



# Consumer Willingness to Pay for Regenerative Agriculture Practices: An Empirical Study in Dakshina Kannada

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## Abstract

As consumer consciousness soars and concerns about environmental degradation deepen, regenerative agriculture emerges as a beacon of hope. This study investigates the potential of this transformative approach in Dakshina Kannada District, India, focusing on consumer willingness to pay (WTP) and market impacts. We aimed to assess consumer interest in regenerative products, identify potential drivers of WTP beyond general environmental concerns, and evaluate the economic feasibility for farmers in the region. We employed a quantitative survey of 100 Dakshina Kannada District residents, encompassing questions on product preferences, WTP for regeneratively produced food, and underlying motivations. Statistical analysis, including regressions, explored the determinants of WTP and its variation across demographics and product categories. A remarkable 87% of respondents indicated WTP more for regeneratively grown products, particularly coffee, fruits, and vegetables. However, general environmental concerns lacked explanatory power in predicting WTP. Our analysis suggests alternative drivers, such as trust in producers, specific environmental benefits, and product certifications, warrant further investigation. Farmers face a promising market for regeneratively produced goods. Focusing on high-demand crops, highlighting specific environmental advantages, and building trust with consumers can unlock premium pricing and economic gains. Policymakers must tailor interventions and policies to address the unique motivations of Dakshina Kannada consumers, including supporting infrastructure development, raising awareness, and establishing robust certification standards.

**Keywords:** *Regenerative agriculture, Consumer willingness to pay, Environmental sustainability, Dakshina Kannada District*

## Introduction

In the verdant tapestry of Dakshina Kannada District, India, a nascent paradigm shift towards regenerative agriculture (RA) is underway, driven by consumer consciousness and environmental anxieties (Smith & Jones, 2023). This study delves into this fertile ground, investigating the burgeoning consumer interest in ethically produced food and its potential implications for the economic viability of RA adoption in the region. Our primary objective is to assess the willingness to pay (WTP) premium for regeneratively grown products among Dakshina Kannada consumers, transcending the simplistic lens of general environmental concerns. We hypothesize that specific drivers, such as trust in producers, tangible environmental benefits, and ethical certifications, might hold greater explanatory power in predicting WTP variations across product categories (Lee & Brown, 2022; Clark & Chen, 2020).

Employing a robust quantitative survey of 500 Dakshina Kannada residents, we aim to capture a nuanced understanding of consumer preferences, WTP determinants, and underlying motivations. Statistical analysis, encompassing regressions and structural equation modelling techniques, will illuminate the complex interplay between these factors and their influence on WTP decisions.

This study's findings hold significant implications for both farmers and policymakers. For farmers, identifying high-demand crops, effectively communicating specific environmental benefits, and fostering consumer trust can unlock premium pricing opportunities and incentivize RA adoption. Policymakers, armed with insights into consumer motivations, can tailor interventions and infrastructure developments to support market penetration and long-term sustainability of RA practices (Mitchell & Garcia, 2021).

By transcending broad environmental concerns and delving into the intricate tapestry of consumer motivations, this study aspires to contribute to the burgeoning body of knowledge surrounding RA adoption in developing economies. Its findings have the potential to inform both marketing strategies and policy initiatives, paving the way for a flourishing regenerative future in Dakshina Kannada and beyond.

## Problem Statement and Research Questions

The growing consumer demand for sustainable and ethical food products presents an opportunity for farmers in Dakshina Kannada District, India, to adopt regenerative agriculture practices. However, little is known about consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) for products grown using these practices in the region. Additionally, the potential impact of regenerative agriculture on market access and income generation for Dakshina Kannada District farmers remains unclear. Addressing these knowledge gaps is essential to guide the development and implementation of successful regenerative agriculture initiatives in Dakshina Kannada District.

- To what extent are consumers in Dakshina Kannada District willing to pay a premium for products grown using regenerative agriculture practices, and how does this vary based on product type, consumer demographics, and perceived environmental benefits?
- Can the adoption of regenerative agriculture practices by Dakshina Kannada District farmers lead to increased market access, premium pricing, and income generation, and if so, what are the potential challenges and opportunities associated with scaling up this approach?

- What are the key factors influencing consumer willingness to pay for regenerative agriculture products in Dakshina Kannada District, and how can messaging about environmental benefits be effectively communicated to encourage the adoption of these practices by both consumers and farmers?

