

Prevention first, pesticides second: Why regenerative agriculture does not mean chemical-free farming

The philosophies of regenerative agriculture, sustainable agriculture, and holistic agriculture are generating a great deal of interest these days. While in some people's minds these systems equate to zero, or very few production inputs, in truth, they all use a variety of inputs that align with their objectives. An important component of each philosophy is following integrated pest management (IPM) principles to select the right tactics to address pest problems.

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Preventing a pest from becoming established in the first place is clearly the most effective approach to pest management, particularly in regard to invasive or non-native pests. If a pest is never established, it obviously cannot cause yield or quality losses.

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While synthetic and biological pesticides can be used in regenerative, sustainable, and holistic systems, they should only be used when their impact on non-target species and other side effects have been carefully considered. The pesticide application can be justified if the yield or quality losses caused by the pest exceed the economic or ecological value of the non-target or other side effects. However, a pesticide application is not justified if it will control the pest but also cause more harm than good in the big picture.

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