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Great Lakes St. Lawrence SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Webinar: Great Lakes St. Lawrence Sustainable Agriculture Research Agenda

Cailyn Andrews, Program Manager

May 27, 2026

Board of Directors

40+ years of collaboration among the region's chief executives to grow the $9.3 trillion (US) economy and protect the world's greatest freshwater system

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GSGP Programs

- 100% Great Lakes Fish
- Aquatic Invasive Species
- Export Promotion
- Maritime Transportation
- Restoration and Protection
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Tourism
- Trees Initiative
- Water Management

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National and International Awards

Innovation Award

President's Transportation Award

Award for Sustainable Aquatic Food Systems

President's Environment and Conservation Challenge Award

Award for Excellence in Cruise Practices

Outstanding Achievement Award

Seafood Industry Climate Award

Advancing International Trade Award

Sustainable Agriculture Initiative

Goal to advance sustainable agriculture across the region by,

Strengthening the regional agricultural economy

Increasing resilience and food security

Promoting sustainable natural resource management

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Developing the Regional Initiative

How did we get here?

Initiative Launch: 2025 Governors' and Premiers' Leadership Summit

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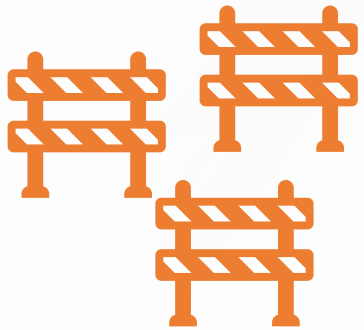
Agriculture in the Region

The agriculture industry contributes over $1 trillion (US) to the region's economy and supports more than 6.5 million jobs.

Industry Challenges



- Aging Farming Cohort
- Decreased Labor Availability
- Loss of Available Farmland
- Uncertain International Markets
- Less Predictable Weather and More Extreme Events
- Rising Production Costs

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Developing the Regional Initiative

An opportunity to catalyze collaboration and innovation

Meetings of State and Provincial Agriculture Directors

2025 Governors' and Premiers' Leadership Summit

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Sustainable Agriculture Focus Areas

Five focus areas are priorities for our work:

Soil Health

Healthy Economy

Healthy People

Water Management

Water Quality

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Sustainable Agriculture Initiative

1st year projects:

- Regional research agenda
- Action agenda
- Strategic plan

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On the horizon:

- Implementation of projects
- Continued information sharing

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Great Lakes St. Lawrence SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Regional Research Agenda Overview

