

Planetpro

NESTLÉ PROFESSIONAL SUSTAINABILITY MAGAZINE

The need to
protect soil, water
& biodiversity

More of what
guests want

How you
can spread
the word

Farms, Food, & Our Future

Why regenerative agriculture matters
to the food & beverage industry

feeling the SQUEEZE

WHY FARMS NEED SUPPORT NOW

Farms have helped feed the world for centuries, but that job is becoming increasingly challenging. Population growth means there are more mouths to feed every year. Meanwhile, land and water are also limited resources, and some farming practices may have depleted soil and water quality, adding to the challenges of growing the food we put on our tables.

To continue growing enough food to feed the world in the face of increasing climate change, agriculture may need some different solutions. That's why scientists and farmers are continuously studying alternative agriculture practices and focusing on soil, water quality, and biodiversity on farms.

In the long run, transitioning to these alternative practices may also make farming communities more resilient, supporting their livelihood for years to come.

In this issue, we'll introduce you to a group of farming practices known as "regenerative agriculture." We'll also discuss why this topic is relevant to the food sector and explain how you can help support this transition and spread the word to your suppliers and customers.

DID YOU KNOW?

Deforestation, intensive farming practices, and degradation of soil health due to agricultural practices are within the top 10 most relevant sustainability concerns for EU coffee consumers.¹

CHALLENGES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY FARM



Population boom

The global population is growing every year. Between 1961 and 2000, it more than doubled. By 2050, in order to provide enough nutrition for the expected 9.7 billion people in the world,² the amount of food farms deliver will need to increase substantially. Meanwhile, the percentage of people who work in agriculture has dropped from 43% in 1991 to 26% by 2022.³



Biodiversity

Converting land to agriculture may result in habitat destruction and biodiversity loss, reducing the rich variety of plant, animal, and microbial life on the planet.⁴ While pesticides help increase crop yields and safeguard food security, their exposure is linked to a wide range of effects on biodiversity, contributing to declines in populations of insects, birds, bats, earthworms, aquatic plants, fish and amphibians, among others.⁵



Farmers' finances

Almost half of the world's population lives in households linked to agrifood systems.⁶ Extreme weather events are already generating more uncertainty in yields. Research shows that climate change will continue to impact agricultural output, incomes, prices, food access, food quality, and food safety,⁷ and degrading soil, water quality, and biodiversity could also decrease harvests. In the face of these pressures, food farms may need to build resilience to protect their livelihoods.



Land and water use

Given our planet's limited resources, farms cannot expand indefinitely, so they need techniques to help them grow more food more efficiently. In 2020, the global agricultural land area was 4.74 billion hectares, 3% less than in 2000. During that same period, the production of primary crops was 9.3 billion tonnes, an increase of 52%.⁸ Meanwhile, agriculture accounts for roughly 70% of freshwater withdrawals worldwide.⁹