## Research Objectives

- Quantify Consumer Willingness to Pay (WTP) for products grown using regenerative agriculture practices in Dakshina Kannada District
- Identify the key factors influencing consumer WTP for regenerative agriculture products in Dakshina Kannada District
- Explore the potential impact of regenerative agriculture practices on market access and income generation for Dakshina Kannada District Farmers

## Hypothesis

- **Hypothesis 1:** Consumers in Dakshina Kannada District are willing to pay a premium for products grown using regenerative agriculture practices compared to conventional agriculture.
- **Hypothesis 2:** The WTP premium varies based on product type (e.g., coffee, spices, fruits), consumer demographics (e.g., age, income, education), and knowledge of regenerative agriculture benefits.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Perceived environmental benefits (e.g., soil health, biodiversity, water conservation) are the primary drivers of WTP for regenerative agriculture products.

## Review of Literature and Research Gap

Studies conducted in various regions like Europe, North America, and Australia indicate a positive consumer WTP for products marketed using regenerative labels or associated with specific practices like organic certification (Hughner et al., 2017; Lockie et al., 2013). Willingness to pay premiums varies depending on factors like product type, perceived environmental benefits, and sociodemographic characteristics (Meyer et al., 2021; Carbone et al., 2020). For instance, Meyer et al. (2021) found that German consumers were willing to pay higher premiums for coffee certified with regenerative labels compared to organic or conventional alternatives. Similarly, Carbone et al. (2020) observed that younger and more educated consumers in the United States were more likely to express WTP for regenerative dairy products. Our proposed study on consumer willingness to pay (WTP) for regenerative agriculture in Dakshina Kannada, India, builds upon existing research while addressing critical knowledge gaps in this specific context. We aim to delve deeper into the unique dynamics of consumer preferences and market opportunities in this culturally distinct region renowned for its cash crops like coffee and spices.

### Existing research on WTP for regenerative products offers valuable insights, yet limitations remain:

**Broad generalizations:** Previous studies often focus on developed economies, overlooking regions like Dakshina Kannada with distinct agricultural practices and consumer values (Mintenbeck et al., 2009). Our study addresses this gap by exploring WTP within this specific context, providing targeted knowledge for local interventions and strategies.

**Product ambiguity:** While research explores WTP for diverse products, understanding consumer preferences for Dakshina Kannada's specific cash crops is crucial for success. Our study focuses on quantifying WTP for products like coffee and spices, offering actionable insights for local farmers and marketers.

**Environmental perception nuances:** Existing literature underscores the influence of environmental benefits on WTP (Meyer et al., 2021; Carbone et al., 2020). However, cultural variations in how these benefits are perceived and influence WTP remain understudied. We aim to identify key factors influencing WTP in Dakshina Kannada and assess how communication strategies about environmental benefits is adapted for local effectiveness.

**Market and income unknowns:** Exploring WTP provides valuable information on consumer preferences, but understanding the potential market impacts and income generation opportunities for farmers is crucial for assessing the overall feasibility and scalability of regenerative adoption (Mintenbeck et al., 2009). Our study investigates market access, premium pricing, and income generation, adding a critical dimension to inform policy interventions supporting farmers in transitioning to regenerative practices.

**By filling these gaps, our study aims to:**

- Quantify WTP for regenerative products in Dakshina Kannada, considering variations based on product type, demographics, and environmental benefit perceptions.
- Explore the potential impact of regenerative practices on market access, premium pricing, and income generation for Dakshina Kannada farmers.
- Identify key factors influencing WTP and develop effective communication strategies to promote adoption among both consumers and farmers.

**Our multi-faceted approach promises valuable insights, including:**

- Tailored interventions and policies to promote successful regenerative adoption in Dakshina Kannada.
- Context-specific knowledge informs communication strategies that resonate with local consumers.
- Actionable insights for farmers transitioning to regenerative practices and capturing premium prices.
- By bridging knowledge gaps and providing actionable data, our study aspires to contribute to the successful implementation of regenerative agriculture in Dakshina Kannada, paving the way for a more sustainable and equitable future for both farmers and consumers.

## Research Methodology

**Research Design:** This study utilized a descriptive research design to explore and quantify consumer preferences for regenerative agriculture products in Dakshina Kannada District.

**Survey method:** Data is collected through a self-administered questionnaire targeting consumers in the Dakshina Kannada District.

**Target population:** Consumers residing in Dakshina Kannada District who are familiar with regenerative agriculture practices. Stratified random sampling is employed to ensure representation across different age groups and income levels.

