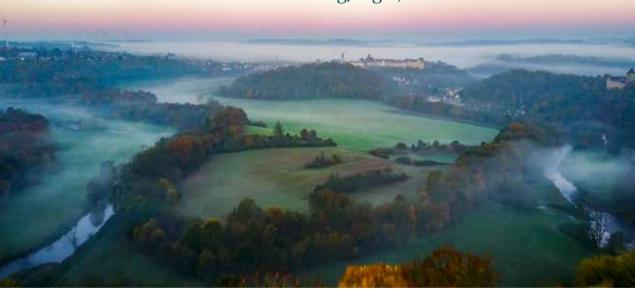




C L I M A T E F A R M I N G C O N G R E S S

9.11. - 11.11.2021 Akademie Schloss Kirchberg 74592 Kirchberg/Jagst, DE









CLIMATE FARMING CONGRESS

The international 1st Climate Farming Congress was organized in collaboration with Climate Farmers and held at the "Farmers' Castle" Schloss Kirchberg in Kirchberg an der Jagst in Germany from 9 - 11 November 2021.

The congress was co-organized by Akademie Schloss Kirchberg and Climate Farmers with the support of our partners GLS Bank, elobau Stiftung and Bäuerliche Erzeugergemeinschaft Schwäbisch Hall.



The congress united 80 pioneering farmers and organization members from 16 different European countries exchanging their knowledge and experiences as well as their struggles to build the foundation for a common voice of Regenerative Agriculture in Europe. The congress was the first gathering of pioneers of Regenerative Agriculture, which, with its ,from the ground up' nature and its objective of unifying the voices worked on enabling the further development and scaling of Regenerative Agriculture.

"In the wake of the climate emergency,



we need a paradigm shift that reflects a more holistic and humble relationship with nature. With current ecological and environmental degradation increasing in severity, it is imperative we utilize the momentum established at the Congress to scale up regeneration and sow the seeds for a paradigm shift in Europe." (Climate Farmers 2022)

Our current agriculture system contributes to around 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions and has degraded 33% of our planet's soil and degraded 66% of the biodiversity (Amelung et al. 2020).

With extreme weather events likely to occur more frequently, monoculture agriculture will put food security at risk. We will need to adapt in order to maintain high yields and food security. This calls for a redesign of our agricultural ecosystems such that soil production can be sustained at the same time as soils regenerate their soil organic matter and functions, supporting the broader ecosystem services and a thriving farming economy (Climate Farmers 2022).



"Regenerative Agriculture can solve many of our most pressing problems such as climate change, biodiversity loss, air quality, food system resilience [water scarcity, ecological imbalances, low-nutrient food] and [declining] public health if practiced at scale. The potential, however, remains underutilised, as we have seen through the poor exploration of the topic in Glasgow during COP26, and, previously, the new Common Agricultural Policy of the EU." - Ivo Degn, Climate Farmers

The goal of the congress was to work collaboratively on a manifesto to summarise the central position of practitioners in European Regenerative Agriculture and support decision-makers in mobilizing growth.







Beyond Organic Agriculture

"The number one priority in regenerative organic agriculture is soil health. Soil health is intrinsically linked to the total health of our food system. Soil health affects everything from plant health to human wellbeing and the future of our planet. Regenerative prioritizes soil health while simultaneously encompassing high standards for animal welfare and worker fairness. The idea is to create farm systems that work in harmony with nature to improve quality of life for every creature involved." (Rodale Institute, 2022)

The outcome from the Climate Farming Congress:

The highly participatory process at the gathering culminated in a manifesto which was signed by 80 participants from 16 European countries towards the end of the congress. It lays out the central positions of the pioneers of Regenerative Agriculture to help key decision-makers and other stakeholders understand regenerative farming and what it needs for its growth.





The manifesto describes the regenerative approach as a systemic approach to soil, plants and animals adapted to the local ecological, economic and social conditions of the farmers, rather than a simple list of agricultural practices. "There is no single solution that can be applied everywhere. Only the thorough analysis of a farm context with all factors from the qualities of the soil, the technical capacities of the farm, the type of animal husbandry to the flora and fauna in the surrounding area creates the possibility to develop unique agricultural practice concepts," say the directors of Climate Farmers.

As a result, the congress has engendered a programmatic and fully conceptualised understanding of Regenerative Agriculture, bound together by unified perspective and lived experiences.

