

Newsletter #02 | July 2026



TRAILS 4 SOIL



Rebuilding soil health
through Regenerative &
Conservation Agriculture



Funded by
the European Union



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Editorial

Welcome!

The first half of 2026 has been marked by productive discussions. Farmers, policymakers, researchers and other actors in the farming sector gathered at TRAILS4SOIL's workshops, held across our five Living Labs in nine countries of Europe.

TRAILS4SOIL aims to advance solutions for soil health adapted to different agri-environmental and production systems, and each of our Living Labs addresses a different core issue in agriculture.

Here in my Living Lab in Austria and Switzerland, Living Lab 2, we are looking at how Conservation Agriculture can support organic farming. Minimised tillage is core to soil health, and organic farming requires special attention with regards to weed management and nitrogen nutrition for crops under minimum mechanical soil disturbance.

In an intense day of discussion at our February workshop in St. Pölten, Austrian stakeholders – involving farmers, experts from the no-till and organic farming communities, policymakers from the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, extensionists, farmer-to-farmer hubs (Boden.Leben, Humusbewegung) and representatives of seed supply companies – identified the key farming challenges in the region as climate change (drought, heat) and volatile food markets.

Discussing soil health solutions and potential innovations to be tested and monitored by TRAILS4SOIL,

participants identified soil coverage and crop diversification as key principles to meet these challenges, while acknowledging that they must be translated into concrete, practical and economically viable solutions.

You can learn more about the workshops on page 4 of this newsletter. Elsewhere you can read about policy blockers and enablers of Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture (pages 8-10) and find out how MRV providers and farmers are getting involved with TRAILS4SOIL (pages 6 & 7).

Stay tuned to follow our progress as we turn our shared principles of healthy and resilient soils into successful farming system solutions over the coming years, to create environmentally and economically sustainable value chains - across all 5 of our Living Labs.



Gernot Bodner
BOKU University, Austria



www.trails4soil.eu



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About TRAILS4SOIL

We are a 5-year (2025-2030) European research project. We are investigating how to restore soil health with Regenerative and Conservation Agricultural Practices that support the long-term productivity, environmental sustainability, and economic viability of farms.

In a Living Labs approach, we work closely with farmers and land managers across a network of 100 experimentation sites in nine European countries to provide large-scale evidence on the impacts of Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture.

We will develop innovative business models, training, and collaboration programmes to drive the widespread adoption of effective farming practices across Europe and support the transformation of European agriculture towards more resilient, sustainable, and climate-smart farming.

Funding

TRAILS4SOIL is funded by the EU's Horizon Europe programme (Grant agreement ID: 101218949) and the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).

Meet our Living Labs

Learn more about our project >>

trails4soil.eu



Living lab 1
Permanent crops



Living lab 2
Organic farming



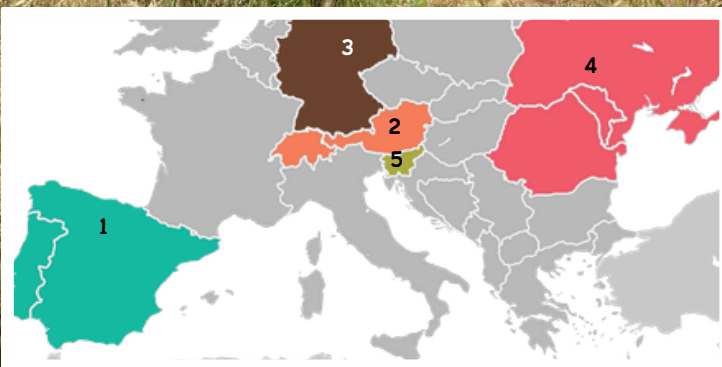
Living lab 3
Climate change adaptation



Living lab 4
Black soil preservation



Living lab 5
Crop-livestock integration



Farming stakeholders shape TRAILS4SOIL's plans at workshops

Across February and March 2026, farmers, public authorities (both national and regional), businesses, researchers and NGOs came together at workshops to shape TRAILS4SOIL's efforts to rebuild soil health using Regenerative and Conservation Agricultural Practices.

