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The Regeneration International Standard with Guidance Version 2, April 2025

REGENERATION INTERNATIONAL	6771 South Silver Hill Dr. Finland, MN 55603, USA https:// regenerationinternational.org
Regeneration International Standard	**Guidance for Certification**
Agriculture must change from chemically intensive degenerative industrial systems to regenerative, biological, biodiverse, nature-based ones to regenerate our ecosystems, climate, health, and communities. Such systems improve resources, reduce, and ultimately avoid synthetic chemicals. It is not based on animal or plant cruelty. Instead, its foundations are biodiversity, plant biology, living soil science, and humane livestock systems.	
Overview of Standard	
This standard is brief and direct instead of a lengthy, complex regulatory document. It aims to be user-friendly for farmers and landholders. Regeneration International will periodically update this standard.	The Regeneration International Standard has been crafted in a format that is more accessible for farmers, rather than adopting a regulatory standard format.
It has the Definition, General Principles, Guidance, Clear prohibitions and Management Plan.	The Definition, General Principles and Guidance are Informative. The Prohibitions and Management Plans are Normative and Mandatory.
Apart from the prohibitions, it uses principles and guidance rather than mandated practices so farmers and land managers can make decisions based on the most appropriate practices and inputs and encourage innovation. The primary purpose of this standard is to assist in a paradigm shift from the current degenerative industrial-agricultural systems into systems that regenerate soil, biodiversity, climate, community, fairness, care, and health.	
Operators can get certified to the following levels.	
• Regenerative A Grade - meeting all the requirements	
• Regenerative in Transition - in the process of meeting all the requirements	
Operators can be certified to other standards and schemes.	
The Definition of Regenerative Agriculture	**The Definition, General Principles, Guidance are Informative**
Regenerative systems improve the environment, soil, plants, animal welfare, health, and communities.	

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The opposite of Regenerative is Degenerative	
This is an essential distinction in determining practices that are not regenerative.	
Agricultural systems that use Degenerative Practices and inputs that damage the environment, soil, health, genes, and communities and involve animal cruelty are not regenerative.	
Synthetic toxic pesticides, synthetic water-soluble fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, confined animal feeding operations, overgrazing, exploitive marketing and wage systems, destructive tillage systems, and clearing high-value ecosystems are examples of degenerative practices.	These are examples of some degenerative practices. There are many more and using IFOAM-Organics International's Four Principles of Organic Agriculture is the recommended way to determine if practices are regenerative or degenerative.
Such systems must be called degenerative agriculture to stop greenwashing and hijacking.	
The best way to determine if practices and inputs are regenerative or degenerative is IFOAM-Organics International's Four Principles of Organic Agriculture.	The Definition, General Principles, Guidance are Informative
Health	
Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible.	
Ecology	
Organic agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.	
Fairness	
Organic agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.	
Care	
Organic agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.	
1.0 General Principles and Guidance on Best Practices	**1.0 The Definition, General Principles, Guidance are Informative**
1.1 Maximize Photosynthesis	
1.1.1 Agriculture starts with plants, which create soil by using photosynthesis to feed the microbiome with the molecules of life.	

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1.1.2 Plants will hardly grow in freshly ground rock. However, if you add organic matter, they will grow. Plants do this naturally, creating soil.	
1.1.3 The key to successful regenerative agriculture is maximizing the capture of solar energy through photosynthesis in plant leaves. This solar energy powers the production system that feeds the soil microbiome, making nutrients, water, pest, and disease management available to plants and animals. Photosynthesis is the basis of most life on our planet—directly and indirectly. We use this energy to power farming and ranching systems. The key to getting the highest productivity is collecting as much photosynthesis energy as possible to power the system.	
1.1.4 95% to 98% of plants' biomass comprises water and carbon dioxide (CO_2). Through photosynthesis, plants harness the sun's energy to create glucose, the essential molecule for life. Glucose is the basis for all molecules of life and is the substance most living organisms need for energy, growth, reproduction, and survival.	
1.2 Regenerate Soil	
1.2.1 Soil is fundamental to all terrestrial life on this planet. It is the source of our food and biodiversity. Soil is not inert dirt—it is living, breathing, and teeming with life. The soil microbiome is our planet's most complex and richest biodiversity area. The rhizosphere, the region around plant roots, has the greatest biodiversity.	
1.2.2 Plants feed the soil microbiome with the molecules of life they create through photosynthesis. These molecules are the basis of organic matter—carbon-based molecules—on which all life on Earth depends. Organic matter is fundamental to all life, and soil organic matter (SOM) is essential to life in the soil.	
1.2.3 Farming practices that enhance SOM improve soil fertility, increase water retention capacity, and strengthen resilience to pests and diseases, thereby boosting agricultural systems' productivity. As SOM comes from carbon dioxide fixed during photosynthesis, increasing SOM can significantly benefit the climate by removing this greenhouse gas from the atmosphere.	
1.2.4 The fact is that our health and wealth come from the soil.	
1.3 Cash Crops and Cover Crops	

