



## Healthy Soils, Healthy Crops, Healthy Food – How Farmers Ensure Healthy Soils

On 12th October 2021, the Agriculture & Progress Platform\* hosted a conference on Healthy Soils, Healthy Crops and Healthy Food. Nathalie Sauze-Vandevyver, Director for Quality, Research & Innovation, Outreach, DG AGRI of the European Commission gave the keynote speech.

**Nathalie Sauze-Vandevyver** opened the Webinar and presented the current Commission's focus on the Horizon Europe Programme and the inclusion of soil health in one of the so-called "R&I missions". Soil is a scarce and non-renewable resource, and therefore should be protected via the programme's funding. Mrs Sauze-Vandevyver announced the creation of 100 living labs and lighthouses which will be paramount to lead the transition towards healthy soils by 2030. They will serve both as "real-life" places for experiments and innovation as well as individual places to showcase good practices. She expressed the need to make solutions for soil protection more mainstream.

**Éric Frétilière (French Association of Maize Producers - AGPM)** explained that even with low potential soils such as the one he works on, techniques such as tillage have a positive impact in the overall health of soils, particularly regarding carbon sequestration and the preservation of the soil ecosystem. In parallel, he highlighted the use of intermediary crops and irrigation techniques operating in a closed circuit making sure no water is lost.

**Eddy Bollaert (GAEC, sugar beet grower in France)** provided insights into the main challenges he faces as a sugar beet producer having opted for conservation agriculture. In an environment in which plant breeding becomes increasingly complex, soil management techniques can make the difference. Problems such as erosion and high temperature in the soil can be effectively addressed via the use of multi-species cover crops and direct-sowing. The positive effects of such techniques have increased soil adherence which, in turn, led to an increase in the quality of the beets whilst making the soil prosper. The techniques put in place allow him also to reduce fuel consumption which in turn has a positive effect on emissions.

**In this regard, the Agriculture & Progress Platform would encourage the continued and – potentially increased support both operationally and financially for farming communities to underpin their ongoing efforts to keep soils healthy.**

It is in this context that the Agriculture & Progress platform calls today upon the policy-makers to continue to work hand in hand with the agricultural community to recognize the use of sustainable soil management practices that have been put in place for many years and which continue to evolve through the support and exchange of best practices, training and advice from technical institutes.

You can find the Agriculture & Progress Platform's position paper here. For more information, please contact: [platform@agriprogress.info](mailto:platform@agriprogress.info).

<sup>1</sup> Initiated by European maize producers, beet growers and sugar manufacturers, the Agriculture & Progress Platform's mission is to give the agricultural and primary food processing industry a tool to provide society and decision-makers with answers and suggestions on the needs and challenges of guaranteeing sustainable agricultural production and to highlight the important role of innovation in this context.