



To protect soils, we need public policies to protect and share land!

ECVC calls for a European directive on agricultural land

On 5 July, the Commission published its proposal for a Soil Directive. What was supposed to be a "Soil Health Law" has become a law on the "monitoring" of soil health, with no binding measures. ECVC welcomes this law, which finally gives soil the same legal status as air and water. However, to fully protect this precious common good, we need ambitious public policies on land tenure.

This proposal for a directive remains too flexible to ensure that the objectives of the Soil Strategy are achieved by 2050. The trend towards soil artificialisation is not sufficiently curbed, and the proposal runs the risk of further legitimising carbon farming through the certification of healthy soils.

All the same, we see some very positive points. This proposal paves the way for regulatory action on agricultural land in Europe. If adopted, it would set a precedent for land regulation and establish the legal basis for preserving this common good: the scale of the problem, its transboundary aspect, the need for coordinated action and the guarantee of better results through European legislation that would harmonise markets and balance competition, for example, justify EU action on the issue of land.

Today, to protect the soil, we need to go further and guarantee farmers stable, long-term access to and sharing of agricultural land, in particular by introducing long-term rural leases throughout Europe. It is only by guaranteeing access to land that farmers will be able to invest in the long-term health of their soils and will be more inclined to adopt virtuous practices. Combating land concentration through a fairer distribution of land is a prerequisite for restoring soil health: land concentration leads to the industrialisation of practices, whereas, conversely, by distributing land and encouraging a large number of farmers to set up, we can encourage healthy farming practices. Similarly, any consideration of virtuous practices must be based on agroecology, which makes the most of the synergies between different plant and animal species to improve ecological services and agricultural productivity.

This is why Europe needs harmonised public regulation of agricultural land: we need to overcome the paradox of a common market for agricultural products without a common structural policy on the main production factor, land. Protecting the soil means encouraging farmers to set up in rural areas and supporting agro-ecology. Protecting soil means securing the right to land, which is key to generational renewal, the fight against climate change, the biodiversity crisis and the socio-economic crisis we are facing. **That is why we are calling for a European directive on agricultural land, to guarantee healthy soils and living countryside.**

Notes for editor

[ECVC - Proposal for an EU Directive on Agricultural Land](#)

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