

Defining Regenerative Agriculture for State Policies and Programs

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Regenerative Agriculture Work Group

DRAFT Definition*

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Introduction

“Regenerative agriculture,” as defined for use by State of California policies and programs, is an integrated approach to farming and ranching rooted in the principles of soil health leading to improved target outcomes. This approach recognizes and respects the traditions and innovations from the original Indigenous stewards of the land.

Target Outcomes

Target outcomes for regenerative agriculture practices include:

- a) Building soil health, soil organic matter and biodiversity;
- b) Restoring and maintenance of water resources;
- c) Protecting air quality;
- d) Sequestering/reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- e) Using sustainable and integrated pest management to eliminate reliance on pesticides
- f) Improving nutrient cycling to reduce use of external fertilizers
- g) Protecting spiritual and cultural traditions;
- h) Supporting Native-led stewardship practices;
- i) Improving/enhancing human health and rural communities;
- j) Fostering wildlife and animal welfare;
- k) Creating livelihoods and durable solutions leading to a healthy food and agriculture workforce;
- l) Minimizing negative impacts to other target outcomes
- m) Maintaining positive impact on the economic vitality/livelihood of farmers and ranchers.

Conclusion

Meeting target regenerative outcomes will require processes, practices, monitoring, evaluation, and innovation to be customized to specific production systems, ecoregions, and local Indigenous cultural regions. Practice selection is based on the best available science and practice, including organic and traditional ecological knowledge, for production systems.

*This version was discussed and refined by the CDFA Regenerative Agriculture Work Group on July 30th, 2024. It will be presented to the California State Board of Food and Agriculture (Board) for consideration at its next meeting. The Board is responsible for final refinement and potential adoption of the definition. All Board meetings are open to the public.