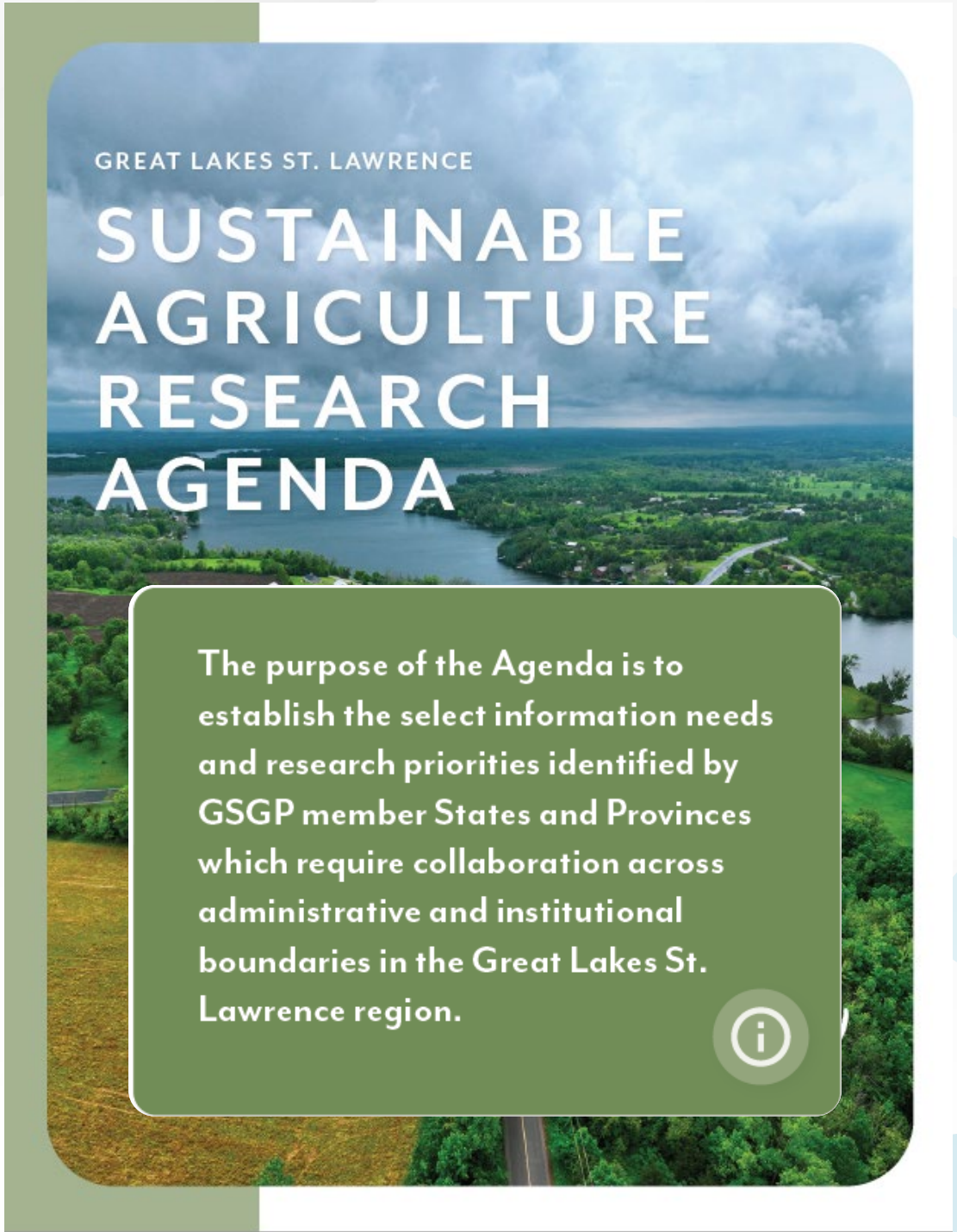
Laura Johnson, Ph.D.

Michigan Department of AGRICULTURE & Rural Development

Context

The overall Initiative's mission is to foster sustainable agriculture in the region, strengthen the region's agriculture economy, and increase resilience and food security.

The Research Agenda is the first building block in a multi-phase, multi-stakeholder process that will not only develop shared solutions for sustainable agriculture but will also facilitate a regional culture of collaboration in the agricultural space among government institutions, policy makers, growers, academia, industry, and agricultural sustainability advocates.



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Regional Research Agenda Development

Team Members

- Research Agenda Committee with a representative from each State/Province
- Drafting team of five Committee members

Timeline

- Series of virtual meetings with the Committee starting in October
- In-person meeting in Indianapolis with regional experts in January
- Agenda drafting and revision
- Approved at Spring Agriculture Director Meeting on April 1st
- Released on April 30th

https://gsgp.org/projects/sustainable-agriculture/resources/

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Challenges & Needs

- Access to land, labor, and capital
- Behavioral trends
- Varied metrics and monitoring
- Environmental stressors and emerging risks

