

# THE IVEY CENTRE FOR BUILDING SUSTAINABLE VALUE

## *Transforming Canada's Agri-Food System*

Ivey Business School's purpose is to inspire leaders for a sustainable and prosperous world. Within Ivey, the [Centre for Building Sustainable Value \(BSV\)](#) is the School's centre of excellence in sustainability with a two-decade track record of leadership in research and teaching.

Addressing complex sustainability challenges is more urgent and important than ever, particularly within Canada's agri-food system. While the system is one of the most economically efficient in the world, the way we produce and consume food is unsustainable. We are generating an enormous amount of greenhouse gas emissions, destroying ecosystems, and wasting vast quantities of resources while millions experience food insecurity.

We need a new food system that delivers universal access to affordable, nutritious food produced within the ecological limits of the planet. Canada can be a leader in this transition but systemic change is required to make that a reality.

The BSV Centre's mission is to strengthen change-seekers' capacity to create thriving communities capable of advancing the transition toward a regenerative future. We aim to play a catalytic role in transforming Canada's agri-food system with a three-pronged strategy: **nurturing farmer communities of practice; mobilizing change-ready businesses to foster regenerative value chains; and equipping entrepreneurs with an eco-effective mindset.**

These three strategic elements will deliver impactful outcomes by motivating and enabling farmers and businesses across the agri-food system and leveraging Ivey's key areas of expertise: shifting decision-making principles, strategies, operations, and relationships toward a regenerative future. The key insights from this work can also be applied to support transitions in other sectors of the economy.

# OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Currently, a range of efforts are making progress across the Canadian agri-food system, from grassroots community efforts to major national initiatives. However, the pace and scale of this change is insufficient. We see three key barriers that need to be addressed to accelerate systemic change, that Ivey and the BSV Centre have the tools and capabilities to act on now:

## Poor Collaboration

Farmers may be connected through digital platforms, but they struggle to work together effectively because they compete for land and resources, and operate in siloed value chains. As a result, they struggle to collaborate and share knowledge regionally.

## Concentrated Power Structures

The centralized supply chains and concentrated power structures of the contemporary food system do not encourage sustainable food production, and the ideal economics of sustainable food production are yet to be realized.

## Efficiency Mindset

The current business mindset prioritizes short-term efficiency and profit. As a result, many innovations fail to deliver long-term societal impact, and instead often perpetuate systems that are misaligned with the well-being of people and the planet.

Tackling these barriers requires not only changing practices, but also understanding and challenging underlying structures, models, and institutions.

The BSV Centre, with its unique interdisciplinary expertise, is pioneering innovative approaches to engage and strengthen systems change-makers to overcome these barriers, while enabling them to take new models and solutions to scale. We are actioning this approach through three impact-focused **Lighthouse Projects**.





# LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS



## COLLECTIVE ACTION PROGRAM

Innovative farmers working together

**Purpose:** Tackle competition and polarization between farmers by developing inclusive and regenerative communities of practice (CoPs) that improve individual and collective performance through peer-to-peer learning and resource sharing.

**Plan:** By December 2025, we will convene innovative farmers in Middlesex County (covering 3,000+ acres) to establish a CoP where they share and adopt production practices that improve ecological outcomes and long-term profitability at both the farm and community levels. By December 2026, these farmers will establish their own governance structures, and a new CoP will be formed in one or more other counties in Ontario or Quebec. These CoPs will be supported to become self-governing within two years.

**Impact:** Connecting farmers across sub-industries (crops vs. produce vs. livestock), scales of operations (large vs. small), and socio-cultural divides (settlers vs. Indigenous) allows for leveraging of diverse perspectives and expertise in the co-creation of innovative, sustainable ways of farming and co-managing resources. Ultimately, this will lead to reduced GHG emissions and improved soil health.

**Pathway to scale:** Active expansion of CoPs across participating counties, while working with partners to replicate the model in other counties and regions.



## SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION PATHWAYS

Reimagining supply chains for regeneration

**Purpose:** Challenge current supply chains and concentrated power structures by mobilizing change-ready businesses to reconsider their procurement, distribution, and investment principles and processes.

**Plan:** We are convening a leading group of 8-10 mid-sized change-maker processors, retailers, and financial actors with a strategic interest in the shift toward regenerative value chains and a track record in enabling change in their sphere of operations. By December 2025, we will use innovative systems-thinking tools and approaches to reimagine how agri-food value chains are configured to incentivize regenerative and sustainable outcomes.

**Impact:** Define a collective vision for regenerative value chains in the Canadian agri-food system and re-design the supporting procurement and finance architecture.

Each participating firm will develop an action roadmap for enabling change in their sphere of influence, and prioritize opportunities for collective action and solutions. The goal is to actively incentivize regenerative and sustainable practices throughout the value chain.

**Pathway to scale:** This project will seek to scale impact by engaging with other change-makers and policy-makers, helping to accelerate the transition across major agri-food value chains.



## ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCELERATOR

Regenerate the future


**Purpose:** Accelerate the growth of sustainable agri-food start-ups that give back more than they take and have the potential to significantly impact the agri-tech industry.

**Plan:** A four-month intensive program within the [Western Accelerator](#) program, called the “Regenerator,” which will fund agri-food ventures and provide nascent entrepreneurs with hands-on mentorship and educational training from in-house experts and industry partners. The entrepreneurs will act on issues such as decarbonization and biodiversity conservation.

**Impact:** Empowers the next generation of leaders to reimagine and reshape the economy in ways that recognize and respect nature.

Enables entrepreneurs to speed and scale up the life cycles of their ventures, prioritizing bio-circularity, regeneration, sustainable impact, and system change.

**Pathway to scale:** Supporting prospective regenerative ventures directly, while rolling out the Regenerator approach to other major entrepreneurship accelerator programs across Canada (and globally).



The BSV Centre is actively seeking synergies and connections between the Lighthouse Projects.



# SUPPORTING THE LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS

Each Lighthouse Project is designed to **tackle a specific barrier to systemic change**, be **synergistic in nature** (where one initiative enables another), and **be replicable across the country**. The BSV Centre has already started building a network of academics and practitioners who can scale its efforts in a decentralized fashion.

The BSV Centre is taking a radical approach to cultivating system-wide change, but with a focus on impact at scale. We are committed to understanding the shifts needed in the paradigms and mindsets within Canada’s agri-food system, working with communities of change-makers who are driving change in practice. These communities are key to transformation, especially when they shape new models that are also adoptable by larger existing players who are truly motivated for a more sustainable system.

The BSV Centre also supports four impact labs on key sustainability agendas – Sustainable Finance, Net Zero, Circular Economy, and Innovation – that deliver evidence-based insights for transforming the agri-food system and Canada’s economy more broadly.

By investing in one of the Lighthouse Projects, or one of the four impact labs, you can help drive tangible change within Canada’s agri-food system, support the advancement of knowledge creation, and impact business and farming practices across Canada. Opportunities to support other areas of the BSV Centre start at \$10,000 and include workshops, scholarships for students, small and large research projects, as well as post-doctoral students and research assistants. For more information on how you can **support the BSV Centre, the Lighthouse Projects, and impact labs**, please contact **Andrea Luchini** at [aluchini@ivey.ca](mailto:aluchini@ivey.ca).



## PROUD COLLABORATORS

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Transition Accelerator