

Brussels, 13 March 2023

Joint open letter to the European Commission on the urgent need for an ambitious and progressive EU Soil Health Law

Dear Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Climate Action Timmermans,

Dear Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Sinkevičius,

Dear Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Kyriakides,

Dear Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth Gabriel,

Dear Commissioner for Agriculture Wojciechowski,

We, the Soil Health Law Coalition and signatories, are writing to you to express our support for an ambitious and progressive legislative proposal for an EU Soil Health Law.

The Soil Health Law Coalition and the signatories of this letter represent actors from the entire European agri-food system and other organizations, all of whom have a genuine interest in protecting and restoring the health of European soils. This includes farmers, scientists, impact startups, the finance and consulting industry, civil society organizations, soil, health and water associations, the food and retail industry, the circular bioeconomy sector, as well as citizens.

We strongly welcome the European Commission's initiative for a Soil Health Law and offer our support to the Directorate-General for Environment in realizing the comprehensive potential of soil legislation for society, planet and climate.

With the health of European soils rapidly degrading, an ambitious Soil Health Law is urgently needed. A legislative framework for soil has the potential to deliver much-needed policy integration and coherence, catalyzing the positive socio-ecological and -economic impact of EU policy. Healthy soils are fundamental to achieve the climate, biodiversity, water and zero pollution targets of the European Green Deal, and to support the EU's Farm to Fork objectives and transition to a sustainable food system.

It is fundamental to understand the cost-benefit structure of soil health monitoring and action: while the costs of soil health degradation to society, businesses and biodiversity are exponentially rising, the costs of soil health monitoring and soil health regeneration are rapidly decreasing.

An EU Soil Health Law must include:

- An unambiguous definition of soil health with indicators based on the newest soil science;
- Ambitious and binding targets on achieving soil health;
- Robust requirements on the sustainable use of soil;
- A binding “zero net land take” target;
- A comprehensive, harmonized and legally anchored soil health monitoring and reporting system;
- A strong governance framework for the Law's implementation and enforcement.

To support this, the Soil Health Law Coalition offers to share its expertise and provide more detailed political, economic, technological and legal analyses as needed.

We thank the European Commission and the Directorate-General for Environment for taking up this crucial task of improving soil health across Europe. Please be assured of our strong support for an ambitious and progressive Soil Health Law.

Sincerely,

The Soil Health Law Coalition and signatories

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BirdLife Cyprus (CY)

BirdLife Sverige (SE)

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