



## *A Little Bit Of Every System Can Make For Better Farming*

It seems that there are more and more terms for different types of farming practices coming on stream. Many of these methods have been around for a long time but maybe never had a specific term or category associated with them and some are regaining popularity.

Farms must be more than sustainable. Meaning that they must turn profits and protect the environment, not forgetting to ensure the farmer has a good work-life balance and a safe and healthy environment to carry out that work. A sustainable farm, without ever saying it, probably involves a mix of all of the farming types listed plus more. So, what do they mean?

### **Regenerative agriculture**

Regenerative agriculture focuses on restoring and improving soil health and increasing soil biodiversity in a bid to produce nutrient-dense food. Through the use of practices like direct-drill, mixed species swards, companion crops, cover cropping, while also avoiding the use of artificial fertiliser, pesticides and avoiding excessive cultivation. Regenerative agriculture aims to increase soil health, carbon content and farm income.

### **Organic farming**

Organic farmers cannot use artificial fertilisers or chemicals, and organic produce has to be certified by an organic body. While other farming systems may not use artificial fertiliser or pesticides, they cannot sell produce as organic if they are not certified.

### **Conventional farming**

Conventional farming is what most people are familiar with – farms that use artificial fertilisers and pesticides. Within this category, there are different intensities, where farms may follow the high-input, high-output model, or are stocked at high rates, but many are somewhere in the middle.

### **Biological farming**

Biological farming is sometimes described as a mix of conventional and organic agriculture. Similar to regenerative farming, it focuses on improving soil health and biological activity, which in turn can improve plant health. Rotation, multi-species grazing swards, cover cropping and non-inversion tillage practices all form part of the biological farming toolbox. Biological farming practices work to reduce artificial fertiliser and pesticide use but their use is allowed as the farm transitions.

### **A little bit of every system**

A little bit of every system can help to improve your overall farming system. This can then reduce artificial fertiliser use and the amount of mineral supplements supplied to animals, or trace elements to plants. Crop rotation can reduce pests, diversity can increase the number of natural predators, healthier soils result in healthier plants and all of these combined can reduce pesticide and fertiliser use, making farms more economically and environmentally sustainable.

### **Do your own research**

Research is behind in some cases, but farmer-led research is thriving. Maybe that is what's needed – to try something new every year on farms. Plant a cover crop in half a field and not in another and see the difference. Stitch clover or plantain into a paddock, cut back fertiliser rates in one paddock and compare it to the one beside it. It might not be scientific, but what you try might suit your farm. Little changes can make a big difference.

***Farming Secrets says: Do No Harm To Health Of People, The Soil Environment And  
The Ecology***

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