

Soil Alliance News

Newsletter of the European Land and Soil Alliance (ELSA), the Soil and Land Alliance of European Cities, Districts and Municipalities



Issue 1 / 2021

Dear members and friends of the European Land and Soil Alliance,

The soil beneath our feet may look unremarkable but it is irreplaceable. Soil nourishes us and is the most important asset in agriculture, forestry and horticulture. But our fields are under pressure. Valuable cultivated land and meadows are being earmarked for housing and transport developments. Pollutants negatively impact soil organisms and plant growth. Fertile arable soil is eroded by wind and water and compacted by heavy-duty agricultural machinery. The consequences of climate change, in the form of drought and heavy rain, impair the soil. The diversity of organisms in the soil suffers particularly from these consequences. However, there is an increasing awareness that diversity in the field can only be achieved in the long term with diversity in the arable soil. Healthy, humus-rich soil is less susceptible to the consequences of climate change. It can serve as a carbon dioxide sink and brings better yields.

Under the new EU regulation on land use, land use change and forestry, the member states must, as a minimum, compensate for the greenhouse gas emissions in this sector from 2021 to 2030. The soil will play a significant role in the achievement of this goal.

There are still many unknown factors, but the better we understand the dynamics between soil, soil organisms and climate, the better chance we have of designing and implementing sustainable solutions.

The Board

Soil Alliance News is published regularly. We appreciate your suggestions and criticism. In addition, you have the opportunity to disseminate news, projects, events, etc. Just send us a short [email](#).

Featured topic: Agricultural soil in danger

Global mapping of land cover and land use: The Copernicus Land Monitoring Service provides data products for monitoring the land surface and inland waters. This data documents the status of and changes in the land cover, land use, vegetation, water cycle and energy flows. The products are available to a wide range of users in Europe and around the world in the area of terrestrial environmental applications.

[More information](#)

Status report on biological diversity in the soil: The first FAO status report on biodiversity in the soil explains why species diversity in the soil is essential to agriculture and nutrition and what can be done to protect it in the long term.

[More information](#)

Less fertile soil in Europe: In many parts of Europe, building developments are increasing along with erosion and contamination. 18% of cultivated land in Europe has suffered productivity losses. The region around the Black Sea in particular, but also the Mediterranean countries, has been severely affected due to heavy use by people and urban development.

[More information](#)

Position paper on Common Agricultural Policy: The basic elements of the upcoming funding period for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in Brussels are largely in place. The German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) has published a position paper that concludes that the current resolutions at EU level are not enough to counteract the loss of biological diversity. It sets out eight key requirements.

[More information](#)

Promoting soil biodiversity in European agricultural ecosystems: The EU-funded SoildiverAgro project aims to introduce new management and crop growing systems that promote genetic and functional soil biodiversity in order to reduce external inputs, while increasing yield and quality and improving ecosystem services and agricultural stability and resilience in the EU.

[More information](#)

Soil report from the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation: The report from the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) turns its focus to organisms in soil that is used for agricultural purposes, particularly soil in agronomic use. It shows that diverse and active soil organisms not only represent a fundamental and hitherto often hidden component of the ecosystem, but also provide a crucial basis for sustainable land cultivation.

[More information](#)

Additional reports

EU Soil Strategy – Consultation on EU Soil Strategy: The European Commission is currently preparing a new soil protection strategy entitled “New Soil Strategy – Healthy Soil for a Healthy Life” and is calling on stakeholders to provide their input. The initiative is a new version of the Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection from 2006. The new strategy is intended to provide a comprehensive and uniform framework for land and soil protection policy. Up to 27 April 2021, you can get involved by taking part in an online survey.

[More information](#)

Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative: The Initiative provides a great deal of up-to-date and interesting information about soil biodiversity on its website. It also offers scientific articles, a blog, videos and webinars as well as the latest tenders and news.

[More information](#)

Land usage in Germany: The German Federal/State Working Group for Soil Protection (LABO) has published its 2020 status report on reducing new land use and sealing. The report does not simply focus on the status quo in the reduction of new land use and sealing; as a second step, it highlights possible solutions in the form of a comprehensive catalogue of proposals for the sustainable protection of soil as a resource.

[More information](#)

Glinka World Soil Prize 2020: Luca Montanarella has been awarded the Glinka World Soil Prize. Throughout his career, he has helped to improve the visibility of soil in the political sphere and among the public. Congratulations from the Soil Alliance!

[More information](#)

Earthfest. An Initiative: The Initiative was launched in 2018 and has since become an annual celebration held in multiple locations at the same time, known as "Earthfests" ("Erdfeste"). In 2019, around 180 Earthfests were held across Germany. Although summer 2020 was affected by coronavirus, a wide and diverse range of initiatives, organisations and individuals took part.