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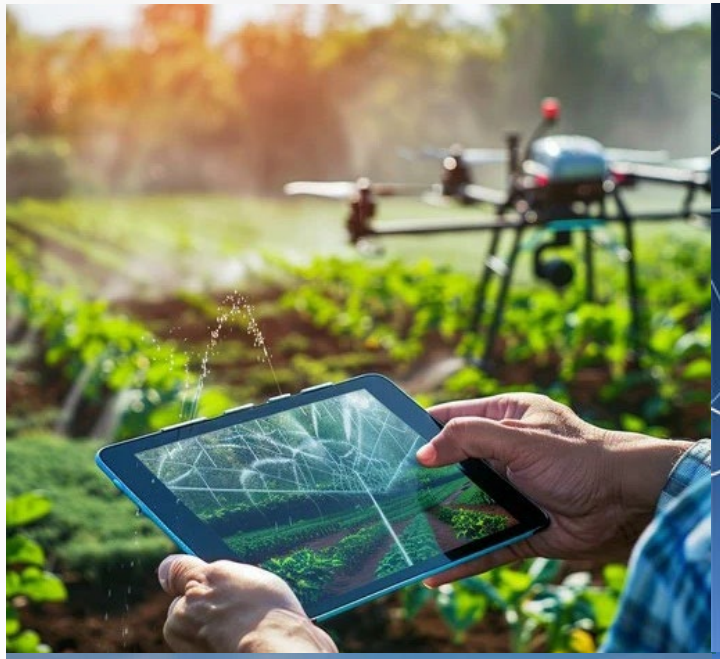
Priority Research Areas

1. Support Technological Innovation and Crop Diversification
2. Build Resilient and Transparent Supply Chains
3. Assess the Effectiveness of Conservation Practices and Programs
4. Determine Social, Behavioral, and Economic Drivers of Producer Adoption of Sustainable Practices
5. Develop Strategies to Address Contaminants of Emerging Concern



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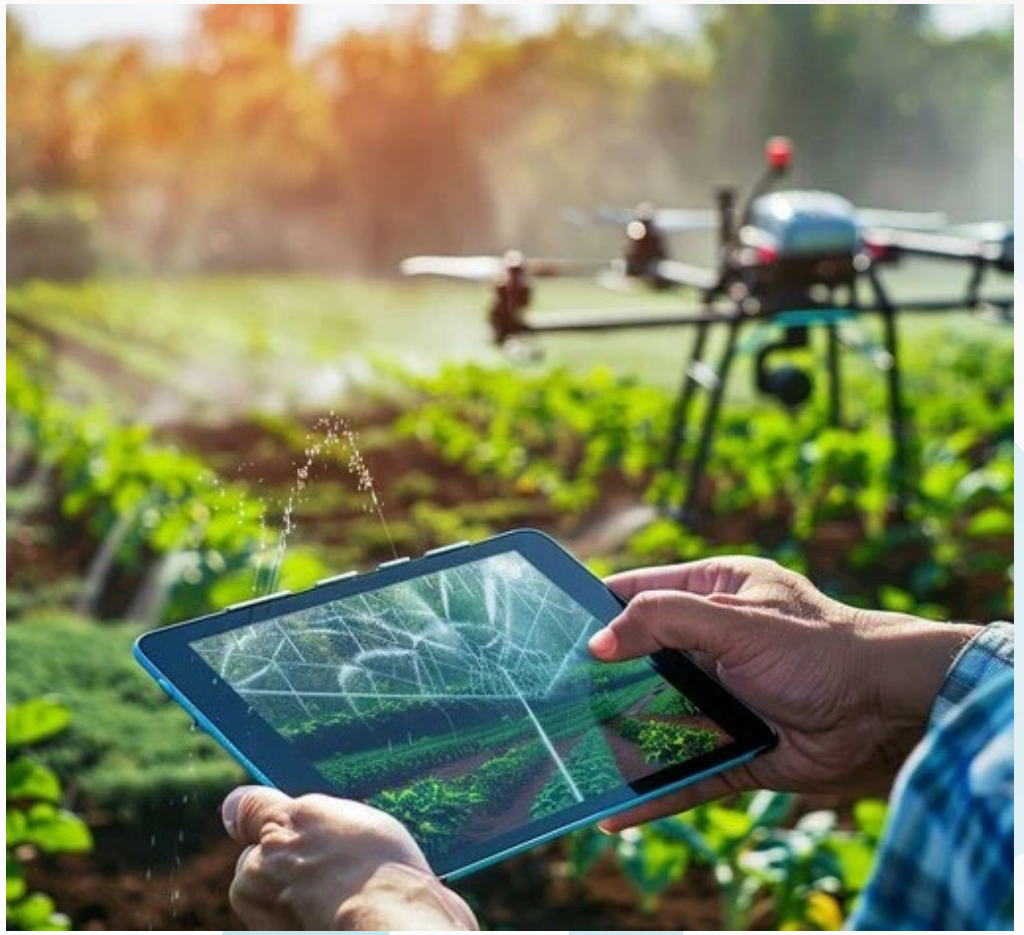
Support Technological Innovation and Crop Diversification

