



By Province Fryslân

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The European SOILCRATES Project held its official Kick-Off meeting on 7-9 October 2024.** It marked a significant milestone in the project's journey, fostering collaboration and mutual understanding among the twenty-one partners involved with clear strategies in place for the coming years. Funded with 12 million euros, the project seeks to contribute to the EU Mission for healthy agricultural soils through the creation of four Living Labs (LL) in the Netherlands, France, Ireland and Spain.

The event, hosted in the Province of Fryslân and chaired by Project Coordinator Jildou de Raad, gathered over 45 leading experts, researchers, Living Lab representatives and partner organizations to officially launch the **SOILCRATES** project to collaborate on strategies and innovations for sustainable soil management across Europe.

To facilitate discussions, during the three days event, different presentations and parallel sessions were organized to spark valuable discussions that allowed all participants to have a deep understanding of the Living Labs and how each work package contributes to the overall goals of SOILCRATES.



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## Building the Foundation

The kick-off began with introductions from each partner organization. During this session, participants shared their expertise and vision for the project, fostering a sense of shared purpose. This was followed by a series of discussions covering key aspects of the project, including **project scheduling, financial management, and communication strategies**.

The day concluded with a city walk through Leeuwarden's historic center and a networking dinner, giving participants the opportunity to further connect and lay the groundwork for future collaboration.

## Living Labs Presentations

The spotlight was on the Living Labs, which is the focal point of the SOILCRATES project. These LL's will serve as innovation hubs where local stakeholders collaborate to tackle soil health challenges, drawing on agricultural practices. The second day began with a keynote presentation by **Loes Witteveen (HVHL)**, who introduced the LL approach and led a lively discussion on the practical benefits of this innovative model.

Each of the four Living Labs presented their work, highlighting how they will improve soil structure, enhance biodiversity, and optimize crop-growing conditions. The **quadruple helix collaboration** model ensures that insights from different sectors—business, governmental, scientific and social—are integrated, creating a robust, multifaceted approach to soil management.

## Field Visit Dairy farm: A Practical Look at Innovation

Participants had the opportunity to explore Jan Woudstra's innovative dairy farm in Menaldum. The farm's forage hedge exemplifies how practical, ground-level innovations can enhance both soil health and biodiversity, while also improving productivity and animal welfare. Attendees saw firsthand how "Agricycling," a composting technique used on the farm, converts grass into nutrient-rich soil. "This compost is gold for my land," Woudstra remarked, highlighting his dedication to reducing chemical inputs. His farm aligns with the goals of the Regional Deal, demonstrating how sustainable farming practices can successfully balance agricultural productivity with environmental stewardship.



## Practical Information

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### Social media



## SOILCRATES Partners



AMPHOS<sup>21</sup>  
an RSK company



Coughlan Community Farm

le cnam

CUMA  
FEDERATION 440  
BEARN-LANDES-SCHERES-BASQUE

Provinsje  
Fryslân

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UNIVERSIDAD  
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