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A cash crop is a crop we eat, swap, or sell. A cover crop is a crop we grow to feed the soil microbiome and produce fertility and nutrients for the cash crop. Both can be the same, such as pastures for livestock.	
1.3.1 Maximize living plants and deep roots	
1.3.1.1 A key principle is to ensure that agricultural systems include photosynthesizing plants for the longest possible durations within their climates. *Dead plants and bare soil do not photosynthesize.* Consequently, the most productive regenerative systems avoid using herbicides and excessive tillage to kill plants. Instead, plants are managed as ground covers and cover crops to enhance soil fertility, maximizing the carbon compounds that roots secrete into the soil.	
1.3.1.2 As plants grow, 10% to 40% of these molecules of life are secreted into the soil through the roots. Thanks to the depth of the roots, these carbon compounds penetrate deeper into the soil than above-ground or tilled SOM, which can quickly convert back into CO_2. Systems with deeper roots are preferred because their carbon compounds help build more durable SOM, making deep soil carbon more stable.	
1.3.2 Maximize Soil Cover	
1.3.2.1 A general principle is to cover the soil with the highest possible amount of living plants for as long as possible. Bare soil is vulnerable to wind and water erosion. Plant cover protects the soil and serves as a silt trap to prevent erosion. *Bare soil and dead plants do not photosynthesize*.	
1.3.3 Increase Diversity	
1.3.3.1 Utilizing a diverse range of well-managed plant species ensures maximum sunlight capture per acre or hectare. This captured sunlight provides the energy needed to convert CO_2 into organic compounds that contribute to SOM through the soil microbiome. Maintaining permanent covers of living plants and implementing limited tillage systems are the most effective methods for increasing SOM. Properly managed polycultures are more resilient and produce higher yields than monocultures.	
1.3.4 Increase Perennials	

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1.3.4.1 Perennials have longer photosynthesis periods and deeper root systems. Choosing the right species can yield fruit, fodder, and nitrogen, which boosts resilience to climate extremes like droughts, floods, and storms. Overall, they need less management than annuals.	
1.4 Minimize Disturbance	
1.4.1 Short-term soil disturbances, such as animal trampling in pastures and effective tillage practices, help aerate the soil. This process encourages soil microbes to decompose organic matter, releasing essential nutrients.	
1.4.2 There is considerable misunderstanding about the role of microbes in oxidizing SOM. Some degree of oxidation is necessary to free minerals vital for crop growth. Without sufficient oxidation, many minerals remain trapped within organic matter.	
1.4.3 The key is to effectively manage the cycles of both short-term and long-term SOM fractions. The short-term fraction should continuously cycle and release nutrients to support crop growth, which can be achieved while enhancing the stable long-term soil organic matter fractions.	
1.5 Strip tilling	
1.5.1 Strip tilling minimizes soil disturbance during cultivation. Most soil remains uncultivated as the crop is sown in the tilled strips. The most effective weed management strategies involve turning them into cover crops. Pasture cropping is one of the best examples of implementing this approach.	
1.6 Maximize Recovery	
1.6.1 Ecosystems naturally regenerate once a disturbance stops. Consequently, regenerative agriculture not only maintains resources but also improves them. Understanding how to manage this powerful force is essential. Maximizing recovery after grazing, tillage, and other disturbances allows the plants and soil to reach their full production potential.	
1.7 Integrate Livestock	
1.7.1 Livestock can manage weeds, pests, and diseases, supply nitrogen via manure, and increase SOM.	