- Expand agronomic research to facilitate diversification of novel crops and related food processing systems;
- Innovation of sustainable solutions for commonly grown crops (e.g., precision nutrient management), including risk management programs to support adoption;
- Conduct life-cycle analyses of agricultural products to find ways to minimize waste, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and move toward a more circular bioeconomy with sufficient return on investment for producers;
- Investigate business or operating models that improve the likelihood and success of diversification.



Build Resilient and Transparent Supply Chains

- Develop advanced traceability systems for farm-to-market tracking;
- Develop predictive models to help producers prepare for climatic and economic disruptions;
- Analyze agricultural business frameworks such as cooperative structures/shared infrastructure as well as public-private partnership structures;
- Evaluate regulations and policies that impact supply chain resilience and transparency;
- Identify market trends and opportunities for current crops and novel crops;
- Assess supply chain infrastructure gaps that prohibit producer participation in new or existing markets (e.g., specialty processing infrastructure).

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Assess the Effectiveness of Conservation Practices and Programs

- Improve environmental models that account for the complexity of natural systems, changing climate and extreme weather conditions, limited datasets, scalability, and regional differences;
- Assess cost-effectiveness and implementation of measurement and monitoring strategies across the region to better quantify the benefits of conservation practices;
- Investigate the effectiveness of conservation practices considering environmental stressors, soil type, and/or concurrent practices.
- Analysis of traditional incentive-based conservation programs verses innovative outcomes-based conservation programs.

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Determine Social, Behavioral, and Economic Drivers of Producer Adoption of Sustainable Practices

- Assess successful peer learning networks to better understand producer behavior change and what is needed to scale up these changes across the region;
- Analyze policies and regulations, including the extent to which government regulation either incentivizes or impedes adoption of sustainable practices;
- Analyze the role of other participants in the agri-food system which involves the influence of non-operating landowners (i.e., landlords) and private agribusiness stakeholders; and
- Develop cost-share models that reduce/spread the cost burden for sustainable agricultural practices across the supply chain.

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Develop Strategies to Address Contaminants of Emerging Concern

- Assess models from other contaminant responses that could inform coordinated regional approaches to CEC;
- Develop risk-reduction strategies producers can implement to mitigate the impact of CEC;
- Improve understanding of what knowledge and support is needed to reduce barriers for implementation of these strategies;
- Identify CEC-response approaches that could be operationalized and harmonized across the region in response to novel CEC, including understanding policies that are required to protect the food system from an unknown CEC;
- Identify effective communication strategies to inform stakeholders and the public of current work on CEC and their potential risks.

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	Support Technological Innovation & Crop Diversification	Build Resilient and Transparent Supply Chains	Assess the Effectiveness of Conservation Practices and Programs	Determine Social, Behavioral, and Economic Drivers of Producer Adoption	Develop Strategies to Address Contaminants of Emerging Concern
Access to Land, Labor, and Capital	✓	✓		✓	
Behavioral Trends	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Varied Metrics and Monitoring	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Environmental Stressors and Emerging Risks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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Reporting

- Track progress towards each priority research area over the next five years.
  - Findings will be disseminated to the Research Committee

- Identify opportunities to share progress with partners from the broader agricultural sector at conferences and published reports when appropriate.

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Questions?

