



The Six Rules of Biological Farming

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Rule 1: Test and balance your soil.

To establish a balance in the soil, you need to know whether your soil is short of any nutrients. Any nutrient in short supply becomes a limiting factor, reducing yield and quality, and possibly triggering weeds, insects and diseases.

You need to get a good soil test so that you know the condition of your soil – what it is deficient in or what it has in too great a quantity. Then begin with “first things first” and start moving the soil toward a balance.

Rule 2: Use fertilizers which are life-promoting and non-harmful.

Not all fertilizer materials are the same, and not all soils are the same. Some materials work better under certain conditions, and others contain substances that can harm the soil, plants or soil organisms. Sometimes the cheapest source of an element is not the best source.

Use materials that are natural mined or have had minimal processing, including rock phosphates, potassium sulfate, Sul-Po-Mag, Cal-Sul (Gypsum), Bio-Cal, high-calcium lime, ammonium sulfate, monoammonium phosphate (MAP), humates and sulfate-form trace minerals.

Unacceptable fertilizer materials might include dolomitic lime, potassium chloride, anhydrous ammonia, diammonium phosphate and oxide form trace elements.

Rule 3: Use pesticides and herbicides in minimum amounts and only when absolutely necessary.

Pesticides and herbicides are made to kill living things. They do not distinguish between good and bad. Just as a crop can be injured by herbicide carry-over, beneficial insects and soil organisms can be killed, thus crippling a natural system for growing good crops. The use of toxic chemicals should be restricted or eliminated.

Rule 4: Use a short rotation.

When crops are rotated every year or two, there are fewer weeds, disease and insect problems. Thus, less herbicides and pesticides are needed, and better use is made of green manures (cover crops) and animal manures. Crop yields are also higher, and inputs lower, than with a long rotation or with a mono-cropping system.

Rule 5: Use tillage to control decay of organic materials and to control soil air and water.

Good soil should have adequate air and moisture, because roots and beneficial soil organisms need oxygen and water. Raw organic matter should be tilled into the upper layers of the soil for optimum decay into humus. When soil is tilled deeply, it should not be inverted (turned over), but can be sliced or uplifted.

Never till soil that is wet, and keep field traffic to a minimum to reduce compaction. A hardpan can be temporarily broken up by sub soiling, but the best long term solution is high levels of calcium and sulfur, plus adequate humus and soil organisms-especially earthworms and large, deep root systems.

Rule 6: Feed soil life.

Beneficial soil organisms are a “volunteer army” willing to work tirelessly for you, if you let them. When you provide them with a comfortable home (soil with adequate air and moisture), food (organic matter), a good mineral balance, and freedom from toxic chemicals, they will go to work.

When you feed the soil microbes, they will feed the crop. That is how it should work!