



Regenerating the Delta: From the Ground Up

An intersectional approach to recidivism reduction, economic autonomy, and sustainable agriculture.

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN CSAEC, DELTA GROWS, AND THE ACADEMIC RESEARCH OF DAVID J. JEFFERSON

Convergence of Theory Theory and Practice

The Context

The Dual Crisis

The United States faces two parallel failures: a justice system characterized by mass incarceration and an industrialized food system degrading our environment. These systems are historically linked, and both require regeneration.



The Intervention

The Solution: The Happy Food Project

By integrating the "Strengths-Based Reentry" framework defined in David Jefferson's Capstone Thesis with the operational capacity of Delta Grows and CSAEC, we are deploying a scalable agricultural reentry program. This model empowers formerly incarcerated individuals to reclaim their connection to the land, ensuring food security while dismantling the cycle of recidivism.



The Intersection of Broken Systems

Solving for the Soil and the Soul Simultaneously

The Justice Crisis



5.1X

Incarceration rate of Black Americans vs. White.

67.8%

Released prisoners rearrested within three years.

Incarceration strips dignity, disrupts families, and drains community wealth.

The Food Crisis



50%

U.S. produce wasted before reaching the store.

1 in 7

Children in the U.S. go to bed hungry.

90% of farming soil is currently infertile due to overworking and chemical fertilizers.

Farming as an Act of Resistance and Reclamation

For Black and brown communities, the connection to land has been fraught with the trauma of slavery and sharecropping. However, land is also the basis of independence.

Historical Context:

Between 1910 and 1969, African American landownership declined by over 98% (from 12.8 million acres to less than 6 million).

“We are in a moment where Black and Brown people are ready to reclaim our right to belong to the Earth and ready to reclaim our place and agency in the food system.” — Leah Penniman (cited in Thesis)



Moving from Risk to Strength

The Status Quo: Risk-Based Reentry

- **Focus:** Surveillance, drug testing, and compliance.
- **Resource:** “Gate Money” (often insufficient for even a bus ticket).
- **Mindset:** Treats the individual as a liability to be managed.



The New Model: Strengths-Based Reentry

- **Focus:** Restorative Justice—repairing harm and rebuilding relationships.
- **Resource:** Therapeutic connection to land to reduce PTSD and anxiety.
- **Mindset:** Treats participants as ASSETS with talents to contribute.
- **Outcome:** Transforming the “Scarlet Letter” into a badge of community leadership.

The Delta Grows Operational Model



01 EDUCATE

Providing free education on transferable skills, tool usage, and business ownership. Moving beyond job training to career building.

02 ACTIVATE

Hands-on training in sustainable farming. Partnering with local farms for paid opportunities.

03 ELEVATE

Generating generational health and wealth for the Mississippi Delta. Addressing the “whole person” —mental, financial, and communal.

Environmental Regeneration & Technology

Solving the Water and Soil Crisis through Controlled Environment Agriculture.



Water Efficiency

Problem: 70% of the world's consumptive water is used by agriculture.

Solution: Hydroponics drastically reduces water withdrawal compared to field farming.



Soil Health

Problem: 90% of farming soil is infertile due to chemical runoff.

Solution: Rebuilding soil naturally without phosphorus/nitrogen runoff that salinates fresh water.

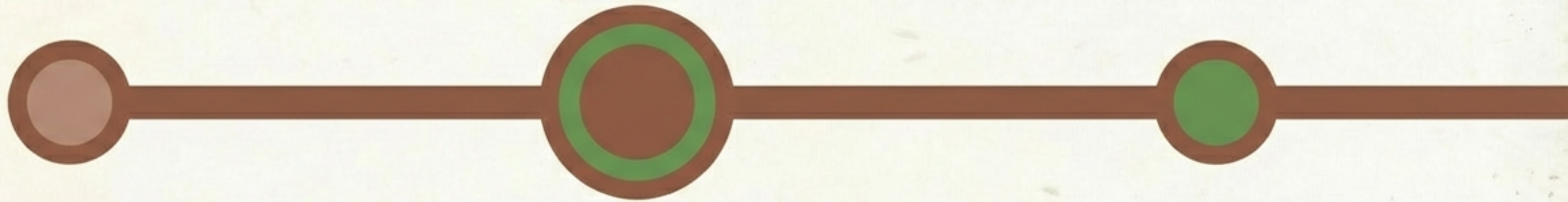


Food Security

Problem: Food deserts lack fresh options.

Solution: Greenhouses enable year-round production of vibrant, life-giving food.

Implementation Timeline: The Happy Food Project



Q1 2024 (Preparation)

- Site selection & assessments.
- Soil testing & water access.
- Greenhouse layout plans.

Q2-Q3 2024 (Infrastructure)

- The 'But God' Phase.
- Securing materials.
- Preparing fields for training.
- Initial infrastructure development.

2025 (The Harvest)

- Full Okra growing season.
- Execution of Offtake Agreements.
- Weekly deliveries commenced.

Economic Viability: The Offtake Agreement

This is a sustainable business model, not just a non-profit. A secured buyer for the 2025 Okra harvest ensures revenue stability.

