

## Sustainable farming practices

### When is it more environmentally friendly to upgrade to a new machine?

Agriculture has revolutionized and become the **backbone of our society**, becoming ever more important by providing food for the huge population growths around the world since the 1950's.

Unfortunately, despite how far agricultural technology and innovations have come in that time, there is an ever-increasing push to **make farming more sustainable**. According to [World Bank Data](#) in most regions of the world, over **70 percent of freshwater is used for agriculture**. In a world threatened by water scarcity, this is a real issue.

Let's not forget that by 2050, the population is estimated to grow to 9 billion - meaning we have to really carefully utilize the resources that we have in agriculture to make sure we can successfully feed the world. Additionally, the agricultural industry is responsible for a substantial amount of GHG emissions (primarily carbon and methane) that have negative effects for climate change.

There's a wealth of research, innovations and programs that explain what [sustainable farming practices](#) are, so there is no need for going into details here. The basic ideas are based on resource management, lowering GHG emissions, and working with the environment instead of against it, including lessening the impacts of pesticides, soil erosion and deforestation. But one thing that is often not mentioned when thinking about resource management or sustainability is the [machinery](#) involved.

Machinery has an impact on our world as well, as the production of tractors, harvesters, and other agricultural items use up many virgin resources in their production, and can cost a lot in carbon emissions to manufacture and ship around the world. The most sustainable option here is often to purchase machines second hand, extending their lifecycle and reducing the amount of waste in landfill.

The volume of agricultural machinery in the world is enormous. In the United States itself, this number reaches [4 389 812](#) products. It's also worth noting that many countries face an overabundance of machinery. In Germany alone, there's so many tractors registered that it's estimated to be about four times the amount that is actually needed for the country's farming area. So, it would seem that we definitely have enough equipment to go around already.

Of course, there is an environmental argument for buying new too. As with many other technology driven products, sometimes buying a new version actually helps with saving the environment. This can be seen in products like washing machines, where advances in technology mean that models produced in the past 5-10 years are far superior to older models in terms of water usage and energy efficiency.

But is it the same for machines? In some cases, sure, but there's just so many factors to think about - dependant on the machine, the brand, the model, the job it does, and the materials it is made from. It's really up to the farmer or business to consider their situation, and weigh up the specs between the two options when looking to buy a machine.

In most scenarios, unless you are buying a solar-powered tractor or there has been some other huge technological improvement in the product you are considering, it is generally less environmentally impactful to simply repair and reuse second hand farming vehicles. Plus, this has the additional benefits of being immediately available and financially cheaper - important considerations for any farmer.

References used:

- Chart: Globally, 70% of Freshwater is Used for Agriculture - World Bank Blogs | <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/chart-globally-70-freshwater-used-agriculture>
- What is Sustainable Agriculture? - UCSUSA | <https://www.ucsusa.org/food-agriculture/advance-sustainable-agriculture/what-is-sustainable-agriculture>
- Agricultural machinery, tractors - Index Mundi | <https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/indicators/AG.AGR.TRAC.NO>

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