

Prairie Conservation

[THIS IS BUFFALO \(/PAGES/BUFFALO\)](/PAGES/BUFFALO)

[SOURCING \(/PAGES/BUFFALO-SOURCING\)](/PAGES/BUFFALO-SOURCING)

[CONSERVATION \(/PAGES/BUFFALO-CONSERVATION\)](/PAGES/BUFFALO-CONSERVATION)

[THE MEANING OF BUFFALO \(/PAGES/THE-MEANING-OF-BUFFALO\)](/PAGES/THE-MEANING-OF-BUFFALO)

[HUMANE HARVEST \(/PAGES/HUMANE-HARVESTING\)](/PAGES/HUMANE-HARVESTING)

[SHOP BUFFALO \(/COLLECTIONS/BUFFALO\)](/COLLECTIONS/BUFFALO)

PRAIRIE SALVATION by Yvon Chouinard

We are already experiencing the effects of climate change. Drought. Catastrophic storms. Ocean acidification. We have to accept what science and our experiences are showing us, but that doesn't mean we're helpless. In fact, one of the best and most exciting tools we have to combat global climate change already exists, and it lies directly beneath our feet: soil.

We have to change how we treat our soil, though, and that starts with agriculture. Our current model is broken: Great swaths of natural, carbon-absorbing prairies have been converted into monocultures dependent on tilling, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Modern industrial farming is now responsible for 70 percent of the world's water use, and emits more carbon dioxide (CO₂) than all of our cars, planes and trains combined. The soil beneath these monocultures is all but robbed of its natural resilience and ability to support life.



On the other hand, healthy soil nourishes a great diversity of plants, insects, fungi and microbes. Plants draw CO_2 from the atmosphere for photosynthesis, then exchange the carbon with fungi and microbes that help store it away in the soil. Managing our grasslands to promote diversity also provides better nutrition for livestock. The animals, in turn, provide fertilizer and aeration, which means healthier plants, and so on. “Regenerative organic agriculture,” as it’s known, is really just a fancy term for growing plants and animals in ways that recover the natural cycle.

Now here’s the really amazing part: Healthy grasslands, managed with regenerative grazing techniques, not only produce more forage for livestock and increase the water holding capacity of the soil, they also capture tons of carbon per acre every year. According to the Rodale Institute, switching to regenerative organic agriculture in the world’s croplands and pastures could sequester more than 100% of the world’s annual carbon emissions. If we made this switch, we could begin to reverse global warming.

That's why we're working with Dan O'Brien's Wild Idea Buffalo Co. ranches on the Great Plains. They are committed to restoring grasslands through grazing techniques that build soil quality and biodiversity. They're conserving important regional ecosystems and reducing the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere at the same time. On a global scale, our role in this effort is admittedly small, but we believe it's a good place to start.

ACCORDING TO THE RODALE INSTITUTE

switching to regenerative organic agriculture in the world's croplands and pastures could sequester

MORE THAN 100%
OF WORLD'S ANNUAL CARBON EMISSIONS.

If we made this switch, we could begin to reverse global warming.

Instead of waiting for some miraculous, high-tech solution to bail us out of our climate-change disaster, the real miracle turns out to be simply working *with* nature instead of against it. Our grasslands, and the soil beneath them, might just save the world.