Textile Exchange's Regenerative Agriculture Outcome Framework

About the framework

Textile Exchange's Regenerative Agriculture Outcome Framework aims to help the fashion, textile, and apparel industry align on outcomes for assessing the holistic benefits of regenerative agriculture.

It is designed to respect the inherent place-based nature of these agricultural systems while shifting the industry's focus from the avoidance of negative outcomes to the achievement of measurable, beneficial ones instead.

Our approach

This open-source, fully documented framework draws on rigorous research and synthesis of work from other outcome frameworks, related sector methodologies (such as Science Based Targets for Nature and the GHG Protocol), and scientific literature. Most importantly, it respects and centers local farm community knowledge.

The framework is designed to be applicable worldwide in cropping, grazing, and agroforestry systems and to assess outcomes across a range of fibers, farm scales, and geographic contexts. It includes a specific focus on smallholder farmers and resource-limited farming.

One of the framework's defining principles is that brands must collaborate on outcome measurement with growers.

What makes an agricultural system regenerative?
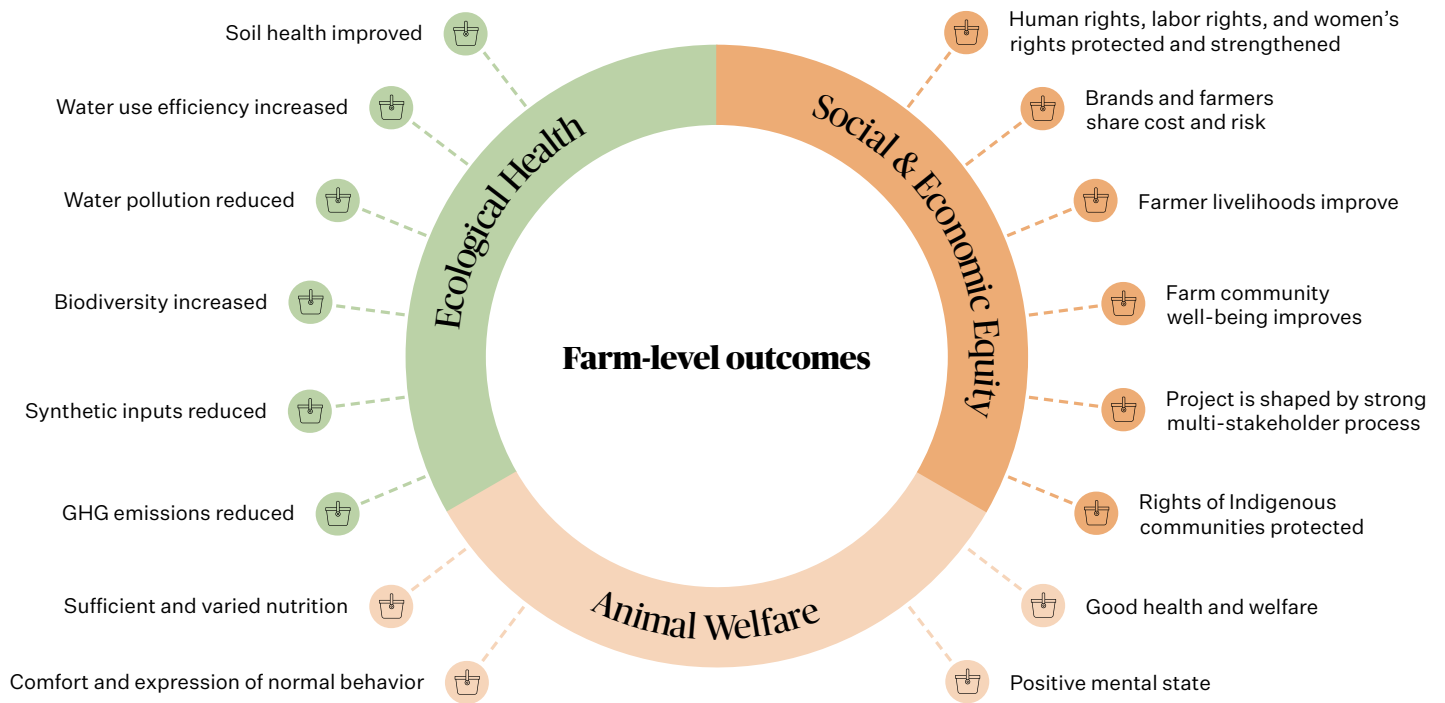
Released in January 2022, Textile Exchange's Regenerative Agriculture Landscape Analysis report drew on extensive research and interviews to establish that regenerative agriculture is inclusive of the following:

- A view of agriculture that works in alignment with natural systems, recognizing the value and resilience of interconnected and mutually beneficial ecosystems vs. extractive agricultural systems.