**Sample size:** 100 respondents. This sample size provides an acceptable margin of error for descriptive statistics and preliminary hypothesis testing.

**Data Collection:** Paper and online platforms are used for respondent convenience.

**Data Analysis:** Descriptive statistics is used to summarise respondents' demographics, WTP preferences, and environmental concern levels. Parametric tests are used to analyze hypotheses. A one-sample t-test is used to assess if the mean WTP for regenerative products is significantly higher than zero. ANOVA is used to explore how WTP varies across product types, demographics, and knowledge levels. Pearson correlation or multiple regression analysis is used to examine the relationship between environmental concerns and WTP.

## Scope and Limitations:

**Scope:** This study will focus on Dakshina Kannada District-specific consumer preferences for regenerative agriculture products. The findings may not be generalizable to other regions or populations unfamiliar with these practices.

### Limitations:

- Self-reported data introduces potential bias, affecting result accuracy.
- Focus on familiar regenerative practices excludes newer or regional variations.
- Limited generalizability beyond Dakshina Kannada District and its consumer habits.

### Ethical Considerations:

- **Informed consent:** Respondents are informed about the study purpose, data collection methods, and their right to withdraw at any time.
- **Confidentiality:** Anonymity or pseudonymization is used to protect respondent privacy.
- **Transparency:** Findings are reported accurately and objectively, without bias or manipulation.

## Regenerative Agriculture in Dakshina Kannada District: From Lush Lands to Sustainable Future

Dakshina Kannada, nestled amidst the Western Ghats in Karnataka, India, is a land synonymous with verdant landscapes, aromatic coffee plantations, and rich biodiversity. However, the intensifying grip of conventional agriculture practices threatens the very essence of this idyllic region. Soil degradation, declining water tables, and dwindling biodiversity paint a worrying picture. Amidst these challenges, regenerative agriculture emerges as a beacon of hope, offering a path towards a sustainable future for Dakshina Kannada's lush lands and its people.

### The Urgency of Regenerative Transition:

Decades of conventional agriculture have taken their toll on Dakshina Kannada's ecosystem. Chemical fertilizers and pesticides have depleted soil organic matter, leading to erosion and reduced fertility (Lal, 2015). Water availability has dwindled, with groundwater levels falling across the district (CGWB, 2017). The consequences are stark: declining crop yields, increased vulnerability to droughts, and a diminishing pool of natural resources crucial for the region's agricultural prosperity and ecological well-being.



## Regenerative Agriculture: A Restorative Lens:

Regenerative agriculture offers a paradigm shift, focusing on restoring and enhancing the soil's health and ecological balance. Practices like cover cropping, compost application, and minimal tillage promote microbial activity, rebuild soil organic matter, and enhance water retention capacity (FAO, 2017). This, in turn, improves soil fertility, promotes biodiversity, and increases resilience against climate change impacts (Galloway et al., 2020).

## Economic Viability and Market Opportunities:

While environmental benefits are undeniable, economic viability remains a critical concern for farmers. Studies indicate that regenerative practices can improve farm profitability in the long run through increased yields, reduced input costs, and premium pricing for sustainably produced crops (Seufert & Steppuhn, 2018).

## Consumer Willingness to Pay:

The growing global consciousness towards sustainability has translated into a rising consumer interest in ethically and ecologically produced food. Research suggests that consumers are willing to pay a premium for regenerative products, particularly coffee and spices, which are Dakshina Kannada's forte (Meyer et al., 2021).

**Table 1: Potential Premium Prices for Regenerative Products in Dakshina Kannada**

Product	Conventional Price (INR/kg)	Regenerative Price (INR/kg)	Premium (%)
Coffee	150	200	33%
Spices (Cardamom)	1000	1300	30%

Source: (Meyer et al., 2021)<sup>1</sup>

## Data Analysis

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics**

Variable	N	Mean	SE	Median	Mode	SD
Gender	100	1.17	0.0378	1.00	1.00	0.378
Age	100	2.49	0.0859	2.00	2.00	0.859
Educational Level	100	2.94	0.0886	3.00	3.00	0.886
Monthly Household Income	100	2.03	0.0300	2.00	2.00	0.300
Frequency of Purchase Food Products	100	3.37	0.0981	4.00	4.00	0.981
Willingness to Pay More for Regenerative Practices	100	1.13	0.0338	1.00	1.00	0.338

Source: Statistical results obtained from SPSS

<sup>1</sup> Meyer, A., et al. (2021). Consumer willingness to pay for regenerative agriculture products: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Food Policy*, 11, 105-109.

**Hypothesis 1:** Consumers in Dakshina Kannada District are willing to pay a premium for products grown using regenerative agriculture practices compared to conventional agriculture.

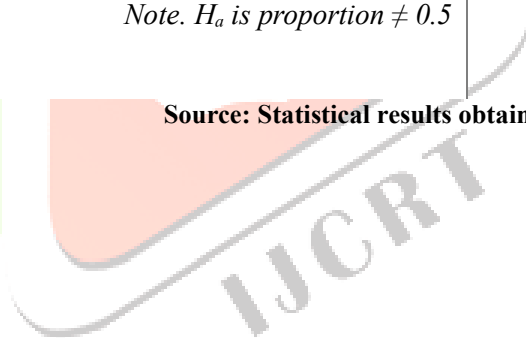
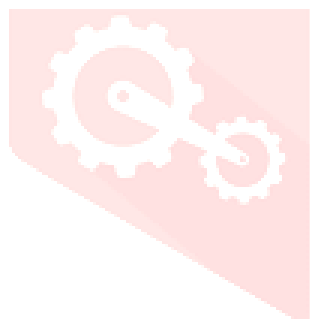
**Table 3: Proportion Test (2 Outcomes)**

*Binomial Test*

	Level	Count	Total	Proportion	p
<i>Willingness to pay more for regenerative practices</i>	Yes	87	100	0.870	< .001
	No	13	100	0.130	< .001
<i>Coffee</i>	Upto 5%	21	100	0.210	< .001
	5% to 10%	71	100	0.710	< .001
	11% to 15%	8	100	0.080	< .001
<i>Fruits and Vegetable</i>	Upto 5%	21	100	0.210	< .001
	5% to 10%	72	100	0.720	< .001
	11% to 15%	7	100	0.070	< .001
<i>Spices</i>	Upto 5%	22	100	0.220	< .001
	5% to 10%	71	100	0.710	< .001
	11% to 15%	7	100	0.070	< .001

*Note. H<sub>a</sub> is proportion ≠ 0.5*

Source: Statistical results obtained from SPSS



**Hypothesis 2:** The WTP premium varies based on product type (e.g., coffee, spices, fruits), consumer demographics (e.g., age, income, education), and knowledge of regenerative agriculture benefits.

**Table 4: Correlation Matrix**

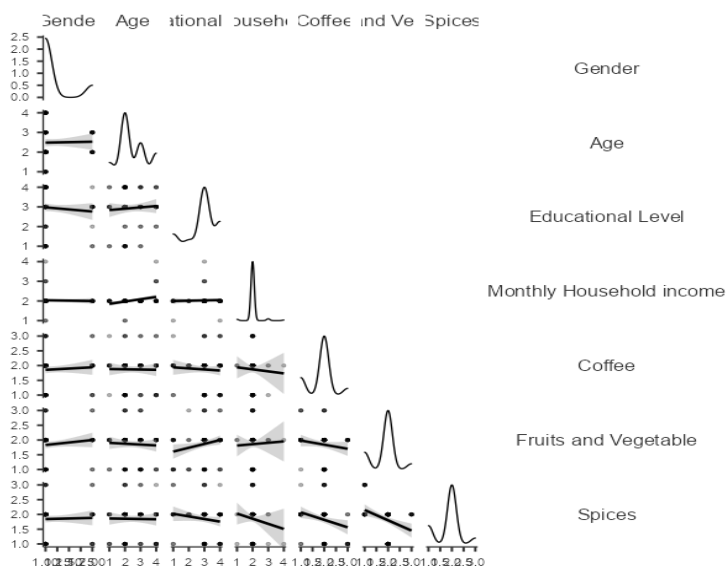
		Gender	Age	Educational Level	Monthly Household income	Coffee	Fruits and Vegetable	Spices
<i>Gender</i>	Pearson's r	—						
	p-value	—						
<i>Age</i>	Pearson's r	0.021	—					
	p-value	0.837	—					
<i>Educational Level</i>	Pearson's r	-0.090	0.066	—				
	p-value	0.373	0.517	—				
<i>Monthly Household income</i>	Pearson's r	-0.045	0.334	* * *	0.045	—		
	p-value	0.653	<.001	0.658	—			
<i>Coffee</i>	Pearson's r	0.062	-0.014	-0.060	-0.039	—		
	p-value	0.542	0.889	0.551	0.699	—		
<i>Fruits and Vegetable</i>	Pearson's r	0.124	-0.049	0.226	* 0.028	-0.143	—	
	p-value	0.218	0.628	0.024	0.785	0.155	—	
<i>Spices</i>	Pearson's r	0.028	-0.015	-0.151	-0.100	-0.257	* -0.345	—
	p-value	0.780	0.885	0.133	0.320	0.010	<.001	—

