



EU SOIL STRATEGY 2030

“EU Soil Strategy for 2030 Reaping the benefits of healthy soils for people, food, nature and climate”

On 17 November 2021, the European Commission presented a new EU Soil Strategy, one of the deliverables under European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. The Strategy sets a framework with concrete measures for the protection, restoration and sustainable use of soils and proposes a set of voluntary and legally binding measures.

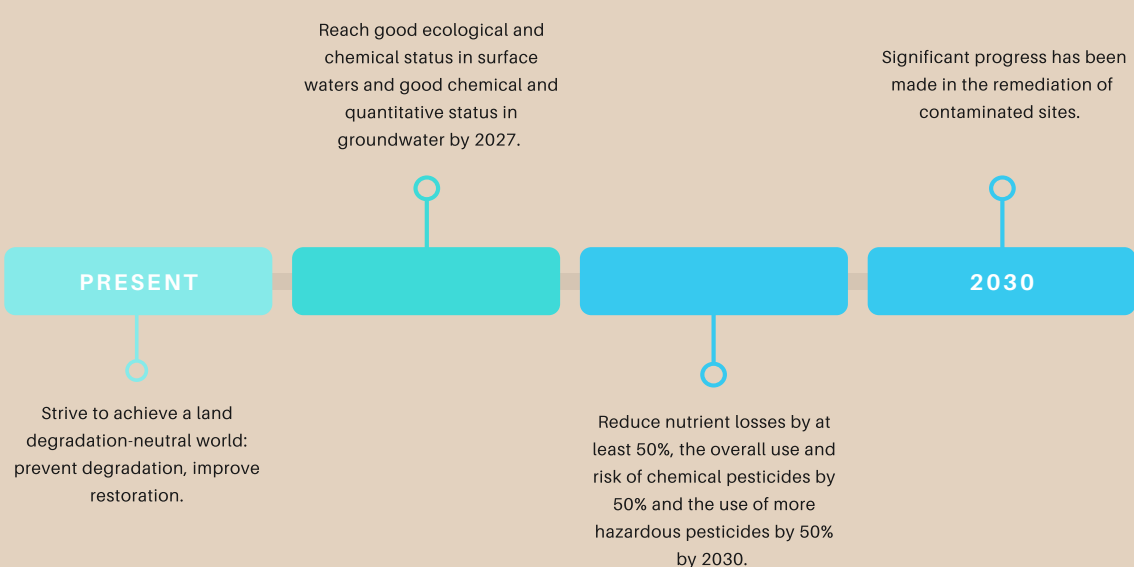
In this summary, we will focus on the topics most relevant for NICOLE, dealing with industrial land management.

VISION AND OBJECTIVES: ACHIEVING GOOD SOIL HEALTH BY 2050

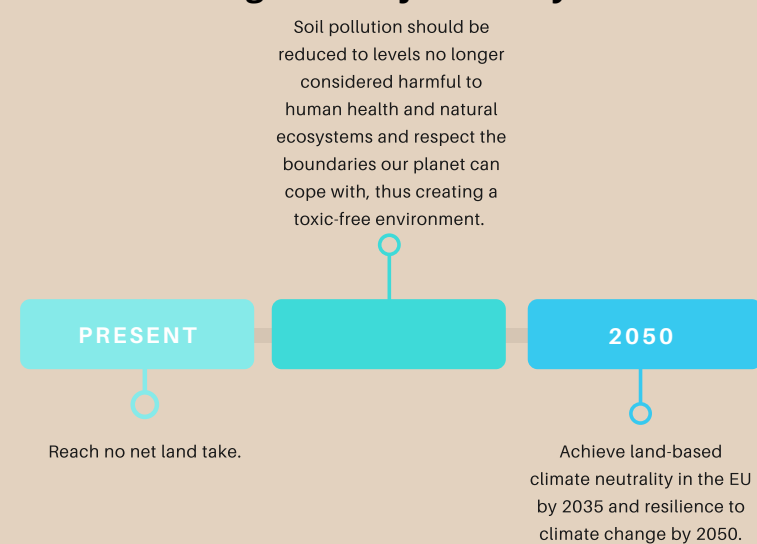
By 2050, all EU soil ecosystems are in healthy condition and are thus more resilient. By then, protection, sustainable use and restoration of soil has become the norm.

Objectives

Medium-term objectives by 2030



Long-term objectives by 2050



SOIL AS A KEY SOLUTION FOR OUR BIG CHALLENGES

As a key solution, healthy soils contribute to address our big challenges of achieving climate neutrality and becoming resilient to climate change, developing a clean and circular (bio)economy, reversing biodiversity loss and obtaining healthy water resources.

