



# Biodiverse & Wildlife-Friendly Food Systems

*Connecting food systems with ecosystems.*



Biodiverse simply means having a wide variety of plants and animals in a specific area. Biologists have long understood that biodiversity is key to a healthy ecosystem, whether it is wild or managed by man. Practices that are friendly to wildlife are one very visible way of maintaining biodiversity. Wild Farming is used to refer to both biodiverse and wildlife-friendly farming and ranching.

## CONNECTING FOOD SYSTEMS WITH ECOSYSTEMS

Farmers and ranchers, and those who work with them, pay close attention to conserving soil and water as essential natural resources that make food and fiber production possible. Much less attention has been given to the variety of plants, animals, fungi, and other life forms that provide the essential ecosystem services needed in farming—decomposition and nutrient cycling, cleansing of water, biological control of unwanted insects, rodent control by raptors, pollination, and much more. **“Healthy food systems are based on healthy ecosystems.”**

## NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER

As energy becomes more expensive, farmers need to depend less on fossil-fuel-based fertilizers and pesticides and more on biological ecosystem services. With our changing climate, agriculture must become much more resilient in order to face an uncertain future—biodiverse and wildlife-friendly farming can increase that resiliency.



## A RESTORATIVE FORCE

Agriculture has had a serious impact on wild nature, especially in recent times. While we are not planning to give up growing our food, wild farming can not only reduce those impacts, but in some



ways can help restore healthy ecosystems on and around the farm. This could signify a dramatic shift in our relations with wild nature.

## DOMESTIC DIVERSITY IS ALSO IMPORTANT

Modern industrial agriculture inherently concentrates on a very few commercial plants and livestock varieties which grow well with synthetic fertilizers, ample water, and



industrial feeds. This has led to us losing many of the varieties domesticated over the centuries for very specific uses. As we turn to more biologically based farming, we need



plants that can thrive under more varied natural conditions and livestock suited to more natural feeding practices. Many organizations are preserving and distributing heritage seeds and livestock breeding stock suited to this renewed reliance on more natural agricultural processes.

# HOW THIS CAN BE DONE ON ALL SCALES OF GROWING

## Landscaping

- Wildlife plantings.
- Shrubs & trees, not just lawns.
- Bat houses for mosquito control.
- Butterfly bushes & pollinator plants.



## Gardens

- Bird houses for insect control.
- Plants to attract pollinators.
- Diversity of crops to encourage beneficial insects.
- Soil cover to encourage earthworms.

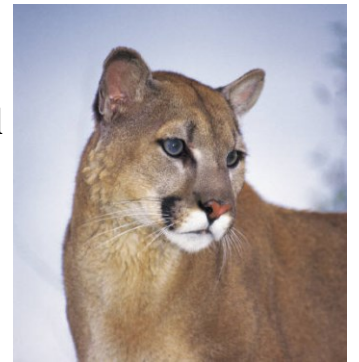
## Farms & Ranches

- Diversity instead of monocultures.
- Chemical-free practices to protect microbes, birds, worms, etc.
- Dogs for non-lethal predator control.
- Protection of vulnerable riparian habitats.
- Deer-friendly fencing.
- Finding ways to coexist with beavers and predators.



## Whole Landscapes Provide:

- Corridors for migration.
- Safe buffers around wild areas and wilderness.
- Habitat for larger or wide-ranging animals.



## THE MARKETPLACE CAN HELP

More and more consumers want their food and fiber grown sustainably, and that includes increasing biodiversity and wildlife-friendly practices. This movement has become well established in seafood—

dolphin-safe tuna for example—but it is spreading into agriculture as well. Producer-marketers can

appeal to customers who care about these values by explaining their measures to protect wildlife. Some producers have developed slogans—and even trademarks or brands—to reflect their sustainable approaches.



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## WHAT CAN WE DO IN OUR COMMUNITIES?

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- ❑ Support wild farmers and ranchers in the marketplace: seek out and buy their products.
- ❑ Support them in the community: provide recognition as good stewards of wildlife and biodiversity.
- ❑ Promote policies that encourage wild farming and ranching practices.
- ❑ Connect environmental groups with farmers enhancing wildlife habitat.
- ❑ Help bring wild farming practices to school gardens so children understand these concepts early.
- ❑ Use wild farming practices whether you are a landscaper, gardener, farmer, or rancher.
- ❑ Help farmers and ranchers take advantage of government programs supporting wildlife-friendly practices and habitat improvement.
- ❑ Favor restaurants serving wildlife-friendly foods.
- ❑ Plant, raise, and eat heritage crops and livestock varieties.
- ❑ Include wild farming practices in climate action, environmental, land use, and sustainability plans.
- ❑ Research the best wild farming practices for your area.
- ❑ Engage the public in monitoring wildlife, including bird counts, to increase awareness of the benefits of biodiversity and supportive practices.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Find online resources for this tool, as well as additional tool booklets on other community food topics, under “Food System Tools” at [www.healthycommunityfoodsystems.org](http://www.healthycommunityfoodsystems.org) or [www.HCFS.org](http://www.HCFS.org)



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