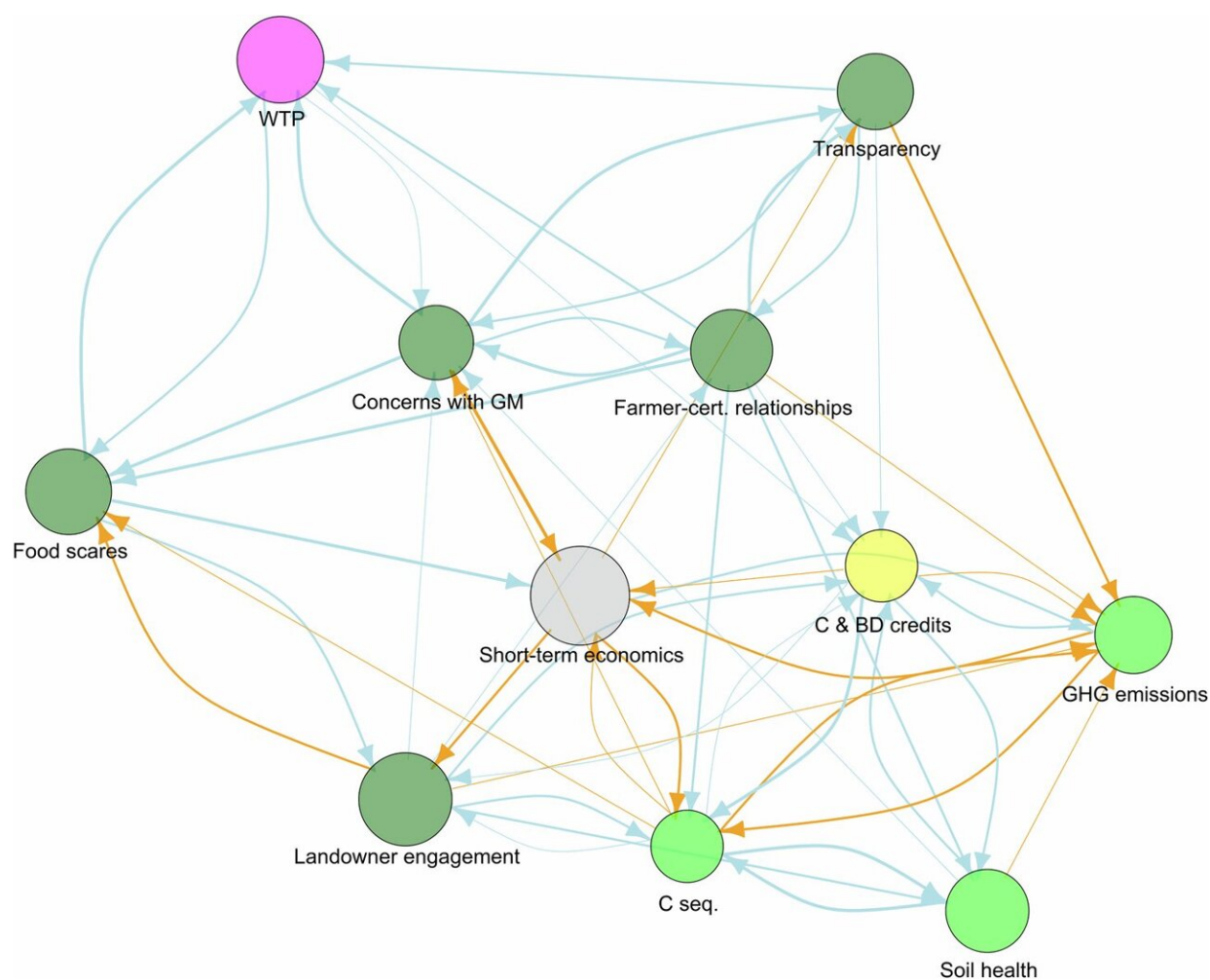


Clearing up confusion between organic and regenerative farming could boost green agriculture

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Simplified fuzzy cognitive map network showing the main factors that could influence the uptake of organic food production and consumption by 2050.
Credit: *Communications Earth & Environment* (2024). DOI:

10.1038/s43247-024-01585-3

Making the benefits of different types of farming plain for the public could provide better protection for the British countryside, according to a new study. Led by a team at the University of Reading, the research says greater education about sustainable agriculture in the UK is needed in order to support farmers.

This includes clearing up the confusion between "organic" and "regenerative" farming, something that has troubled farm owner and TV presenter Jeremy Clarkson on his Amazon Prime show Clarkson's Farm.

The concept of regenerative farming is gaining support with many farmers, scientists and retailers. This includes Waitrose & Partners, which in May launched a major new plan to adopt regenerative farming schemes for its whole food range, [with the support of University of Reading experts](#).

Dr. Tom Staton, who led the [research](#), said, "There's a lot of buzz around regenerative farming, but it's crucial to understand that 'organic' is a legally protected term. This means consumers can trust that [organic produce](#) meets specific standards, particularly regarding pesticide and manufactured fertilizer use.

"We're not knocking regenerative farming, which helps improve the health of British soil and boosts biodiversity. Regenerative farming is not regulated, however, and if we want to see real change in our food system, we need to support approaches with clear, enforceable standards."

Changing attitudes

[Published](#) today, 28 August, in *Nature Communications Earth and Environment*, the study used an innovative modeling approach to map out the complex web of factors influencing and hindering the uptake of organic farming in the UK. By tapping into the expertise of 18 farming experts, the researchers created a "mental model" of 55 factors driving organic adoption.

The results revealed that farmers are less concerned about the cost of growing organic veg or a lack of subsidies from the government—instead, it is the lack of long-term thinking from shoppers, landowners and policymakers about the benefits of sustainable farming that is preventing an organic revolution.

The study indicates that if people shift their priorities from purchasing cheaper, imported food to valuing quality and sustainability, it could create a more favorable environment for organic farming. This might mean being willing to pay a little bit more for food, but with a better understanding of where that extra cost goes—into soil health, biodiversity, and more sustainable farming practices associated with [organic farming](#).

The research says that although there is no quick fix for promoting sustainable farming, initiatives aimed at changing [public perception](#) and understanding of farming's role in society could be effective in driving the transition to organic methods.

More information: Tom Staton et al, Leverage points for the uptake of organic food production and consumption in the United Kingdom, *Communications Earth & Environment* (2024). [DOI: 10.1038/s43247-024-01585-3](#)

Provided by University of Reading

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