The manifesto describes how regeneration as an approach cannot be a list of practices but is fundamentally context-specific. "There is no single concept which can be replicated everywhere. While best-practices exist, through analysis of contexts result in unique (farming) system designs." The first step in regenerating a landscape must be the deep analysis of the "given ecological, socio-cultural and economic context" which includes "multiple levels, including field level, farm level, landscape level, biomes level and food system level" (Climate Farmers 2022).

What is Regeneration?

"Regeneration is about continuously increasing the life-holding capacity of a place. Regenerative Agriculture is about working with nature, not suppressing it."
- Peter Dunne

Regenerative Agriculture is a conservation and rehabilitation approach to food and farming systems. It focuses on topsoil regeneration, increasing resilience to climate change and strengthening the health and vitality of farm soil as well as regional ecosystems which define the foundation for human health.

Why is it important? – Voices from the agricultural world

"Regenerative agriculture provides answers to soil crises, the food crisis, the health crises, climate change crises and crisis of democracy."

- Dr. Vandana Shiva

"More than a mere alternative strategy, Regenerative Agriculture represents a fundamental shift in our culture's relationship to nature."

- Charles Eisenstein

"In the wake of the climate emergency, we need a model that reflects a more holistic and humble relationship with nature."

- Climate Farmers 2022

PRINCIPLES OF REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

"Regenerative Agriculture is not a specific practice itself. Rather, proponents of Regenerative Agriculture utilize a variety of other sustainable agriculture techniques in combination. [...] Regenerative Agriculture is based on and positioned among agricultural philosophies like permaculture, agroecology, agroforestry, agroecology, nature restoration and spiritual holistic management practices." (Wikipedia 2022)

Lal (2020) suggests, therefore, the goal of Regenerative Agriculture is to apply the concept of more from less (McAfee 2019) to agriculture and therefore produce more from less (Lal 2013):

- less input of chemicals,
- less use of water,
- less emission of greenhouse gases,
- less risk of soil degradation,
- less use of energy-based input

The strategy is to spare land and resources for nature. Wasting food and polluting the environment are crimes against nature.

- 1. Reduced soil disturbance
- 2. Keep cover on the soil (green growing cover is most effective)
- 3. Keep living roots in the soil as much as possible
- 4. Create as much diversity as possible
- 5. Integrate animals into the system

The TED talk by Gabe Brown (2016) provides a good introduction to Regenerative Agriculture on his farm in northern USA, highlighting the importance of minimizing cultivation and bare soil, encou-

raging diversity and water percolation, avoiding pesticides and integrating crop and livestock production at a farm-scale. Building on this, five practices that are widely associated with regenerative farming are:

- 1. abandoning tillage
- 2. eliminating bare soil
- 3. fostering plant diversity
- encouraging water percolation into the soil
- integrating livestock and cropping operations.

Arohi et al. (2020) categorized their findings into the following principles.

- Nurture relationships within the Ecosystem
- Understand the given and future social and environmental context
- Prioritize soil health
- Reduce reliance on synthetic inputs
- Nurture communities and reimagine economics

Regenerative Agriculture www.regeneration.org



Approaches to a definition of Regenerative Agriculture

The adjective 'regenerative' has been associated with the nouns 'agriculture' and 'farming' since the late 1970s (Gabel 1979), but the terms Regenerative Agriculture and Regenerative Farming came into wider circulation in the early 1980s when they were picked up by the US-based Rodale Institute. Through its research and publications (including the magazine Organic Gardening and Farming), the Rodale Institute has, over decades, been at the forefront of the organic farming movement (Giller et al. 2021)

Currently, Regenerative Agriculture does not have a comprehensively described scientific definition (Elevitch et al. 2018; Merfield 2019; Soloviev and Landua 2016). In absence of such a scientific definition, a variety of researchers may foster diverging perceptions of Regenerative Agriculture.

Rodale (1983) defined Regenerative Agriculture as one that, at increasing levels of productivity, increases our land and soil biological production base. It has a high level of built-in economic and biological stability. It has minimal to no impact on the environment beyond the farm or field boundaries. It produces foodstuffs free from biocides. It provides for the productive contribution of increasingly large numbers of people during a transition to minimal reliance on non-renewable resources.

Malik and Verma (2014) describe RA as a dynamically advanced modified technique involving the use of organic farming methods.

Regenerative Agriculture comprises system-based conservation agriculture (CA), which includes no-till farming in conjunction with residue mulching, cover cropping, integrated nutrient and pest management, complex rotations, and integration of crops with trees and livestock (Lal 2015).

Rhodes (2017) claimed that Regenerative Agriculture has at its core the intention to improve the health of soil or to restore highly degraded soil, which symbiotically enhances the quality of water, vegetation and land-productivity; and Terra Genesis (2017) said that it 'increases biodiversity, enriches soils, improves watersheds, and enhances ecosystem services.