1.7.2 Various strategies are used to manage weeds and use them as cover crops to build fertility. Grazing is a widespread management tool for these regenerative systems. Many systems, known by different names, fall under the heading of regenerative grazing, such as Holistic Planned Grazing, AMP grazing, cell grazing, mob grazing, and rotational grazing.	
1.7.3 Overgrazing occurs when animals graze for too long without allowing the ecosystem sufficient time to recover. When many animals graze briefly, allowing the vegetation adequate time to heal before returning them to the field mimics the natural grazing patterns of herding animals and enhances biodiversity. Even a low stocking density of animals that continuously eat their favored species can damage plants because they cannot recover.	
1.8 Maximize Efficiency	
1.8.1 The best regenerative farmers redesign farming systems to create a series of integrated systems that prevent pests and diseases, giving the cash crop a significant advantage. They aim to take a whole-systems approach, resulting in a resilient, low-input, high-output farm. This is where effective traditional practices, scientific rigor, and farmer-led innovations combine to produce new systems, applying an ecological approach to agriculture.	
1.8.2 Ecosystem-based regenerative production systems manage biodiversity to achieve the optimal utilization of ecosystem services. The aim is to maximize the multi-functional benefits of ecological functions rather than synthetic chemical intensification.	
1.8.3 These services encompass pest and disease management, water retention and drainage, soil enhancement, soil biology and fertility, nutrient cycling, nitrogen fixation, photosynthesis, CO_2 removal, diversity in crops and animal species, pollination, and many others.	
2.0 Education to Train Farmers in Best Practices	**2.0 Education is encouraged and is Informative not Mandatory**
2.1 This standard is based on a culture of continuous improvement. Certified operators are encouraged to take courses and workshops on best practices such as but not limited to:	
· Regenerating soils	
· Nutrient balancing	
· Organic agriculture	
· Agroecology	

· Regenerative grazing	
· Animal husbandry	
· Cover and pasture cropping	
· Permaculture	
· Agroforestry	
· Biodynamics	
3.0 Prohibitions	**3.0 Prohibitions - These are Normative and Mandatory**
3.1 Synthetic pesticides	**3.1 Synthetic pesticides**
	3.1.1 These are toxic poisons made from compounds that do not exist naturally to kill insects, weeds, fungi, and other crop pests. However, naturally occurring compounds are permitted for pest and disease management.
3.2 Synthetic animal feed supplements	**3.2 Synthetic animal feed supplements**
	3.2.1 Synthetically produced substances like hormones, amino acids, antibiotics, and urea cannot be used as feed additives.
	3.2.2 Natural substances such as salt licks, seaweed, lime, and dolomite are permitted.
	3.2.3 Livestock should be managed to derive most of their nutrition from pasture and natural habitats.
	3.2.4 While antibiotics and other synthetic compounds are permitted as medications for treating acute diseases, their use must cease once the animal has recovered.
3.3 Synthetic food additives	**3.3 Synthetic food additives**
	3.3.1 Synthetic food additives such as dyes, colorings, preservatives, and flavor enhancers are prohibited.
	3.3.2 All food should be unprocessed or minimally processed, such as fermented, ground, dried, or cooked.
3.4 Water soluble chemical fertilizers, except for correcting deficiencies with trace elements	**3.4 Water-soluble chemical fertilizers, except for correcting deficiencies with trace elements**
	3.4.1 Water-soluble chemical fertilizers of macronutrients synthesized in factories, such as ammonium nitrate, urea, superphosphate, muriate of potash, etc., are prohibited as they disrupt the soil microbiome and cause imbalances in plant metabolism.

