

What Is Regenerative Farming?

The agricultural industry is facing an enormous burden at the present time. Not only it is tasked with producing enough food for the world's eight billion people – and the populace is expected to near 10 billion by 2050 – but it also must deal with the challenges of climate change, global warming and conserving biodiversity.

In order to overcome all of these daunting difficulties, it will be necessary to adapt the way we approach industrial farming methods. Could a return to more traditional techniques bear fruit? The proponents of regenerative farming believe so. The practice concentrates on the specific needs of each individual landscape and ecosystem to improve soil quality, encourage biodiversity and maximise profit margins, all at the same time.

Back to basics

While the existing farming industry has proven adept at using synthetic fertilisers and monopolising land to generate enough sustenance for the world's growing population, it has often done so at the expense of the land itself. Indeed, according to some estimates, as much as 15% of arable land has a life expectancy of less than 100 years in terms of producing harvests, while a further 50% will last little more than 1,000 years.

While that figure might seem comfortably far into the future, it does indicate that the status quo is not sustainable in the long term. That's why many forward-thinking farmers are looking to the past in order to better understand how we might care for the future.

By dispensing with artificial fertilisers in favour of organic material and waste, as well as utilising technology to maximise resources and optimise processes, farmers can grow healthy, nutrient-rich crops without sacrificing nature or biodiversity in the process. And while initial yields might drop, so too will the amount of resources needed to produce the crops (along with the expenses involved therein), thus resulting in better profit margins in the long run.

UAE ripe for regenerative farming

One part of the world which could particularly benefit from regenerative farming is the Middle East. In the UAE, for example, as much as 80% of the country's terrain is desert, with that figure slowly creeping up over recent years as desertification intensifies. Indeed, a mere 5% of the land is farmed at present, meaning the Emirati government must import over 90% of the food used to feed its people.

As such, anything which can help to boost domestic production is to be welcomed. Regenerative farming has already shown positive results in this respect, with 400 acres of wheat fields under production to date. All of this has been achieved by using desalinated

water and the latest technology, such as thermal imaging equipment, satellite imagery, hi-tech sensors and onsite weather stations. Best of all, no chemical pesticides are used at all.

Cognisant of how effective this form of farming could be, the UAE authorities are supporting it as best they can through subsidies and incentives. Not only is this turning previously inhospitable parts of the country into productive farming sites, but it also addressing public concerns over pollution, climate change and sustainability. As such, regenerative farming holds real potential for greening the desert and making the land future-proof, today, tomorrow and even millennia from now.