

Viewpoint: ‘Regenerate or die?’ Fashion industry co-opts sustainability buzzwords like ‘regenerative’ and ‘circular’ — but what do they really mean?

The North Face and Patagonia now tout clothing made of regenerative cotton. And Secteur 6, a new Indian-American brand that uses only regenerative-grown materials like rose-petal silk, is teaming up with the streetwear brand Freak City L.A. to produce a capsule collection that includes regenerative cotton graffiti T-shirts that read: “Regenerate or Die.”

But what in the world does that even mean?

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Advocates describe it as a holistic approach, working with nature, rather than trying to control it. That means foregoing various industrial agriculture practices, which could include pesticides, store-bought fertilizers, tilling or neat little rows of a single crop. Also, no weed-pulling.

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The idea is to mix different types of plants in the same field, allowing the nourishing cover crops to spread wildly, co-mingling with, say, corn or cotton. It looks messy, but chickens, sheep and cattle get to graze on the edibles, and in return they fertilize the fields with their droppings. Bingo: healthy soil.

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Fashion is extremely late to the carbon sequestering party — the food industry was way ahead — but with multiple brands publicly promising to become carbon neutral, it is now firmly committed. Better late than never.

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