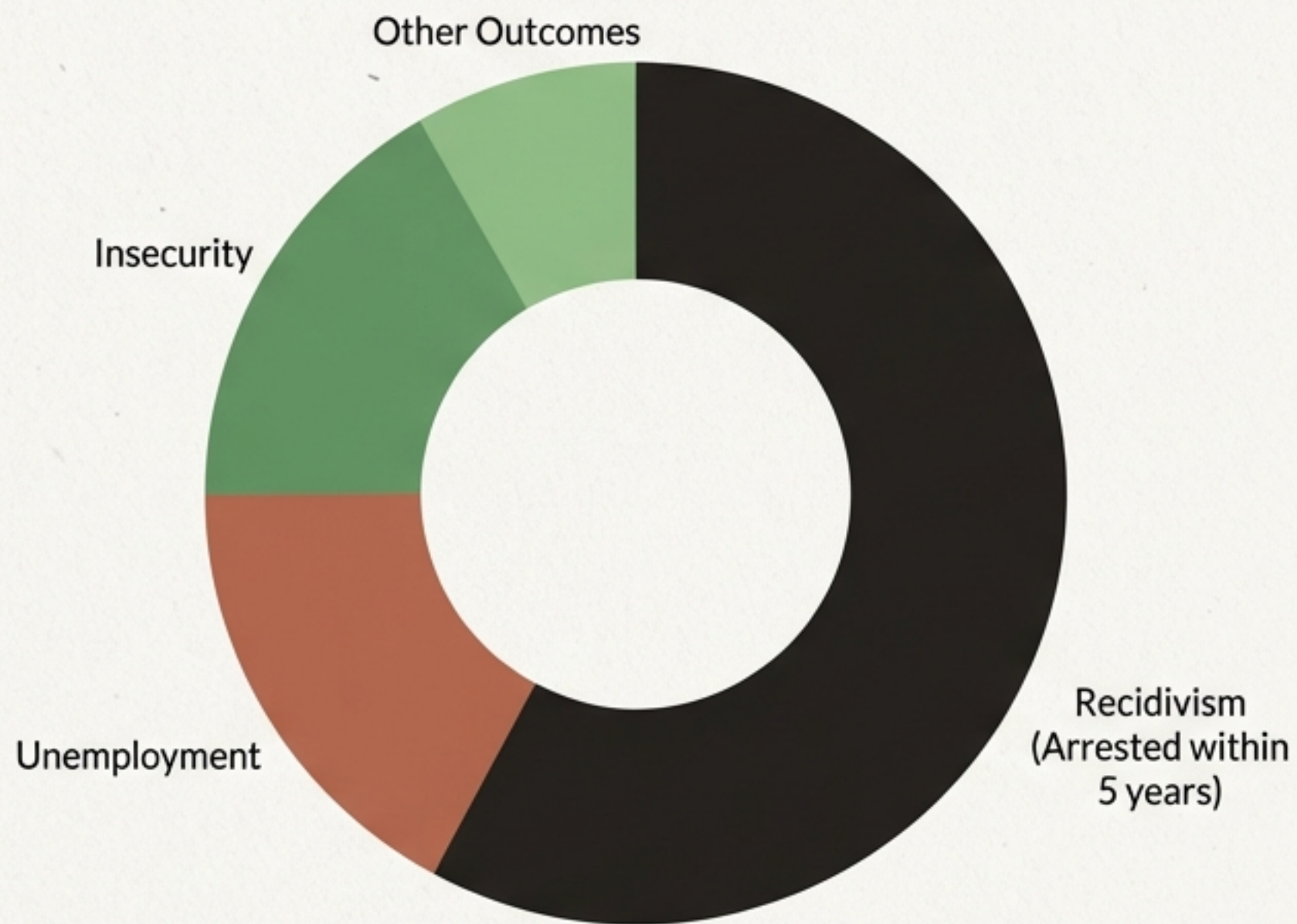


Voices of Transformation

“It can be impactful to plant something from a seed and nurture it... There is so much power in teaching people to grow food, to value food, and to value themselves.” — Participant I

Three-fifths of formerly incarcerated people responded that they ‘rarely or never’ had access to fresh vegetables in prison.

Breaking the Cycle by the Numbers



76.6%

Recidivism

Of prisoners are arrested within 5 years of release.

5x Higher

Unemployment

Unemployment among the formerly incarcerated compared to the general public.

20%

Insecurity

Of formerly incarcerated people suffer from food insecurity—double the general population.

Delta Grows addresses the root causes: unemployment, lack of purpose, and food insecurity.

Grounded Editorial

Structural Barriers to Scale

The systemic hurdles facing returning citizens.



The Poverty Trap

Gate money is insufficient. Formerly incarcerated individuals must often choose between a bus ticket home and a meal.



Collateral Consequences

Legal discrimination denies access to housing, student loans, and occupational licenses based solely on criminal records.



Capital Access

Systemic denial of loans. A criminal record often results in a 69% drop in credit scores, barring access to farming capital.

Delta Grows addresses the root causes: unemployment, lack of purpose, and food insecurity.

Policy Recommendations for Systemic Reform

- ✓ **Justice for Black Farmers Act**
Restore the land base lost by Black farmers and end discrimination within the USDA.
- ✓ **Reallocation of Funds**
Redirect the proposed \$1.2 billion for 'Community Policing' toward reentry programming and community investment.
- ✓ **Curriculum Standards**
Implement 'Roots of Success' (environmental literacy & job readiness) in at least 20% of correctional facilities before release.
- ✓ **Reparations Commission**
Establish a commission to study and develop reparation proposals for African Americans.


Delta Grows addresses the root causes: unemployment, lack of purpose, and food insecurity.

Vision: The National Institute of Food & Justice (NIFJ)

A proposal for a new agency within the USDA dedicated strictly to the advancement of minority groups within the food system.



Delta Grows addresses the root causes: unemployment, lack of purpose, and food insecurity.



“Everything would be alright if everything was put back in the hands of the people.” — Chairman Fred Hampton (Playfair Display)

Partner with Delta Grows & CSAEC to regenerate the Delta.” (Lato)