Melany Dobson
HUDSON HEMP
as told to Lisa Gabor, BPCM Cannabis

Melany Dobson is a leader in the cannabis startup ecosystem and outspoken advocate for regenerative agricultural practices. At Hudson Hemp, where she works alongside her sister, Freya, and brother, Ben, Melany leads brand strategy and creative direction for the company and its portfolio of brands, including the hemp-based cannabinoid wellness brand, Treaty.

HUDSON HEMP WAS AMONG THE FIRST OF 10 HEMP GROWERS LICENSED IN NEW YORK STATE AND ONE OF THE FIRST TO PRODUCE CBD.

“... grew up in a home connected to farming. My house was located on Cherry Hill Farm, in the Berkshires, in Massachusetts. The land surrounding our house was used for the cultivation of edible things—like tomatoes and mesclun. With that I understood farming from a business perspective, the distribution and marketing of farm goods. Part of my experience was understanding seasonality—the timing and urgency of farming, and the fact that you plan as much as possible but there will always be variables—such as weather—that are entirely out of your hands.

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After school, I went to California and I entered the cannabis industry, sort of without meaning to. I had a bird’s eye view of the market as it was going from illicit to a regulated, compliant business. Understanding cannabis as a farm good brought it into a familiar context for me. At this point, the cultivation of cannabis wasn’t connected to the philosophy or practice of organic agriculture. Where I was in Northern California, it was treated as a commodity crop. That’s what brought me back to New York, where my brother was managing an organic farm in the Hudson Valley.

My brother, Ben, has always been a farmer—his background is in organic solids and policy. In 2012, Ben was hired by Abby Rockefeller to transition Old Mud Creek Farm from a conventional to an organic farm through regenerative agriculture. Regenerative farming is the practice of bringing more carbon into the soil than you’re letting into the atmosphere. Old Mud Creek had been damaged by both fertilizers and mono cropping—singular crops of corn and soy—that had depleted the soil of vital nutrients and left behind toxins and heavy metals. Throughout the transition, Abby and Ben measured carbon, nitrogen and methane gas fluctuations across the farm, quantifying the effects of these regenerative practices. While documenting these changes, they started Hudson Carbon, the institute and soil lab that studies how

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SIBLINGS MELANY, BEN AND FREYA DOBSON
organic regenerative farming maximizes carbon capture.

In 2017, Ben added hemp to the farm’s crop rotation. He was the first of 10 hemp growers in New York State. Hemp is an incredible remediator. It pulls heavy metals and other toxins from the soil. It's also an amazing carbon sequester, bringing carbon from the atmosphere into the soil. Abby and Ben saw hemp as a conduit from regenerative agriculture to regenerative industries—from feed to fiber to textiles to medicine and to fuel.

I came back from California to New York after the first hemp harvest, when the team at Old Mud Creek Farm established Hudson Hemp and began development of the brand and product line called Treaty. Our focus is on the medicinal use of the plant, CBD hemp and cannabinoids. We started exclusively with CBD, looking at CBD in isolation as well as in full spectrum products. Currently, we’re looking at a whole range of other cannabinoids.

Treaty develops products through regenerative agricultural practices. This is the piece that we really focus on through research and development: how our farming practices affects the full spectrum of the plant—the terpene profile, the cannabinoid profile and all the other constituents that make up a true, full spectrum product.

What’s so special about this operation is that we’re really confronting the intersection of cannabis and regenerative agriculture. This crop was Illegal to grow for over 50 years. Now, this is what it looks like in an agricultural system returning value to the earth, not depleting resources. We farm in a context where cannabis is one of many crops and part of an ecosystem. Our product line, Treaty, really embodies the regenerative farming philosophy in that it’s good for the Earth first, then it is good for the individual taking it. We really try to leverage that position to push forward a new idea of what luxury goods look like in the cannabis space.”

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