[More information](#)

The future of Alpine soil: The project "Impuls4Action - From Intelligent Land Use to Sustainable Municipalities" is running until the end of May 2021 as part of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). The Soil Alliance is taking part as an observer. The contributions to a conference of stakeholders from South Tyrol and Trentino on the topic of "Future Scenarios for Alpine Soil" are now available online.

[More information](#)

"Land-conscious municipalities" seal of quality in Bavaria: The seal of quality is a measure introduced by the state government of Bavaria. It is intended as an additional incentive to continue reducing land usage in Bavaria. The award of the seal of quality requires active land management and the implementation of innovative approaches and measures for reducing land usage. Applications can be submitted until 14 May 2021.

[More information](#)

Publications

Soil protection in local land-use planning in the Alpine region: During the German presidency of the Alpine Convention (2015-2016), one focus of activities was on improving the implementation of the soil protection protocol in the Alpine Convention. The publication reports on this work and provides methods as well as best-practice examples.

[More information](#)

CheTerraPesti monthly #77, The earth beneath your feet - A soil magazine: The March issue has been published.

[More information](#)

Soil protection in the forest: The publication contains specific recommended actions for damage prevention and regeneration of damaged woodland soil.

[More information](#)

"Soil is valuable" teaching materials: "Umwelt im Unterricht" has provided background information and suggested teaching materials relating to soil on its website. The materials are suitable for primary and secondary schools.

[More information](#)

Soil protection in Hannover allotments – thank goodness for worms! The brochure provides information and suggestions on the subject while helping people to enjoy practical soil protection.

[More information](#)

Documentary film “Unser Boden, unser Erbe”: The documentary film “Unser Boden, unser Erbe” shows how important our soil is as the basis of life – and the extreme threat it faces.

[More information](#)

The soil idea

Tea4Science – Researching soil and climate with tea bags: This international citizen science project uses tea bags to research soil and climate. Here’s how to gather valuable data. The method involves burying tea bags then digging them up again after three months. During this time, the tea decays, showing what happens to normal plant material in the soil. The results can be submitted on the project website. The idea behind this new method is to gather data on decomposition rates around the world. This data will be used to create a global map and improve global climate models.

[More information](#)

In Germany, you can register on a dedicated page called “Expedition Erdreich”.

[More information](#)

News from the Climate Alliance

Meet the Climate Stars: On 22 April 2021, the winners of the ninth Climate Star competition will receive their awards as part of the digital Meet the Climate Stars prize ceremony. Every two years, the Climate Alliance gives out awards for the best climate protection projects from its members across Europe. This year, a total of 16 Climate Alliance members will receive the award for dedicated local climate protection. Participants at the event can learn more about the winners and their projects. From ambitious energy and climate plans to innovative ideas for resource conservation and motivating competitions – they have the opportunity to talk to this year’s Climate Stars and ask questions in four “break-out rooms”. Register now and find out more.

[More information](#)

Soil Alliance internal news

Cancellation and postponement: Annual conference 2021: “Land Usage – Climate Change – Microplastics”: The conference planned for 10 and 11 June 2021 in Bolzano, Italy has been postponed until 2022 due to coronavirus.

General meeting 2021: The general meeting will take place digitally on 11 June 2021 from 12.30 pm to 2 pm.

Webinar on soil and climate “Sponge city – dealing with too much or too little water” on 28 April 2021, 10 am to 12 pm: The Soil Alliance and the European Climate Alliance jointly invite participants to this webinar. The soil is an important reservoir for carbon dioxide and provides the basis for the production of our food. At the same time, these functions are being increasingly

restricted by industrial agriculture, soil sealing and changes of use for housing, industrial areas, etc. The retention of the soil's CO₂ sink function is an increasingly important factor in meeting the ambitious reduction targets for carbon dioxide emissions. In cities, soil is playing a more and more important role in town planning when regulating water levels (floods in winter and extreme drought in summer). "Sponge cities" for regulating extreme water levels have become an important target. Join the discussion!

[More information](#)

Webinar "Microplastics in the Soil" (working title) on 11 June 2021, 9 am to 12 pm: The programme will be available soon on our [website](#).

New members: Municipality of Hartkirchen (Austria), Market Town of Walding (Austria) – a warm welcome!

Event information

Webinar on soil and climate "Sponge city – dealing with too little or too much water":
28 April 2021 (10 am to 12 pm)

[More information](#)

Webinar "Microplastics in the Soil" (working title): 11 June 2021.

[More information](#)

Annual conference 2021 of the Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (IÖR) "Space & Transformation": 22 to 24 September 2021, Dresden, Germany

[More information](#)

AquaConSoil 2021 "International Conference on Sustainable Use and Management of Soil, Sediment and Water Resources": 14 to 18 June 2021 (digital)

[More information](#)

Legal notice

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