ReGENERATE

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WERRAGUT

Good Practice Collection

Introduction

Julius took over the organic farm from his mother, continuing the ecological and socially responsible values she established. With a strong commitment to sustainability, he recognizes that agriculture must adapt in response to the growing climate crisis. Motivated by this urgent need for transformation, Julius has implemented a diverse agroforestry system across 12 hectares of his land. This system integrates trees, crops, and biodiversity to enhance resilience and soil health. His approach reflects a deep dedication not only to the environment but also to social responsibility and long-term ecological balance.

The Farm

The farm is diverse and multifunctional, comprising 30 hectares of arable land and 20 hectares of grassland. Its transition to regenerative practices has been gradual, integrating a wide range of elements beyond traditional crop production. These include a dynamic agroforestry system, mobile laying hens, and a small herd of the endangered “Rotes Höhenvieh” cattle, contributing to both biodiversity and animal welfare. The farm also features an in-house bakery, where spelt and rye from its own fields are processed. This holistic approach reflects a deep connection to the land and a commitment to sustainable, circular farming systems.

The Location

Werragut is situated in the low mountain range of northern Hesse, at elevations between 180 and 320 meters above sea level. The soil types on the farm range from fertile alluvial soils in the valley areas to more acidic, weathered soils on the higher ground. This natural diversity influences the farm's land use and crop selection, while also presenting both challenges and opportunities for regenerative practices.

Agricultural regeneration objectives

The farm's regenerative goals focus on enhancing soil fertility and actively building humus to support long-term soil health. Promoting biodiversity across plant, animal, and microbial life is a key priority, as is securing water availability in the face of increasing climate variability. A central aim is to strengthen the farm's resilience to climate stress through diversified systems and ecological design.

A long-term goal is the creation of a largely closed-loop resource system that meaningfully connects natural processes and reduces external dependencies. In doing so, the Werragut pursues not only ecological, but also economically forward-thinking principles. A central element of its sustainable farm concept is direct marketing through its own in-house bakery. Here, grains grown on the farm are transformed into high-quality bread. This generates regional value, provides the farm with economic stability, and offers customers a healthy, transparently produced food option.

Best Practice Focus

TThe farm has its own in-house bakery, where spelt and rye, grown on the farm using minimal tillage methods, are freshly processed into sourdough bread. These gentle soil practices help maintain soil structure, retain moisture, and support microbial life. The bakery creates added value directly on-farm by refining the farm's own grains, strengthening both soil health and the local economy. Baking takes place twice a week, combining traditional craftsmanship with ecologically responsible farming. The bread is sold through the farm's own shop as well as to selected small shops in the region. This short value chain supports transparency, strengthens local food systems, shortens supply chains, and builds a close connection between producer and consumers.

Financial aspects of regenerative measure implementation – challenges faced

Implementing regenerative measures required significant investment, much of which was covered through personal contributions and direct loans. Used equipment helped reduce costs, and some arable farming machinery is rented to avoid large upfront expenses. The on-farm bakery was established with an investment of approximately €35,000. Financing posed an ongoing challenge, but creative solutions played a key role. For example, the planting of the agroforestry system was made possible through donations collected by the local association "ReSoLa e.V.". This mix of self-financing, community support, and resourceful planning made the transition more feasible.

Main Slogan

"Roggen Roll" ("Rye'n'Roll")

Categorisation, keywords

Bakery, minimal tillage, rye, circular economy, value creation, agroforestry, biodiversity, soil protection, climate change, own contribution, social farming, direct marketing, regenerative agriculture, learning curve, innovative spirit

Advantages and disadvantages

Advantages	Reduced energy input through minimal tillage
	Preservation of soil life and improved water availability
	On-farm value creation through the bakery
	Product diversification and increased farm resilience
	Contribution to a closed-loop farm system (circular economy)
Disadvantages	Higher labor requirements
	Challenging weed control with reduced tillage, more expensive machinery
	Narrow working windows due to weather dependency
	Need for specialized knowledge and experience
	Initial investment costs (e.g., bakery setup, equipment)

Learning points

The learning curve was steep - Julius had to learn the craft of baking from scratch, establish direct marketing channels, and integrate both into the daily farm routine. Developing these new skills required time, adaptability, and persistence. Network building played a key role in marketing the products regionally, while process adjustments—such as introducing a second baking day—helped increase efficiency. A hands-on mindset and a willingness to experiment were essential to making the new systems work smoothly within the farm's daily operations.

References/Bibliography

- https://www.werragut.de/

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ReGENERATE

Regenerative Agricultural Practices for Environmental Rejuvenation and Sustainable Ecosystems on European Farms

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