1. Soil for climate change mitigation and adaptation
2. Soil and the circular economy
 - a. As excavated soils are too often reported as waste, the implement a real circular economy in the management of excavated soils is crucial. A passport for excavated soil may be assess after a benchmark of the market situation (to be realized by 2023);
 - b. The Commission will provide a definition of net land take in the Soil Health Law and also monitor progress
 - c. Guidelines on best practice to limit, mitigate or compensate soil sealing with a view to develop a common strategy;
 - d. The Commission will by 2022 revise the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and the list of surface water
3. Soil biodiversity for human, animal and plant health
4. Soil for healthy water resources
 - a. The Commission will consider addressing the adequate integration and coordination of soil and water management, including in the impact assessment for a Soil Health Law.



PREVENTING SOIL AND LAND DEGRADATION AND RESTORING HEALTHY SOILS

To reach the vision and main objectives, the following actions, relevant for NICOLE, are undertaken by the commission.

To prevent soil pollution and contamination, building on the Farm to Fork, Biodiversity and Chemicals Strategies and the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the Commission will:

- Revise the Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides and evaluate the Sewage Sludge Directive by 2022.
- Improve and harmonize the consideration of soil quality and soil biodiversity in EU risk assessments for chemicals, food and feed additives, pesticides, fertilizers, etc.
- Restrict intentionally used micro-plastics under REACH and develop measures on the unintentional release of microplastics by 2022.
- Following the initiation of the restriction process by some Member States, the Commission will prepare a restriction under REACH on all non-essential uses of the per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), preventing their emission to the environment including soil, and also develop a policy framework on bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics by 2022.
- By July 2024, adopt biodegradability criteria for certain polymers. The contaminant limits for EU fertilizing products will also be reviewed by July 2026 as part of the general review under the EU Fertilizing Products Regulation.

The Commission further intends to restore degraded soils and remediate contaminated sites, by:

- Assess the feasibility of the introduction of a soil health certificate for land transaction with information on the key characteristics and health of the soils on site
- In cooperation with Member States and stakeholders, facilitate a dialogue and knowledge exchange on the risk assessment methodologies for soil contamination and identify best practices.
- By 2024, develop an EU priority list for contaminants of major and/or emerging concern that pose significant risks for European soil quality, and for which vigilance and priority action at European and national level is needed.
- By 2022, revise the Industrial Emissions Directive and by 2023 evaluate the Environmental Liability Directive, including with regard to the definition of land damage and the role of financial security.
- Establish a system of soil health certificates for land transactions, with support by the EU research program and mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe', if this is not included in the Soil Health Law.

The actions to reach sustainable soil management and prevent desertification are mainly focused on the agricultural and forestry sector.

WE NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT SOILS

It is essential to make more and better knowledge and data about soils available and to use this knowledge and data. Access to soil research data will be made easier through the creation of a Green Deal dataspace and the implementation of the Horizon Europe Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe'. Building on the INSPIRE Directive, open standards for data should improve the interoperability of national, EU and global soil monitoring frameworks.

The commission will:

- Enhance the use of digital tools and digital modelling capacity of soil-related processes
- Continue providing substantial funding to research solutions to increase soil biodiversity; address soil degradation; pilot innovative technologies for decontamination (Horizon Europe framework program)

ENABLING THE TRANSITION TO HEALTHY SOILS

The Commission will set up a dialogue with the public, private and financial sector to see how financing the prevention of soil degradation and the restoration of soil health can be improved. They will publish a guide in 2022 with an overview of EU funding opportunities available for the protection, sustainable management and restoration of soils. Additionally, a soil literacy engagement and awareness initiative will be launched.

NICOLE AND THE SOIL STRATEGY 2030

We are pleased to note that the published 2030 healthy soil strategy is in line with several comments and suggestion submitted by the NICOLE network during the public consultation period in 2021.

Going forward, the RWG will continue to monitor the implication for the members of the Network of the announced actions and milestone.

In particular, an important focus will be put on ensure a NICOLE Network contribution where possible and relevant for the definition of the upcoming soil health law.

Different members of the network liaise with relevant stakeholder groups to provide NICOLE input and report back to the NICOLE members in the following working groups and platforms

- [Common Forum](#)
- [European Soil Observatory](#)
- [Impel](#)
- [FAO](#)

<http://www.nicole.org>

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