# SOILCRATES 4th General Assembly in Ireland Celebrates Living Labs, Farmer-Led Innovation and the Launch of 52 Soil Health Pilot Projects Across Europe

**PRESS RELEASE**


*For immediate release*

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Limerick, Ireland — The SOILCRATES consortium gathered in Limerick, Ireland, from 18 to 21 May 2026 for its 4th General Assembly, hosted by Technological University of the Shannon, bringing together farmers, researchers, Living Lab coordinators, project partners and advisors to strengthen collaboration around soil health, sustainable farming and practice-based innovation.

The General Assembly marked a key moment for the Horizon Europe project, combining strategic project discussions with field-based exchanges across the Irish Living Lab and the broader announcement of the final selection of 52 pilot projects under the SOILCRATES Financial Support to Third Parties programme. With a total budget of €1.6 million, the FSTP programme will support locally driven soil health experiments across France, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain.

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The selected pilots, coordinated through the four SOILCRATES Living Labs, will receive financial support ranging from €20,000 to €60,000 per project. Over a period of 12 to 24 months, farmers, land managers, research organizations and local actors will test, adapt and monitor innovative practices under real-life conditions, contributing to a shared European evidence base for healthier soils, biodiversity, carbon storage and climate resilience.

**From European Milestone to Local Practice**

The 4th General Assembly opened with a welcome and networking dinner in Limerick before moving into a full day of field visits across the seven Irish selected pilots. Participants split into two groups to meet local farmers and project partners, exchanging practical knowledge on soil health challenges and solutions in real farming contexts.

Visits included farms and community-based initiatives exploring reduced tillage, biochar, deep-rooting multispecies crops, circular agriculture, marine-based soil enhancers, compost, microbial bio stimulants, grassland soil fertility, community-supported farming and farmer-led innovation.

Among the sites visited were Loop Head (SOILCRATES partner), Pat Liddane, Kraken Seeds, Eoin Hennessy, Jim O'Donnell, Sean O'Farrell, Maurice Deasy and Cloughjordan Community Farm. Participants also learned about local approaches such as the use of comfrey to produce potassium-rich fertilizer, Korean natural farming techniques to support beneficial fungi and soil microbiomes, and the trialing of calcified seaweed to rehabilitate acidic soils in intensive dairy systems.

These exchanges demonstrated the central role of Living Labs in SOILCRATES: connecting scientific knowledge with local experience, enabling peer-to-peer learning and co-creating practical solutions with farmers and communities.

**Strengthening Living Labs, Data and Collaboration**

The working sessions at TUS Campus focused on the next phase of SOILCRATES implementation, with workshops and discussions dedicated to the lifecycle of Living Labs, soil data management, ethics, stakeholder communication, exploitation of key results, the use of artificial intelligence, government engagement and the FSTP process.

Partners explored how Living Labs can better support long-term farmer engagement, inclusive participation, knowledge sharing and capacity building. Discussions also highlighted the importance of strengthening collaboration with policy makers and local governments to ensure that project results can contribute to wider soil health transitions.

Dedicated sessions led by project partners also focused on improving soil data quality, integration and usability across the project, including demonstrations and workshops on the SOILCRATES data platform and the management of soil-related information generated through Living Labs and pilot activities.

**A Diverse Portfolio of experiments dedicated to Soil Health**

The selected pilot projects reflect a broad diversity of agricultural practices, environmental conditions, and soil management approaches.

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The portfolio includes initiatives focused on:

- Regenerative and conservation agriculture practices
- Soil structure improvement and erosion prevention
- Cover cropping and intercropping strategies
- Soil biodiversity and microbial enhancement
- Organic amendments, including compost and biochar
- Grassland management and pasture-based systems
- Nutrient cycling and fertilization optimization

These projects are deeply rooted in local contexts, addressing specific soil challenges while contributing to a shared European effort to improve soil health and resilience.

Below is a full overview of the selected projects:

| | Project Name | Entity | Country | Province of the experiment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Evaluating Organic Living Mulches | John Kavanagh | Ireland | Tipperary |
| 2 | CoverChar2627 | Ballyhoura Rural Services CLG | Ireland | Limerick |
| 3 | Intercropping with Field Margins proposal | Eleanor Glesson Cussen | Ireland | Tipperary |
| 4 | Crawford's Farm | Crawford's Farm | Ireland | Tipperary |
| 5 | Maximizing Organic Potential | James M O Donnell Trading | Ireland | Limerick |
| 6 | Biochar & Deep Rooted plant for Decompostion | Joe Bonfil | Ireland | Clare |
| 7 | Local Soil Fertility Solutions | Sean O'Farrell | Ireland | Tipperary |
| 8 | Soil Improvement with Gypsum Optimisation (SoilGo) | Golden Vale Research | Ireland | Tipperary |
| 9 | Doonaha Fort Soil Health | Pat Liddane | Ireland | Clare |
| 10 | Multi species and application of gypsum to tackle compaction | Michael Patrick O Callaghan | Ireland | Limerick |
| 11 | Gortglass Organic Farm Woodchip & Biochar soil experiment | Keith Ranalow | Ireland | Clare |
| 12 | Soil Deal for Europe | Carmel O Sullivan | Ireland | Limerick |
| 13 | Lurra Bio Soil Living Lab | Lurra Bio Limited | Ireland | Tipperary |
| 14 | Considine's Farm soil structure improvement | Seamus Considine | Ireland | Clare |
| 15 | Combining the Miyawaki Method with Silvopastural Agroforestry | Declan Houlihan | Ireland | Tipperary |
| 16 | Adoption of digestate application and diverse swards to improve soil health on grassland | William Burchill-Sole trader | Ireland | Limerick |

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| 17 | Groenbedekking in pompoenen | Mts S. en C. Anema | The Netherlands | Fryslân |
| 18 | Pasture Cropping NL - CropsInGrass Meer uit Grasland, meer voor de Bodem | KAIROS Regenerative Agri & Food Systems B.V. | The Netherlands | Drenthe |
| 19 | SPNA Ebelsheerd als Light House Soilcrates & Experiment Waterbergend vermogen irt groenbemesters | SPNA Agroresearch | The Netherlands | Groningen |
| 20 | Veerkracht van de bodem en het effect van mechanische bodemverdichting in grasland | Melkveehouderij Dekker | The Netherlands | Drenthe |
| 21 | Effecten van Kopros toepassing in rundveemest op bodem- en gewaskwaliteit | van de Lageweg CV | The Netherlands | Fryslân |
| 22 | Identificatie van indicatoren voor mestkwaliteit | Maatschap Aalbers | The Netherlands | Groningen |
| 23 | SoilCycle – Nutriënten uit mestvergisting als meststof: een praktijkvergelijking met gangbare bemesting | Maatschap H. van Kuiken | The Netherlands | Fryslân |
| 24 | Invloed van productief kruidenrijk grasland op bodemprocessen en benutting binnen de vruchtwisseling | Maatschap T.Hof en G.H. Ruitenberg | The Netherlands | Fryslân |
| 25 | Beter Onderzaaien voor Betere Bodems | Maatschap H.G. Wollerich, H.A. Wollerich-Piest en H.W. Wollerich | The Netherlands | Groningen |
| 26 | Vlinderbloemige als onderzaai in zomergraan | Akkerbouwbedrijf H.J. Luth | The Netherlands | Groningen |
| 27 | Silicium telen | Mts van der Bos-Weidenaar | The Netherlands | Fryslân |
| 28 | Alternatieve vormen van bemesting en bodemstimulatie | Mts. Noordhoff | The Netherlands | Groningen |
| 29 | Compostthee voor gezondere bodems en planten | Regeneratieve Landbouw Valburg | The Netherlands | Fryslân |
| 30 | La Gelouze Farm | Ferme La Gelouze | France | Landes |
| 31 | Améliorer la qualité des sols : Etude de cas sur 3 fermes en maraichage biologique | Ferme Solidaire de l'Ecolieu Lacoste | France | Landes |
| 32 | RIVOIRE Jérémie Soilcrates | Rivoire Jérémie | France | Landes |
| 33 | Travail Extra-réduit / Régénération / Agronomie - 3D Décompacter / Désherber / Diversifier (TERA-3D) | EARL LAHUQUE | France | Landes |
| 34 | Optimisation du Cycle de Vie des Couverts Végétaux d'Interculture en sol sableux dégradé (OCVCVI) | Entreprise Individuelle MOULY Romain | France | Landes |
| 35 | Pâturage de couverts végétaux d'intercultures (PCVI) | GAEC Ferme de Libat | France | Landes |
| 36 | Réduire la phase de transition du semis direct en apportant massivement des matières organiques | ALPAD | France | Landes |
| 37 | La diversification au service de la transition agroécologique du Seignanx : expérimentation de nouvelles cultures et pratiques | CPIE SEIGNANX ADOUR | France | Landes |
| 38 | COVER'LANDES | GRCETA-SFA | France | Landes |
| 39 | Nourrir le sol pour nourrir les plantes (LaNDSoil) | EARL du Biaou | France | Landes |

