

Invitation to take part in foresight research for EU policies to support the uptake of sustainable agricultural practices by European Farmers

We are contacting you as we would like you to be involved in our research project called SoilCare (<https://www.soilcare-project.eu/>), a Horizon2020 project which aims to identify and evaluate soil-improving cropping systems and agricultural techniques that can increase the profitability and sustainability of agriculture in Europe. It is a 5-year project that brings together 28 partners from 18 EU countries, spanning universities, research institutes and SMEs.

SoilCare is structured into seven work packages. Research Institute for Knowledge Systems (RIKS) and Milieu Ltd are leading the work on upscaling and synthesis (Work Package 6) and policy analysis (Work Package 7).

Please read this information sheet carefully as it explains what your participation would involve. If you have any questions, please contact us by email at Tugce.Tugran@milieu.be or hvdelden@riks.nl.

What is this study about?

The degradation of agricultural soils—which has increased over the past decades—is a major problem for European farmers, as well as for Europe's environment. Intensive agricultural practices, such as the use of heavy machinery, monocropping, insufficient crop rotations, and the unsustainable use of agro-chemical inputs, are all key drivers of soil degradation resulting in lower yields and related profits as well as environmental decay. While there are well-known agricultural management techniques that can help to improve soil quality, uptake of these techniques generally remains low in Europe, despite various policy incentives.



The SoilCare project studies the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, in particular those related to improved soil quality. In doing so it looks across scales (from local to European level) at the bio-physical, socio-economic, political, and technological factors impacting on adoption.

The work led by RIKS and Milieu aims to analyse the policies and contextual factors that can facilitate or hinder the uptake of sustainable practices by farmers, along with developing scenarios and policy options related to the uptake of these practices. Earlier work in the project resulted in an [inventory of opportunities and bottlenecks in policy to facilitate the adoption of soil-improving techniques](#). The current activities aim to scope plausible future pathways, develop narrative storylines for a set of scenarios and assess their impact on sustainable farming practices, in particular those benefitting soil

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quality. The next step will be to quantify the narrative storylines using modelling to assess the impact of different futures on the soil quality and farm profitability. The combined results of the modelling and the narratives will provide input in the identification of best policy approaches tailored to different situations.



What is the aim of the webinar?

The aim of the webinar is to obtain feedback on a set of draft narrative scenarios that have been developed based on input from the first SoilCare scenario workshop, held in June 2019, in which a group of actors from the European Commission, NGOs, farmers and farm organisations, extension services, industry and research came together to obtain a better understanding of future uncertainties regarding sustainable and profitable agriculture in Europe. They discussed the factors that would impact on the adoption of mandatory or voluntary policy measures to promote sustainable agricultural practices, scoped key drivers of change, and provided input to the developed draft scenarios.

Through this webinar, we are now seeking for input from a broader group of actors, also those not able to attend the workshop last year. The feedback received during the webinar will be used to further fine-tune and develop the narrative scenarios.

The developed narrative scenarios will provide input to the modelling and a second workshop, which will focus on assessing the impact of the scenarios on policy-relevant criteria, the barriers and enablers to take up sustainable agricultural practices and policy support.

The results from the webinar and the workshops, combined results of the modelling and the narratives, will provide input in the identification of best policy approaches tailored to different situations. We will disseminate these policy recommendations to the European Commission and to a wider audience through a report, conferences and policy briefs.

How to take part / get involved

The one-hour long webinar will be organised through GoToWebinar and you will be able to participate by clicking on the link we will send you once you have registered. There is no need to download the application! During the webinar, short movies will introduce you to the project and the draft narrative scenarios we have developed. Polls and a group chat will enable you to share your views on the scenarios and comment on the plausibility of the described pathways. Based on the feedback from the

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webinar we will adapt the narrative scenarios and next use these to model the impacts of different soil-improving practices under various conditions.

Benefits of taking part

By taking part you will be helping to develop knowledge in a critically important policy field. The information provided will feed into policy recommendations which will be aimed at improving the policy framework to better integrate soil quality concerns, with the ultimate aim of reversing the decline of soil quality in Europe. The study is interested in moving beyond identifying and assessing agricultural practices that effectively maintain and improve soil quality, to understanding how they can be successfully implemented to achieve a long-term positive impact on soil quality and profitability.

Privacy precautions

To this webinar and any derived documentation, we will apply the [privacy policy of the SoilCare project](#) conform the EU General Data Protection Regulation. In any published material, workshop attendees will be referred to as the workshop attendees or by stakeholder group (e.g. “A Commission Representative”, “A farmers' association representative”), with no further attributes. The information will be used to inform a publicly available report.

How to contact the researchers

For questions, you are welcome to contact us by email at Tugce.Tugran@milieu.be or hvdelden@riks.nl.