

# Buy best-practice

## Not buzzwords

Over history, many buzzwords that promise the next big thing in food and farming have come and gone. The misappropriation and misuse of terms like “natural”, “organic” and “regenerative” that are not bound by clear standards and definitions, have clouded the true meaning of sustainable farming practices rather than help consumers make informed choices. The truth is, one farming practice alone won't save the planet, but best-practice farming guided by genuine outcomes just might.

It's the word on everyone's lips. “Regenerative agriculture” (regen ag) has captured the imagination of farmers, policy makers and consumers alike as a solution to our climate woes and growing food insecurity. Then again, what's in a name?

**With farmers under pressure to meet arbitrary 'criteria', have we missed the point?**

The CSIRO recently investigated this very question to shed light on the essential characteristics of regen ag and bridge the gap between a romanticised ideology and agricultural science. It found that what was most important was science-based outcomes informed by the Australian context.

Unlike North America and Europe, Australia's approach to regen ag focuses on genuine positive outcomes for soil health, biodiversity, farm productivity and profitability rather than dictating specific farming practices.

If the goal is to provide truly sustainable food choices, then we must acknowledge the role of plant science innovations in achieving sustainable outcomes. If preserving natural resources, reducing soil erosion and increasing soil carbon is the goal, many (95 per cent) of Australian farmers already employ conservation practices like no-till farming which is enabled by herbicides, including glyphosate.

In fact, technologies like GM crops and pesticides have enabled farmers to produce more food on less land and optimise inputs, reduce carbon emissions and conserving natural resources.

Ultimately, the practices used in regenerative agriculture that are proven to create environmental benefit are already considered best-practice across Australian agriculture. Using plant science innovations as one tool in the toolkit to employ best-practice isn't just sustainable – it's good business. Regardless of what we call it, what matters most are the outcomes for environmental stewardship, biodiversity conservation and food security.

A focus on actions rather than clever marketing will be crucial to ensuring farmers have the tools and support they need long-term, to manage their land and produce food responsibly for future generations.

the next big thing

