

Leyla Weighs In: Benefits of Regenerative Agriculture



Industrial agricultural practices like tilling, monocropping and heavy use of chemical and fossil fuel-produced fertilizers disturb and degrade soil health, so much so that the United States lost 1.7 billion tons of it to wind and water erosion in the year 2017 alone.

Let that sink in for a moment: 1.7 billion tons of soil lost to wind and erosion in one year alone. Clearly, industrial agriculture is unsustainable in that it continually extracts our natural resources without replenishing them—a clear illustration of this is the Dust Bowl of the 1930s.

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, *regenerative agriculture is a land management philosophy that focuses on farming and ranching in harmony with nature. More subjectively to farmers and ranchers, it's a place-based management philosophy whose adherents think about their land, their businesses, and their communities as dynamic ecosystems, contrary to today's dominant industrial agricultural model.*

By building soil health rather than degrading it, regenerative farmers and ranchers clean waterways, sequester carbon, and protect wildlife. This system of agriculture

helps protect the environment, grow healthier food, rebuild rural farming communities, and make farming profitable again. A win-win for all of us and the planet.

Instead of continually extracting natural resources, regenerative agriculture gives back to the land that nourishes it, encouraging farmers and ranchers to make management decisions based on the availability of natural resources and healthy soil.

By using practices such as cover cropping, composting, crop rotation and alternative pest management—to name just a few—relationships within the ecosystem are nurtured, prioritizing soil health and reducing reliance on chemical fertilizers.

Healthy soil is better able to retain its structure and nutrients during a rainstorm which equals less runoff and erosion into waterways. And with water stored properly in the soil, drought has much less impact on plants.

Using cover crops, biodiversity is encouraged, and with the elimination of chemicals and synthetic fertilizers, protecting the soil's microbiome and attracting beneficial insects—Nature's own pesticide—eliminates the use of harmful pesticides as well as herbicides.

Plants grown in healthy soil are stronger and better able to prevent infections. And by strategic planting of hedgerows and prairie strips to prevent soil erosion, a habitat is built for pollinators like bees and other beneficial wildlife.

To your health!