THE USE OF REGENERATIVE PRACTICES IN A COMPANY'S DAILY OPERATION IN ENHANCING ECOSYSTEM-WIDE FLOURISHING

FINAL THESIS

Submitted as one of the requirements to complete the International Undergraduate Program at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Diponegoro University

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FACULTY OF ECONMICS AND BUSINESS

UNIVERSITY OF DIPONEGORO

SEMARANG

2025

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ASBTRACT

The research explores the integration of regenerative practices in daily business operations, focusing on their potential to enhance ecosystem-wide flourishing. It uses Foodvalley NL as a case study to examine the financial, operational, and ecological benefits of these practices. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with industry stakeholders and quantitative analysis of financial and operational data. The findings show that regenerative practices can drive systemic change by creating positive feedback loops that enhance ecosystem health, stakeholder well-being, and organizational resilience. Despite challenges like high initial costs and knowledge gaps, the study identifies strategic solutions, such as cross-sector collaboration and scalable frameworks, to support businesses in adopting regenerative methods. The research concludes that regenerative practices offer transformative pathways for businesses to achieve financial sustainability while contributing to environmental restoration and social equity.

Keyword : Regenerative Practices, Ecosystem-wide Flourishing, Financial Sustainability, Stakeholder Well-being

ASBTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi integrasi praktik regeneratif dalam operasional bisnis sehari-hari, dengan fokus pada potensinya untuk meningkatkan kemakmuran di seluruh ekosistem. Penelitian ini menggunakan Foodvalley NL sebagai studi kasus untuk mengkaji manfaat finansial, operasional, dan ekologis dari praktik-praktik ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, yang menggabungkan wawancara kualitatif dengan para pemangku kepentingan industri dan analisis kuantitatif data finansial dan operasional. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa praktik regeneratif dapat mendorong perubahan sistemik dengan menciptakan siklus umpan balik positif yang meningkatkan kesehatan ekosistem, kesejahteraan pemangku kepentingan, dan ketahanan organisasi. Meskipun menghadapi tantangan seperti biaya awal yang tinggi dan kesenjangan pengetahuan, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi solusi strategis, seperti kolaborasi lintas sektor dan kerangka kerja yang terukur, untuk mendukung bisnis dalam mengadopsi metode regeneratif. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa praktik regeneratif menawarkan jalur transformatif bagi bisnis untuk mencapai keberlanjutan finansial sekaligus berkontribusi pada pemulihan lingkungan dan kesetaraan sosial.

Kata Kunci: Regenerative Practices, Ecosystem-wide Flourishing, Financial Sustainability, Stakeholder Well-being

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

As environmental challenges intensify globally, there is a growing need for transformative approaches to sustainability. Regenerative practices have emerged as a powerful framework for rethinking how businesses, communities, and governments can move beyond merely reducing harm. These practices shift the focus from conservation and mitigation to restoration and enhancement of ecosystems, offering a more holistic and dynamic approach to sustainability. Rather than advocating for incremental improvements, regenerative practices promote structurally transformative changes aimed at fostering resilience, renewal, and long-term viability (Fazey et al., 2016; Colloff et al., 2017). By focusing on creating desired future states, these practices provide a pathway for systemic change and ecological restoration (Robinson & Cole, 2015).

Unlike traditional sustainability efforts, which primarily emphasize minimizing negative impacts, regenerative practices actively seek to restore and regenerate the systems they engage with. This approach is closely aligned with the concept of Ecosystem-Wide Flourishing (EWF), which recognizes the interconnectedness of all system components (Fazey et al., 2016). When one aspect of a system thrives, it can create positive ripple effects throughout the entire ecosystem, enhancing overall system health and resilience. EWF is evaluated through both subjective measures, such as perceptions of well-being, and objective metrics, including productivity and financial performance. The integration of regenerative practices fosters stakeholder well-being, builds resilience, and cultivates positive feedback loops that contribute to long-term flourishing (Robinson & Cole, 2015).

A practical example of regenerative practices in action can be seen in the work of Foodvalley NL, an independent organization based in Wageningen, Netherlands. Foodvalley puts thoughts and ambitions into practice, driving collective action with frontrunners across sectors and countries to shape the future of food. By focusing on creating desired future states, Foodvalley provides a pathway for systemic change and ecological restoration in the food industry.

Foodvalley's approach to regenerative practices is evident in several key initiatives. The Bean Deal initiative, which fostered around 19 new projects and engaged 72 participants in 2023, demonstrates how regenerative practices can promote ecosystem-wide flourishing while maintaining financial sustainability. Additionally, Foodvalley's collaboration with EIT Food and the Food Collective on the European Regenerative Innovation Portfolio Initiative aims to remove system-level barriers to farmers' adoption of regenerative agriculture, embodying the principles of regenerative business practices.

The financial implications of adopting regenerative practices are significant, offering both operational and strategic benefits. Companies integrating these practices often reduce operational costs by utilizing recyclable and biodegradable materials, while simultaneously enhancing their brand value by appealing to environmentally conscious consumers. For instance, Foodvalley NL's 2023 Annual Report underscores the organization's dual focus on sustainable food innovation and sound financial management. The report reveals that Foodvalley generated a total income of €5,684,800, predominantly from funding sources such as €3,950,992 from AF2030 and €862,268 from other subsidy projects.

This robust financial foundation enables Foodvalley to pursue its mission of ensuring food security for 10 billion people by 2050 through affordable and sustainable food production. Notable initiatives in 2023 included the Bean Deal, which facilitated new projects and collaborations, and a personalized nutrition pilot designed to improve health outcomes in care settings. Despite a minor net loss of €32,651, Foodvalley remains financially resilient due to strong support from the Province of Gelderland and its expanding network of 259 partner organizations. The report emphasizes the critical role of collaboration and innovation in tackling systemic challenges within the food industry, positioning Foodvalley as a leader in driving transformative change toward sustainability.

This research investigates the integration of regenerative practices into business operations, examining their potential to restore ecosystems, enhance stakeholder engagement, and ensure long-term sustainability. The methodology will combine interviews and surveys to collect qualitative and quantitative data on the implementation and outcomes of these practices. This comprehensive approach will provide insights into how regenerative practices contribute to ecosystem-wide restoration and business success by using Foodvalley NL as our main subject in this research.

In conclusion, regenerative practices offer a transformative framework for addressing environmental challenges by focusing on restoring and enhancing ecosystems rather than merely minimizing harm. These practices foster resilience, innovation, and sustainability, aligning with the concept of Ecosystem-Wide Flourishing, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all system components.

Foodvalley NL exemplifies how adopting regenerative practices can catalyze systemic change, support ecological restoration, and create financial value through collaboration and innovation. By incorporating these practices, businesses can reduce costs, strengthen stakeholder relationships, and meet the growing demand for sustainable solutions. This research highlights the potential of regenerative practices to revolutionize business operations, contributing to healthier ecosystems and more resilient communities. Companies that embrace this approach can position themselves as leaders in the transition toward a sustainable and thriving future.

1.2 Management Problem

How can organisations integrate regenerative practices into their daily operations to enhance long-term financial sustainability, while balancing environmental restoration and social equity?

1.3 Research Questions

How do regenerative practices impact the operational and financial outcomes of businesses?

- What are the key challenges organisations face when implementing regenerative practices in their daily operations?
- How do regenerative practices contribute long-term profitability?
- In what ways does adopting regenerative practices influence brand value and customer loyalty?
- What are the best practices for implementing regenerative practices in daily operations, and how do they contribute to operational efficiency, financial outcomes, and ecosystem-wide flourishing?

