fair agreements.
- **Shared accountability:** We define roles, track commitments, and distribute credit fairly—because impact is collective.
- **Choosing learning over blame:** We treat missteps as data and improve systems rather than punish people.

## 3. Setting our Commitments

1. **We bring people in early—and we co-create, not consult.** Those who will live with the consequences help shape options from the beginning, sharing authorship, learning, and credit.
2. **We make decision pathways explicit.** We name whether we are informing, deciding, or creating—and clarify who decides, who contributes, and how dissent will be honored.
3. **We choose transparency over ambiguity.** We publish the rationale for key choices so people not in the room can still see themselves in the process—and we make explicit agreements on how costs, risks, and benefits will be shared, including through public policy that **shifts subsidies away from industrial agriculture** and **builds incentives for regenerative outcomes**.
4. **We disagree well—and protect psychological safety.** We treat conflict as a test of ideas, not a clash of egos, and we create space for candor, first drafts, and naive questions because they accelerate learning and improve decisions.
5. **We steward knowledge and weave the network.** We document what we try and what it teaches—then deliberately connect people across regions, disciplines, and roles so learning and opportunity can circulate.

6. **We center dignity.** Farmers, workers, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth are partners and co-authors—not beneficiaries.

## 4. Radically Collaborating in Daily Practice

Radical collaboration begins before a meeting even starts—with clarity of purpose and an honest view of what is at stake. It also begins *within*: with the ability to pause, notice our reactions, and choose a response that serves the whole. It lives in how we invite participation, how we frame decisions, how we handle conflict, and how we close loops with integrity.

- **Start with purpose:** “Are we here to inform, decide, or create?”
- **Make commitments visible:** capture decisions, owners, and dates where everyone can see them.
- **Learn fast:** run quick after-action reviews focused on choices and consequences.
- **Share early drafts:** make thinking visible so others can strengthen it.
- **Name tensions:** treat friction as information, not threat.
- **Negotiate for shared gain:** move from positions to interests, then co-design options.
- **Close with alignment:** confirm decisions, next steps, and how feedback continues.
- **Regulate and stay curious:** pause under tension; ask “What am I missing?”
- **Reflect and repair:** when trust strains, name it and restore clarity.

## 5. Recognizing the Signals of Success

- People can explain why we are doing what we are doing—and how their contribution connects to it.
- Decisions are timely *and* feel fair, with visible reasoning even when someone’s preferred option is not chosen.
- Stakeholders can name the trade-offs—and there is a shared, credible approach to distributing costs and benefits fairly, with incentives aligned to long-term outcomes.
- Knowledge travels across the chain—from production to consumption—so teams reuse what works instead of reinventing it, accelerating progress and deepening trust.
- Partners describe their experience not as recipients of support but as co-authors of solutions.
- When hard trade-offs arise, we find ourselves disagreeing well—and moving forward together.

**Collaborative leadership** is the practice of enabling people and institutions to achieve outcomes no single actor can deliver alone—by convening diverse stakeholders, building shared purpose, surfacing and negotiating underlying interests, and holding the conditions for trust, learning, and accountable execution.

These human signals are not “soft.” They are the precursors to hard outcomes: shorter cycle times, fewer rework loops, stronger legitimacy, and more durable impact on farms, landscapes and communities. Trust becomes the currency of execution.

## An Invitation

Adopting this manifesto is not a symbolic endorsement—it is a decision to work differently, starting now. Bring it into your partnerships, coalitions, programs, and institutions. Use it to design how you convene, decide, negotiate, learn, and repair—so that collaboration becomes a source of speed, legitimacy, and durable impact.

### Start here:

1. **Name the shared purpose.** Write one sentence that states the outcome you are seeking together and who it must serve.
2. **Map stakeholders and power.** Identify who is affected, who decides, who holds resources, and who is missing—then bring missing voices in early.
3. **Agree how you will decide.** Clarify when you are informing, deciding, or creating—and document roles, timelines, and how dissent will be handled.
4. **Negotiate interests, not positions.** For one live conflict, ask: “What do we each need, and why?” Generate at least three options that meet multiple interests.

**A practical pledge:** We will elevate collective purpose over individual agendas; negotiate around interests rather than positions; choose transparency, fairness, and reciprocity; invest in trust as infrastructure; and build the inner capacities—self-awareness, humility, empathy, and constructive courage—that allow collaboration to hold under stress. We will track our commitments, learn in public where possible, and repair quickly when trust is strained.

In these times of humanitarian and planetary risk, radical collaboration is not idealism. It is effective leadership. Share this manifesto with your partners and teams—and revisit it quarterly to reflect, learn, and renew your commitments, again and again.

**Now act:** Convene the people you need, name the trade-offs you have avoided, and redesign decisions so costs, risks, and benefits are shared fairly. Whether you grow, govern, invest, sell, or buy food—bring radical collaboration into the next choice you make, and invite others to co-create what comes next.