Soil quality

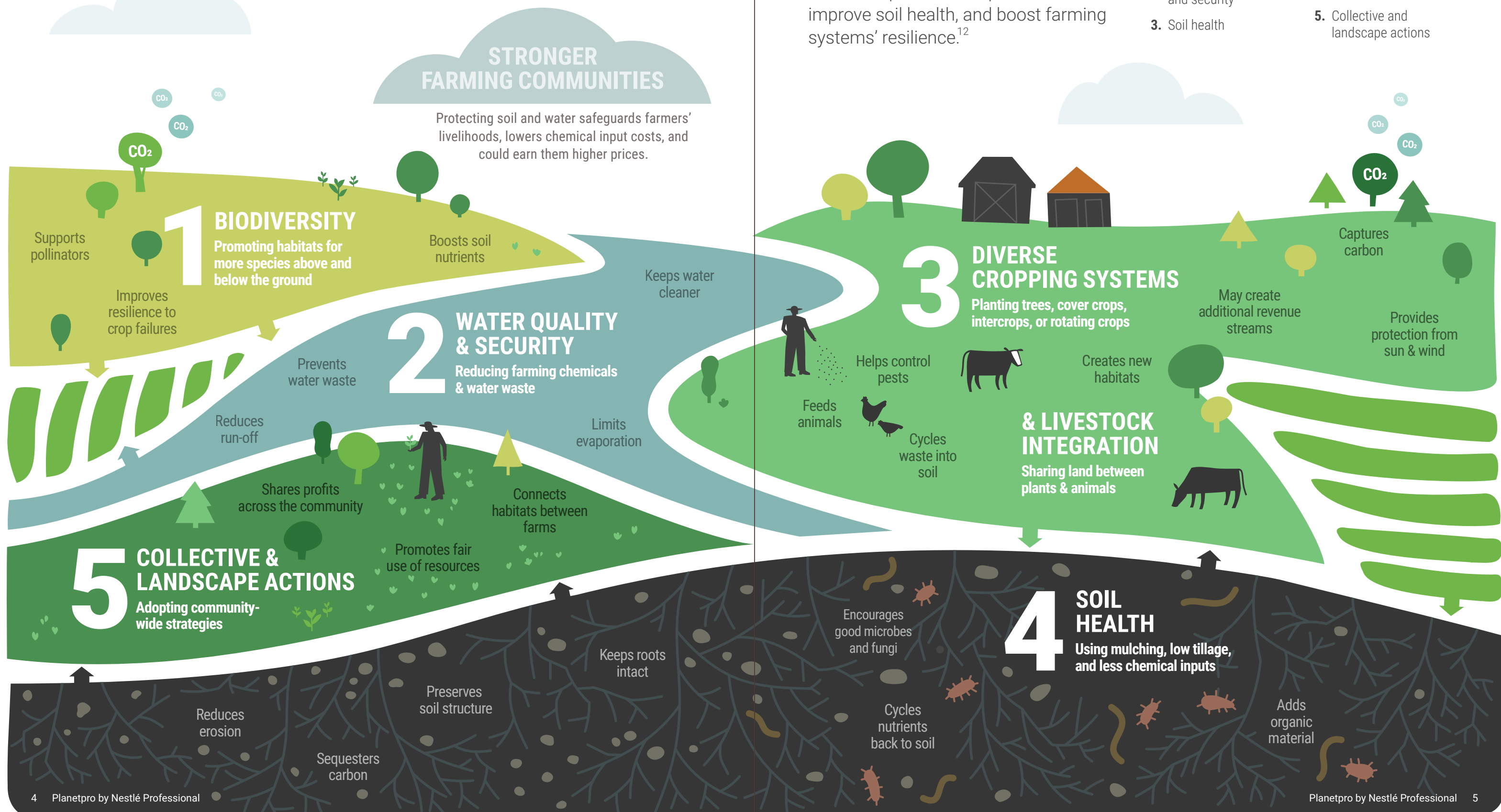
Frequent tilling and other practices have contributed to erosion, depleting soil faster than it can be replenished through natural fertilization by animals and decaying plant matter. Soil erosion could result in as much as a 50% loss in crop yields,¹⁰ and 16% of conventionally managed soils will last less than 100 years if they keep eroding at their current rates.¹¹



Carbon emissions

Total agriculture-related emissions in 2020 amounted to 10.5 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent of GHG released into the atmosphere. Activities within the farm-gate (those related to the production of crops and livestock) accounted for 70% of those emissions—growing 13% between 2000 and 2020—followed by deforestation (28%) and fires in humid tropical forests and organic soils (2%).⁸

future-proof FARMING



APPEAL

to your customers



Finding new ways to grow food should appeal to everyone—after all, everyone needs to eat. Enhancing soil, water, and biodiversity may help farmers do their work, but there are some other reasons for your guests to be intrigued by regenerative agriculture.

Consumer demand

Recent data suggests that these practices could be a plus with your guests; after the concept of Regenerative Agriculture was introduced to U.S. consumers, 73% agreed they would be more likely to trust retailers and brands that implement those practices. 72% agreed that they would be more likely to purchase from them.¹⁵



DID YOU KNOW?

The global regenerative agriculture market value is predicted to triple by 2031, reaching USD 31.88 billion.²⁴



Favourable perceptions

Regenerative agriculture could boost perceptions among consumers, as they intuitively link it to nutrition, health and quality.¹⁶ For example, a study focusing on soil composition in typical growing conditions found that cocoa bean flavour was influenced by the chemical composition of the soil.¹⁷ However, conclusions cannot be drawn yet due to the difference in farming practices studied and variabilities of methods and crops. Thus, further research is still needed.¹⁸

Support for farmers

Regenerative agriculture may help improve long-term farmer livelihood through reduced costs, improved crop yield and crop quality, and greater resilience to extreme climate events.¹⁹ Meanwhile, 79% of farmers state they “would improve sustainability of their farms to meet consumer needs and expectations and because it’s the future of farming.”²⁰



Nutritional content

According to multiple studies in several countries, the nutrient density of our food has fallen tremendously in the last 50-70 years.²¹ However, some preliminary trials in the U.S. showed interesting results: the food grown under regenerative practices contained, on average, more magnesium, calcium, potassium, zinc and vitamins.^{22, 23} Further research in this area is needed.



share the NEWS

What does regenerative agriculture mean for your business?