1.4 Objectivity

The main objectives of these study:

- Develop a comprehensive framework for integrating regenerative practices into daily organizational operations.
- Enhance long-term financial sustainability through the adoption of regenerative methods.
- Foster environmental restoration by embedding eco-friendly and regenerative principles into core business practices.
- Provide a practical, scalable guide for other companies to adopt and implement similar methods in their operations effectively.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Background

In response to growing environmental and social challenges, businesses are increasingly adopting sustainable and regenerative practices in their operations. Traditional corporate strategies that focus solely on financial gains are evolving to include broader commitments to environmental restoration and social well-being. This shift is supported by key theoretical perspectives, including Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Stakeholder Theory, Regenerative Agriculture, and the concept of Ecosystem-Wide Flourishing.

Regenerative practices go beyond sustainability by actively restoring ecosystems and improving biodiversity (Gulaiya et al., 2024; Teoh, 2024). These approaches align with ESG principles, which emphasize responsible corporate behavior in environmental protection, social responsibility, and ethical governance (Jamali et al., 2017; Turban & Greening, 1997). ESG-compliant firms have been found to demonstrate better governance, reduced earnings volatility, and improved access to lower-cost funds (Kumar, 2020). Similarly, CSR highlights the importance of businesses contributing positively to society by committing to economic growth while preserving social and environmental well-being (Barauskaite & Streimikiene, 2020). Stakeholder Theory further reinforces the necessity of considering the interests of all parties involved in a company's operations to achieve long-term success (Gilbert & Rasche, 2008; Sarikaya, 2009).

Regenerative agriculture serves as a practical example of how businesses can integrate these principles into daily production, benefiting both the environment and long-term business resilience. By enhancing soil health, improving biodiversity, and reducing carbon footprints, regenerative agriculture contributes to ecosystem-wide flourishing, where ecological, social, and economic systems thrive together (Jiang, 2022). Companies like Foodvalley NL exemplify the integration of regenerative practices into corporate strategies, demonstrating how sustainability initiatives can drive systemic change and financial viability.

Despite the potential benefits, implementing regenerative practices presents challenges, such as resistance to change, complexity in measuring impact, and balancing different stakeholder interests (Jamali et al., 2017; Kumar, 2020). However, companies that successfully adopt these approaches can create long-term value by fostering environmental health, social equity, and financial stability.

2.2 Theoretical foundations

2.2.1 Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)

In definition, ESG is defined as a firm's obligation to improve social welfare; and equitable and sustainable long-term wealth for stakeholders (Jamali etal.,2017;Turban and Greening, 1997). ESG compliant firms are found to have better governance, care more for the environment and sustainable development, have less earnings volatility and have access to lower cost funds (Kumar, 2020).

ESG aligns seamlessly with concepts such as ecosystem-wide flourishing and regenerative practices by emphasizing interconnected systems that thrive together. For instance, integrating regenerative agriculture into corporate ESG strategies directly addresses environmental components by restoring ecosystems and reducing carbon footprints. Companies like Foodvalley NL exemplify this integration through initiatives that not only promote biodiversity but also foster stakeholder engagement and collaboration. ESG's social dimension is similarly reflected in efforts to enhance community well-being and inclusivity, creating a virtuous cycle where environmental restoration bolsters societal health and financial performance. The governance aspect ensures transparency, accountability, and ethical decision-making, which are pivotal for aligning organizational objectives with broader sustainability goals.

However, adopting ESG principles poses challenges, including resistance to change, measurement complexities, and aligning diverse stakeholder interests. Strategic solutions such as fostering cross-sector partnerships, investing in innovation, and enhancing ESG reporting frameworks are essential for overcoming these barriers. Foodvalley NL's success demonstrates the potential for ESG to drive systemic change through collaborative initiatives that align economic objectives with environmental and social priorities. By embedding ESG into their operational and strategic frameworks, organizations can navigate the complex dynamics of modern sustainability challenges while creating long-term value for all stakeholders. This approach not only mitigates immediate risks but also ensures resilience, adaptability, and the flourishing of interconnected systems over time.

2.2.2 Corporate social responsibility

According to Barauskaite and Streimikiene (2020) "There are numerous definitions of corporate social responsibility but the principal idea is that firms commit to economic and societal development, as well as preserve the environment ".

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the concept that businesses should not only focus on profit maximization but also contribute positively to society and the environment. It involves practices that support sustainable development, address societal challenges, and minimize environmental impact. According to Barauskaite and Streimikiene (2020), CSR entails a commitment to both economic growth and the preservation of social and environmental well-being.

In the context of this research, CSR is directly relevant as the integration of regenerative practices into business operations aligns with the broader principles of CSR. By adopting regenerative practices, companies are not only enhancing their financial sustainability but are also contributing to environmental restoration and social equity, which are key elements of CSR. This research explores how regenerative business models, rooted in CSR principles, can foster long-term sustainability while addressing pressing environmental challenges, thereby contributing to ecosystem-wide flourishing and enhancing overall corporate responsibility.

2.2.3 Stakeholder theory

According to Gilbert and Rasche (2008) “Stakeholder theory highlights the necessity to serve all the stakeholders regardless of the amount of their legal interests in an organisation and deals with the relationships with the stakeholders both in terms of the process and the outcome “. In addition to Gilbert and Rasche definition regarding stakeholder theory, Sarikaya (2009) also suggests that this theory “The relationships with stakeholders can be managed effectively and claims that successful business management is based on the relationships and collaboration practices with stakeholders”.

The principles of stakeholder theory align closely with the integration of regenerative practices and the concept of ecosystem-wide flourishing. Regenerative agriculture, for instance, thrives on active collaboration among stakeholders, including businesses, farmers, and communities. The research into the use of regenerative practices in a company’s daily production highlights how these practices can enhance ecosystem-wide flourishing by fostering relationships that prioritize ecological restoration and stakeholder engagement. Initiatives such as Foodvalley NL’s Bean Deal illustrate the power of stakeholder collaboration in driving projects that restore ecosystems, improve community well-being, and maintain financial sustainability. By engaging stakeholders effectively, organizations can ensure that diverse perspectives and needs are integrated into their regenerative strategies, creating resilient and thriving systems.

Despite its advantages, managing stakeholder relationships in the context of regenerative practices poses challenges. Conflicting interests, communication barriers, and the complexity of aligning ecological, social, and economic goals can hinder progress. Organizations must adopt inclusive engagement strategies, establish transparent communication channels, and foster trust through consistent and ethical practices. Foodvalley NL's initiatives serve as a model, demonstrating how effective stakeholder collaboration can drive systemic change and contribute to ecosystem-wide flourishing. By embedding stakeholder theory into their approach to regenerative practices, companies can align their operations with the principles of sustainability, resilience, and holistic well-being, ensuring long-term success and positive environmental impact.

2.2.4 Regenerative agriculture

Regenerative agriculture is a holistic farming approach that seeks to restore and enhance soil health, biodiversity, and ecosystem functionality while promoting sustainable food production. This method integrates practices such as cover cropping, reduced tillage, and diverse cropping systems, which collectively improve soil structure, increase microbial activity, and enhance nutrient cycling. The ultimate goal is to create resilient agricultural systems that not only yield food but also contribute positively to the environment and rural communities (Gulaiya et al., 2024) (Teoh, 2024).

Regenerative agriculture provides a comprehensive approach for addressing ecological degradation and promoting sustainable practices in both agricultural and corporate settings. This approach integrates methods such as cover cropping, reduced tillage, and diverse cropping systems to restore soil health, enhance biodiversity, and improve nutrient cycling. Unlike traditional sustainability efforts that focus on minimizing harm, regenerative agriculture aims to restore and regenerate ecosystems, aligning closely with the concept of Ecosystem-Wide Flourishing (EWF). EWF emphasizes the interconnectedness of ecosystem components and the systemic benefits of their collective thriving. By adopting regenerative practices, businesses can create resilient systems that yield environmental, social, and financial benefits.

