



Fast Facts

The challenge

- 60-70% of soils in Europe are currently considered unhealthy.
- BENCHMARKS supports the European Commission on its mission to reach “75% of European soils as healthy or significantly improved by 2030” (SH&F mission).
- Conventional soil monitoring systems measure chemical parameters but disregard a wide range of biological and physical parameters essential to soil health.
- One-size fits all minimum dataset approaches are often applied in monitoring, which do not account for climatic and land use differences across Europe for soil health assessment.

The objective

The BENCHMARKS’ objective is to build a European network that creates a shared understanding of soil health assessment across a range of land uses and climatic conditions. BENCHMARKS will define how to measure soil health and provide context and spatial scale relevant measurement techniques from field to European scale. Working with multi-stakeholder partnerships, BENCHMARKS aims to contribute to and empower land-use systems, side-by-side with land managers, that promote soil health.

The outcome

Through a multi-scale (local, landscape, national, Europe) and multi-stakeholder process across different land-use types (urban, forestry, agriculture), BENCHMARKS aims to:

1. Provide a clear, easy-to-use tool for evaluating soil health, that is transparent, harmonized, and cost-effective.
2. Define appropriate indicators that are relevant to the assessment of soil health for a range of land uses and climatic zones across Europe.
3. Develop a soil health dashboard appropriate for use at a range of scales (field to European) for agricultural, forestry, and urban settings.
4. Contribute to improving existing European policies and regulations related to soil health.

The process

BENCHMARKS uses innovative participatory approaches to address the soil health requirements of multiple stakeholders such as land managers, advisors, policymakers, scientific and educational communities and the private sector. Throughout 2023, a series of workshops will take place in 24

landscape case studies across 13 countries in Europe. They will bring together land managers at the local level and diverse stakeholder groups at regional, national and European levels.

The consortium partners will build on existing knowledge, resources and expertise to develop a new framework to understand soil health objectives from stakeholders represented in the different scales. The inclusion and engagement of land managers throughout the project has multiple benefits:

- a) The facilitation of an innovative process that combines both scientific and practical knowledge.
- b) Ownership creation for research outcomes for land managers.
- c) Increased research impact through the integration of diverse opinions.

The consortium

BENCHMARKS brings together a robust pan-European consortium (29 partners) that:

- Builds upon state-of-the-art scientific advances in the field of soil health and functions in recent years.
- Provides the needed expertise to work with stakeholders across multiple scales, and diverse range of land-use types, within Europe.
- Brings the knowledge and experience to ensure the implementation of BENCHMARKS outcomes in policy, private industry and social decision-making.

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