

SOIL HEALTH: EU PUBLISHES A PROPOSAL FOR SOIL MONITORING DIRECTIVE

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Healthy soils are crucial for winning the sustainability and resilience game and can be achieved only by overcoming the current lack of knowledge about soil health through a robust and coherent monitoring framework.



In this sense, the EU Proposal for a Directive on Soil Monitoring, to be known as the Soil Health Law, published on 5 July by the European Commission, is strategic, as it aims to develop an integrated monitoring system for all soils in the EU based on data at the level of the EU, Member States and the private sector.

The goal is to define what is meant by 'healthy soil' and to use information and knowledge to improve soil health through sustainable management,

thus achieving healthy and resilient soils across the EU by 2050. The proposal is also important because it goes so far as to offer a technical and scientific method to identify the different pathologies that soils can suffer from so as to have a clear, comparable and unified picture to make the necessary policy reforms.

For the first time, the European Union is proposing a soil directive that contains precise methods to be used and the analytical limits of certain parameters to determine whether a soil is healthy. This was achieved thanks to the participation of hundreds of soil experts from EU Member States during the drafting phase.

The 'regular and accurate monitoring of soil health' proposed for Member States will be an interesting challenge. 'Regular' and 'accurate' are demanding but necessary adjectives that force everyone to reflect on the seriousness of the issue and the efforts that will be required in order to achieve results. The Commission is even proposing a that monitoring be conducted over a period of no more than five years and that a certain number of samples be used; otherwise, the entire process will not only be in vain but will risk not activating the preventive mechanism that the proposal wants to put into practice.

In addition to presenting its proposal, the Commission is also offering training and capacity-building opportunities for soil managers, landowners and government agencies. In addition, the Commission has requested that Member States ensure easy access to impartial and

independent advice on sustainable soil management.

On the one hand, future policies will have to secure the many ecosystem services provided by soils in the EU while reducing soil contamination to levels that are not harmful to human health or the environment. On the other hand, the policies will have to specify measures to halt soil degradation and regenerate soil health as well as establish a regulatory framework to ensure that those measures are implemented by requiring Member States to assess and report on soil health.

More information on the proposal is available here:

https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/proposal-directive-soil-monitoring-and-resilience_en.

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