



LIFE Platform Meeting on Soils

WORKING GROUPS

Three **Working Groups** will be organised during the afternoon session of the meeting on 10th April. These groups will be used to discuss technical/policy/economic issues concerning the relevant soil sector and how to support the implementation of the actions foreseen in the EU Soil Strategy in the Member States, which is further stressed by the proposal for a Soil Monitoring Directive and the newly adopted Certification framework for permanent carbon removals, carbon farming and carbon storage in products (CRCF).

The participants are expected not only to briefly present the outputs of their projects but will also be invited to contribute with their wider professional experience in identifying technical bottlenecks or lingering issues and describe best practises to attain the policy objectives in the EU Member States.

Horizontal topics for discussion:

- ❖ Methodology and possibilities to monitor soil health and the results achieved through specific projects.
- ❖ Strategies to support the role of soils in tackling climate change issues.
- ❖ How to promote the soil literacy, information to the public and societal engagement in soil conservation initiatives.
- ❖ Economic opportunities linked to the solutions to be adopted for the conservation of soils.
- ❖ A holistic approach to soil: such as how water and soil are closely interlinked.

In particular, specific soil-related aspects will be addressed through speeches held by stakeholders invited to the event and further elaborated in the following sectorial Working Groups:

- A. Soil management and sustainable agriculture
- B. Soil contamination, bioremediation and circular economy
- C. Soil conservation and carbon removals

Format of the Working Groups

Each Working Group will last 1 hour and 45 minutes and will start with an overview by the moderator on the sectorial background and the soil-related objectives addressed by the Groups.

Then, the discussion will be focused on pre-set topics/questions indicated in the paragraphs below (a specific set for each Working Group has been prepared). At the beginning of the Working Group, the main topics will be introduced by the three selected projects (one per Group) that will present their activities, especially those more closely related to the selected topic. As a result, a pitch presentation will be made through few slides (3-4 slides maximum) and pictures showed on a screen; each room is equipped with a screen, data projector and computer; microphones will not be required.

The moderators will further stimulate the discussion on the remaining topics by encouraging the involvement of the participants (projects staff, stakeholders, etc.) that might provide the most significant contributions, according to their experience.

A “wrap up” session will conclude each Working Group (around 10 min.).

Three ELMEN Rapporteurs will take note of the main aspects/issues emerged in the three Working Groups and will draw the conclusions for each group during the plenary meeting foreseen at the end of Day 1.

THE THREE WORKING GROUPS

Working Group A Soil management and sustainable agriculture

The role of sustainable agricultural practices in tackling soil conservation issues and improving adaption of the agricultural sector to climate change risks (drought, loss of fertility and biodiversity, etc.).

Moderators: Sara Barcelo (ELMEN), Michel Quicheron (CINEA)

Rapporteur: Marta Kaczynska (ELMEN)

Introduction by the LIFE project(s): LIFE17 CCM/ES/000140 LIFE AGROMITIGA

Topics:

- Soil sustainable management practices should be implemented to ensure soil health, but there is a possible gap between knowledge and practice in this regard. Can projects provide examples on how to bridge this gap? For instance, is the link between the improvement of indicators for soil health (e.g. high levels of carbon stock, biodiversity, etc.) and sustainable agriculture (*sensu lato*) /forestry management practices sufficiently known by stakeholders and technicians? How to improve this knowledge?
- Are there good examples of principles and strategies for building long-lasting partnerships for this purpose?
- Significant opportunities can be envisioned in the next future for farmers as well as foresters (e.g. economic savings in mechanical works, supports from CAP actions, certifications of carbon removal or sustainability, as well as stable productivity and/or improve resilience) linked to the implementation of sustainable agricultural and forestry practices. Have the pertaining technical constraints and costs been well identified? Are opportunities enough to counterbalance them? Are the conditions to make sustainable soil management the “new normal” already in place?
- Do practitioners and technicians know which soil health indicators should they monitor and how? How to support technically sound monitoring of soil parameters (e.g. organic matter or biodiversity)?
- It is necessary to improve the knowledge and management of the water fluxes within the soils of farmlands to properly tackle recurring drought issues. How can this type of knowledge be transferred and made promptly available to local farmers and technicians?
- How to finance and support the above-mentioned actions/initiatives (including the engagement of stakeholders such as farmers cooperatives, private companies, etc.)? Any successful example to be highlighted?

