

FoodDrinkEurope and OP2B advocate for regenerative agriculture as a pillar for the upcoming EU Soil Health Law and call for incentives

Brussels, 24 October 2022 – FoodDrinkEurope and One Planet Business for Biodiversity (OP2B) welcome the consultation initiative for the upcoming EU Soil Health Law and stated the potential of regenerative agriculture practices in helping to meet the objectives of the EU Soil Strategy for 2030, by protecting and restoring soils.

A [public consultation](#) for the upcoming Soil Health Law proposal, organized by the European Commission, which closed on 24 October, looked for inputs around the definitions of conditions for healthy soils, targets and obligations for EU Member States. In this context, FoodDrinkEurope and OP2B stressed the importance of soils from natural ecosystems and agricultural landscapes for the promotion of ecosystem services. Both organizations positioned regenerative agriculture as an effective farming system able to nurture and restore soil health, and highlighted the need for enablers for the transition.

The [EU Soil Strategy for 2030](#) sets a path for the achievement of healthy soils by 2050, through measures and a framework that enables the objectives of the [European Green Deal](#). The Soil Health Law proposal, to be adopted in 2023, will provide definitions for healthy soils and establish monitoring requirements at the EU level and for Members States.

Scientific research has repeatedly shown that regenerative agriculture practices contribute to climate change mitigation and promote biodiversity, as they re-establish carbon, water and nutrient-flow cycles, plus ecosystem services such as pest control and pollination, all the while producing nutritious food, fiber and timber, and supporting rural livelihoods. A shift to such practices would lead to a [reduction of agriculture greenhouse gas emissions](#) of 20% at the global level by 2030, and up to 40% in Europe by 2050 in line with the objectives set out in the European Green Deal. Additionally, the deployment of regenerative farming practices at scale has the potential to [create habitat and increase connectivity for biodiversity](#), balancing productivity, profitability and environmental health.

An EU Soil Health Law to protect, sustainably manage and restore EU soils is of great importance to ensure a level playing field for business operators. FoodDrinkEurope and OP2B see significant value in building a strong monitoring framework for soil health that encompasses soils under restoration and regenerative farming.

This kind of impact evaluation would provide transparency to the different stakeholders along the value chain of agricultural products. Moreover, it would help identify best practices, develop knowledge and innovation in specific contexts, as well as reward those who are contributing to regenerate soil health, notably farmers.

FoodDrinkEurope and OP2B stress, however, that the upcoming monitoring requirements must not incur additional financial burden to farmers to avoid further threats to rural livelihoods, taking into account their economic vulnerability. In this

sense, the upcoming soil monitoring systems must rely on accessible and affordable technologies associated with meaningful indicators that are feasible in rural contexts. Several indicators have already been identified to measure the progress of regenerative farming practices, including soil organic carbon, crop diversification, duration of soil cover, and ecological integrity. These indicators form part of the monitoring tools considered most effective for assessing soil health.

In addition, it is fundamental to have the right economic incentives in place to stimulate and enable the transition to regenerative agriculture, such as financial support during the first years of the transition to cover potential yield gaps while farming inputs decrease. There is room for maximizing the synergy of public and private incentives. The [new Common Agricultural Policy](#), introducing a new green architecture and a funding share for more sustainable practices, is a first step toward this transition, and its available tools, especially eco-schemes, must be used to their full potential. Similarly, the upcoming EU rules for the [certification of carbon removals](#) must develop a credible business model where farmers and actors of the value chain are benefiting from carbon farming.

For an impactful Soil Health Law, leading to sustainable farming and food systems, alignment with other EU initiatives – especially in the Farm to Fork and Green Deal context – will be key.

About us

[FoodDrinkEurope](#) represents the food manufacturing industry. Made up of around 290,000 businesses and 4.5 million workers, the food and drink industry buys 70% of all EU agricultural produce and is Europe's largest manufacturing industry.

[One Planet Business for Biodiversity](#) (OP2B) is a unique international cross-sectorial, action-oriented business coalition with a specific focus on agriculture. The coalition is determined to drive transformational systemic change and catalyze action to protect and restore cultivated and natural biodiversity within the value chains. OP2B is a project of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD).