# Supporting Regenerative Agriculture in Practice in Scotland

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# Regenerative agriculture – another label?

### Introduction

Over recent decades, the industrialisation of agriculture has accelerated and intensified the impact of farming on the environment. In 2023, the *State of Nature* report suggested that farming in the UK was a leading cause of habitat loss and species decline, on a par only with climate change. Our soils and their diverse ecosystems are also under threat through agricultural management. If we are to reverse the decline of biodiversity and soil health, in Scotland and beyond, then improvements to the way we produce food are urgently needed.

Over the last decade, the term "regenerative agriculture" has gained traction with concerns by many that it was just another label and drew upon agronomic practices from a range of production systems that were incompatible with Scottish systems. To better understand the ecological benefits of Regenerative Agriculture in Scottish and UK contexts, members of *Healthy Soils for a Green Recovery* (KJHI-D3-1) were co-authors of a British Ecological Society report and a UK Government POSTnote.

## Results

Regenerative Agriculture represents a multitude of agronomic and management practices.

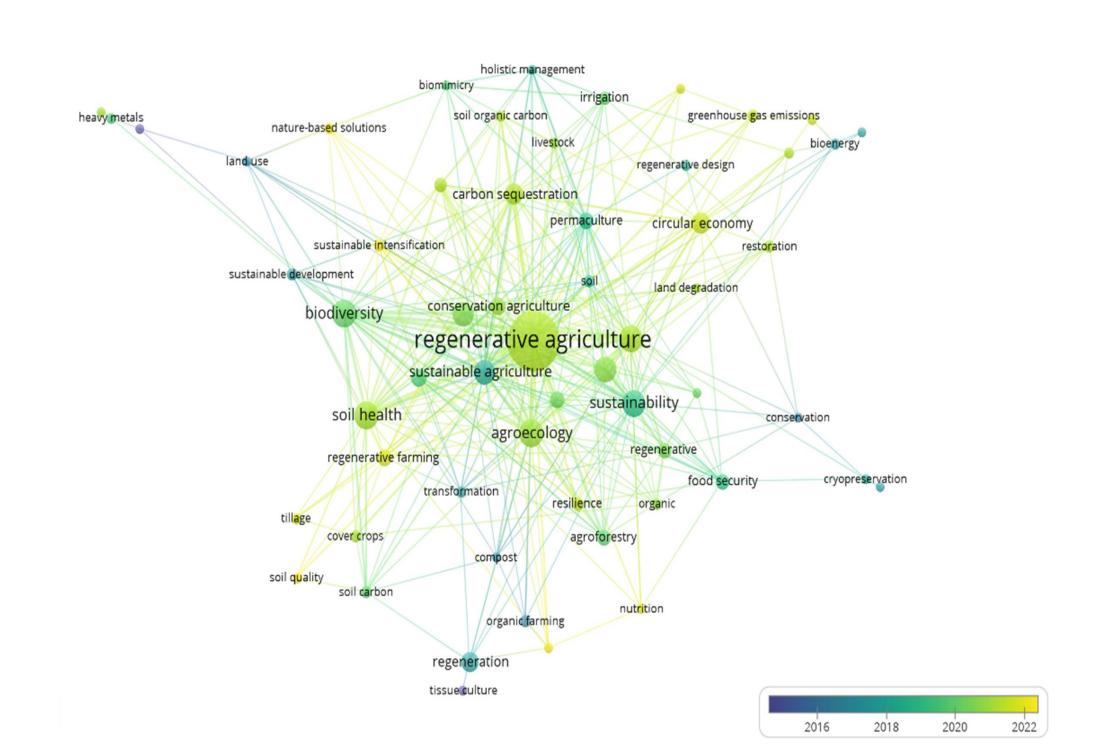


Figure 1: The broad spectrum of Regenerative Agriculture

Summary benefits of regenerative agriculture.

		Minimise soil disturbance	Minimise bare soil and keep living roots year round	Increase on- farm diversity	Integrate livestock or approaches that deliver the same functions	Favour nature- based methods over synthetic inputs
Objectives	Increase in soil organic matter	*	**	**	**	**
	Improved soil structure	**	***	**		?
	Improved nutrient availability	*	**	**	*	
	Increased biodiversity	*	**	**	*	**
	Weeds, disease and pest suppression	?	*	*	**	*
	Reduced environmental externalities	*	*	*		***
	Commercial yields (including business resilience)	?	*	*	**	?

Figure 2: Evidence based assessment, with confidence levels, of the benefits of Regenerative Agriculture principles aligned with environmental objectives.

Regenerative Agriculture is context specific not prescriptive.



Figure 3: Regenerative Agricultural practices should be tailored to the individual farm and production system.

# Recommendations

- A place-based and trusted network of mentors and facilitators to help farmers navigate the transition
- A new way of collaborative working between farmers and scientists to build an enhanced evidence base
- Co-design of new agri-environment schemes that support a flexible and system-based approach in all 4 nations
- Innovation and technological advances to create more cost and time-effective approaches to food and fibre production that improve the environment
- A role for regulators to avoid green-washing and ensure a set of core values and principles are embedded in all products and organisations that claim the use of regenerative agriculture practices

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### References

- British Ecological Society Report: ISBN 978-1-0369-1546-9, https://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/our-policy-work/
- UK Government POSTnote: https://doi.org/10.58248/PN748









