Sustainable Agriculture

Sustainable Agriculture is farming and ranching in ways that promote the health and wellbeing of people and the planet now and in the future. That means using practices that are: (1) Ecologically sound, (2) Economically viable, and (3) Socially responsible. This poster illustrates some of the ways that’s done.

A Whole Farm Approach
Using many sustainable agricultural practices creates a healthy farming system that works with nature. Producers choose practices that work best for their farm or ranch.

Economic Viability
Building a strong local economy supports people and businesses in rural and urban areas. When farmers and ranchers sell, barter, or share what they raise locally, it keeps money and resources in the community.

Community Vitality
Agriculture is a rewarding way of life that involves hard work. Farmers, farm families, farm workers, and communities thrive when people respect each other and help each other grow.

Soil Health
Covering bare soil with cover crops, adding compost, and reducing or eliminating tillage are just a few ways of increasing soil health, controlling wind and water erosion, and keeping nutrients cycle in the soil where plants can use them.

Crop, Livestock, and Landscape Diversity
Growing a variety of crops and livestock helps reduce the risk of pests or diseases, weather extremes, and market ups and downs. Practices like agroforestry, conservation buffers, and managed grazing provide habitat and pollinator food for wildlife.

Nutrient Management
Properly managing and applying on-farm nutrient sources such as manure and green manure (from cover crops) can build soil, keep water cleaner, and reduce the need for fertilizer and other off-farm purchases.

Ecological Pest Management
Grown in a healthy farming system with preventive practices like crop rotation to limit diseases, pests, and weeds before they become a problem.

Managed Grazing
In managed grazing systems, farmers divide pastures into smaller paddocks and move animals frequently. This provides animals with high quality forage and reduces the need for feed and other off-farm purchases.

Water and Wetland Management
Conserving and protecting water is vital to everyone. Wetlands can filter nutrients and provide other benefits, plus provide homes for wildlife.

On-Farm Energy Conservation and Production
Installing solar panels, wind turbines, and energy-saving devices can save money and create a cleaner environment.

Funding for this poster was provided by the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NRSA RE) program. SARE is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture. For more information on SARE and sustainable agriculture see www.sare.org.