

A Q&A with 2017 Summit

Speaker:

Eric J. Pierce

Can you tell the Sustainability Summit audience a bit about yourself and your background?

My name is Eric Pierce, I am director of business insights for the NEXT Data & Insights team at the New Hope Network. I am a market researcher by trade with more than 20 years of experience helping businesses use marketplace data to run more successful businesses. I recently found myself energized by the potential of regenerative agriculture and have elected to volunteer some of my time to helping this important cause. I am an advisor to Kiss the Ground, an organization looking to build awareness and demand for regenerative agriculture in the marketplace. Working with Kiss the Ground, we recently completed research (along with my colleagues at Penton Agriculture and New Hope Network) that we are excited to share with the GMA/FMI Sustainability Summit audience.

You're bringing the idea of regenerative agriculture to the Sustainability Summit, which is a relatively new concept. Can you briefly tell us what it is and why it's important to the CPG and retail industry?

Regenerative agriculture is a holistic land management practice that leverages the power of photosynthesis in plants to close the carbon cycle, build soil health, crop resilience and nutrient density. It offers the potential to restore balance to our climate, reduce GHG emissions, pull excess carbon from our atmosphere and improve soil health, farmer/producer profits, and consumer health. It is important for consumer goods manufacturers and retailers because there is growing demand from consumers for brands to engage in responsible business and climate practices and because, in an era of declining consumer trust, these agricultural practices present an opportunity for leadership and to differentiate our brands.



How does regenerative agriculture fit with existing sustainable agriculture and/or sustainable sourcing efforts?

Regenerative agriculture is new and not new all at the same time. The goal is to build soil carbon in order to produce the benefits of carbon sequestration, increased water holding capacity, increased soil biodiversity, healthier crops, and more. One can get there by using organic or biodynamic farming practices, but those certifications aren't necessary. A conventional farming operation is likely to be able to increase soil carbon and water holding capacity by combining several regenerative practices like no/low till, multispecies cover cropping, reducing pesticide usage, planting windbreaks and fertilizing with compost. The goal is not to require a strict set of practices, the goal is to regenerate and build the soil and farm ecosystem to benefit the farm, farmer and climate.

What do you advise companies to keep in mind when it comes to agriculture and climate?

Demand for regenerative agriculture needs to be built. We need to educate consumers on the topic and we need to make commitments and demonstrate to farmers/producers that there is a market for their products. We have an exciting opportunity; consumer culture is changing and climate concern has deeply penetrated consumer culture. During my presentation at the GMA/FMI Sustainability Summit I will demonstrate that we have an exciting opportunity to link consumerism to climate action through our brands. I will demonstrate that the market is ready for brands to lead on climate and that our brands represent the new entry point for engaging consumers in climate action. The market is ready and regenerative agriculture offers our retail and consumer product brands a powerful means of engaging consumers proactively and strengthening the relevance of our brands while rebalancing our climate, benefiting consumers, brands and farmers/producers.

ABOUT THE [GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT](#)

The Global Sustainability Summit is the only event this year designed with the specific needs of the food retail and consumer products industry in mind. It is the one conference you will attend that will focus on the interconnected issues impacting retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers. The Summit is designed BY the food and CPG industry FOR the food and CPG industry. Each element of the Summit will represent a deep dive into the serious issues impacting sustainability, offering real-life solutions to the important challenges as companies face an uncertain future. Find out more about the Summit [here](#).