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	3.4.2 Applying water-soluble trace elements is acceptable when a deficiency is demonstrated. The small amounts do not overwhelm the soil microbiome and assist by correcting deficiencies.
	3.4.3 Macro nutrient deficiencies can be corrected by applying naturally occurring minerals such as lime, dolomite, gypsum, ground basalt, etc.
3.5 Sewerage sludge/biosolids	**3.5 Sewerage sludge/biosolids**
	3.5.1 Sewerage sludge/biosolids are prohibited, as history shows they can spread human diseases such as hepatitis and may be contaminated with toxic synthetic chemicals like dioxins and PFAS.
3.6 GMOs, including gene editing and GMO vaccines	**3.6 GMOs, including gene editing and GMO vaccines**
	3.6.1 Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and other artificial genetic modification technologies, such as gene-edited organisms, RNA vaccines and pesticides result from DNA recombinations or modifications that do not happen in nature. A significant amount of scientific research indicates various adverse effects of GMOs on animals, humans, microorganisms, and the environment. Long-term safety data remain insufficient.
3.7 Nanotechnology	**3.7 Nanotechnology**
	3.7.1 Many compounds behave differently at the nanoscale, which is one reason why nanotechnology is utilized. Nano-compounds can penetrate cell walls into the nucleus and mitochondria, potentially causing damage. The safety testing data is insufficient at this stage, so the precautionary principle is applied to restrict nanotechnology.
3.8 Animal cruelty - all animals must be able to express their natural habits	**3.8 Animal cruelty - all animals must be able to express their natural habits**
	3.8.1 All domestic and wild animals must be treated with respect and not subjected to cruel and painful procedures.
	3.8.2 Whips, electric prods, toothed traps, wire snares, and other painful devices are prohibited.
	3.8.3 Domestic animals should be allowed to express their natural behaviors, such as dust bathing for chickens and rooting or wallowing for pigs.
	3.8.4 Adequate shelter from adverse weather, including trees for shade and windbreaks from storms, is essential.
	3.8.5 When culling is necessary, it should be performed in the quickest and least stressful and painful manner.

3.9 Confined Animal Feeding Operations - all animals must spend adequate time on pasture and/or their natural habitat	**3.9 Confined Animal Feeding Operations - all animals must spend adequate time on pasture and/or their natural habitat**
	3.9.1 Keeping animals confined 24/7 is prohibited.
	3.9.2 All animals need daily access to pasture and enough time to eat, drink, and express their natural habits outside.
3.10 Hydroponics - all systems must be soil-based	**3.10 Hydroponics - all systems must be soil-based**
	3.10.1 Regenerative agriculture is based on regenerating soils. Consequently, non-soil production systems such as hydroponics cannot be regenerative. Landless productions systems such as mushrooms, sprouts, wheat/barley grass are not allowed as they don't improve the soil.
3.11 Clearing old growth and high-value ecosystems	**3.11 Clearing old growth and high-value ecosystems**
	3.11.1 Regenerative agriculture is based on regenerating the environment. Degenerative activities such as clearing old growth and high-value ecosystems have no place in regenerative agriculture.
3.12 Damaging tillage	**3.12 Damaging Tillage**
	3.12.1 Damaging tillage refers to the type of tillage that destroys soil structure.
	3.12.2 Well-structured soils consist of peds formed by organisms nourished by living roots. These organisms bind soil particles together to create peds, resulting in aggregated soil structures that enhance aeration, improve friability, and increase water infiltration and mineral availability.
	3.12.3 Tillage performed too quickly, when the soil is excessively wet or dry, harms the peds and compromises the structure. This results in soil compaction, erosion, and diminished aeration, water infiltration, and mineral availability.
3.13 Burning crop residues, except for cool-season mosaic burns in First Nation agroecosystems	**3.13 Burning crop residues, except for cool-season mosaic burns in First Nation agroecosystems**
	1.13.1 Crop residues should be allowed to biodegrade, feeding the soil microbiome. Plants consist mainly of cellulose made from long chains of glucose and water. Microorganisms break this down and use glucose as an energy source to support the soil microbiome. Burning destroys this energy source.