- An acknowledgement that Indigenous and Native peoples have been employing this approach to growing food and fiber for centuries—it is not a new concept—and that regenerative agriculture must include a focus on social justice.

- A holistic, place-based, outcome-focused systems approach, not a "one-size-fits-all" checklist of practices.

Examples of desired outcomes for regenerative systems in cropping, grazing, and agroforestry include not only carbon sequestration but also beneficial outcomes related to biodiversity, soil health, water quality and availability, and other environmental impacts, alongside the equally important outcomes of animal welfare, social justice, Indigenous rights, gender equity, and farmer and community resilience. Over time, regenerative practices can increase productivity, naturally reduce the need for external inputs, and improve economic stability for producers.

Read the full statement in the Regenerative Agriculture Landscape Analysis →

Regenerative Agriculture Outcome Framework

Farm-level outcomes

Ecological Health
- Soil health improved
- Water use efficiency increased
- Water pollution reduced
- Biodiversity increased
- Synthetic inputs reduced
- GHG emissions reduced

Social & Economic Equity
- Human rights, labor rights, and women's rights protected and strengthened
- Brands and farmers share cost and risk
- Farmer livelihoods improve
- Farm community well-being improves
- Project is shaped by strong multi-stakeholder process
- Rights of Indigenous communities protected

Animal Welfare
- Sufficient and varied nutrition
- Comfort and expression of normal behavior
- Good health and welfare
- Positive mental state

Brand expectations

Social & Economic Equity

- Human rights, labor rights, and women's rights safeguards in place
- Brands and farmers share cost and risk
- Multi-stakeholder process in place
- Grievance process in place
- Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process in place (if applicable)

Ecological health

- Water risk assessed
- Biodiversity risk assessed
- *SBTN land targets set**
- *SBTN freshwater targets set**
- *GHG Protocol LSR targets set**

Animal Welfare

- 3rd party certification in place

* Emerging indicator

Identifying which indicators represent regenerative outcomes

Our 2022 report helped us establish a clear position on the key categories of indicators that textile value chain partners should be using to assess whether a project or program is following a regenerative approach and, importantly, whether it is generating beneficial outcomes over time.

Now, our Regenerative Outcome Framework takes this a step further by providing a common reference point to set that work in motion. We believe that creating further alignment on which indicators to track, and laying some initial groundwork on how this might be done, is a critical step to speed progress on regenerative agriculture in a way that supports farm communities.

Rather than providing a list of boxes to tick, we are offering a flexible, context-adaptable framework for outcome measurement. It reflects the consensus outlined in the Regenerative Agriculture Landscape Analysis that regenerative agriculture cannot be defined in a single standard. It also answers the call for the industry to take an approach that includes the development of equitable partnerships with farming communities.