Regenerative agriculture may be a new term to many people. In a recent survey, operators in the U.S. were not very familiar with it, but once introduced, most felt it was an important farming approach.²⁵ It also resonates well with consumers,¹⁶ so taking time to educate them is worth your while.

As one of the people at the heart of the food industry, you can become a thought leader in this area, helping guests, coworkers, and suppliers understand how regenerative agriculture could support the ongoing supply of ingredients.

Here are a few conversation starters that could make regenerative agriculture feel more relevant to your team, your suppliers, and your customers:

Appeal to the senses

Highlight dishes made with ingredients grown with these practices on your daily specials board, using descriptive words to build an appetizing story.

Use an emotional tone rather than lecturing

The goal is to have meaningful conversations around values you share and help other people learn alongside of you.

Educate your team

Share what you know with your employees, offering resources to support their learning and build a better understanding of the farms that grow our food.

Ask your suppliers what they know

Try asking if they've heard of regenerative agriculture or buy from farmers who use these methods. Let them know you're interested in growers who use this approach.

Start with the familiar

Choose a topic that guests may already recognize, such as soil health, sustainability, or biodiversity, and discuss how regenerative agriculture can work toward those goals.

Shout it out

If one of your suppliers is implementing regenerative agriculture practices, ask for some specific facts that you can share with your customers. Ingredients may vary throughout the year, so keep in touch with your suppliers, and update communication materials regularly.



"Over the past five years, there have been significant shifts in consumer habits, concerns, and perceptions of responsibility regarding sustainability and environmental issues. Consumers are increasingly seeking sustainable options, but they often struggle to make informed decisions due to a lack of expertise and understanding of sustainability concepts."²⁶

Everyday Q&A

Is “organic” equivalent to using regenerative agriculture practices?

Farms producing organic ingredients may be adopting regenerative agriculture practices, but the two terms are not equal. Many markets have regulations which provide a clear standard for organic farming and organic products. This regulated approach satisfies consumer demand for trustworthy organic products, while providing a fair marketplace for producers, distributors, and marketers. Organic farms and produce are subject to a strict regulatory framework to ensure compliance across the entire supply chain. Also, this approach permits the use of specific, mandatory logos which can be applied to products that comply with the requirements.

On the other hand, there are no regulations in place regarding regenerative agriculture, therefore farmers can take a more tailored and localized approach to implementing the practices that are most suitable for their farm and crops.

What is the difference between responsible sourcing and regenerative agriculture?

These are two separate topics. There is currently no regulatory or global standard for “responsible sourcing,” so many companies are creating their own definitions. For Nestlé, this approach applies to 14 key ingredients sourced as per the Nestlé Responsible Sourcing Core Requirements.²⁷ Responsible sourcing means that our ingredients are traceable to the group of farms where they were grown, and produced in accordance with sustainability standards from external programmes.

Meanwhile, “regenerative agriculture” relates to farming practices and how ingredients are grown. Farms which produce “responsibly sourced” ingredients may be practicing regenerative agriculture practices.

Does food grown with this approach cost more?

Not necessarily. Nestlé’s investment in deploying regenerative agriculture at scale supports the long-term resilience of our agricultural supply chains, while ensuring business continuity for customers in the future. It could also be an investment to help mitigate the costs of severe weather effects and climate change.

You can raise awareness among your guests by sharing the story behind the ingredients you use and highlighting your commitment to more resilient practices.

Is there an international seal for regenerative agriculture?

Currently, there are no international standards, global certification schemes, or harmonized regulatory definitions for “regenerative agriculture.” However, various initiatives have been developed to help translate global concepts of regenerative agriculture into actionable practices at the farm level. For instance, some commodity-specific definitions are emerging to provide practical guidance for crops such as coffee.²⁸

How to know if ingredients are grown this way?

As there are no international standards for regenerative agriculture, there is currently no requirement for ingredients grown under these practices to be claimed as such. Some suppliers or producers may voluntarily provide this information, but without defined standards, the approaches may vary. Some suppliers may also adopt regenerative agriculture practices such as planting cover crops, reforestation, or strategic irrigation, without mentioning it. In the end, it’s best to ask your suppliers and farmers directly and confirm how they measure and validate their practices.

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