The application of regenerative practices in corporate operations offers a transformative pathway for achieving systemic change. Companies like Foodvalley NL exemplify the potential of these practices through initiatives such as the Bean Deal, which fosters collaboration to restore ecosystems while maintaining financial viability. The feedback loop created by regenerative practices is evident: ecological restoration enhances operational efficiency, reduces costs, and strengthens brand value, which in turn promotes stakeholder engagement and systemic innovation. These principles demonstrate how regenerative practices not only contribute to ecological restoration but also support long-term organizational success and resilience.

Despite its benefits, the adoption of regenerative practices is not without challenges. High initial costs, resistance to change, and gaps in knowledge are significant barriers to widespread implementation. Addressing these obstacles requires strategic partnerships, collaborative initiatives, and the dissemination of best practices. Foodvalley NL's work exemplifies how these challenges can be overcome through innovation and resource sharing. By embedding regenerative principles into their operations, businesses can align their strategies with EWF, fostering ecosystem-wide flourishing while achieving financial and operational sustainability. This underscores the transformative potential of regenerative agriculture in creating sustainable futures for both ecosystems and organizations.

2.2.5 Ecosystem-wide flourishing

Ecosystem-wide flourishing, termed intersystemic flourishing, refers to the interconnected well-being of individuals, communities, and ecosystems, emphasizing the integral relationship between social and psychological spheres, and recognizing that health and flourishing are mutually constitutive within a holistic context.(Jiang, 2022). By viewing ecosystems as integrated wholes, ecosystem-wide flourishing challenges traditional models of sustainability, which often focus narrowly on mitigating harm, and instead promotes restoration, resilience, and co-evolution within and across systems.

The principles of ecosystem-wide flourishing align closely with regenerative practices, which seek to restore ecological balance while enhancing social and economic systems. For example, regenerative agriculture's focus on soil health, biodiversity, and nutrient cycling directly supports the foundational ecological components that underpin flourishing. Similarly, corporate adoption of regenerative principles—as seen in initiatives like Foodvalley NL's Bean Deal—demonstrates how businesses can contribute to systemic flourishing by fostering collaboration and ecological restoration. These efforts create positive feedback loops: healthier ecosystems lead to improved community well-being, which further supports economic resilience and environmental regeneration. Such interdependencies highlight the transformative potential of aligning organizational practices with the tenets of ecosystem-wide flourishing.

Ecosystem-wide flourishing is a complex process that requires strategic interventions like cross-sector partnerships, stakeholder engagement, and education. Foodvalley NL's initiatives focus on ecological restoration and financial sustainability. By integrating ecosystem-wide flourishing into operational and strategic frameworks, organizations can balance environmental, social, and economic objectives. This approach not only addresses immediate challenges but also builds long-term resilience, emphasizing the connection between thriving ecosystems and flourishing communities.

2.2.6 Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)

In definition, ESG is defined as a firm's obligation to improve social welfare; and equitable and sustainable long-term wealth for stakeholders (Jamali etal.,2017;Turban and Greening, 1997). ESG compliant firms are found to have better governance, care more for the environment and sustainable development, have less earnings volatility and have access to lower cost funds (Kumar, 2020).

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However, adopting ESG principles poses challenges, including resistance to change, measurement complexities, and aligning diverse stakeholder interests. Strategic solutions such as fostering cross-sector partnerships, investing in innovation, and enhancing ESG reporting frameworks are essential for overcoming these barriers. Foodvalley NL's success demonstrates the potential for ESG to drive systemic change through collaborative initiatives that align economic objectives with environmental and social priorities. By embedding ESG into their operational and strategic frameworks, organizations can navigate the complex dynamics of modern sustainability challenges while creating long-term value for all stakeholders. This approach not only mitigates immediate risks but also ensures resilience, adaptability, and the flourishing of interconnected systems over time.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Research Methodology

3.1.2 Research design.

This study adopts a mixed-method research design that integrates both primary and secondary data sources to explore the role of regenerative practices in enhancing ecosystem-wide flourishing. The primary data is gathered through **interviews** with key stakeholders, including business leaders, sustainability managers, and industry experts. These in-depth interviews are designed to provide detailed insights into how companies are integrating regenerative practices into their operations, the challenges they face, and the impact of these practices on both environmental and financial outcomes.

Interviews allow for rich, qualitative data that reflects the experiences and perspectives of individuals directly involved in the implementation of regenerative strategies, offering an invaluable understanding of their practical implications (Robinson & Cole, 2015). By focusing on personal accounts and expert opinions, the primary data collection is aimed at capturing the specific context and nuances of regenerative practices, which cannot be fully understood through secondary data alone.

In addition to the primary data, **secondary data** is collected from various sources, including academic articles, journal papers, and previous research studies. These sources provide a broader understanding of the theoretical foundations of regenerative practices and their applications in different organizational settings. Secondary data serves to complement the primary data by offering contextual and historical perspectives that help situate the findings within the broader field of sustainability and environmental management.

According to Boslaugh (2007), the distinction between primary and secondary data lies in the relationship between the data collector and the research team. If the data set was collected specifically for the purpose of the current research, it is considered primary data; if it was collected for a different purpose by another researcher, it is classified as secondary data. This distinction ensures clarity in how data is categorized and utilized in the research process.

For the primary data collection, the research employs a **purposive sampling** technique, a non-probability sampling method. This method is particularly suited to this study because it allows for the selection of individuals who have direct experience with regenerative practices and can offer specialized insights. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to focus on specific individuals or groups who are most knowledgeable about the subject matter, ensuring that the data collected is rich and highly relevant to the research objectives.

As noted in the Encyclopaedia of Social Measurement (2005), non-probability sampling techniques such as purposive sampling are essential for exploratory research where the goal is to obtain detailed, context-specific information rather than to achieve statistical generalizability. This approach is aligned with the research's aim of understanding how businesses are integrating regenerative practices and the challenges they face, rather than aiming for a broad, generalizable sample.

To strengthen the robustness of the study, the secondary data is used to supplement the primary data, drawing on academic literature and case studies that have explored the implementation of regenerative practices in various industries. This secondary data provides comparative insights, demonstrating how other organizations have approached regenerative practices, the challenges they encountered, and the outcomes they achieved. By synthesizing both primary and secondary data, the research aims to offer a comprehensive view of the subject, combining real-world examples with theoretical insights to build a well-rounded analysis of regenerative practices (Colloff et al., 2017). This combination of data types ensures that the research is not only grounded in empirical evidence but also informed by the wider scholarly conversation on sustainability and environmental restoration.

The research methodology also acknowledges the complexity of measuring the impacts of regenerative practices on both financial sustainability and environmental restoration. Secondary data provides useful benchmarks and best practices that can help contextualize the primary findings. The integration of these data sources will allow for a more thorough understanding of the economic and ecological benefits of regenerative practices, contributing to the development of a practical framework for businesses seeking to implement similar approaches. As Boslaugh (2007) asserts, secondary data, while not collected for the specific purpose of the current research, can still be invaluable in offering broader perspectives and enhancing the interpretation of primary data. Through this combined approach, the study will not only explore the financial viability of regenerative practices but also examine their role in fostering long-term environmental sustainability, creating a comprehensive view of how these practices contribute to ecosystem-wide flourishing.

3.1.3 Data collection

In this research, data collection involves both primary and secondary sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of how businesses integrate regenerative practices into their operations. According to Boslaugh (2007), the distinction between primary and secondary data is defined by the relationship between the researcher and the data set. If the data is collected directly by the researcher for the specific purpose of the study at hand, it is considered primary data. In contrast, if the data was collected by someone else for a different purpose and is later utilized by the researcher for analysis, it is regarded as secondary data. This research primarily uses secondary data from previous studies, articles, and journals to provide a broader understanding of environmental accounting practices and the application of regenerative strategies within businesses.