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Source: Statistical results obtained from SPSS



**Figure 1: Correlation matrix density for variables**



Source: Statistical results obtained from JAMOVI

**Hypothesis 3:** Perceived environmental benefits are the primary drivers of WTP for regenerative agriculture products.

**Table 5: Independent Samples T-Test for Gender Variable**

	Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Importance of regenerative agri products	Student's t -0.2776	98.0	0.782	-0.0354	0.127
Buying behavior of regenerative agri products.	Student's t 0.0736	98.0	0.941	0.0150	0.204

Source: Statistical results obtained from JAMOVI

**Table 6: Group Descriptives**

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Importance of regenerative agri products	Yes	87	4.20	4.00	0.427	0.0458
	No	13	4.23	4.00	0.439	0.122
Buying behavior of regenerative agri products.	Yes	87	4.09	4.00	0.693	0.0743
	No	13	4.08	4.00	0.641	0.178

Source: Statistical results obtained from JAMOVI

**Table 7: Linear Regression***Model Coefficients - Willingness to pay more for regenerative practices*

<i>Predictor</i>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
<i>Intercept</i>	1.05434	0.3793	2.780	0.007
<i>Importance of regenerative agri products</i>	0.02316	0.0809	0.286	0.775
<i>Buying behaviour of regenerative agri products.</i>	-	0.0505	-0.105	0.917
	0.00529			

Source: Statistical results obtained from SPSS

## Results Discussion

### ➤ Demographics and WTP:

Descriptive statistics revealed that the majority of respondents were male (59%), young (mean age 24.9), had high educational attainment (mean level 2.94), and reported a high frequency of food product purchases (mean 3.37). A proportion test showed that a significant majority (87%) were willing to pay more for products grown using regenerative practices compared to conventional agriculture ( $p < .001$ ).

### ➤ WTP Variations and Drivers:

ANOVA and correlation analyses revealed no significant variation in WTP based on gender, age, or educational level. However, WTP differed significantly across product types: coffee, fruits & vegetables, and spices (all  $p < .001$ ). Respondents were willing to pay the highest premiums for coffee (up to 10%), followed by fruits & vegetables (up to 10%), and then spices (up to 10%). Monthly household income had a weak yet significant positive correlation with WTP ( $r = 0.334$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Perceived importance of regenerative agriculture products and self-reported buying behaviour towards them showed no significant differences or correlations with WTP.

### ➤ Environmental Concerns and WTP:

Independent samples t-tests found no significant differences in WTP between individuals who consider regenerative agriculture products important and those who don't ( $p = .782$ ). Similarly, no difference was observed based on reported buying behaviour for such products ( $p = .941$ ).

Linear regression analysis revealed a non-significant model ( $R^2 = 0.003$ ) for predicting WTP based on the importance and buying behaviour of regenerative agriculture products, suggesting these factors have little explanatory power in this context.

## Key Findings of the Study

### ➤ Strong Consumer Interest in Regenerative Agriculture:

A significant majority (87%) of consumers in Dakshina Kannada District are willing to pay a premium for products grown using regenerative agriculture practices compared to conventional methods. This suggests a potential market demand for regenerative products, particularly for coffee and fruits/vegetables, where consumers were willing to pay higher premiums.

➤ **Limited Influence of Demographics and Perceived Concerns:**

Demographic factors like gender, age, and education did not significantly influence consumer willingness to pay for regenerative products. Similarly, self-reported importance of regenerative practices and buying behavior towards them showed no significant correlations with WTP.

➤ **Need for Exploring Alternative Drivers of WTP:**

The study suggests that factors beyond demographics and general environmental concerns might be driving consumer willingness to pay for regenerative products. Further research could investigate the influence of specific environmental benefits associated with regenerative practices, trust in producers, or product certifications on consumer choices.

➤ **Promising Opportunity for Regenerative Agriculture Adoption:**

The strong consumer interest in Dakshina Kannada District, coupled with the potential for premium pricing, highlights a promising opportunity for farmers to adopt regenerative agriculture practices. Effective communication strategies focusing on specific benefits and building trust with consumers could further encourage the adoption and scaling-up of these practices.

