



Regenerative Agriculture & the Seed Industry: Bandwagon or Serious Business?

Seed Associations of Americas
Buenos Aires, 2 October 2024

Michael Keller
Secretary General, International Seed Federation



It continues to be a buzzword

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Marcel Bruins - Seed World Europe Editorial Director April 24, 2024 Featured - Europe, Featured - Global, Innovation, Seed World Europe

Hype or Hope? Regenerative Agriculture Under the Magnifying Glass

Mario Caccamo - Chief Executive of NIAB May 30, 2024 Environment & Climate, Featured - Europe, Featured - Global, Perspective, Seed World Europe

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How Unilever is implementing regenerative agriculture practices across 1 million hectares

Published: 18 September 2024

Changing how our ingredients are grown will help protect soil, preserve water, restore nature and build a more resilient supply chain. Learn how we're working with farmer partners to roll out regenerative agriculture across 1 million hectares.



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Forbes

INNOVATION

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Judith Magyar Brand Contributor
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Why is there a buzz?

- **SDG 2030 – time is running out**
- **Food systems approaches** (Food Systems Summit/ Stocktaking events) - accountability
- **Biodiversity Loss and climate change**
 - COP28 Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action
 - Cop 29 + FAO Harmonia4 – climate resilience initiative
 - Cop 30 Focus on Agriculture
- **Investment “needs” and “opportunities”**
 - call for upscaling approaches + metrics + data collection needs
- **G20 – Brazil** – Call for climate resilience
- **Survey 2019 (US)** 80 % regenerative agriculture – positive perception



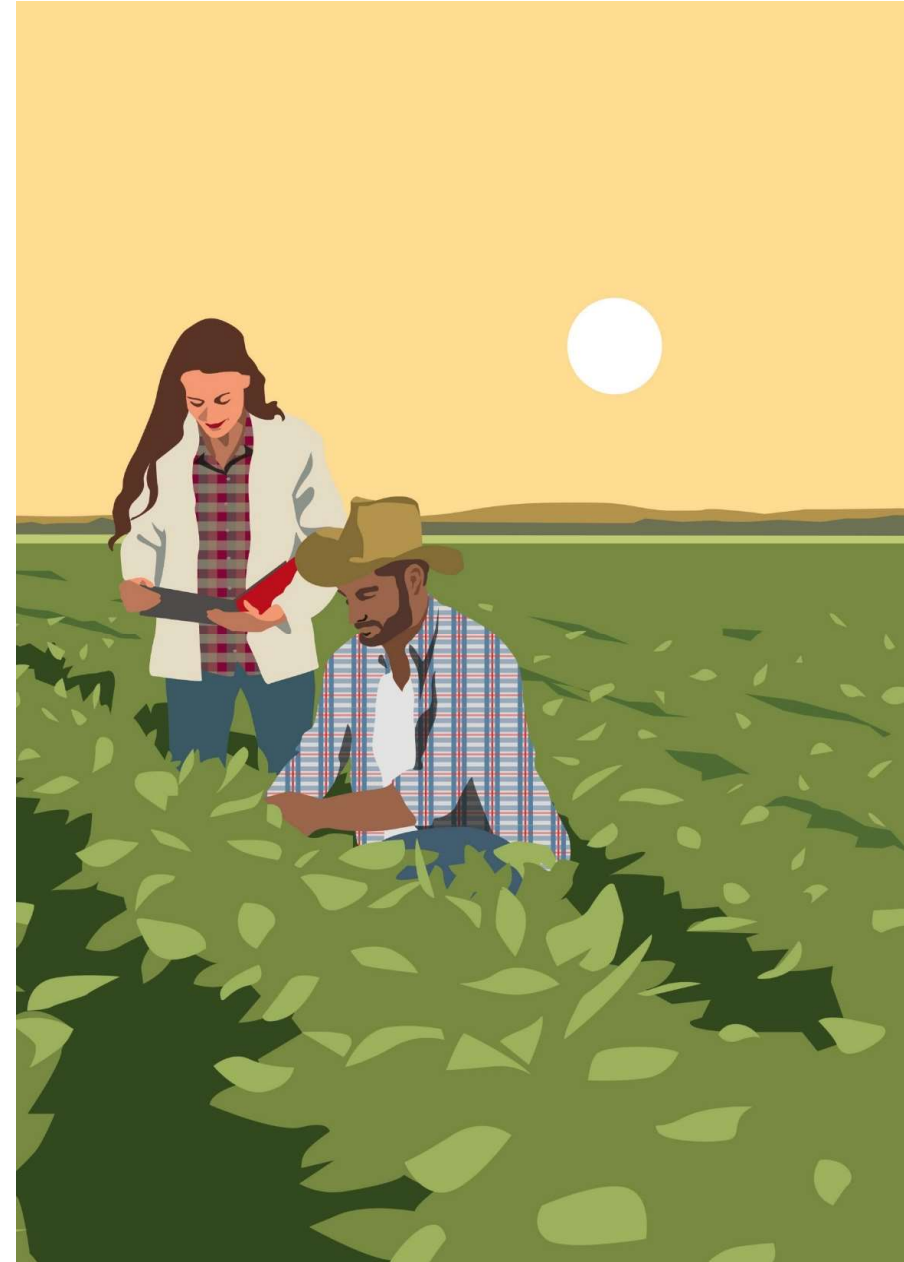
But what does it mean?