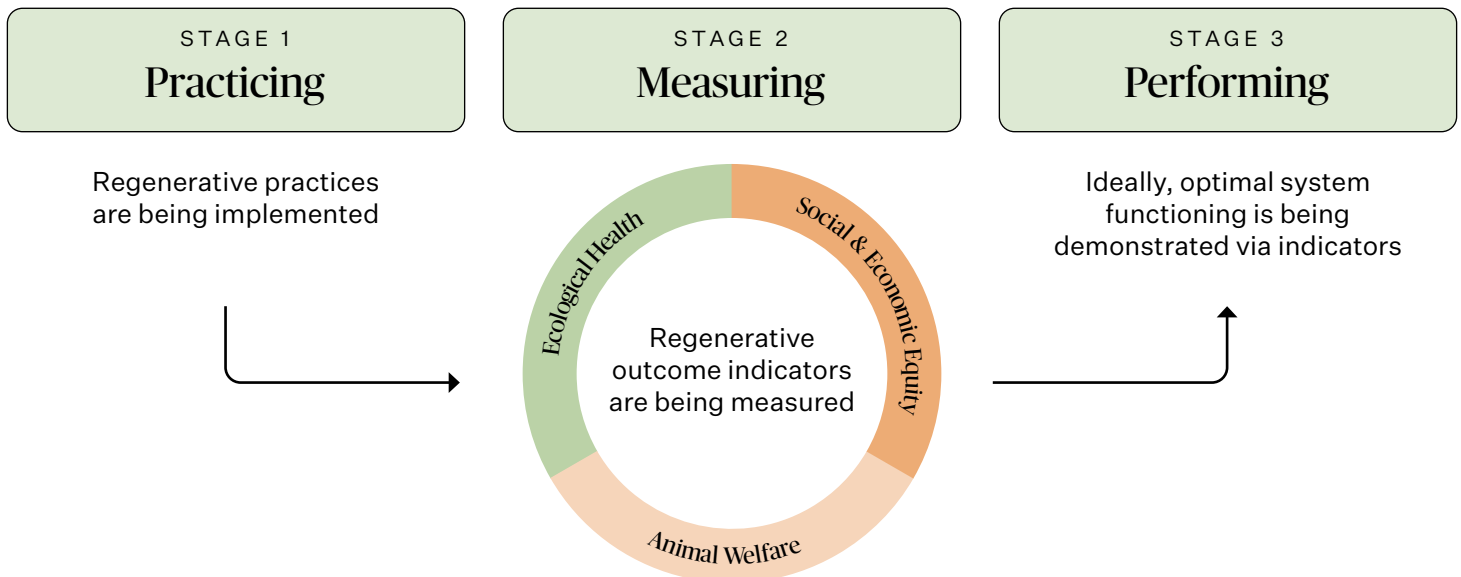# Putting the framework into action

A key principle of the Regenerative Agriculture Outcome Framework is that producers are not expected to bear responsibility for monitoring for regenerative outcomes on their own. To emphasize the sharing of this work, we have organized indicators into farm-level and brand-level categories. We also include a section for fundamental brand-level expectations that should be in place before projects or programs are considered, or claimed, to be regenerative.

At the farm level, the framework includes three major categories of outcomes and indicators, aligning with those identified in the Regenerative Agriculture Landscape Analysis:

- **Socioeconomic outcomes:** A core message of the Regenerative Agriculture Landscape Analysis is that socioeconomic outcomes play a critical role in holistic regenerative agriculture, and these are given equal weight in our framework alongside the widely discussed ecological outcomes. In this category, we have included indicators on fair financing, multi-stakeholder engagement, livelihoods, farm community well-being, and more.

- **Ecological health outcomes:** The second section of our framework references one of the most-cited elements of regenerative agriculture: ecological health outcomes. It covers outcomes related to soil health, biodiversity, water use efficiency and water quality, synthetic input reductions, GHG emissions, and more. This area continues to be supported by ongoing research and frameworks, including the Science Based Targets for Nature industry guidance.

- **Animal welfare outcomes:** Our framework also fully includes animal welfare as a component of regenerative systems that is inextricably linked with both human welfare and ecosystem and soil health.

How to use it

- Our framework offers a choice of indicators for each outcome area. This approach respects the context-based nature of regenerative agriculture and allows programs in different regions or at different stages of the regenerative journey to select indicators that work for them.

- Projects are not expected to demonstrate progress towards every outcome indicator listed. However, they are expected to select, establish a baseline for, and show meaningful efforts to track progress towards a context-appropriate selection of indicator(s) within each outcome area, as indicated in the detailed Excel Framework.

- For each indicator, references for standard operating procedures, methods, or specific guidance on assessment from existing sources are included, but others can be used if already underway. Details on the unit, reference, notes, and method/standard operating procedure for each indicator are summarized in the Excel Framework and provided in full in the accompanying Supplementary Guidance Document.

- Textile Exchange recommends that brands use the Regenerative Agriculture Outcome Framework as part of a broader three-step process[1] to implementing regenerative agriculture programs and initiatives:

  1. Identify best practices that are contextually appropriate for your company's fiber and raw material production systems and regions;

  2. Utilize the Regenerative Outcome Framework to identify contextually appropriate outcome indicators; and,

  3. Ensure robust verification and reporting mechanisms.

- The regenerative outcome framework is intended to serve as a neutral basis for building outcome measurements into existing standards and certifications.

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3
Practicing	Measuring	Performing

Regenerative practices are being implemented

Ideally, optimal system functioning is being demonstrated via indicators

Three-step process developed by VF Corporation and gifted to Textile Exchange for use in conjunction with the Regenerative Outcome Framework.

Photo: Fields with diverse crop growth

Getting input from all impacted and interested voices

Development

The Regenerative Agriculture Outcome Framework is being developed through a rigorous, research-based, and collaborative process. So far, this has included:

- A thorough review and synthesis of over a dozen existing frameworks and hundreds of potential outcome indicators for the assessment of sustainable agriculture, agroecology, regenerative agriculture, and other fields.

- High-level review by the Textile Exchange Regenerative Agriculture Community of Practice.

- Extensive internal and external expert review process integrating over 40 sets of comments on the draft set of indicators.

Next steps

Now, the Regenerative Outcome Framework is being released in "Version One" form to reflect our ongoing commitment to piloting and refinement in partnership with the Textile Exchange Regenerative Agriculture Community of Practice and broader community. The framework will be tested through the Textile Exchange Round Table Working Groups, commencing in summer 2023.

Additional companies, project developers, and farm groups are welcome to test the Framework and help us refine it in future versions. Contact regenagcop@textileexchange.org for more details and to be involved.

Read the full Excel Framework and Background and Guidance document.

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