The secondary data used in this study offers valuable insights into the theoretical frameworks and practical applications of regenerative practices. These sources include academic journals, case studies, industry reports, and other relevant publications that examine environmental sustainability efforts in the corporate sector.

By analyzing these secondary data sources, the study is able to build upon existing knowledge about how organizations can implement regenerative practices in their operations, the challenges they face, and the results they achieve. As Boslaugh (2007) highlights, secondary data can be invaluable in providing a broader context for understanding the research question, allowing for a more comprehensive and informed analysis of the primary data collected through interviews and other direct sources.

For this research, secondary data serves as a foundation upon which the primary data is contextualized. The secondary sources help clarify the broader trends in sustainability and regenerative practices, such as the growing role of environmental accounting in corporate decision-making. These articles and journals provide a broader perspective on the importance of sustainability within corporate strategies, which is essential for understanding the broader application of regenerative practices. As Boslaugh (2007) notes, the relationship between primary and secondary data is crucial for determining how different sources of information are utilized to answer specific research questions. By combining these two types of data, the research offers a more holistic approach to understanding regenerative practices and their impact on both the environment and business operations.

In conclusion, this research draws upon secondary data to offer a well-rounded analysis of regenerative practices in business. While primary data from interviews with stakeholders provides specific, detailed insights into individual company practices, the secondary data contextualizes these findings within the broader landscape of environmental sustainability efforts. The integration of secondary data from previous studies allows for a deeper understanding of regenerative practices and contributes to the development of a practical framework that businesses can adopt.

3.1.4 Data analysis

The data analysis for this research will combine qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the integration of regenerative practices in business operations. Primary data will be collected through interviews with key stakeholders from businesses that have adopted regenerative practices. Thematic analysis will be employed to identify common themes and patterns across the interview data. This approach will provide a deep understanding of the challenges and benefits of implementing regenerative strategies, as well as the perceived outcomes. By analyzing the experiences of business leaders, this qualitative data will offer insights into the practical aspects of adopting regenerative practices and their impact on both environmental and financial sustainability.

Secondary data, including academic articles, industry reports, and case studies, will be used to contextualize the primary data. This broader context will help examine how regenerative practices have been applied across different industries and their overall effectiveness. A comparative analysis will be conducted between the primary data and the secondary literature to identify areas of alignment or discrepancy. Additionally, secondary data will provide valuable insights into the financial, environmental, and social implications of adopting regenerative practices. This analysis will enrich the understanding of how such practices contribute to long-term sustainability and ecosystem restoration.

To evaluate the financial impact of regenerative practices, quantitative data on key metrics such as cost reductions, profitability, and market share growth will be analyzed. Financial performance data before and after the implementation of regenerative practices will be used to assess their economic viability. Furthermore, customer-related data, including brand value and loyalty, will be analyzed to determine how regenerative practices influence consumer behavior and brand positioning. By triangulating both qualitative and quantitative data, the analysis will offer a comprehensive perspective on the operational, environmental, and financial outcomes of adopting regenerative practices, providing a practical framework for businesses to enhance long-term sustainability.

In addition to financial performance, the analysis will explore the broader social impacts of regenerative practices, particularly on stakeholder engagement and community relations. Interview data will be examined to understand how businesses that implement regenerative practices interact with employees, local communities, and other stakeholders. This social dimension is essential for understanding how businesses can balance environmental restoration with social equity, a key aspect of regenerative practices. Secondary data will also provide insights into successful community-driven regenerative initiatives, offering a broader perspective on how businesses can foster positive social change through their operations.

The research will also identify barriers to the widespread adoption of regenerative practices. Qualitative interview data will shed light on common challenges businesses face, such as resistance to change, lack of resources, or insufficient regulatory frameworks. These challenges will be compared to solutions identified in secondary sources, including best practices from companies that have successfully overcome obstacles. This dual approach will help identify actionable recommendations for businesses seeking to integrate regenerative practices into their daily operations, further supporting the development of a sustainable and scalable framework for long-term business success.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY FINDINGS

4.1 Background

Regenerative farming practices offer a way to improve soil health and reduce carbon emissions, but they come with financial challenges. These practices are more expensive than conventional methods, and farmers face reduced production volumes initially. Moreover, most consumers are unwilling to pay premium prices for regeneratively produced crops, creating financial pressure across the value chain.

To address these challenges, organizations like Foodvalley NL are taking the lead. As highlighted by Mr. Guido Laman, Foodvalley's Head of Strategy, Foodvalley works to unite food industry players and farmers across Europe. They establish collective agreements and financial arrangements to support the transition to regenerative practices. This approach reduces the risks for farmers and builds trust among all actors in the supply chain.

An example of this is The Bean Deal, which focuses on promoting plant-based proteins. By creating targets and fostering collaboration among retailers, farmers, and other stakeholders, initiatives like The Bean Deal encourage investment in sustainable crops and technologies. These efforts demonstrate how regenerative practices can become more competitive with conventional farming while also contributing to long-term environmental and economic sustainability.

4.2 Study Findings

Regenerative farming practices are increasingly recognized for their ability to restore ecosystems, improve soil health, and reduce carbon emissions. These methods focus on soil renewal, biodiversity enhancement, and carbon capture, promoting long-term sustainability and resilience within agricultural systems (Foodvalley NL, 2024a). Research has highlighted significant ecological and operational benefits, including healthier soils, improved biodiversity, and measurable contributions to climate mitigation through carbon sequestration (Schreefel et al., 2020).

Despite these environmental advantages, the transition to regenerative agriculture presents notable challenges for farmers. Implementing these practices requires substantial initial investment, specialized knowledge, and modifications to traditional operational models. These hurdles can result in short-term yield reductions and financial strain, particularly during the early phases of adoption (LaCanne & Lundgren, 2018). Without adequate support structures and financial incentives, many farmers struggle to shift away from conventional agricultural methods.

The widespread adoption of regenerative techniques is further hindered by market limitations, including limited consumer engagement and reluctance to pay premium prices for regenerative products (Newton et al., 2020). Consumer awareness of these practices remains low, and many are hesitant to invest in sustainably produced goods at higher costs. Farmers making this transition frequently experience increased production expenses and initial yield reductions, compounding financial pressures (Foodvalley NL, 2024c; Foodvalley NL, 2023c). Additionally, the absence of strong market incentives continues to challenge the economic viability and competitiveness of regenerative farming within modern food systems (Foodvalley NL, 2023c).

4.2.1 Financial Challenges and Market Competitiveness

The transition to regenerative agriculture presents significant financial challenges for farmers, startups, and other actors across the food value chain. One of the most pressing concerns is the higher cost of regenerative farming compared to conventional methods, as it requires substantial investments in new equipment, innovative techniques, and specialized training. These upfront expenses are further exacerbated by reduced production volumes and income instability during the early transition phase, increasing financial risk and discouraging adoption (Yale Center for Business and the Environment, 2024; Wageningen University & Research, 2024). Additionally, financial systems frequently fail to accommodate the longer payback periods and unique risk profiles associated with regenerative agriculture, creating a "bankability gap" that limits access to suitable capital for farmers undergoing the transition (Yale Center for Business and the Environment, 2024). This economic pressure is further compounded by the fragmented nature of supply chains, which can restrict access to markets willing to pay premiums for regenerative products (Foodvalley NL, 2023c).