Working Group B
Soil contamination, bioremediation and circular economy

By 2050, soil pollution should be reduced to levels which are no longer expected to pose risks and which respect the boundaries our lands can cope with, thus creating a toxic-free environment. What are the risks and opportunities to reach this objective in the framework of the new EU initiatives on soil health?

Moderators: Josefa Diamantopoulos (ELMEN), Agnieszka Romanowicz (CINEA)

Rapporteur: Pavlos Doikos (ELMEN)

Introduction by the LIFE projects: LIFE18 NAT/BE/000576 LIFE Nardus & Limosa and LIFE20 ENV/ES/000416 - LIFE MySOIL

Topics:

- Pro and cons of the EU proposed initiatives (proposal of the Soil Monitoring Law, EU Soil Strategy for 2030) for a “soil health certificate for land transactions” (to provide land buyers with information on the key characteristics and quality of the soils in the site they intend to purchase) and of the “passport for excavated soils” (to certify the quantity and quality of the excavated soils and to ensure that it is transported, treated or reused safely elsewhere). Are the existing EU and national regulations adequate to stimulate this approach?
- Are nature-based techniques (e.g. bio-remediations) for the restoration of degraded ecosystems, particularly those with the best potential to store carbon and to prevent natural disasters (as foreseen in the EU Soil Strategy for 2030) sufficiently known to national stakeholders as well as technicians dealing with land management? How to improve this knowledge among operators of public administrations and professionals (any initiatives to be highlighted?)
- Are the correlations between soil and water adequately taken into consideration in the remediation activities or should this be further emphasized at policy level? If so, how?
- To support the actions aimed at the conservation of soil health, what is the necessary organisation at local level to guarantee a constant and technically sound monitoring of sites at risk of contamination (e.g. the national registry of polluted soils as recently recommended by European Parliament)? How to assess the risks of chemicals not screened in the standard soil analysis, emerging contaminants and substances not regulated with contaminant thresholds?
- Do public administrations have the tools and resources to investigate contaminated sites? What is the type of support they are lacking? Could R&I provide cost-efficient methodologies and techniques? Is soil health (in general) and soil pollution in particular integrated in spatial planning?

Working Group C Soil conservation and carbon removals

How to assess, monitor and enhance the role of soil in tackling climate change issues. This includes the increase of carbon stocks via land use and the adaptation to hydrogeological risks e.g. floods and desertification. The Working Group will deepen on how the new EU Carbon Removal Certification Framework will contribute to the existing certification methodologies and the role of monitoring on the whole process.

Moderators: Riccardo Giandrini (ELMEN), Sergi Costa (CINEA)

Rapporteur: Quirin Renard (ELMEN)

Introduction by Stina Jansson (DG CLIMA) and Maria Doula from the LIFE ClimaMed project (LIFE17 CCM/GR/000087).

Topics:

- Opportunities and constraints related to the quantification of carbon removals and emissions reductions from carbon farming and other ecosystem services provided by soils, in view of the new EU Carbon Removal Certification Framework.
- In relation to quantification of carbon stock changes, how can you most optimally use a combination of on-site observations, remote sensing, or modelling techniques?
- How to coordinate water and soil related actions within land management activities, reducing the impact of hydrogeological hazards on people (such as floods) and increasing carbon sequestration (restoration of wetlands and peats). Are the existing EU policies adequate to stimulate this approach?
- Are the links between soil health and climate mitigation sufficiently known by national stakeholders as well as experts dealing with land management and planning? How to improve this knowledge among public administrations and practitioners (any initiatives to be highlighted?).
- In the framework of the initiatives for the certification and accounting of carbon sequestration in soils, what is the necessary organisation at local level to guarantee a constant and technically sound monitoring of soil parameters (e.g. systems and frequency for the monitoring of water infiltration and retention?).
- How to finance and support the above-mentioned actions/initiatives? Any successful example to be highlighted?