
Regenerative agriculture-the soil is the base

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Mankind's key challenge nowadays is to produce enough safe and nutritious food for a growing and wealthier population within the carrying capacity of the planet. An increasing body of literature concludes that regenerative agriculture (RA) might be a solution for a sustainable food system. But what is RA? RA is one of several approaches towards a sustainable food system. Characterisation of the term is still challenging since a variety of actors (e.g. scientists, governmental agencies, sector organisations, industries and farmers) perceive this term differently and a clear definition is missing in the scientific literature. The aim of this study was to identify the background and core themes of RA by examining the convergence and divergence between definitions in existing peer-reviewed articles. We systematically studied 21 peer-reviewed articles to find definitions of RA using the methodological framework PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews). Then, we categorized the different terms mentioned in the definition into themes using a cultural domain analysis and inductive coding. Findings show a strong focus on the environmental pillar of sustainability, e.g. alleviate climate change and improve soil biodiversity, articulated by both aspirations (e.g. improve soil quality) and activities (e.g. use perennials). We also found a socio-economic foundation in RA, to improve human health and improve economic prosperity. This socio-economic foundation, however, relies currently on divergent aspirations and is not operationalized. We propose in our paper a definition for RA based on the peer-reviewed articles and relate RA to organic agriculture as an example of a regulated farming approach and circular agriculture which remains yet a theoretical concept.