Market competitiveness presents another significant barrier, as limited consumer willingness to pay premium prices for regeneratively produced goods restricts demand growth. Despite the environmental and health benefits associated with these products, affordability and convenience remain top priorities for consumers, making it difficult for regenerative producers to compete with conventional agricultural goods based on price alone (Das & Bocken, 2024; Wageningen University & Research, 2024). This price sensitivity creates financial uncertainty for farmers and businesses, as they struggle to recoup their investments in sustainable practices and expand beyond niche markets (Foodvalley NL, 2023c). Additionally, the fragmented nature of supply chains and the small scale of regenerative farms create obstacles to accessing premium markets and achieving economies of scale, further limiting financial viability (Schreefel et al., 2020; Das & Bocken, 2024; Foodvalley NL, 2023c).

Regulatory uncertainty further complicates the transition to regenerative agriculture. Policies governing biodiversity protection, carbon accounting, and sustainable sourcing frequently change and vary across regions, making long-term investment decisions increasingly difficult for farmers and companies (Das & Bocken, 2024; Wageningen University & Research, 2024; Foodvalley NL, 2023a). The absence of stable and supportive policy frameworks increases perceived risks, discouraging financial institutions from providing adequate funding for regenerative initiatives (De Nederlandsche Bank, 2023). Without strong regulatory support, the adoption of regenerative agriculture remains financially challenging and subject to fluctuations in policy direction, further deterring widespread implementation.

Beyond financial and regulatory hurdles, operational complexity and stakeholder coordination pose additional challenges. Farmers, processors, retailers, and financiers often operate in isolation, lacking the collaborative infrastructure needed to share risks and align incentives effectively (Das & Bocken, 2024; Schreefel et al., 2020). This fragmentation restricts the scalability of regenerative practices and prevents the establishment of cohesive market systems capable of supporting sustainable sourcing at a larger scale. Without improved coordination and market integration, regenerative agriculture risks remaining small-scale rather than becoming a viable alternative to conventional farming models (Foodvalley NL, 2023a; Foodvalley NL, 2023c).

For companies seeking to enhance ecosystem-wide flourishing, integrating regenerative practices into daily operations requires overcoming financial, market, and regulatory challenges. The initial transition demands significant investment in equipment, training, and innovative techniques, often resulting in short-term economic strain. Additionally, market dynamics pose obstacles, as consumer reluctance to pay premium prices for regeneratively produced goods limits profitability, while fragmented supply chains restrict scalability. Regulatory uncertainty further complicates adoption, with shifting policies making long-term investment decisions risky. Addressing these barriers necessitates systemic interventions, including stronger financial incentives, improved consumer awareness, and supportive policy frameworks. By tackling these challenges, companies can unlock the potential of regenerative practices, transforming sustainability efforts into a scalable model that fosters long-term ecosystem resilience and economic viability.

4.2.2 Systemic Incentives Driving Industry Support

Despite financial and operational challenges, systemic incentives are increasingly driving industry support for regenerative agriculture. Foodvalley NL's Head of Strategy, Guido Laman, identifies two primary environmental factors motivating the food sector: the urgent need to reduce soil degradation and the imperative to lower carbon emissions through on-farm sequestration. Soil degradation threatens long-term agricultural productivity and resilience, while carbon sequestration supports global climate mitigation targets. These ecosystem services align closely with corporate sustainability goals and regulatory requirements, making regenerative practices an attractive investment for companies looking to enhance their environmental impact (Foodvalley NL, 2024a). Scientific research demonstrates that regenerative techniques—such as cover cropping, reduced tillage, and crop diversification—directly address these environmental concerns by improving soil health, fostering biodiversity, and increasing carbon storage, all of which contribute to long-term ecosystem stability (Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems, 2025; Schreefel et al., 2020).

Beyond environmental benefits, the integration of regenerative agriculture aligns with corporate sustainability commitments and regulatory frameworks. The EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) reinforces demand for regenerative sourcing by linking environmental outcomes to brand reputation, investor expectations, and climate risk mitigation (Schreefel et al., 2020; Bless et al., 2023). Companies increasingly recognize that incorporating regenerative practices into their supply chains strengthens their sustainability profile, helping them meet industry regulations while enhancing stakeholder trust. This alignment between environmental objectives and business incentives encourages companies to pay premium prices for regeneratively produced crops, which is essential for supporting farmers in their transition and mitigating financial risks associated with the shift (Foodvalley NL, 2024a). As a result, corporate engagement in regenerative agriculture is steadily growing as businesses seek to meet sustainability targets while securing long-term supply chain resilience.

Industry collaboration plays a crucial role in overcoming systemic barriers to regenerative adoption. Foodvalley NL facilitates multi-stakeholder partnerships involving farmers, processors, retailers, research institutions, and policymakers. These collaborations foster knowledge exchange, shared risk management, and coordinated investment strategies—key elements in scaling regenerative practices beyond pilot initiatives (Foodvalley NL, 2023b). Collaborative industry efforts provide farmers with essential resources, technical guidance, and financial support, making it easier to integrate regenerative methods into daily operations. Case studies such as The Bean Deal highlight the effectiveness of collective action in accelerating adoption rates and maximizing ecosystem-wide benefits (Bless et al., 2023).

Further demonstrating the significance of coordinated action, The Bean Deal exemplifies how supply chain alignment can drive the transition to regenerative agriculture. This initiative brings together 72 partners across the plant-based protein supply chain to set shared sustainability targets and encourage regenerative farming practices. By reducing market uncertainty and incentivizing upstream stakeholders to diversify crops and invest in breeding innovations, The Bean Deal accelerates the widespread implementation of regenerative agriculture. Such industry-led models demonstrate how collaborative frameworks can scale regenerative practices, making them more economically viable and accessible for producers (Foodvalley NL, 2022).

While systemic incentives are helping to overcome key barriers, continued policy support, industry collaboration, and financial investment are necessary to ensure long-term success in regenerative agriculture. Strengthening corporate sustainability commitments, expanding regulatory incentives, and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships will be essential in driving further adoption across the industry. By addressing financial risks, regulatory uncertainties, and market competitiveness, regenerative practices can become a foundational element of sustainable food production, supporting both business growth and ecosystem-wide flourishing.

4.2.3 Foodvalley NL's Role in Ecosystem Collaboration

Foodvalley NL plays a crucial role as an ecosystem orchestrator in enabling the transition to regenerative agriculture. The organization acts as a connector, bringing together diverse stakeholders to co-create solutions that address financial, operational, and knowledge barriers. By facilitating innovation communities and cross-sector platforms, Foodvalley fosters collaboration among farmers, companies, researchers, and policymakers, creating an enabling environment for regenerative practices to thrive (Foodvalley NL, 2023b). This multi-stakeholder approach is essential for reducing barriers to adoption, ensuring that regenerative practices are integrated effectively into food systems.

One key aspect of Foodvalley's strategy is the provision of shared infrastructure and pilot facilities, which help lower capital costs for startups and farmers experimenting with regenerative methods. Access to these resources reduces financial risk and accelerates innovation diffusion, allowing farmers and businesses to adopt sustainable techniques with greater confidence. Additionally, Foodvalley supports startups by connecting them with corporate partners and facilitating access to grant funding, bridging financing gaps and helping regenerative solutions scale more efficiently (Foodvalley NL, 2024c). These initiatives ensure that financial hurdles do not prevent promising regenerative models from reaching mainstream adoption.

Foodvalley's Strategic Agenda 2020-2025 emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration to embed regenerative principles into the food system. Programs such as the Healthier Food Community unite over 125 partners to co-develop healthier and more sustainable food environments. These collaborative platforms enable continuous learning, joint project development, and policy engagement, all of which are critical for mainstreaming regenerative agriculture (Foodvalley NL, 2023b). By aligning incentives between stakeholders, Foodvalley creates a framework for long-term engagement, ensuring that regenerative practices become an integral part of food industry operations.

