

# Regenerative Agriculture

## Key Takeaways

- Several large commodity and food companies have announced intent to buy millions of acres of product produced through regenerative agriculture.
- Cargill has announced the intention of advancing 10 million acres of regenerative agriculture in North America by 2030.
- Walmart has set a goal to become a regenerative company.
- There are several definitions of what regenerative agriculture is.
- **TFBF is seeking to determine if farmers see this movement to regenerative agriculture as a threat, opportunity, or combination for farmers in Tennessee.**

## Questions

1. Are you or farmers in your county aware of the regenerative agriculture movement?
2. Are there commodities grown in your county which are required to be grown using regenerative agriculture practices?
3. How should Farm Bureau engage in this effort?

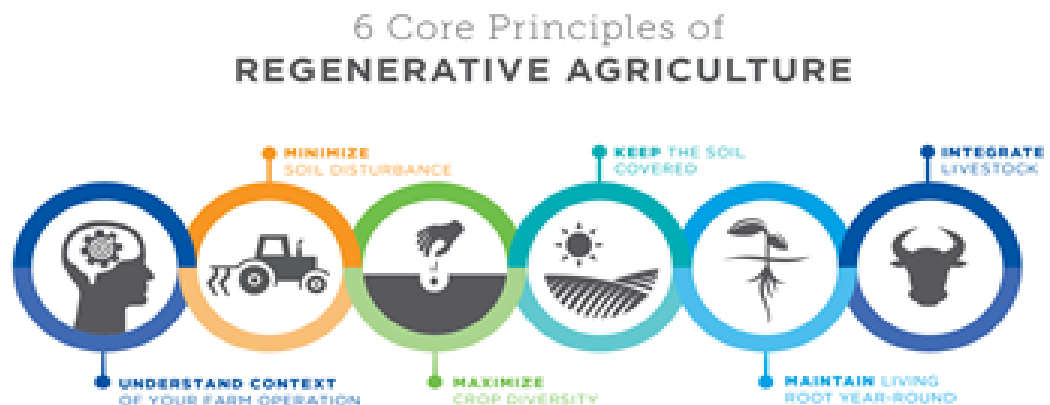
Many large commodity and food companies have moved to transition inputs and purchases of farm commodities to regenerative agriculture sources.

## Background

Over the past few years there have been announcements by many large commodity and food companies to transition inputs and purchases of farm commodities to regenerative agriculture sources. Below are examples of announcements:

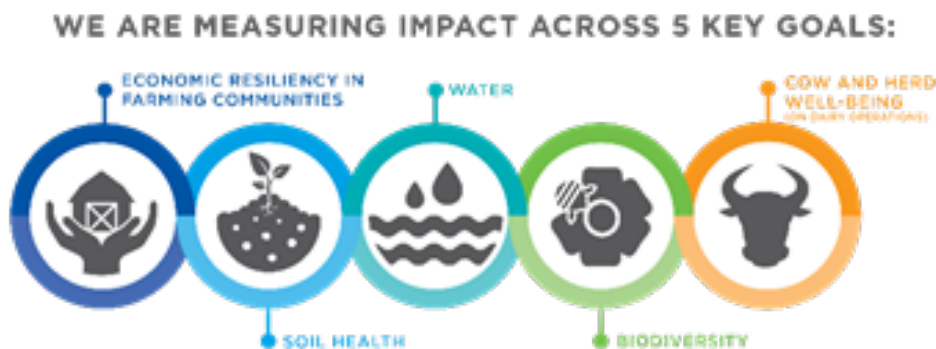
- Danone in November 2017 announced its regenerative initiative to work with 58,000 farmers worldwide to focus on regenerative agriculture.
- General Mills announced on March 4, 2019 the intent to advance regenerative agriculture on 1 million acres of farmland by 2030.
- Cargill in September 2020 announced the intention of advancing 10 million acres of regenerative agriculture in North America by 2030.
- Walmart in September of 2020 set a goal to become a regenerative company by protecting, managing, or restoring at least 50 million acres of land and one million square miles of ocean by 2030 and have zero emissions by 2040.

Figure 1



These are just examples of corporate goals for regenerative agriculture. **An interesting aspect of these goals is each announcement uses different metrics to achieve regenerative agriculture.** For example, General Mills defines regenerative agriculture as a holistic, principles-based approach to farming and ranching that seeks to strengthen ecosystems and community resilience. General Mills’ claims six core principles of regenerative agriculture the company uses as the basis of its work. These are identified in *Figure 1*. Additionally, General Mills approach to regenerative agriculture seeks to improve the following outcomes as shown in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2



The executive vice president and chief sustainability officer for Walmart Inc. and president of the Walmart Foundation, Kathleen McLaughlin, in the company’s announcement to become a regenerative company said, “People have pushed past the earth’s natural limits. Healthy societies, resilient economies and thriving businesses rely on nature. **Our vision at Walmart is to help transform food and product supply chains to be regenerative, working in harmony with nature – to protect, restore and sustainably use our natural resources.”**

A recent article, *Sustainability By Any Other Name*, attempts to define regenerative agriculture and compare its production practices. The article was written by Kelly Young and Allison Thomson on behalf of the SPARC Initiative. According to this article there is no federal standard for regenerative agriculture, and no consensus of a definition across the industry. **Depending upon the source, some definitions of regenerative agriculture focus on the agronomic processes, such as eliminating tillage or avoiding synthetic crop inputs, while other definitions center around environmental outcomes like improved soil health or water quality.** Below are the authors’ attempt to compare regenerative agriculture to other forms of production agriculture:

TABLE 1. Comparing principles and practices of various agricultural systems.

Principles and practices	Agriculture system				
	Sustainable	Regenerative	Conservation	Climate smart	Organic
Emphasize soil health	X	X	X	X	X
Keep soil covered	X	X	X	X	
Minimize soil disturbance	X	X	X	X	
Maintain living roots year-round	X	X	X		
Diversify crop rotations	X	X	X	X	X
Increase soil carbon	X	X	X	X	X
Integrate livestock		X			
Encourage cover crops	X	X	X	X	X
Restricted synthetic inputs					X
Increase productivity	X			X	
Remove CO <sub>2</sub> from atmosphere	X			X	
Prohibit GM traits					X
Requires certification					X

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