Sustainable Agriculture Initiative

Already completed:

- Resolution
- Regional research agenda

In progress:

- Information sharing
- Action agenda
- Identification of pilot projects

On the horizon:

- Project implementation
- Long-term plan

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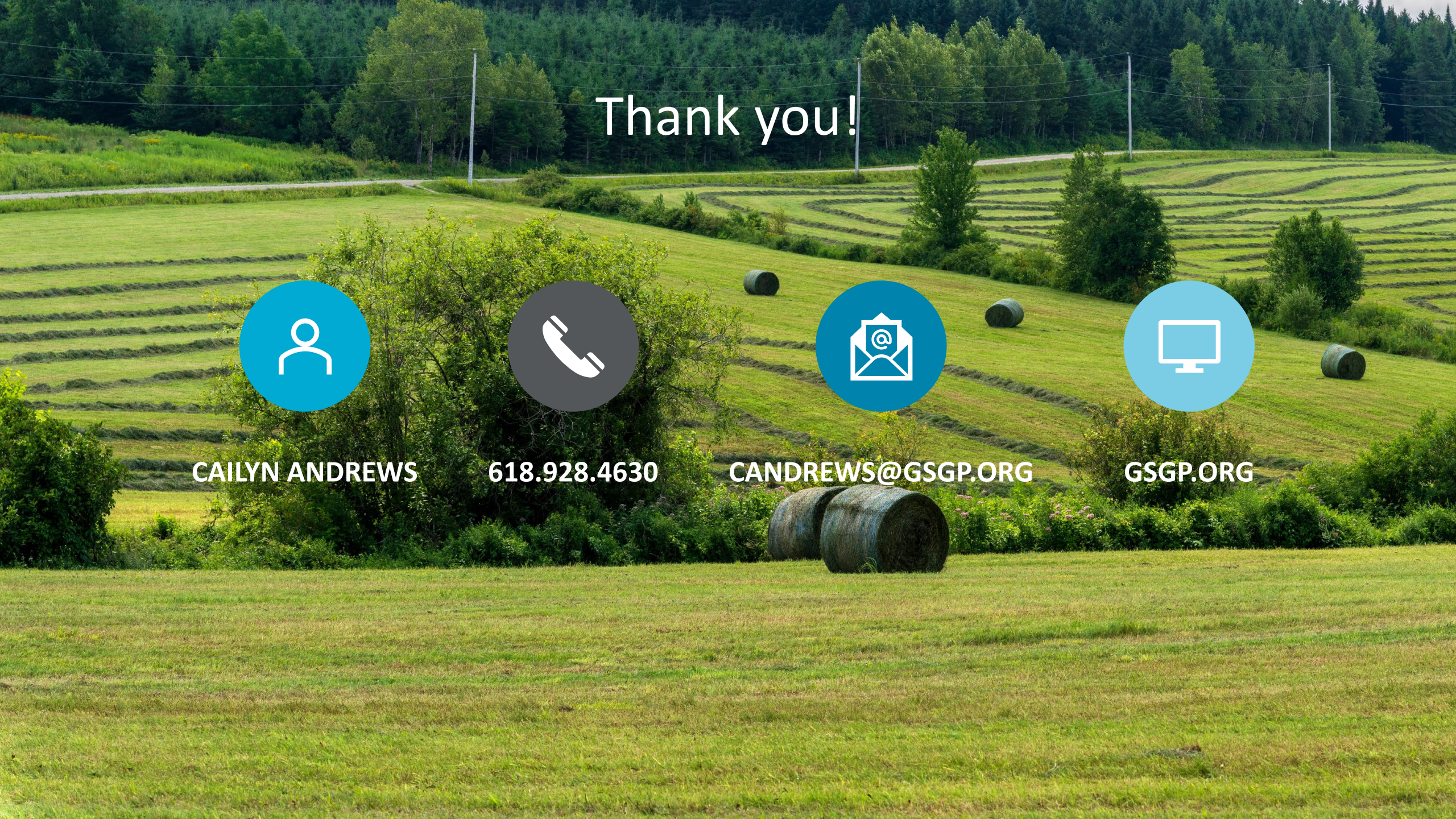
Key Takeaways

- Regional Sustainable Agriculture Initiative aims to advance sustainable agriculture by strengthening the regional agricultural economy; increasing resilience and food security; and promoting natural resource management.

- Great Lakes St. Lawrence Sustainable Agriculture Research Agenda builds on decades of research and efforts and establishes the select information needs and research priorities identified by GSGP member States and Provinces that require collaboration across administrative and institutional boundaries in the region.

- Continued collaboration and information sharing amongst Depts./Ministries of Agriculture is central to the work under the Initiative.


Thank you!
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