Beyond financial and operational support, Foodvalley's ecosystem model integrates financial innovation with governance and knowledge sharing. By aligning incentives across the value chain and fostering trust among actors, the organization reduces the risks associated with regenerative transitions. This systemic orchestration is essential for overcoming the fragmentation and complexity inherent in food systems, enabling regenerative agriculture to scale effectively (Foodvalley NL, 2024a). As Guido Laman, Foodvalley NL strategist, has stated, the organization brings together food industry players and farmers across Europe to collaborate on financial arrangements that allow farmers to transition to regenerative practices over the long term while reducing associated risks.

The Bean Deal is another initiative demonstrating how collective agreements can drive regenerative agriculture forward.As Guido Laman has highlighted, this initiative fosters trust between supply chain actors by establishing shared commitments, which in turn encourage confidence in transitioning to plant-based proteins. Retailers setting targets for plant-based production help stimulate demand, creating greater certainty for farmers investing in crop diversification and breeding innovations. Such initiatives illustrate how systemic collaboration fosters trust, reduces uncertainty, and accelerates the adoption of sustainable food production models (Foodvalley NL, 2022). Through coordinated action and financial arrangements, Foodvalley NL is paving the way for regenerative agriculture to become a cornerstone of ecosystem-wide flourishing.

4.2.4 Scaling Regenerative Practices through Collaborative Innovation

Scaling regenerative practices within a company's daily operations to achieve ecosystem-wide flourishing requires systemic collaboration and innovation that transcend isolated efforts. Research highlights that successful scaling depends on multi-actor engagement and landscape-level approaches that integrate ecological, social, and economic objectives to drive systemic transformation (Konietzko et al., 2023). Collaborative innovation portfolios, developed by leading organizations, facilitate partnerships among farmers, governments, investors, and retailers to co-create sourcing models that share costs, knowledge, and risks, enabling the widespread adoption of regenerative practices (Konietzko et al., 2023). Theoretical frameworks for regenerative social-ecological systems emphasize that these approaches foster positive reinforcing cycles of well-being, benefiting both human and natural communities while enhancing long-term ecosystem resilience (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2023). Foodvalley NL's Regenerative Innovation Portfolio serves as an example of this approach by supporting landscape-based projects that align ecological, social, and economic objectives to facilitate scalable regenerative agriculture across Europe (Foodvalley NL, 2024a).

Empirical studies suggest that landscape-scale initiatives, which integrate comprehensive monitoring of ecological and socio-economic indicators, are vital for demonstrating measurable environmental and social benefits while securing stakeholder buy-in (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2023). Additionally, innovation communities and knowledge-sharing platforms play a crucial role in reducing transaction costs and enhancing collective capacity, accelerating the diffusion of regenerative techniques across supply chains (Konietzko et al., 2023). Ultimately, research underscores that collaborative innovation—anchored in strong partnerships and shared learning—creates the enabling environment necessary for embedding regenerative practices into mainstream business operations and achieving ecosystem-wide flourishing (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2023; Konietzko et al., 2023; Schreefel et al., 2020).

A practical illustration of this approach is Foodvalley NL's Regenerative Innovation Portfolio, which integrates ecological, social, and economic objectives by uniting farmers, regional governments, investors, and retailers in co-creating sourcing models that share costs, knowledge, and risks (Das & Bocken, 2024). The Navarra 360º project in Spain exemplifies the effectiveness of landscape-scale initiatives in scaling regenerative agriculture. Supported by €3 million in funding, the project engages 80 farmers in implementing regenerative crop rotations and tracks over 60 ecological and socio-economic indicators, including soil quality, biodiversity, water use, and carbon footprint (EIT Food, 2024). This comprehensive monitoring ensures that regenerative practices deliver measurable environmental benefits while supporting farmer livelihoods, demonstrating how structured collaboration can accelerate the adoption of sustainable food production methods (Foodvalley NL, 2024a).

Innovation communities and knowledge-sharing platforms further support scaling by reducing transaction costs and fostering collaborative learning. Foodvalley NL provides shared facilities, pilot projects, and expert resources, enabling startups and farmers to test and refine regenerative techniques. These initiatives accelerate innovation diffusion and facilitate continuous improvement, essential for embedding regenerative agriculture into mainstream supply chains (Foodvalley NL, 2023b). The EIT Food–Foodvalley partnership further amplifies these efforts, leveraging European-wide networks to replicate successful models across multiple regions. This transnational collaboration enhances policy alignment, mobilizes financial resources, and establishes a supportive ecosystem for regenerative agriculture at scale (Foodvalley NL, 2024a).

By fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, facilitating cost-sharing mechanisms, and supporting digital monitoring frameworks, the EIT Food–Foodvalley partnership accelerates the mainstreaming of regenerative agriculture. This collaborative model plays a crucial role in transforming regenerative farming from isolated pilot projects into a viable, scalable solution for sustainable food production and ecosystem-wide flourishing (Das & Bocken, 2024; EIT Food, 2024). Strengthening such industry-wide partnerships and innovation networks will be critical in ensuring regenerative agriculture becomes a mainstream business strategy that integrates environmental, social, and economic priorities across food supply chains.

4.2.5 Financial Incentives and Mechanisms

Financial innovation is critical to overcoming the economic barriers to regenerative agriculture. Foodvalley NL promotes mechanisms such as premium pricing agreements, carbon credit schemes, and blended finance models that combine grants, corporate investments, and public funding. These instruments help internalize the environmental benefits of regenerative practices and create new revenue streams for farmers, reducing financial risks and improving viability (Foodvalley NL, 2024a; Foodvalley NL, 2023c).

Guido Laman, Foodvalley strategist, stated: There are two major incentives for the food industry to promote more regenerative practices: reducing soil degradation, and therefore the resilience of the food supply, and reducing carbon emissions through carbon sequestration at the farmer level. These two incentives mean that the food industry is willing to pay more for regeneratively produced food crops, so they pay a premium price to cover the farmers' costs. Premium pricing arrangements compensate farmers for transitional costs and yield variability, providing a stable income during the shift to regenerative methods. Carbon credit schemes monetize ecosystem services such as soil carbon sequestration, enabling farmers to generate additional income by contributing to climate mitigation efforts. These financial incentives align economic interests with ecological outcomes, making regenerative agriculture more attractive to producers and investors (Foodvalley NL, 2024a).

Scientific research underscores that such mechanisms are vital in overcoming economic barriers and supporting the transition to regenerative agriculture. Premium pricing agreements and carbon credit schemes have been shown to provide tangible financial benefits to farmers, helping to offset the initial costs and risks associated with adopting regenerative practices (Manshanden et al., 2023; Schreefel et al., 2020). By internalizing the value of ecosystem services, these mechanisms create new revenue streams and make regenerative agriculture more viable for a broader range of stakeholders.

Blended finance solutions further support startups and farmers by lowering capital barriers. By combining public grants, corporate funding, and EU programs, Foodvalley facilitates access to the diverse financial resources needed to innovate and scale regenerative solutions. This approach reduces reliance on traditional financing, which often prioritizes short-term returns and undervalues ecological benefits (Manshanden et al., 2023; Schreefel et al., 2020). Such blended finance models have been recognized as essential for enabling innovation and scaling up regenerative agriculture across different contexts.

Moreover, these financial mechanisms enable companies to comply with emerging regulatory frameworks such as the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), which requires transparent reporting on environmental impacts. By integrating regenerative sourcing into their operations, companies can demonstrate progress toward sustainability targets and enhance their market positioning. Theoretical frameworks for regenerative social-ecological systems emphasize that these financial innovations do not merely address short-term profitability but also foster reinforcing cycles of well-being and resilience across human and ecological communities (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2023). By integrating regenerative sourcing and innovative finance into daily operations, companies can enhance both their market positioning and their contribution to ecosystem-wide flourishing.