Held across our 5 Living Labs, the workshops enabled participants to share their thoughts on soil health problems and the potential for Regenerative and Conservation Agricultural Practices to support farmers.



A sincere thank you to everyone who joined these workshops. The conversations and collaboration are essential in helping us decide which agricultural practices we should test with participating farmers at our 100 experimental sites across 9 countries of Europe.

We will use the results to build a strong picture of Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture's impacts on soil and farms, and accelerate the move towards a more sustainable, thriving agricultural sector in Europe.



TRAILS4SOIL partners meet in Austria for annual General Assembly



TRAILS4SOIL partners from across Europe came together in Austria in May 2026 for the project's General Assembly. Marking nearly one year since the project began, the two-day meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on progress to date and set priorities for the year ahead.

Discussions focused on key challenges facing the project, including how to measure Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture practices, and how to harmonise soil health indicators across project requirements, the EU Mission Soil framework, and the practical realities of implementation within individual Living Labs.

Living Lab leaders also shared their first-year achievements, alongside the specific challenges and opportunities shaping their work.

The Assembly took place against the backdrop of an intense regional drought, highlighting the urgency of the project's aims. This was brought into sharp focus during a field visit to sites in Lower Austria, including those linked to Living Lab 2, which supports organic farming systems. Partners heard directly from farmers about the impacts of dry conditions on soil health and production.

The event reinforced the importance of collaboration as TRAILS4SOIL works to strengthen methods for assessing Regenerative and Conservation practices, with the ultimate aim of supporting healthier soils and more resilient farming systems.

We're already looking forward to our next General Assembly – to be held in the UK next year!

Open call for soil MRV providers: join TRAILS4SOIL!



We are looking for providers of soil MRV (Measurement, Reporting, and Verification) technologies to take part in TRAILS4SOIL.

Selected providers will play a pivotal role in TRAILS4SOIL's work. Through precise, robust measurements of soil health characteristics, your technology will enable us to evaluate the impacts of Regenerative and Conservation Agricultural Practices on agricultural soil.

You will have the opportunity to test your solutions in real farming conditions across 100 farms in Europe, benefitting from direct collaboration with farmers and researchers.

Successful applicants will:

- Receive up to €50,000 per technology, and up to €200,000 per provider.
- Foster collaborations with farmers and scientists.
- Get direct user feedback on your product.

Interested?

Take a look at the call in full, and submit your application by 31 August 2026:

<https://trails4soil.eu/open-mrv-call/>

European farmers apply to join TRAILS4SOIL and strengthen their soil's health



Farmers across Europe applied to take part in TRAILS4SOIL throughout May-July this year.

Our Open Call offered farmers the opportunity to test Regenerative and Conservation Agricultural Practices on their land and learn how to improve soil health, while contributing to our large-scale evidence base on the impacts of Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture.

With 49 places available, successful applicants will gain hands-on experience with techniques tailored to local soil challenges and join a network of farmers, researchers and other experts to discuss their experiences.

The call was open to farmers based in Spain, Portugal, Germany, Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland, Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine. Each participating farm will form part of a Living Lab - a network of people and farms in their region who work together to address a local challenge.

Thank you to everyone who applied! We are currently reviewing and shortlisting applications for interview.

We will confirm who has been successful in their application on 27th July.

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Parliamentary event discusses how to scale up Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture



How can policymakers enable more farmers to practice Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture? This was the question we took to European Parliament on 9 June at an event co-hosted by the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) and the MEP Group on 'Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development', and attended by representatives from the European Commission, European Parliament, the finance sector and the food industry.

Sharing practical insights from our research, we showed:

- How Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture can strengthen farm income, resilience, climate adaptation, and long-term budget efficiency.
- Why the limited uptake of Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture is not due to knowledge gaps among farmers. Instead, it is because the policy environment is not enabling.

- How farmers face major hurdles when it comes to getting finance for Regenerative and Conservation practices.
- Why this transition to improved soil health is long-term, depends a lot on local context, and needs support across the whole system.

Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to this valuable event.

> Read a summary of the discussions in [our briefing](#).



