



[How to Recycle](#)

[Where to Recycle](#)

[Earth Watch](#) [Inspire & Motivate](#)

Reading time: 3 mins

Regenerative Agriculture To Restore Our Earth



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

© APR 15, 2021 [Earth Day](#), [regenerative agriculture](#),

[Restore Our Earth](#)



In 35 years, there will be 10 billion people on earth. Our planet is [getting full](#), and unless we're very careful, its people will go hungry. The environmental impacts of trying to increase production by further intensifying industrial farming are devastating, and expanding lands under cultivation destroys entire ecosystems. [Urban agriculture](#) shows promise, but may not be scalable. As part of its 2021 Earth Day theme, Restore Our Earth, EARTHDAY.ORG (formerly Earth Day Network) launched a [new campaign](#) to help people

Never miss an update!

Enter email address

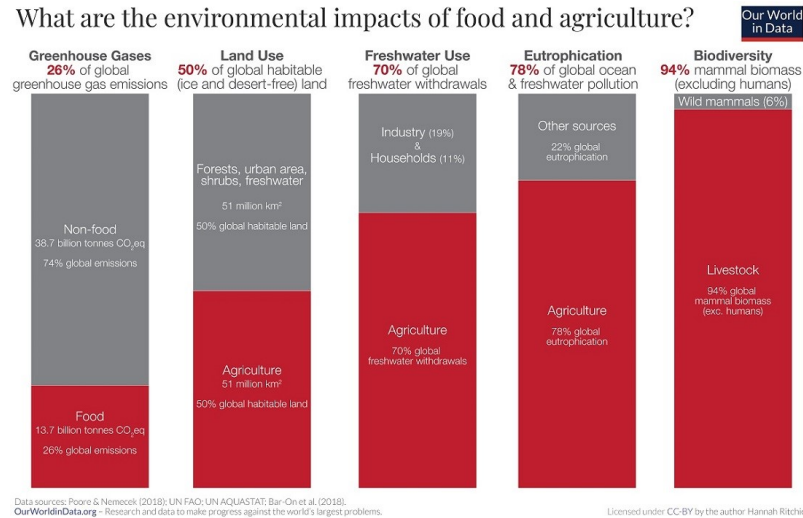
JOIN OUR LIST

understand the ways industrial agriculture contributes to environmental destruction and how regenerative agriculture can not only feed the world but also restore our earth.

Agriculture's Impacts

Agriculture is a big part of the **impact** humans have on the planet. Global food production accounts for a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions, 70% of freshwater withdrawals, and 78% of **eutrophication** in both fresh and ocean waters. It also uses half of the world's habitable lands – an increasingly important impact on an increasingly crowded planet.

What are the environmental impacts of food and agriculture?



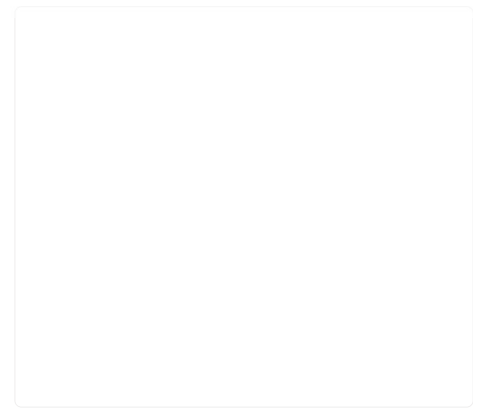
Source: [Our World in Data](#)

Modern, industrial farming methods, while initially raising productivity, pump chemical **pesticides** and fertilizers into the environment, harming **biodiversity** and polluting **drinking water**. They also cause long-term **soil destruction** and erosion of topsoil that further pollutes downstream waters.