	3.13.2 Plants also produce lignins, which microorganisms convert into humus, one of the most vital types of soil organic matter. This process is also halted by burning.
	3.13.3 The exception is First Nations traditional land management systems, where minor cool-season mosaic burns are utilized to regenerate pastures and prevent large, harmful forest and pasture fires.
3.14 Grazing that produces bare soil	**3.14 Grazing that produces bare soil**
	3.14.1 Bare soil and dead plants cannot photosynthesize or create the molecules essential for life.
	3.14.2 Bare soil is prone to erosion from rain, wind, and direct sunlight. It also loses moisture because it is exposed to the sun without any shade.
	3.14.3 Living plants provide protection for the soil. Their roots stabilize it by acting as reinforcing rods and feeding microorganisms that secrete substances such as glomalin and humus that glue and build peds to form soil structure.
	3.14.4 Plants mitigate the harmful effects of heavy rainfall and function as silt traps to prevent the loss of topsoil.
	3.14.5 Grazing should be managed on a rotational basis to ensure that animals are removed before the soil becomes exposed and are not returned until the pasture vegetation has recovered.
4.0 Management Plan - Continuous Improvement, Accountability, and Practices	**4.0 Management Plans - These are Normative and Mandatory**
4.1 This standard's most critical aspect is that it helps operators manage the transition to a fully regenerative system. Certified operators will be inspected and evaluated for progress based on their management plan.	4.1 Operators will be subject to at least one inspection per calendar year to determine compliance to this Standard.
4.1.2 Compliance to the standard	4.1.2 If there are concerns about non-compliance, an unannounced inspection is the best way to uncover the truth.
4.1.3 Operators can choose their preferred format for documenting their practices, plans, and maps.	4.1.3 The plans do not have to be detailed; they can be brief. The main thing is to get the operator to start thinking and strategizing differently as part of a paradigm shift.
4.1.4 You must document and improve them every year.	4.1.4 Cultivating a culture of continuous improvement is crucial for operators to stay environmentally,, socially, and economically viable during uncertain climatic and financial challenges. Operators must review their management plans each year and record the improvements made in each section.

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4.2 Environmental		**4.2 Environmental**
4.2.1	Increasing soil organic matter	**4.2.1 Increasing Soil Organic Matter**
		4.2.1.1 The management plan encourages operators to adopt practices that increase soil organic matter while avoiding those that decrease it.
		4.2.1.2 Although soil tests are desirable, they are not essential.
		4.2.1.3 Operators are encouraged to implement proven methods such as cover crops, polycultures, agroforestry, and rotational grazing, that allow pastures to recover fully.
		4.2.1.4 They should avoid bare soil, bare fallows, and synthetic nitrogen fertilizers.
		4.2.1.5 Soil should be seeded immediately after tillage.
4.2.2	Building soil fertility	**4.2.2 Building soil fertility**
		4.2.2.1 The management plan describes methods for improving soil fertility, such as cover crops for green manure, legumes for nitrogen, and ground natural minerals such as lime, dolomite, gypsum, basalt, rock phosphate, and trace elements.
		4.2.2.2 While soil tests are desirable, they are not essential.
4.2.3	Increasing plant and animal biodiversity	**4.2.3 Increasing plant and animal biodiversity**
		4.2.3.1 The management plan outlines the transition from monocultures to more diverse systems.
4.2.4	Ground cover and weed management	**4.2.4 Ground cover and weed management**
		4.2.4.1 The management plan details the strategy for managing ground covers and weeds, emphasizing the practice of transforming weeds into cover crops.
4.2.5	Pest and disease management	**4.2.5 Pest and disease management**
		4.2.5.1 The management plan outlines the methods for managing pests and diseases, emphasizing ecological approaches instead of sprays.
4.2.6	Traditional ecosystem mosaic burning - where appropriate	**4.2.6 Traditional ecosystem mosaic burning - where appropriate**
		4.2.6.1 This section is exclusively for First Nations cultures that incorporate mosaic burning into their food and land management systems.