Policy briefs guide the way for greater adoption of Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture



Strengthening the policy framework for Regenerative Conservation Agriculture Practices: barriers, enablers, and policy opportunities

This policy brief from TRAILS4SOIL examines the factors that hinder and those that enable adoption of Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture practices, and how EU policy can support wider implementation.

It draws on the results of EU-funded projects centred on Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture, TRAILS4SOIL workshop data, and supplementary scientific literature.

[Read the brief](#)

From soil health to farm resilience: Policy, finance and risk-sharing for scaling Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture practices

This briefing summarises discussions from the TRAILS4SOIL event held at the European Parliament (see Page 9) on advancing the uptake of Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture Practices across Europe.

Discussions pointed to a shared understanding that the main constraint to increasing the adoption of Regenerative and Conservation Agriculture is not the availability of technical solutions, but the broader enabling environment.

[Read the briefing](#)

MORE EVENTS

Spreading the word, joining conversations

We continue to be busy introducing the project and its ambitions to researchers, farmers and other interested groups at events across Europe.



Regenerative Agriculture workshop, Romania.

On World Environment Day (5 June), Romanian partners and the pre-selected farm SCDA Turda, organised the TRAILS4SOIL workshop: "Regenerative Agriculture – Farmer Engagement and Results Monitoring." Participants discussed soil health, water and sustainability, and discussed an analysis of soil managed under tillage and no-tillage systems.



Soil Evolution, Switzerland

This event was attended by project partners from Bern University of Applied Sciences, the German Association for Conservation Tillage (GKB), Boden.Leben, the University of Evora, the University of Ljubljana, EARA, SAI Platform, and Slovenian farmers on the project. We enjoyed meeting people from diverse backgrounds with a shared commitment to more resilient farming systems and came away with many new ideas and connections.



Agraria trade fair, Romania.

Romanian partners from University of Cluj-Napoca opened Agraria, Transylvania's largest agricultural trade fair, in April. Their presentation on TRAILS4SOIL prompted a number of questions from the audience who showed strong interest in the project.



Healthy soils for Europe - webinar

TRAILS4SOIL's Emilio Jesús González Sánchez joined DG AGRI's Vincent Tchedy and permaculture and agroecology expert, Perrine Bulgheroni to talk European soil health policy and research at a webinar in May. Watch the recording here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMfugDzX918



TRAILS4SOIL at Groundswell, UK

UK partners Fern Baker, Jane Mills and Charlotte Chivers (Countryside and Community Research Institute) were busy talking to festival-goers at this year's Groundswell, the UK's largest Regenerative Agriculture event.

Thank you to everyone who stopped at the stand to chat, we enjoyed meeting you.

Upcoming TRAILS4SOIL events

Soils for Europe

Conference
7-11 September 2026
Coimbra, Portugal



Together with other Mission Soil projects, we are co-organising Soils for Europe, to be held 7-11 September 2026. The event will include cross-cutting sessions aiming to showcase the latest soil research being developed across Europe.

The conference is open to all researchers and practitioners in an effort to bring together the best and most innovative initiatives in the European space, including a day dedicated to the Living Labs initiatives.

<https://soils4europe2026.eu/>





Who we are

TRAILS4SOIL is a consortium of 22 research and agricultural organisations across 12 European countries, coordinated by the University of Cordoba.

Partners

- University of Cordoba - Spain
- University of Evora - Portugal
- National Scientific Center Institute of Agriculture of NAAS - Ukraine
- Bern University of Applied Sciences - Switzerland
- Boden Leben - Austria
- Countryside & Community Research Institute - UK
- European Alliance for Regenerative Agriculture - Germany
- European Conservation Agriculture Federation - Belgium
- German Association for Conservation Tillage - Germany
- Institute for European Environmental Policy - Belgium
- National Center for Research and Seeds Production - Moldova
- Research Institute of Organic Agriculture - Switzerland
- SAI Platform - Switzerland
- Slovenian Association for Conservation Agriculture - Slovenia
- South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences - Germany
- Spanish Conservation Agriculture Living Soils Association - Spain
- University of Cluj-Napoca - Romania
- University of Greenwich - UK
- University of Ljubljana - Slovenia
- University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences - Austria
- University of Teramo - Italy
- Young Farmer Association - Spain

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