“Our soils are in horrendous shape, worldwide, not just in the U.S. We’re looking at global, catastrophic misuse of our soils,” says Kathleen Rogers, president and CEO of EARTHDAY.ORG. Globally, more than 90% of **conventionally farmed soils** are thinning. For 16% of conventionally farmed soils, the remaining lifespans – meaning soil depth and fertility useful for agriculture – are predicted to be less than a century. At current rates of **soil erosion**, the U.S. will lose a half-inch of topsoil by 2035. That’s more than eight times the amount of topsoil lost during the Dust Bowl.

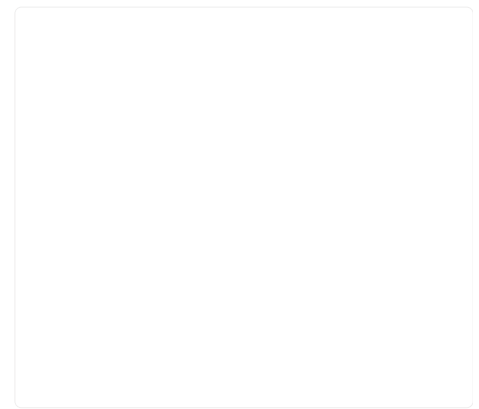
But 10 billion people will still need to eat in 2035.

Regenerative Agriculture



Earth911 Podcast: Discover Biobased Plastic with UBQ's

Privacy Policy



Growth in U.S. [agricultural productivity](#) averaged 1.9% annually between 1948 and 1999, thanks to the post-war development of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and intensive farming practices. But mechanization, monocropping, and chemical inputs placed a heavy and unsustainable burden on the environment. To deal with the problems of the 21st century, EARTHDAY.ORG is promoting [regenerative agriculture](#).

“Regenerative agriculture is basically just looking at farming in a whole new way,” says Rogers. This way of farming treats the soil as a precious resource. Erosion is avoided by minimizing soil disturbance using zero or low-tillage before planting and using cover crops between seasons. Along with cover cropping, crop rotations and multi-cropping improve biodiversity in the soil and above it. The increased biodiversity, perhaps counterintuitively, protects against loss from pests and diseases. Composting and managed grazing are also key regenerative agriculture practices.

Combined, these practices promote food security; restore soil, organic matter, and biodiversity to agricultural systems; and reduce atmospheric carbon. Regenerative agriculture also provides direct benefits to farmers due to its ability to increase crop yield and produce high-quality, nutrient-rich crops that create healthy communities and boost farmers’ incomes.

“I hope people find an element of hope and optimism through this idea of Restore Our Earth. I hope that people will see the connection between restoring the planet and our personal health and safety and that of our kids,” says Rogers.

What You Can Do

Unless you are among the just [under 2%](#) of the American workforce employed in agriculture, your only influence on farming practices is as a consumer. In 2018, a new international certification system to verify food producers who practice regenerative agriculture was introduced. Because it is so new, [Regenerative Organic Certified](#) is still fine-tuning its standards and has only issued a handful of certifications. For most products, [buying certified organic](#), which utilizes

many of the same agricultural practices, is still the best option for supporting sustainable agriculture in the U.S.

Regenerative agriculture involves diversifying crops and growing more of the foods that have smaller environmental footprints. Consumers can support these choices by being mindful of what they eat. Learn how to reduce your own personal [foodprint](#) by reducing or eliminating meat in favor of [legumes](#) and other environmentally friendly [vegetarian](#) proteins, [producing less food waste](#), and [cutting carbon](#) from your diet.

You can learn more about regenerative farming from Earth911's [recent podcast](#) interview with Steve Groff, author of [The Future-Proof Farm](#). Then test your knowledge of sustainable agriculture with the [regenerative agriculture quiz](#) on EARTHDAY.ORG

advertising



Reading time: 3 mins

[Earth911 Quiz #91: Test Your Earth Day Recycling Facts](#)



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

Related Post

[Inspire & Motivate](#) [Quizzes](#)

[Earth911 Quiz #91: Test Your Earth Day Recycling Facts](#)

🕒 Apr 15, 2021 👤 [Earth911](#)