

**Groundswell Festival drives progressive change in agriculture.**

The UK’s only two-day on-farm regenerative agriculture conference, Groundswell, sold out for another year, attracting over 6500 attendees, with 75% either directly farming or involved in a farming enterprise.

With over 100 sessions and 200 speakers, from across the world, the theme this year centred on “what is regenerative agriculture”, creating a welcoming stage for technical experts, experienced regenerative farmers, leading researchers, politicians, retailers, and NGOs to explore and debate the topic.

Taking place from 28th to 29th June and now in its eighth year, the event is hosted by the Cherry family at Lannock Manor Farm in Hertfordshire and brings together a wide range of discussion, supporting both theoretical and practical applications of agroecology.

To ensure the event was inclusive for everyone, sessions included “First Principals” for those at the start of their journey, through to advanced sessions looking at integrated pest and disease management and enhancing underground communications.

Event Director, Alex Cherry said of the event,

“It’s been a monumental eighth Groundswell, welcoming old friends and new faces, and catching up with people about their evolving farms and projects, some of which were initiated at Groundswell.

“When we first launched Groundswell, just 400 people joined us. Today thousands travel from across the world to look at how we can continue to develop and advance sustainable agriculture, improving our soils and enhancing our food production. It is really humbling that, together, we can create stimulating conversations that generate positive change.”

Across the site, crop plots including cover cropping and herbal leys, direct drilling demonstrations, mob grazing, composting and tree management were on display to illustrate the work of those exhibiting and allow visitors to experience how these could be integrated into their own farm.

Visitors included Patron of the Association of Show and Agricultural Organisations, HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh, and The Secretary of State, Therese Coffey, who joined the Cherry family for a tour of the site to understand more about the progress being made to deliver a sustainable agricultural future, and the challenges facing the sector.

Independent plant and soil consultant, Joel Williams, opened the event,

“The term “regenerative” is still an open definition, allowing more people to connect. We are still learning and developing the concept but it all stems from soil regeneration, and whilst we often talk about it as an emerging topic, regenerative agriculture is something many are rediscovering, rather than something new on-farm.

“It goes beyond the soil, and is also about regenerating our people, restoring the connections in our communities. That is why, for me, events on on-farm and peer-to-peer learning in the field, is key to generating action.”

Other speakers included Anna Biklé who explained the role of pasture-fed livestock for the health of humans. During her presentation she showcased 22 studies involving cattle, comparing pasture-based and concentrate diets, concluding that phytochemical levels are 20 times higher in pasture-based diets.

Ensuring that Groundswell connected the whole supply chain was a key objective this year, with a “Moveable Slaughter Unit” on site. Luke Smith, farmer and abattoir owner, joined the event to talk about his own experience, the investment required and the positive welfare and economic benefits to rural and agricultural communities.

Farmer and recognised regenerative advocate, Richard Perkins, felt that customer certification was vital for the future of his business, ensuring that he operates transparently to build a connection between food and farming. He also highlighted the benefits of using technology and utilising existing tools to provide data for efficient management. One example he shared was the use of drones to teach his poultry to use down and up vision to protect themselves from predators.

Catchment and Biodiversity Manager, Alistair Leggatt, from headline partner, Affinity Water, who has been working with the Cherry family for over six years, shared his reflections,

“Safeguarding soil and water quality for future generations is essential. We have been helping farmers, including the Cherry family, to invest, improve and retain soil on farm. Through our attendance at Groundswell, we have been growing this conversation, to help make change happen.

“It’s been such a positive event, those who attended had a sharp focus and came armed with questions to put to exhibitors and speakers, showing a real desire to develop and improve UK agriculture.”

**All sessions have been recorded and will be available on the Groundswell YouTube channel. Photographs are available and can be found here.**

**The 2024 event will take place from 26th to 27th June.**

**For further information or to arrange an interview with the Cherry Family, please contact** **press@groundswellag.com****.**