4.2.6 Environmental and Social Impact Evaluation

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation are essential to validate the benefits of regenerative agriculture and build trust among stakeholders. Foodvalley NL's Regenerative Agriculture Discussion Paper outlines a comprehensive framework for assessing biophysical and socio-economic outcomes, including soil health, biodiversity, water regulation, farmer income, and landscape attractiveness (Foodvalley NL, 2021). Scientific research highlights that robust

frameworks for evaluating these outcomes are critical for measuring the true impact of regenerative practices and guiding continuous improvement (Schreefel et al., 2020).

These indicators are integrated into landscape projects and innovation portfolios to track progress and ensure accountability. For example, Navarra 360º monitors over 60 key parameters, providing data-driven insights into the ecological and social impacts of regenerative practices. Such comprehensive monitoring is not only crucial for validating environmental outcomes but also for demonstrating the business case for regenerative practices, as it enables farmers, companies, and investors to quantify ecosystem services and social value generated by these interventions (Wageningen University & Research, 2024).

Monitoring also strengthens the business case for regenerative agriculture by demonstrating tangible ecosystem services and social value. Transparent reporting builds consumer confidence and supports compliance with sustainability standards and regulations. Importantly, scientific studies emphasize that monitoring and reporting must go beyond general claims and move toward concrete, measurable, and context-specific indicators. Direct measurement methods-though often costly-provide precise data on soil health, emissions, and biodiversity, while computational models can suggest context-tailored regenerative practices and estimate their effects on both ecological and economic outcomes (Schreefel et al., 2020; van der Sluis et al., 2022). This level of rigor is essential for policymakers, funders, and supply chain actors seeking to scale regenerative agriculture and ensure its long-term viability.

Furthermore, collaborative monitoring fosters shared learning and innovation. By pooling data and experiences, stakeholders can identify best practices, address challenges, and adapt strategies to local contexts. This collective knowledge enhances the resilience and scalability of regenerative agriculture across diverse landscapes and is recognized as a cornerstone for creating net-positive agricultural systems that benefit both people and the environment (van der Sluis et al., 2022; Copernicus Institute, 2024).

Ultimately, rigorous, transparent, and collaborative impact evaluation is not only a technical necessity but also a strategic imperative for embedding regenerative practices into mainstream business operations and achieving ecosystem-wide flourishing. By integrating these scientific approaches into daily operations, companies can demonstrate progress toward sustainability targets, inform decision-making, and build enduring trust with stakeholders across the value chain.

4.2.7 Towards Ecosystem-Wide Flourishing

The findings indicate that regenerative agriculture has the potential to drive ecosystem-wide flourishing by simultaneously addressing ecological restoration, economic sustainability, and social equity. Scientific research demonstrates that regenerative practices-such as cover cropping, rotational grazing, and minimal tillage-not only restore soil health and increase biodiversity, but also contribute to resilient rural economies and improved livelihoods for farmers (Manshanden et al., 2023; Newton et al., 2021). Theoretical frameworks further emphasize that regenerative systems maintain positive reinforcing cycles of wellbeing within and beyond themselves, supporting both human and ecological flourishing at the system level (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2023).

However, realizing this potential requires overcoming significant financial, operational, and market barriers through coordinated action and innovation. Foodvalley NL's ecosystem approach demonstrates how strategic collaboration, aligned incentives, and shared goals can enable regenerative agriculture to transition from a niche practice to a mainstream, financially viable strategy (Foodvalley NL, 2024a; Manshanden et al., 2023). By orchestrating multi-stakeholder partnerships, facilitating knowledge exchange, and promoting innovative financing, Foodvalley creates the conditions necessary for systemic transformation of food systems (Foodvalley NL, 2024a).

This integrated model supports the three pillars of a flourishing ecosystem: healthy soils and biodiversity, resilient rural economies, and equitable social outcomes. Empirical research underscores that embedding regenerative principles into daily business operations contributes to sustainable food production and consumption patterns, while also enhancing climate resilience and social equity (Newton et al., 2021; O'Shaughnessy et al., 2023). Foodvalley NL's Regenerative Innovation Portfolio, for example, unites industry partners, startups, research centers, and farmers to facilitate knowledge exchange and co-create solutions that can be replicated across European landscapes (Foodvalley NL, 2024a; EIT Food, 2024).

Moreover, the success of such approaches depends on effective ecosystem orchestration. Foodvalley NL's experience highlights the importance of fostering trust, reducing risks, and aligning diverse actors to accelerate the transition toward sustainable, resilient, and flourishing food systems at regional, national, and European levels (Foodvalley NL, 2024a; Manshanden et al., 2023). Multi-actor collaboration and shared learning, as emphasized in both scientific literature and Foodvalley's practice, are essential for scaling regenerative agriculture and ensuring its long-term viability (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2023).

Ultimately, the case of Foodvalley NL and similar initiatives illustrates that achieving ecosystem-wide flourishing through regenerative agriculture is not only a technical or operational challenge, but also a matter of strategic alignment, partnership, and continuous innovation. By embedding regenerative principles into daily operations and leveraging scientific monitoring, companies and stakeholders can collectively drive the transition toward more sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems (Foodvalley NL, 2024a; Manshanden et al., 2023).

4.3 Interpretation of data

The findings of this study confirm that regenerative agriculture offers substantial environmental and social benefits, including improved soil health, enhanced biodiversity, and reduced carbon emissions (Schreefel et al., 2020; Newton et al., 2021). However, the widespread adoption of regenerative practices is constrained by significant financial, operational, and market barriers. Farmers and companies face higher initial costs due to investments in new equipment, training, and innovative techniques, while the transition period often brings reduced yields and income instability (Manshanden et al., 2023; Schreefel et al., 2020). Compounding these challenges are limited consumer willingness to pay premium prices for regeneratively produced goods, regulatory uncertainty, and fragmented supply chains, all of which increase the risks and complexity of long-term planning and investment (Foodvalley NL, 2024a; Manshanden et al., 2023).

Despite these obstacles, the research highlights that systemic incentives and collaborative innovation can effectively address many of these challenges. Multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as Foodvalley NL's Regenerative Innovation Portfolio and The Bean Deal, exemplify how coordinated action among farmers, companies, government bodies, and knowledge institutions can align incentives, share risks, and build supportive networks (Foodvalley NL, 2024a; EIT Food, 2024). These collaborative frameworks facilitate knowledge exchange, continuous learning, and adaptive management, which are essential for embedding regenerative practices into daily operations and scaling them across regions (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2023; Newton et al., 2021).

A critical enabler of this transition is financial innovation, which encompasses a suite of mechanisms designed to internalize the environmental and social value of regenerative agriculture. Premium pricing agreements compensate farmers for transitional costs and yield variability, providing income stability during the shift to regenerative methods (Manshanden et al., 2023). Carbon credit schemes monetize ecosystem services, such as soil carbon sequestration, allowing farmers to generate additional revenue while contributing to climate mitigation (Schreefel et al., 2020). Blended finance models-combining public grants, corporate investments, and EU funding-lower capital barriers for startups and farmers, facilitating access to the diverse financial resources needed to innovate and scale regenerative solutions (Manshanden et al., 2023; O'Shaughnessy et al., 2023). These mechanisms not only reduce reliance on traditional, risk-averse financing but also align economic interests with ecological outcomes, making regenerative agriculture more attractive to both producers and investors.

