

## SCALING REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE (RA) IN ALBERTA

Regenerative Agriculture (RA) is gaining traction in Alberta, offering solutions to climate challenges, enhancing soil health, and promoting sustainable farming. This brief explores successes, barriers, opportunities, and policy recommendations to support RA in Alberta.

RA has shown significant successes in Alberta, including improved biodiversity and soil health through multispecies planting and no-till approaches. The growing interest in RA is fueled by its alignment with sustainability, land stewardship values, and pressures from climate change.

Despite successes, several barriers hinder RA expansion. There is a disconnect between RA practices and national ecosystem service payment programs, limiting economic incentives for farmers transitioning to RA. Additionally, the limited availability and high certification costs for programs such as Ecological Outcome Verification (EOV) and insufficient financial support exacerbate the financial burdens faced by producers. Supply chain gaps present another challenge, as existing infrastructure remains tailored to conventional commodity markets, making it difficult for RA producers to market their products. Moreover, impatience among stakeholders seeking immediate results undermines the long-term commitment required to realize the cumulative benefits of RA practices.

To address these challenges, policy has a pivotal role to play in expanding RA initially through adopting a forward-looking approach that enables realisation of ecological and economic outcomes. Introducing penalties for unsustainable practices such as wetland draining, could generate funding for conservation initiatives.

Developing transparent data-sharing frameworks would address producer privacy concerns, balancing regulatory requirements with incentives for RA adoption. Fostering RA-specific value chains to promote direct-to-market opportunities can align market demand with ecological benefits. Expanding RA grants with tiered entry points for beginners and mentorship from experienced practitioners can accelerate adoption and knowledge sharing.

A dedicated RA Commission should be established to consolidate efforts and increase lobbying power. Aligning with broader agricultural groups such as the Alberta Livestock Group can amplify RA's influence. Inclusive programmatic incentives supporting both new and established RA practitioners can ensure sustained engagement. Collaborative frameworks integrating RA with other ecologically focused farming models can maximize collective impact.

RA in Alberta has achieved remarkable successes in enhancing soil health, biodiversity, and community resilience. Alberta's leadership in soil health and grazing management is highlighted by events like the Western Grazing Conference. Addressing financial costs, supply chain limitations, and programmatic restrictions is essential for unlocking its full potential. Strategic policy changes, enhanced funding mechanisms, and robust advocacy frameworks are required to sustain and expand RA practices, ensuring a sustainable and resilient future for Alberta's agricultural sector and ecosystems.

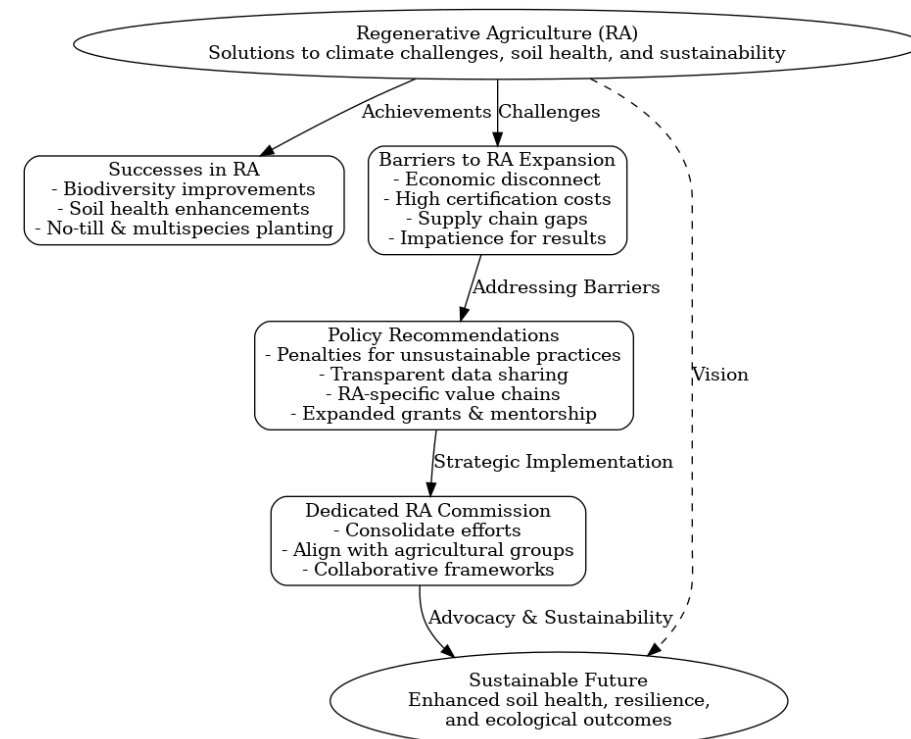


Figure 1 Regenerative Agriculture - Solutions to climate challenges, soil health and sustainability