- **From 1980s, Regenerative = Organic** - increasing productivity of farming systems **without the use of biocides or other external inputs**
- **Today a plethora** of definitions from diverse stakeholders
- **Towards a blurred understanding?**



Is there a common understanding?

- A holistic farming system (landscape approach – broader production area) to produce more with less by taking into account:
 - **Soil Health**
 - **Water**
 - **Biodiversity**
 - **Climate Change**



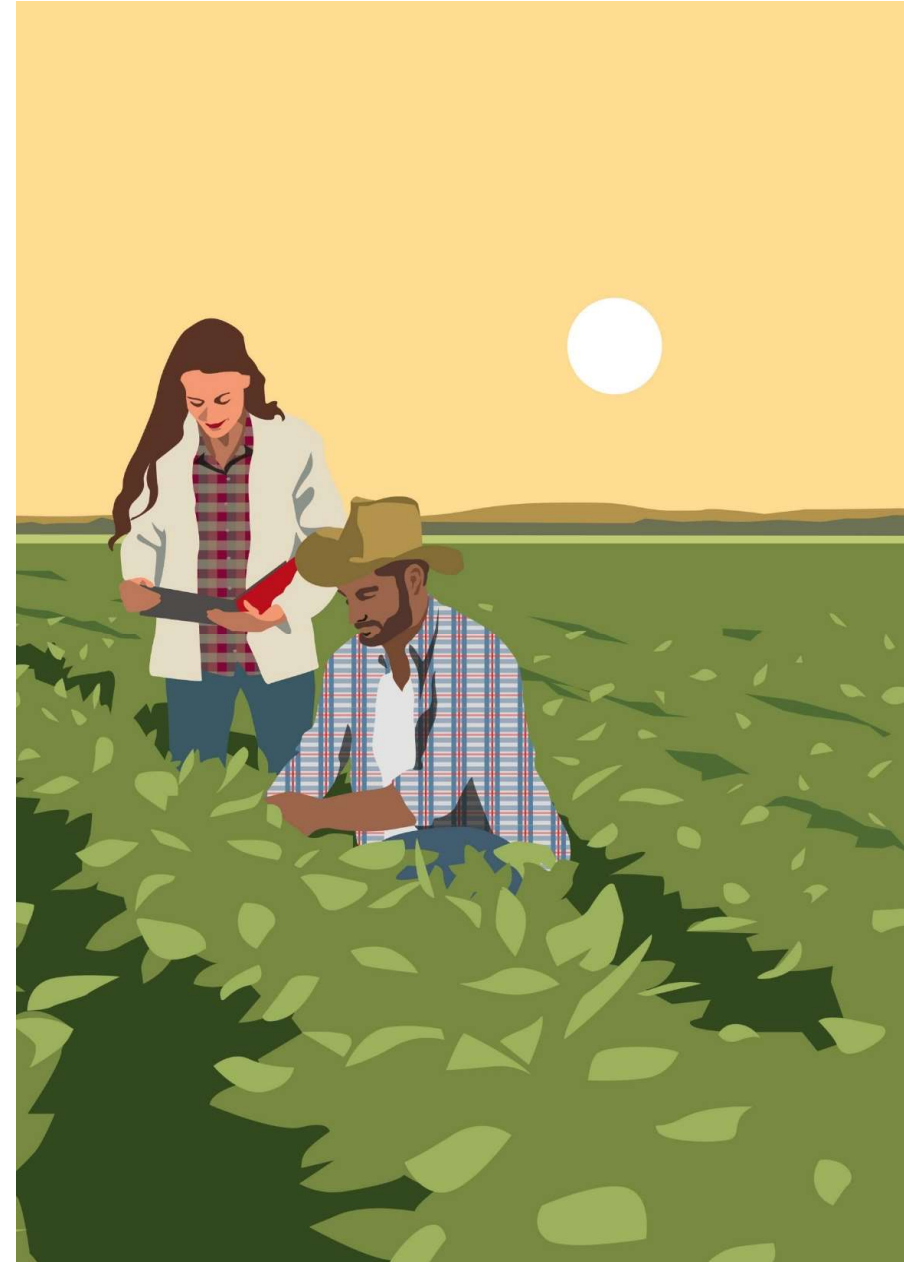
Regenerative Agriculture & Seed

- **Soil:** intercropping, cover crops, pest and diseases – resistance, more legumes, ...
- **Water:** crop diversity, drought tolerance, capacity building – agricultural practices
- **Biodiversity:** crop diversity, yield increase, etc...
- **Climate Change:** shelf life, crop diversity...



But, keep in mind a reality.

- **Today exists,**
 - a variety of **agricultural philosophies** (sustainable/ agroecological/ regenerative/ conservation/ organic/ conventional, ...)
 - a variety of **food systems** (sustainable/ fair trade/ food sovereignty...)
 - Over 100 principles exist!
- **Some communalities:**
 - On Farm action
 - Farm outcome
 - Systems outcome



We have a role to play in the next steps!

- Our sector is a crucial contributor to different agricultural approaches, including “regenerative agriculture”
- There is no need to start from scratch – we need to be included in existing initiatives and to actively take our seat at the table



Why?

- 80 % of all food is plant-based
- Seed is the (most) critical input
- Call for innovation



Investment is the starting point

- Continued increase in R&D: over 65% of all investment in seed is from the private sector
 - Roughly US\$15 billion per year
- Increase seed choice of farmers + capacity building
- Over 90% of seed actors (ISF survey 2024) expect innovations that breed more resilient and productive varieties of key crops within 10-20 years



Our engagement

- From the **Seed Declaration** to the
- **Seed Resilience Initiative**
 - Continued genetic progress
 - Incentivising Innovation
 - Sustainable, inclusive seed systems
 - Sustainable seed trade
 - Functioning markets

GOAL: To build Seed Choice for farmers



Are we ready?

- National authorities + Agriculture and Food Systems partners called for our contribution
- **ISF focus in 2025:** Climate Adaption and Mitigation,
 - SeedsForFood Coalition
 - Seed Resilience initiative
 - Statement
 - Partnerships
 - Communication
 - COP 30 in Brazil



**We know we cannot plant seeds with closed fists.
To sow we must open our hands.**

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel



1924


International Seed Federation

2024



Seed is Life