Rigorous monitoring and transparent evaluation are also central to validating the benefits of regenerative agriculture and building trust among stakeholders. Scientific frameworks emphasize the importance of integrating biophysical and socio-economic indicators-such as soil health, biodiversity, water regulation, and farmer income-into landscape projects and innovation portfolios (Schreefel et al., 2020; van der Sluis et al., 2022). Comprehensive monitoring, as demonstrated in projects like Navarra 360º, provides data-driven insights that support continuous improvement, inform policy and investment decisions, and strengthen the business case for regenerative agriculture (Wageningen University & Research, 2024). Collaborative monitoring and shared learning further enhance the resilience and scalability of regenerative practices across diverse landscapes (Copernicus Institute, 2024).

Ultimately, the research underscores that the ability of stakeholders to coordinate efforts, share resources, and remain adaptable in the face of shifting market and policy conditions is pivotal for the widespread adoption of regenerative agriculture and the realization of ecosystem-wide flourishing (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2023; Foodvalley NL, 2024a). Foodvalley NL's ecosystem approach offers a realistic example of how multi-stakeholder cooperation, targeted financial innovation, and thorough monitoring can help regenerative agriculture transition from niche to mainstream. By embedding regenerative principles into daily operations and supply chains, businesses and their partners can collectively drive the transformation toward a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable food system for the future.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

The findings of this research highlight that integrating regenerative practices into daily business operations provides significant benefits across financial, operational, and ecological dimensions. Using Foodvalley NL as a case study, it was demonstrated that regenerative initiatives such as the Bean Deal and the European Regenerative Innovation Portfolio Initiative fostered cross-sector collaboration, improved stakeholder engagement, and contributed to ecological restoration. These efforts resulted in measurable outcomes, including increased soil organic matter and enhanced supply chain resilience, while also supporting financial sustainability through diversified funding and operational efficiencies (Jiang, 2022; Foodvalley NL Annual Report, 2023). Despite challenges such as initial implementation costs and knowledge gaps, the study shows that regenerative practices can drive systemic change by creating positive feedback loops that support ecosystem health, stakeholder well-being, and organizational resilience (Gilbert & Rasche, 2008; Sarikaya, 2009).

In summary, regenerative practices offer a transformative pathway for businesses seeking to move beyond traditional sustainability efforts by focusing on restoration and enhancement rather than mere harm reduction. Foodvalley NL exemplifies how adopting these practices can catalyze systemic change, support environmental restoration, and create financial value through innovation and collaboration. The research underscores that companies embracing regenerative approaches can reduce costs, strengthen stakeholder relationships, and meet the growing demand for sustainable solutions, positioning themselves as leaders in the transition toward a thriving and resilient future (Kumar, 2020; Teoh, 2024).

5.2 Recommendation

5.2.1 Prioritize cross-sector collaboration frameworks.

To maximize the impact and scalability of regenerative practices, organizations should actively prioritize the development of robust cross-sector collaboration frameworks. This involves forging strategic partnerships with academic institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), policymakers, and industry peers to co-create innovative and scalable solutions tailored to local and global sustainability challenges. By leveraging the diverse expertise, resources, and networks of these stakeholders, companies can overcome knowledge gaps, share risk, and accelerate the adoption of regenerative models.

For example, collaborative initiatives in regenerative agriculture have demonstrated that when farmers, researchers, and government agencies work together, they can develop modular toolkits that reduce implementation costs and standardize impact metrics, making it easier for a wider range of organizations to participate (Schreefel et al., 2020).
Furthermore, such partnerships facilitate the exchange of best practices and the co-design of policies that incentivize sustainable transitions, ultimately leading to more resilient supply chains and greater ecosystem-wide benefits (European Commission, 2025). Building these frameworks requires ongoing dialogue, trust-building, and transparent communication to align objectives and ensure that all parties are committed to shared regenerative outcomes.

5.2.2 Adopt phased regenerative transitions.

Organizations are encouraged to implement regenerative practices through a phased transition strategy, beginning with pilot projects in areas that offer high impact with relatively low risk. This incremental approach allows companies to build internal capacity, gather data, and demonstrate tangible benefits before scaling up to more complex systems. For instance, initial efforts might focus on energy efficiency upgrades, waste reduction, or soil health improvements—areas where quick wins are possible and measurable. Research shows that organizations employing phased transitions experience significantly less resistance to change, as stakeholders can observe early successes and gradually adapt to new processes (Jamali et al., 2017). Moreover, phased implementation enables companies to refine their strategies based on real-world feedback, allocate resources more effectively, and manage uncertainties associated with large-scale change (Lal, 2020). By progressively expanding the scope of regenerative initiatives, organizations can ensure that each stage is aligned with their operational realities and strategic goals, ultimately leading to more sustainable, long-term transformation.

5.2.3 Enhance regenerative literacy through training programs.

A critical enabler of successful regenerative transitions is the enhancement of regenerative literacy across all organizational levels. Companies should invest in comprehensive training and certification programs that educate employees about circular economy principles, biomimicry, ecosystem services, and regenerative design thinking. Such programs not only close knowledge gaps but also empower staff to identify opportunities for innovation within their roles and foster a culture of sustainability throughout the organization (Wiek et al., 2011). Studies have shown that organizations with a higher proportion of employees trained in sustainability and regenerative practices are able to implement changes more rapidly and effectively, achieving greater improvements in operational efficiency and environmental outcomes (Gulaiya et al., 2024). In addition, ongoing professional development and knowledge-sharing platforms can keep teams updated on the latest scientific advancements and regulatory requirements, ensuring that regenerative practices remain at the forefront of business strategy. Ultimately, investing in human capital is essential for embedding regenerative thinking into the organizational DNA and achieving lasting ecosystem-wide flourishing.

5.2.4 Advocate for policy incentives.

To accelerate the adoption of regenerative practices, organizations should actively engage in policy advocacy aimed at securing supportive regulatory environments and financial incentives. This includes lobbying for tax rebates, research and development grants, and subsidies specifically targeted at regenerative agriculture, renewable energy, and other sustainability-focused innovations. The European Union's Farm to Fork Strategy, for example, has led to a substantial increase in agroecological subsidies, demonstrating how policy frameworks can drive large-scale transitions toward sustainable food systems (European Commission, 2025). By participating in policy dialogues and industry coalitions, companies can help shape regulations that lower barriers to entry, reward positive environmental outcomes, and encourage investment in regenerative research and development. Furthermore, proactive advocacy can foster public-private partnerships, mobilize additional funding, and ensure that the interests of diverse stakeholders—including smallholders and marginalized communities—are represented in decision-making processes (Lal, 2020). Through sustained engagement with policymakers, organizations can contribute to the creation of an enabling environment that supports both business innovation and ecosystem restoration.

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APPENDIX

Guido Laman, Foodvalley Strategist stated:

Dear Amanda,

That’s a very interesting research topic! Good job.

If you look at regenerative farming practices, this has significant financial implications for everyone in the value chain because it is more expensive than conventional practices and the average consumer is not willing to pay for it. To add to that. In the short term, farmers' overall production volumes will fall.

So the crux of the challenge is how to make it competitive with conventional farming practices. There are two major incentives for the food industry to promote more regenerative practices.

Reducing soil degradation, and therefore the resilience of the food supply, and reducing carbon emissions through carbon sequestration at the farmer level.

These two incentives mean that the food industry is willing to pay more for regeneratively produced food crops. So they pay a premium price to cover the farmers' costs.

So what does Foodvalley do? We organise food industry players and farmers in different regions of Europe to work as a collective to develop (financial) arrangements that enable farmers to switch to more regenerative practices in the long term, thereby reducing the risk involved.

The Bean Deal is another initiative with more or less the same objective for plant proteins. By organising a collective agreement, you can create the trust between supply chain actors to move forward as a collective. For example, food retailers themselves have set targets for plant-based proteins and are actively trying to stimulate, thereby creating more confidence along the supply chain to produce different crops or invest in the necessary breeding techniques, for example.

Does this help?

Kind regards,

Guido