

Viewpoint: Outcomes over ideology — Why biotechnology innovations like pesticides and GM crops are essential tools in advancing regenerative agriculture

We hear a lot about regenerative agriculture these days, but everyone has their own definition of what this term means. Some of these definitions focus too closely on practices and not on outcomes. At the end of the day, it's all about soil health.

I would define regenerative agriculture as any approach to farming that ensures the soil remains in as good or better health than when you started farming it. It's a spectrum of activities and tools focused on an outcome, rather than criteria to be met.

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So, how does plant science support regenerative agriculture? Pesticides and biotech crops have enabled farmers to adopt conservation tillage practices that have reduced the need for tillage. Tillage involves plowing the soil to remove weeds. This disrupts the soil structure and makes it more prone to erosion and run-off. When the soil isn't disturbed by tilling, organic matter builds and soil health increases.

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Some people believe that regenerative agriculture can only be achieved by rejecting technology, but this is simply not true and would in fact have the opposite effect. While debates over different practices will continue, we'd all be better served focusing on the outcomes we are trying to achieve.

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