Elevitch et al. (2018) describe RA as a farming approach that has the capacity for self-renewal and resiliency, contributes to soil health, increases water percolation and retention, enhances and conserves biodiversity, and sequesters carbon.

For Burgess et al. (2019) Regenerative Agriculture 'generates agricultural products, sequesters carbon, and enhances biodiversity at the farm scale.

Ambiguity or uncertainty about what an individual or organization is referring to when they use the term "Regenerative Agriculture" may create multiple challenges.

- First, without a clear, stated definition of Regenerative Agriculture, it may be difficult or impossible for researchers to test a specific claim about the benefits or outcomes of Regenerative Agriculture (Goswami et al., 2017). Clear definitions may be an important component of effective communication and engagement between scientists and practitioners (White & Andrew 2019).
- Second, in the absence of a clear understanding of what Regenerative Agriculture is or is not, consumers may be misled or confused about the significance or truth basis of a claim about food produced using Regenerative Agriculture. In turn, confusion about eco-labels can lead to consumer distrust and dissatisfaction (Moon et al., 2017).
- may open the door for unscrupulous commercial interests to exploit the term and use it misleadingly in their marketing, potentially diminishing the value of the term to any producer who is more genuinely involved in efforts to enhance the sustainability of food production. That is, there is potential for watering down or greenwashing the use of a term to the point where it becomes universalized and loses value.

Finally, the absence of a clear understanding of what Regenerative Agriculture is, and whether it is or should be process- or outcome-based, has implications for policy and program development (Goswami et al. 2017).

The current debate on the definition of Regenerative Agriculture

Newton et al. (2020) reviewed 229 journal articles and 25 practitioner websites to characterize the term "Regenerative Agriculture." They revealed that there were many definitions and descriptions of Regenerative Agriculture in usage. These were variously based on processes (e.g., use of cover crops, the integration of livestock, and reducing or eliminating tillage), outcomes (e.g., to improve soil health, to sequester carbon, and to increase biodiversity), or combinations of the two. Process-based definitions may imply that advocates or users of such definitions are open-minded about the possible outcomes of these processes. Similarly, outcome-based definitions may imply that users of such definitions are open-minded about the processes that may lead to those outcomes.









EUROPEAN REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE MANIFESTO

This manifesto has been written by European farmers, individuals, and organizations from 16 countries during the 1st Climate Farming Congress.

This document is created as a representation of a shared vision and current understanding (11/11/21) of Regenerative Agriculture in Europe and should not be seen as a static, fixed position. We anticipate this continuing to evolve and to improve in clarity moving forward.

1. Vision

"More than a mere alternative strategy, Regenerative Agriculture represents a fundamental shift in our culture's relationship with nature." - Charles Eisenstein

"All flourishing is mutual." - Robin Wall Kimmerer

We believe that agriculture in Europe has

a stronger potential to solve critical shared problems than is currently expressed and supported by policy. In particular, Regenerative Agriculture can solve many of our most urgent and elusive problems simultaneously such as climate change, biodiversity loss, air quality, food system resilience, rural community, public health, etc. And when

Regenerative farmers all over Europe have already demonstrated these solutions in many different contexts.

practiced at scale, it has unprecedented

potential for increasing system resilience.

We see a future where all of the food, renewable fuel, and fiber needs of Europe will be produced in a way that replenishes the natural ressources while strengthening communities and creating sound business models for farmers.

2. What is regeneration?

"Regeneration means bringing the earth back to life" - Paul Hawken
Regeneration is about continuously increasing the life-holding capacity of a place while fulfilling all human needs. It maximizes a positive ecological-social-economic impact, rather than minimizing a negative impact. Its objective is to facilitate the highest potential of an ecosystem. This is a continuous process.

We recognize that the roots of regenerative farming come from indigenous cultures. We consider ourselves listeners to such worldviews and wisdom. The term regenerative has a long history (citation). There is already a lot of embodied knowledge, research, ecological understanding, farming methods and technology that we can build on.

3. Context-specific

Regeneration takes place within a given ecological, socio-cultural and economic context. Every soil, farmer, culture, climate, biodiversity and market is different. Restoring natural cycles necessitates the recognition, identification and understanding of the local dynamics, as well as the impact that land management is having on the aforementioned.

The context includes multiple levels, including field level, farm level, landscape level, biomes level and food system level. It is essential to keep all these levels in mind when designing a regenerative (farming) system.

There is no single concept which can be replicated everywhere. While best practices exist analysis of context results in unique (farming) system designs.

4. Outcome-based

It is necessary to measure outcomes for verifying the regenerative effects on the social, economic and environmental ecosystem.

We are not dogmatic about farming practices and systemic approaches, but rather embrace the diversity of pathways towards regenerating in different contexts. No practice should be seen independently as harmful for ecosystems, before being assessed in relation to the specific context and the long-term regenerative impact. We respect and celebrate the effort put in by farmers to steward their land.

A recognition that Regenerative Agriculture does not exist in absolutes is essential in this discussion. Regeneration is a spectrum that represents the evolution towards healthy and resilient ecologies. Given the fact that nature is inherently dynamic, the regeneration process can never be finished or stable, and instead is a continuous improvement.

Outcomes should be clear indicators that reflect the full potential of the given context. The reference point is the context status when starting the regeneration process. Progress should be measurable, using qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators, and be comparable to the reference point. Impact performance should allow for linking farming efforts to economic value schemes, such as ecosystem service credits, markets and access to land.

5. Eco-centered approach; Farmers as steward

We are a movement that was started by the farmers for both the farmers and the environment.

The natural ecosystem is at the center of regeneration. The intrinsic connection between ecological outcomes and agriculture puts farmers in the significant role of guardians and caretakers. Enabling farmers to be stewards of the land is at the center of solutions aimed at transitioning to a regenerative food system. As such agricultural policy, incentive programs and regulations need to enable and empower farmers to be these stewards.

This means that actors working with regeneration need to move beyond abstract concepts and talk directly to farmers. All farmers face social, economic and environmental challenges on a daily basis. A deep understanding of these socio-economic challenges is an integral part of Regenerative Agriculture. Regeneration means regenerating both the ecosystem and the position of farmers in the value web. This is crucial to enable farmers to be long-term stewards of the land and empower them to improve their livelihoods.

Governance structures crossing the whole value web should ensure that power imbalances are resolved and actors across the value web have a voice in how the value web is governed and are compensated fairly for the value they add to the supply web.

6. Integrity of terminology

Attention on Regenerative Agriculture has been growing exponentially and this has resulted in the term being applied in very extensive and ambiguous ways.

While we support the global transition of agricultural systems towards regeneration, we are acutely aware of the need to agree on a shared outcome-based definition of Regenerative Agriculture to maintain credibility and preserve the clarity of meaning while ensuring desired results.

When implementing Regenerative Agriculture at scale, systems need to be in place to ensure that the care for ecology, climate, soils, communities and economies are not compromised in the adoption of the terminology.

Please find the digital version of the European Regenerative Agriculture

Manifest online here:







1ST CLIMATE FARMING CONGRESS

09. - 11. NOVEMBER 2021

Manifesto

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ORGANISERS & SUPPORTERS



The Akademie für ökologische Land- und Ernährungswirtschaft Schloss Kirchberg (Academy for Organic Agriculture and Food Economy Schloss Kirchberg) is supported by the Stiftung Haus der Bauern (Foundation Haus der Bauern).

The non-profit foundation was established in 2012. It is the social welfare and socio-political foundation of the Bäuerliche Erzeugergemeinschaft Schwäbisch Hall (Farmers Association Schwäbisch Hall), an association of 1,560 farms from the Region of Hohenlohe in Baden-Württemberg, Germany. The Stiftung Haus der Bauern is committed to freedom, empowerment and social justice for the farming and rural population. It is committed to the principles of sustainable action and future-proof economics. Beyond its commitment to the local farming community, the foundation is committed to the enforcement of fundamental democratic rights of indigenous communities in rural regions worldwide.



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Farmers' Castle in Kirchberg an der Jagst



Climate Farmers see the foundations of their work in the unparalleled potential of Regenerative Agriculture to store carbon in the soil and restore ecosystems while improving the livelihoods of farmers around the globe. As a young start-up network, the Climate Farmers are developing educational programs, as well as technological and financial tools to scale Regenerative Agriculture.

Working closely with farmers, Climate Farmers build solutions made to work for farmers to elevate their voices into the conversation. At the same time, Climate Farmers develop monitoring tools for industry and financial instruments that are scalable and benefit producers. Climate Farmers work across Europe. Their main offices are in Berlin and near Lisbon, Portugal.

Climate Farmers www.climatefarmers.org



The 1st Climate Farming Congress was made possible thanks to the significant support of GLS Bank, the elobau Stiftung and the Bäuerliche Erzeugergemeinschaft Schwäbisch Hall.