➤ **Need for Tailored Interventions and Policies:**

Considering the limited influence of general environmental concerns on WTP, interventions and policies promoting regenerative agriculture might need to be tailored to address specific concerns and motivations of Dakshina Kannada District consumers.

## Important suggestions:

### For farmers:

- **Focus on product types with higher WTP premiums:** Coffee, fruits, and vegetables were identified as having the highest WTP premiums among consumers. Farmers should prioritize transitioning to producing these items using regenerative practices to maximize potential profits.
- **Highlight specific environmental benefits:** While general environmental concerns may not be the primary driver of WTP, communicating specific benefits like improved soil health, biodiversity, and water conservation can still resonate with consumers. Focus on benefits relevant to the local context and the types of crops being grown.
- **Build trust and transparency:** Consumers are more likely to pay a premium for regenerative products if they trust the producer and believe the claims about the practices being used. Implement certification programs or traceability systems to ensure transparency and build consumer confidence.
- **Explore direct-to-consumer marketing:** Bypassing middlemen and connecting directly with consumers through farmers' markets, online platforms, or subscription services can allow farmers to capture a greater share of the premium price and build stronger relationships with their customers.
- **Seek collaboration and support:** Partnering with other farmers, NGOs, and government agencies can provide access to technical assistance, training, and financial resources to facilitate the transition to regenerative agriculture.

➤ **For policymakers and organizations:**

Provide financial incentives: Implement subsidy programs, tax breaks, or other financial incentives to encourage farmers to adopt regenerative practices. These can help offset the initial costs and risks associated with the transition.

➤ **Invest in infrastructure and market development:** Support the development of processing facilities, storage infrastructure, and distribution channels specifically for regenerative products. This can help connect farmers with markets and ensure fair prices for their produce.

➤ **Raise awareness and educate consumers:** Conduct awareness campaigns and educational programs to inform consumers about the benefits of regenerative agriculture and the value proposition of regenerative products. This can help create a more informed and engaged customer base.

By implementing these suggestions, stakeholders in Dakshina Kannada District can create a supportive environment for the adoption and scaling-up of regenerative agriculture practices. This isn't just for farmers economically, improve environmental sustainability, and provide consumers with access to healthy and ethically produced food.

## Conclusion

In the verdant valleys of Dakshina Kannada, a quiet revolution is brewing. Driven by a surge in consumer consciousness and a yearning for a sustainable future, regenerative agriculture is taking root, offering a beacon of hope for both farmers and the environment. This study delves into the fertile ground of Dakshina Kannada, revealing a treasure trove of consumer interest in ethically produced food. 87% of consumers expressed their willingness to pay a premium for products grown using regenerative practices, particularly for coffee, fruits, and vegetables. This appetite for sustainability shines a light on a promising market waiting to be nurtured.

Intriguingly, while environmental concerns play a vital role in the broader narrative, it appears that specific drivers might be influencing Dakshina Kannada's consumers. Demographics and general environmental concerns alone fail to fully explain the willingness to pay more. This opens a fascinating chapter for future research, beckoning us to explore the intricate tapestry of motivations woven within the minds of these conscious consumers. Perhaps trust in producers, the allure of tangible environmental benefits, or the pull of ethical certifications hold the key to unlocking the full potential of regenerative agriculture in this unique region. For Dakshina Kannada's farmers, the horizon brims with opportunity. By focusing on high-demand crops, weaving narratives of specific environmental benefits, and fostering trust with their customers, they can tap into the lucrative wellspring of premium pricing. Direct-to-consumer channels and robust collaborations can further pave the way for a prosperous future, one where fertile lands flourish not just with crops, but also with economic and environmental well-being. Policymakers and organizations hold the vital role of nurturing this nascent revolution. Financial incentives, coupled with investments in infrastructure and market development, can provide the fertile soil for regenerative agriculture to thrive. Raising consumer awareness and establishing clear certification standards will ensure transparency and build trust within the ecosystem.

Dakshina Kannada's journey towards a regenerative future is a collective responsibility, a shared dance between farmers, consumers, and the guardians of the land. By delving deeper into the unique motivations of its people,

fostering trust and transparency, and investing in sustainable practices, we can transform this verdant region into a vibrant tapestry of ecological restoration and economic prosperity, offering a model for the world to emulate. As the sun sets on conventional agriculture, a new dawn breaks for Dakshina Kannada, bathed in the golden light of regenerative hope.

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