

OATMAN FLATS RANCH



Oatman Flats Ranch, an anchor of the Hansen family for four generations, has a rich cultural and natural history. Ray Judd Hansen raised quarter horses and grew cotton for 50 years. But, like so many other family farms today, the Hansens were on the verge of losing their family ranch. Ray Judd's grandson, Dax Hansen, purchased the historic farm in 2018 with the intent of restoring the once-fertile property on the floodplain of the Gila River.

When Dax took over, the farm was clearly degraded. The river had been dammed and diverted upstream, the groundwater overdrawn, the desiccated watercourses choked with invasive species of plants, and the farm soils depleted and overrun with weeds.

It's hard to imagine a more challenging place to restore a large-scale farm, yet Dax and team endeavored to combine ancient traditional knowledge and cutting edge agroecological principles to restore the fertility to his farm's soils while also replenishing water resources and boosting soil carbon sequestration.

Oatman Flats Ranch is committed to revitalizing and sustaining family farms in hotter and drier environments while serving as a model that others can replicate.

In an effort to adapt to our changing world, the farm is transitioning from practices that deplete and despoil the land to those that heal and restore it, and from approaches that ignore the cultural historical contexts of farms to those that embrace and celebrate them. In so doing, Dax honors his ancestors and the indigenous inhabitants who preceded them, and aims to bequeath to future generations, a resilient and thriving oasis in the desert.

The Arizona desert river valley soil and climate produce wheats with character and minerality. Their organic and [regenerative farming practices](#) result in a nutrient-dense wheat, while healing and feeding the earth, and providing our crops with the wholesome ecosystem they need to thrive.

One highlight of their regenerative farming efforts was to conserve ~700 gallons of water in the aquifer of the Gila River for every pound of winter wheat harvested on their farm compared to conventional commodities (alfalfa, cotton, and corn) grown in their region. Although yield was slightly lower, the amount of water conserved from half a million pounds of grain harvested is

enormous. In an area where drought is very prevalent, rebuilding soil and conserving water is very important throughout the regenerative journey.

The overall objective is to enable the land to heal while also providing an abundance of nutritious food for the community, and healthy lifestyles for farm workers. The concept is to produce premium products in a way that is both environmentally friendly and economically viable, and thereby create a model for families to keep their farms, even in the face of climate instability and water scarcity.

Oatman Flats Ranch aims to achieve this goal by growing relatively drought-tolerant crops, including perennial crops, and using agroforestry techniques to help regenerate the degraded farmland, while also restoring water equilibrium and sequestering carbon.

The first step was to gain organic certification which was achieved in 2019. Now Oatman Flats Ranch is going beyond organic and transitioning the 600-acre farm into a full-fledged regenerative operation specializing in heritage grains and arid-adapted crops. As of 2021, they are also now Regenerative Organic Certified[®].

To learn more about Oatman Flat Ranch, Oatman Farms and their products - you can find their mixes using their grains here: <https://oatmanfarms.com/>

<https://kisstheground.com/oatman-flats-ranch/>