

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Regenerative Agriculture Unit's Strategic Plan

Mission:

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's (MDARD) Regenerative Agriculture Program's mission is to champion a regenerative approach to agriculture, resulting in greater farmer prosperity, improved farm ecosystems, increased community health, and vibrant food systems in the Great Lakes region.

Vision:

Michigan farming and agriculture can become a beacon for sustainability within the Great Lakes region. Michigan's communities are nourished by a robust local food supply chains and supported by farmers committed to regenerative principles and practices. Through innovation, education, and collaboration, MDARD helps cultivate a landscape where farm profitability, environmental stewardship, and community well-being thrive in harmony.

Definition:

Regenerative agriculture is an active approach to land management driven by the goal of improving soil health. Rather than a rigid set of rules, it embraces a blend of sustainable farming methods tailored to each farmer's needs.

By adopting regenerative agricultural practices, farmers and landowners can be profitable while restoring healthy soils and safeguarding the state's natural resources for future generations.

MDARD's Regenerative Agriculture Unit's core principles include:



Learning and understanding the context of a farm operation



Maximizing diversity



Maintaining living roots year-round



Minimizing soil disturbance



Keeping soil covered



Integrating livestock and increasing biodiversity

Goal 1: *Establish the Regenerative Agriculture Unit, systems, and support*

Objective 1: Recruit, hire and onboard staff

- Hire and onboard new staff.

Objective 2: Ensure relevant, accurate, and timely programs

- Develop new programs and review annually to make improvements.
- Establish an Advisory Council by the end of 2024.

Goal 2: *Increase MDARD's understanding of the barriers and opportunities for regenerative agriculture systems*

Objective: Identify, support, and/or lead strategic field trials and research

- Investigate potential avenues to lead field trials, with a focus on regionally and/or practice specific practical applications.
- Identify and coordinate with institutions conducting regenerative agriculture related research.
- Explore research opportunities about regenerative agriculture's impact on community health.

Goal 3: *Expand adoption of regenerative agriculture practices*

Objective 1: Develop and share educational programming and tools

- Complete an initial training for farmers and technicians on regenerative agriculture.
- Develop a strategy to encourage more youth to get involved in regenerative agriculture.
- Develop a strategy to increase/foster data sharing among regenerative agriculture stakeholders in Michigan.

Objective 2: Support and cultivate farmer leaders practicing regenerative agriculture

- Develop annual goals and metrics for technical assistance support for farmers.
- Strengthen and measure the impact of innovative farmers and early adopters.
- Research farmer-led network grant models and assess viability to establish a similar program within Michigan.
- Strengthen and help foster farmer-to-farmer networks and mentorship groups.

Objective 3: Increase market opportunities through regenerative value networks

- Expand internal database with current and potential institutional buyers.
- Provide technical assistance for farmers to become "market ready" for new regenerative agriculture supply chains.
- Explore carbon market opportunities, such as Section 45Z of the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Review tax incentives for Michigan companies who purchase Michigan agricultural products.
- Explore a collaboration with the "10 Cents a Meal" program.

Objective 4: Develop and track impact of meaningful ecosystem service metrics

- Coordinate with partners to identify metrics used to track impact of ecosystems services.
- Review impact of third-party certification and verification systems for increased adoption.

Objective 5: Showcase successfully implemented regenerative agriculture methods

- Develop program plan for new Working Lands Climate Corps and demonstration site.
- Establish practices highlighting regenerative agriculture principles.
- Research the utility/interest in establishing additional regenerative agriculture practices.

Objective 6: Promote regenerative agriculture principles and practices.

- Develop a communications plan to help engage supply chains, producers, and the public.
- Develop marketing materials to promote a regenerative ag supply chain
- Assess feasibility of a public-facing regenerative agriculture marketing campaign.
- Develop a strategy for becoming a nationally recognized leader in regenerative agriculture.