	4.2.6.2 The management plan details the procedures, methods, and timing.
4.2.7 Minimize plastic	**4.2.7 Minimize plastic**
	4.2.7.1 The management plan outlines how plastics, particularly single-use plastics, are minimized and substituted with non-toxic alternatives.
4.3 Social	**4.3 Social**
4.3.1 Fair wages	**4.3.1 Fair wages**
	4.3.1.1 Wages should be sufficient for workers to have a reasonable standard of living.
	4.3.1.2 Operators should ensure that their workers receive fair pay sufficient for a standard of living that allows them to afford food, housing, clothing, healthcare, and education, while also having time for family and recreation.
	4.3.1.3 Paying award wages is the minimum for countries with regulated wage systems.
4.3.2 Gender equity	**4.3.2 Gender Equity**
	4.3.2.1 Women and men should have the same life opportunities.
	4.3.2.2 Women are often treated as second-class citizens in many countries. Operators should ensure that women have equal opportunities and wages as men. All workers deserve a safe environment free from sexual harassment and bullying.
4.3.3 Community engagement	**4.3.3 Community Engagement**
	4.3.3.1 The operator participates in and volunteers for the local community, such as being a member of a sports club, service organization, or history society, buying raffle tickets, and more. This practice is common among most local farmers. Its purpose is to exclude industrial agricultural corporations that do not contribute to the local community.
4.4 Economic Management	**4.4 Economic Management**
4.4.1 Farm and Ecosystem Management Plan and Map	**4.4.1 Farm and Ecosystem Management Plan and Map**
	4.4.1.1 The management plan includes a basic map of the farm layout and outlines the entire farming system regarding crops and livestock and the management of vegetation and wildlife.
4.4.2 Marketing Management Plan	**4.4.2 Marketing Management**
	4.4.2.1 This is essential. Most farms fail because they have difficulty selling their products for a reasonable profit.

	4.4.2.2 Operators need to strategize how, where, when, and to whom they will sell their produce, as well as how to maximize the price they receive.
4.4.3 Financial Management Plan	**4.4.3 Financial Management**
	4.4.3.1 Farms need to operate as profitable businesses. The plan must demonstrate how they reduce their costs and expenses in relation to their income to achieve an annual profit. It doesn't have to be a detailed balance sheet or P&L; rather, it should focus on the strategies to accomplish this.
4.5 Transition Plan	**4.5 Transition Plan**
4.5.1 Describe with time frames how you will reduce and eliminate any prohibited products or production methods.	4.5.1 Outline the timeline for reducing and eliminating any prohibited products or production methods.
	4.5.2 There is no set period for operators to transition to Regenerative A Grade. However, all operators certified to Regenerative in Transition must outline time frames and methods for eliminating prohibited inputs and practices. This should be revised annually, with an emphasis on continual improvement.
4.6 Record Keeping	**4.6 Record Keeping**
4.6.1 An operator will retain all records that relate to the certified operation for a period of at least five (5) years.	4.6.1 An operator will retain all records, such as the management plan and certification reports that relate to the certified operation for a period of at least five (5) years.
	5.0 Guidance on other issues
	5.1 Post Production
	5.1.1 Certifiers must follow the same chain of custody guidelines as organic products. This is why we will only accredit organic certifiers with years of experience and compliance procedures to ensure verification.
	5.1.2 The processor must be certified to a recognized national organic standard by a certifier accredited by Regeneration International.
	5.1.3. The post-production process for Regenerative A Grade and Regenerative in Transition must be documented in the management plan to show that no prohibited practices or inputs were used and that there was no mixing with non-regenerative products, validated as part of the inspection or audit.
	5.1.4 Non-certified facilities are not acceptable.

	5.1.5 The primary issue is to verify that no prohibited inputs or practices are employed for an A-grade product.
	5.1.6 If there are concerns about non-compliance, an unannounced inspection is the best way to uncover the truth.
	5.2 Made With Regenerative
	5.2.1 Products made mostly of certified regenerative ingredients can use the Made with Regenerative A Grade/ Made with Regenerative in Transition labels. This must be the same as the Made with Organic criteria in the country where it is marketed.
	5.2.2 The post-production process for Made with Regenerative must be documented in the management plan to show that no prohibited practices or inputs were used and that including non-regenerative products complies with 5.2.1 validated as part of the inspection or audit.
	5.2.3 We created this standard to encourage farmers and others to change their practices. Made With Regenerative will help farmers market their products.
	5.3 Apiaries
	5.3.1 Apiaries in a forest, ranch or farm exemplify our goals. They help preserve biodiversity by supporting bees, which pollinate plants. The forests, fruit trees, and flowering crops provide value to the community and the environment, and harvesting honey creates economic incentives to sustain these natural and agro ecosystems. They enhance soil organic matter; bees serve as vital indicators for pesticides and pollutants. Healthy bees indicate a healthy environment. The honey can be certified as Regenerative A Grade. The apiary operator must document the relevant practices in their management plan.