

Healthy soil: The basis for a strong economy and wholesome environment

October 30 2013

Soil not only holds environmental and agricultural importance; it is vital to ensuring the growth of a healthy economy. This is why an EU-funded project aims to show how successful regenerative agricultural practices for preventing soil degradation can make a significant difference.

Indeed, soil has only recently been recognised as a crucial filter and buffer to contaminants, allowing us to have [clean drinking water](#). It also acts as a pool of biodiversity, and as a sink for [atmospheric carbon dioxide](#).

However, soil is subjected to some serious threats, which is why it has become a priority environmental issue at the European level. Significant threats come from inadequate farming and forestry practices, urban and industrial development, tourism, climate change and major natural events such as flooding and landslides. Such threats can cause soil degradation and contamination.

This is why the LIFE REGEN FARMING project was launched in July 2013. The project, which will receive EUR 669 110 in EU funding, will test potential good practices in pasture management under different climatic and agricultural conditions. It will also test regenerative practices for soil conservation, including the use of crops with minimum tillage, perennial crops, organic fertilizers, direct seeding and rotational grazing.

From this experimental stage, the project team will then develop easy-to-

use, fast and cheap diagnostic and monitoring methodologies to evaluate [soil health](#). Monitoring will be carried out to assess the environmental and socio-economic impact of regenerative practices on farms. In this way, the project expects to make an important contribution to the achievement of the goals of the EU's Soil Thematic Strategy and the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy.

Specific targets have been set. For example, an increase of at least 5 percent in perennial grass species and grass diversity and a 10 percent improvement in biomass production is expected. Furthermore, the project aims to achieve a 10 percent improvement in soil fertility, as measured by its capacity to hold water, nitrogen, potassium, phosphorous and molybdenum. A 10 percent increase in carbon fixation in the grass and a reduction in the use of fertilisers is also expected.

The project will also provide quality training to farmers and technicians in the field of regenerative practices and sustainable agriculture.

Project trials are scheduled to take place on Spanish pastures located in Arkaute, Roncesvalles (Navarre) and in meadows for organic production devoted to the grazing of sheep of the latxa breed; and in Orduña, on pastures for milk- and meat-producing cattle. The aim is to test these regenerative practices in a range of agro-climatic conditions in order to assess the outcome of the new practices when applied to [soil](#) of different characteristics.

The research, due to be completed in June 2016, is mainly targeting stockbreeders, farmers, primary sector technicians, schools of agriculture and grazing as well as the local administrations.

For more information, please visit:

LIFE REGEN FARMING

[ec.europa.eu/environment/life/ ... pPage&n_proj_id=4623](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/...pPage&n_proj_id=4623)

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