



## Sustainable Farming



The goal of sustainable agriculture is to meet society's food and textile needs in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable farmers seek to integrate three main objectives into their work: a healthy environment, economic profitability, and social and economic equity. Every person involved in the food system—growers, food processors, distributors, retailers, consumers, and waste managers—can play a role in ensuring a sustainable agricultural system.

There are many practices commonly used by people working in sustainable agriculture and sustainable food systems. Growers may use methods to promote soil health, minimize water use and lower pollution levels on the farm. Consumers and retailers concerned with sustainability can look for “values-based” foods that are grown using methods promoting farmworker wellbeing, that are friendly, or that strengthen the local economy. And researchers in sustainable agriculture often cross disciplinary lines with their work, combining biology, economics, engineering, chemistry, community development, and many others. However, sustainable agriculture is more than a collection of practices. It is also process of negotiation: a push and pull between the sometimes-competing interests of an individual farmer or of people in a community as they work to solve complex problems about how we grow our food and fibre.

Problems addressed, include population pressure, subsistence agriculture, rural poverty, natural resource depletion with emphasis on deforestation, land degradation, decline in productivity, resource rich/urban biased policies, and gender disparities.

Agriculture is facing three major problems and choices:

(a) Ecology/Technology: Which technology to base the future of world agriculture on? As the chemical-based model is faltering, the private sector and global establishment are looking to genetic engineering as the way ahead. But all the signs are that ecological farming is superior, not only for the environment, but also for gains in productivity and farmers' incomes. It has not been given the chance to prove itself. It should be.

(b) The global economic framework: The economic environment has turned less favourable for developing countries' small farmers. International Monetary Fund (IMF)-World Bank structural adjustment has put pressure on poor countries to liberalise food imports and abandon subsidies and government marketing boards. The World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) enables rich countries to raise their subsidies and set up astonishingly high tariffs, while punishing developing countries. Commodity prices have slumped. These three factors are threatening the survival of developing countries' farms and farmers. The entire framework of global and national economic policies for agriculture has to be thoroughly revamped.

(c) Land for the farmers: Many small farmers are poor, and some are becoming poorer. A main reason is unequal land distribution, where small farmers have little land security or access and lose a large part of their income to landowners. Land reform is urgently required, and landless farmers are fighting for their rights. But the landowners in most countries have political clout and are resisting change. The United Nations created the Sustainable

Agriculture Program, to improve management; resource-efficiency of the agricultural raw materials and ensure that these products are grown locally in each market.

### Points to consider:

- Does sustainable farming have future without chemicals?
- Will it be possible in the future to fully sustain economic development in harmony with ecology?
- Should chemistry and monoculture be reduced in sustainable and ecological agriculture and techniques of natural ecosystems developed?
- What ways could effectively promote the issue of natural ecosystems in the context of developing models of sustainable development in the media?

### Useful Links:

- <https://asi.ucdavis.edu/programs/ucsarep/about/what-is-sustainable-agriculture>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable\\_agriculture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_agriculture)
- <https://www.theguardian.com/guardian-professional/video/2013/oct/16/food-security-future-sustainable-farming-video>