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| 40 | CHANVRE : Protocole d'essai pour la lutte contre l'invasion de Souchet des parcelles biologiques et la dépollution des sols | CHANVRE DES LANDES | France | Landes |
| 41 | Amélioration globale de la qualité des sols grâce la production à la ferme de semences d'engrais verts et de couverts végétaux pour en optimiser la couverture | EARL BARAT | France | Landes |
| 42 | Co-creating sustainable Management Practices for Integrated soil and ecosystem health for woody crops in GRAnada province (COMPIGRA) | IFAPA | Spain | Granada |
| 43 | Sustainable Soil Management in Mediterranean Vineyards: Cover Crops, Pruning Residues, and Microbial Biostimulation (SOIL-VITIS) | BODEGAS SEÑORÍO DE NEVADA S.L. | Spain | Granada |
| 44 | MESIAS - Mejora de la Estructura del Suelo y de la Infiltracion en Agroecosistemas Sostenibles | Francisco Javier Roman Marin | Spain | Granada |
| 45 | SoilHeroic - Assessing soil resilience of heroic mountain vineyards through drones and sensors in terraces and steep slopes | Bodegas Calvente Sociedad Limitada | Spain | Granada |
| 46 | Biochar-Enhanced Compost for Soil Restoration and Agricultural Sustainability COMPOSTCHAR | Estación Experimental del Zaidín-Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (EEZ-CSIC) | Spain | Granada |
| 47 | Targeted grazing with Andalusian donkeys for soil health improvement in the Vega of Granada - PAAS-VEGA | Descubrir La Vega para la investigación y difusión cultural de la Vega de Granada | Spain | Granada |
| 48 | SpongeSoil - Soil hydraulic bioengineering for salinization prevention and water conservation in subtropical crops | VitaNtech Biotechnology SL | Spain | Granada |
| 49 | Soil Architects | ASOC OPERACION ENCINA | Spain | Granada |
| 50 | Living Soils Sierra Nevada: Practical Regeneration Model for Mountain Agroecosystems (REGEN-SN) | Antonio Yebra Cabrera | Spain | Granada |
| 51 | Enhancing Soil Health in Poplar Systems through Compost, Industrial Hemp Cover Cropping and Low-Impact Biomass Management (POP-SOIL) | AGRUPACION DE PRODUCTORES DE CHOPO MARJAL, SC | Spain | Granada |
| 52 | Regeneración del suelo y del olivar centenario (Raiz Lenta) | Niwalas rural SL | Spain | Granada |

The General Assembly took place shortly after the completion of the SOILCRATES FSTP Request for Applications process, coordinated by Cnam. The selected portfolio reflects a wide diversity of agricultural systems, environmental conditions, and soil management approaches.

The pilot projects include initiatives focused on regenerative and conservation agriculture, soil structure improvement, erosion prevention, cover cropping, intercropping, soil biodiversity, microbial enhancement, compost, biochar, grassland management, pasture-based systems, nutrient cycling and fertilization optimization.

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By embedding these pilots within the SOILCRATES Living Labs, the project will support practical experimentation while also generating comparable knowledge across regions. The results will feed into tools, recommendations, and policy-relevant outputs aimed at accelerating the transition to sustainable soil management in Europe.

The strong response across the FSTP application rounds highlights the engagement and innovation capacity of farmers and rural stakeholders. With 52 projects now underway, SOILCRATES is building a robust, practice-oriented knowledge base to support healthier soils and more resilient farming systems.

**Shared Learning for Sustainable Farming Systems**

Throughout the General Assembly, partners underlined the importance of collaboration, inclusion, and shared learning in addressing soil health challenges. The Irish field visits and working sessions showed how local experimentation can inform wider European strategies, while the FSTP pilots will expand SOILCRATES' capacity to test and scale promising practices across different regions.

The event concluded with feedback from the SOILCRATES Advisory Board, closing remarks and a networking session, reinforcing the consortium's shared commitment to supporting farmers, land managers and communities in the transition towards sustainable soil management.

Details of selected pilot projects are subject to evolution. Updates will be available on the SOILCRATES website through the pilot project pages.

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**About SOILCRATES**

SOILCRATES is a Horizon Europe project committed to promoting sustainable soil management practices that enhance soil health, biodiversity, and carbon storage, while supporting farmers and land managers in adapting to climate change.

For more information, visit SOILCRATES.EU.

**Coordinator**
Jildou de Raad
Provincie Fryslan
j.deraad@fryslan.frl

**Press contact**
Natalia Brack
IID-SII
natalia.brack@iid-sii.org

Jessica Bailloux

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IID-SII
jessica.bailloux@iid-sii.org

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