



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

Karen Ross, Secretary

March 3, 2025

Chair Cameron
State Board of Food and Agriculture
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Cameron and Members of the Board:

On behalf of the Department, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to the State Board for your time and commitment to this process, and particularly to Doria Robinson for her leadership on the Regenerative Definition subcommittee. This was a significant undertaking, engaging hundreds of people over the course of two and a half years. I am pleased to report that the California Department of Food and Agriculture ("Department") has adopted the definition with minimal changes, which are described in the attachment to this letter and which are intended to provide clarity about how other state agencies might approach using the definition for their own purposes.

As noted in the letter accompanying your recommendation, this is not a definition intended to be used for certification, nor to be included in statute. The Department agrees with the State Board that the definition is unlikely to be static, as the science behind our understanding of agricultural sustainability and the factors contributing to "regeneration" are rapidly changing and evolving. In the coming months, the Department will convene our sister state agencies through the Healthy Soils Initiative to provide them information on the definition. We will also hold a guest speaker series with a goal of enhancing our collective understanding of the potential applications of the definition through state programs.

Through this process and definition, the State Board has provided additional clarity towards the Ag Vision priority of "Fostering climate-smart, resilient, and regenerative food systems." We are grateful to have this tool in our toolbox as we seek to carry out effective and impactful policies and programs to address the climate and biodiversity crises at hand.

Thank you again for your time and commitment.

Yours truly,

Karen Ross
Secretary

Attachment 1: Final definition of "Regenerative Agriculture for State of California Policies and Programs"

Attachment 2: Changes to the State Board's recommendation "Defining Regenerative Agriculture for State Policies and Programs"

cc: Jeff Dlott, Chair, Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel
Members of the Regenerative Agriculture Work Group



Attachment 1

Final Definition of “Regenerative Agriculture” for State Policies and Programs

“Regenerative agriculture,” as defined for consideration by State Agencies and Departments, is an integrated approach to farming and ranching rooted in principles of soil health, biodiversity and ecosystem resiliency leading to improved targeted outcomes.

Regenerative agriculture is not an endpoint, but a continuous implementation of practices that over time minimize inputs and environmental impacts and further enhances the ecosystem while maintaining or improving productivity, economic contributions and community benefits.

“Regenerative agriculture” is an ongoing continuum of sustainability for California’s farmers and ranchers, informed by current science as well as the traditions and innovations from the original Indigenous stewards of the land.

Examples of target outcomes include:

- (a) Building soil health, soil organic matter and biodiversity. ([Healthy Soils Program](#)); ([AB 1757](#))
- (b) Increasing statewide implementation of conservation practices that improve soil health, sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gases; (USDA NRCS [Conservation Practice Standards](#))
- (c) Furthering sustainable pest and integrated pest management to reduce the reliance on pesticides; ([Accelerating Sustainable Pest Management: A Roadmap for California](#)) ;([UC Statewide Integrated Pest Management](#)), (USDA NRCS [pest management conservation system](#))
- (d) Protecting the welfare and care of animals in agriculture; ([Animal Care Program](#))
- (e) Building healthy, local communities; ([Ag Vision](#))
- (f) Protecting spiritual and cultural traditions as well as supporting Native-led stewardship practices;
- (g) Minimizing negative impacts to other target outcomes;
- (h) Maintaining positive impact on the economic vitality/livelihoods of farmers and ranchers.

Regenerative agriculture 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 but not limited to, organic and traditional ecological knowledge, for production systems.

State agencies and departments are encouraged to coordinate with the Department, contingent upon resources, in the development of measurable and verifiable outcomes related to individual policies and programs and are responsible for incorporating verification and reporting.

Attachment 2

Changes to the State Board's recommendation "Defining Regenerative Agriculture for State Policies and Programs"

Additions are noted with underlines; deletions are denoted by strikethrough:

Paragraph 1:

"Regenerative agriculture," as defined for consideration by State Agencies and Departments ~~State of California policies and programs~~, is an integrated approach to farming and ranching rooted in principles of soil health, biodiversity and ecosystem resiliency leading to improved targeted outcomes.

Last Paragraph:

State agencies and departments ~~shall~~ are encouraged to coordinate with the Department, contingent upon resources, in the development of measurable and verifiable outcomes related to individual policies and programs and are responsible for incorporating verification and reporting.