Have you been thinking about moving toward organic, regenerative, or agroecological farming — but unsure if now is the right time?

Right now, the reality is this: Farming is changing faster than ever before.

Global instability, rising fuel prices, and ongoing supply chain disruptions — particularly around chemical fertilisers — are placing increasing pressure on farmers across South Africa.

The recent challenges around the availability and pricing of products like Urea, LAN, MAP, and DAP are not short-term anomalies. They are signals of a deeper shift in global agriculture.
And with that shift comes an important question:

How do you farm profitably when your input costs are unpredictable and your supply is uncertain?

A Different Way of Thinking About Farming

For decades, conventional farming has relied on a familiar model:

Plough → Apply synthetic fertilisers → Control weeds chemically → Spray preventatively → Hope for a good yield.

While this approach has delivered results, it has also created increasing dependency on imported, petrochemical-based inputs — inputs that are now becoming more expensive, less available and which exposes the future of crop farming to high risk.

This is where a new opportunity emerges.

Across Southern Africa and globally, leading farmers are beginning to rethink their systems — moving toward soil-first, agroecological approaches that prioritise long-term resilience, profitability, and sustainability.

This is not about going backwards. It's about farming smarter, with nature — not against it.

Why This Shift Matters Now

The current global situation has exposed a critical vulnerability in modern agriculture:

- Heavy reliance on imported inputs
- Exposure to currency volatility
- Rising fuel and logistics costs
- Increasing pressure on margins

At the same time, soils that have been pushed hard for years are showing signs of fatigue — reduced organic matter, lower biological activity, and declining efficiency of nutrient uptake.

The result? 👉 **Higher input costs for lower returns.**

Agroecological farming offers a different path — one that focuses on rebuilding soil health, improving nutrient efficiency, and reducing dependency on external inputs over time.

Can This Work at Commercial Scale?

There is a common perception that organic or regenerative farming is only suited to small-scale or niche operations.

This is simply not true.

Across Southern Africa and internationally, there are commercial farms — ranging from 40 hectares to over 1,500 hectares — successfully implementing these systems at scale.

These farmers are not chasing short-term yield at any cost.They are building resilient farming systems that:

- Improve soil fertility year-on-year
- Increase water efficiency
- Support plant health naturally
- Deliver consistent, high-quality yields

How to Start Transitioning Your Farm

1. Start with Knowledge and Planning

Proper planning prevents poor performance.

Take the time to understand the principles of agroecological farming and soil health. There are excellent local resources available:

- SAOSO Knowledge Hub
- PGS South Africa
- RegenSA
- Talborne Organics Learning Centre

Engage with farmer study groups and connect with experienced growers who have already started this journey.

One of the biggest success factors is mindset: A willingness to learn, adapt, and think differently about farming systems.

2. Understand Your Market Opportunity

Demand for certified organic and sustainably produced crops is growing — both locally and internationally

High-demand categories include:

- Citrus, fruit, nuts, berries, and wine
- Vegetables, herbs, and leafy greens
- Essential oils and medicinal crops
- Grains, dairy, and pasture-based systems

In many cases, value-adding and processing can significantly improve profitability and create more stable income streams.

3. Build Your System Around Strong Foundations

Successful farming — organic or conventional — always comes back to basic foundations:

- Climate suitability
- Soil fertility and qualities
- Water availability and quality
- Infrastructure and labour
- Market access and pricing

These basics become even more important when transitioning systems.

4. Measure and Improve Your Soil

Soil is the starting point.

Start with proper soil and water analysis from a reputable laboratory to understand:

- Reserve of Nutrients and Carbon content
- Soil chemistry
- Biological activity
- Physical structure

Water quality is equally critical — salts, bicarbonates, and contaminants can significantly impact crop performance.

From there, build a targeted soil improvement strategy focused on:

- Restoring balance
- Increasing organic matter
- Supporting microbial life

5. Understand Organic Certification (If Applicable)

If you are aiming for certified organic markets, engage with certification bodies early in the process.

Most farms will go through an “in-conversion” period (typically 3–5 years) before achieving full certification.

However, it is important to note:

You can implement soil health and regenerative practices without formal certification and still benefit significantly from improved sustainable farming from soil fertility.

6. Choose Inputs Carefully

Not all “organic” Fertilizers are equal. Work with trusted suppliers and ensure:

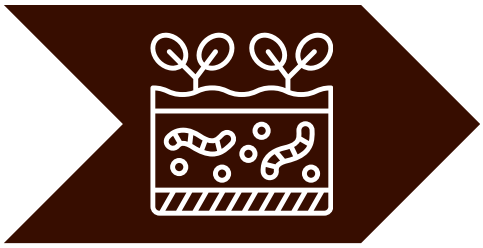
- Products are certified and approved
- Claims are backed by credible data
- Inputs align with your target market standards

Be cautious of misleading claims — especially in a market where demand for organic fertilizer alternatives is increasing rapidly.

The Foundations of a Successful System

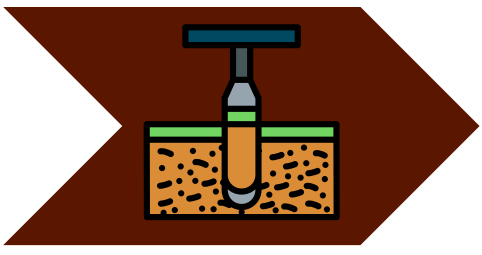
Protect and Build Living Soil

- Minimise disturbance
- Increase and protect beneficial, microbial life
- Use cover crops and mulching



Balance Soil Chemistry

- Correct imbalances and deficiencies
- Improve nutrient availability and uptake



Improve Soil Structure

- Increase water infiltration and retention
- Reduce compaction
- Promote root development

The Result: A More Resilient, Profitable Farm

Farming with nature is not just about sustainability — it's about risk management and long-term profitability.

By investing in soil health, farmers can:

- **Reduce reliance on expensive external inputs**
- **Improve nutrient efficiency**
- **Build resilience against climate and market volatility**
- **Produce healthier crops with greater consistency**

In contrast, continued dependence on imported petrochemical inputs exposes farms to:

- **Supply chain disruptions**
- **Price shocks**
- **Currency fluctuations**
- **Increasing production risk**

The Bottom Line

Global agriculture is entering a new phase.

The farmers who adapt early — by building healthier soils and more resilient systems — will be best positioned to succeed in an uncertain future.

This is not a crisis. It's a turning point.

Let's Grow Together

If you're exploring how to transition your farm or reduce your reliance on chemical inputs, our technical team is here to help.

Speak to our Talborne Organics Team about building a soil-first fertility strategy tailored to your farm.

Healthy Farms = Healthy Futures