

## Kernza: The perennial wheat that could inject sustainability into commodity farming

Most of the cereal crops we grow now, like corn, soy, and wheat, are annual crops. They're planted and harvested every year. And the way most farmers grow those crops — with Nitrogen fertilizers and yearly tilling — damages the soil, pollutes the air, and contributes to climate change.

Kernza is different. It's a perennial grain. Its roots stay in the ground for three or four years, growing up to 10 feet deep into the earth. While the plant above ground keeps producing grain each season, Kernza's roots pull carbon out of the air, build healthy soil and make Kernza resilient to extreme climate events like droughts and floods. Plus, it produces a grain we can eat — which means farmers can sell it and turn a profit.

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National brands *are* starting to pay attention: [Whole Foods named Kernza among its top 10 food trends of 2022](#). But University of Iowa economist Silvia Secchi says that, for Kernza to actually *replace* the grains we grow now, we'll need to see major changes to the U.S. farm bill first.

"You can't just change the crops," she said. "This is a whole system that we need to modify."

[\*\*This is an excerpt. Read the original post here\*\*](#)