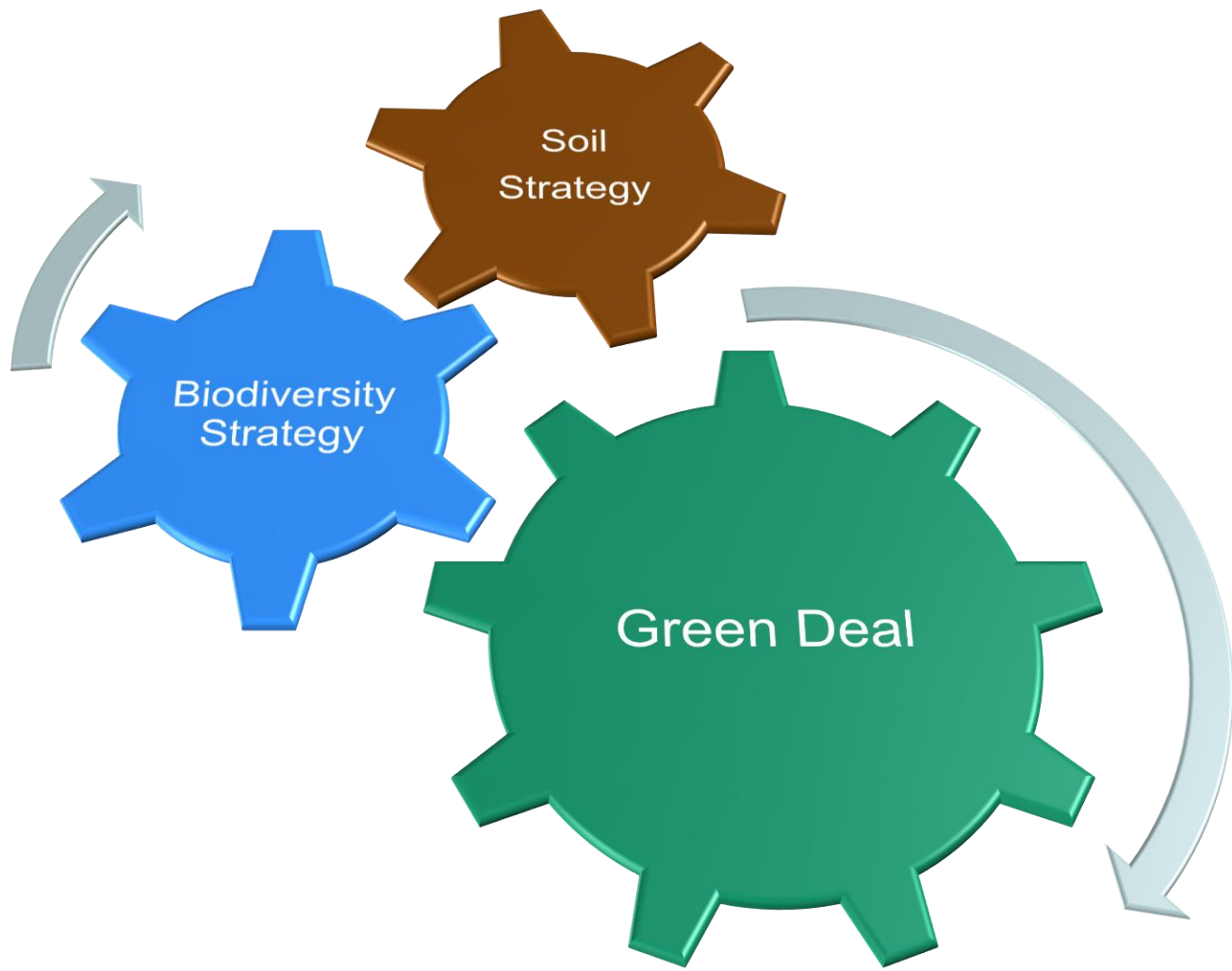




# EU Soil Policy

Humberto Delgado Rosa  
Director for Biodiversity  
European Commission





# Challenges: what do we need tackle?

**60-70%**  
of soils are not  
healthy

**13%**  
of EU soils  
suffer from high  
erosion with  
1.25 bEUR  
yearly losses in  
crop yield

**78%**  
of land take  
takes place in  
agricultural  
land

**200 – 800 k**  
deaths globally  
per year due to  
soil  
contamination

**7.4 million  
tonnes**  
of CO<sub>2</sub>  
lost yearly by  
mineral soils  
under cropland

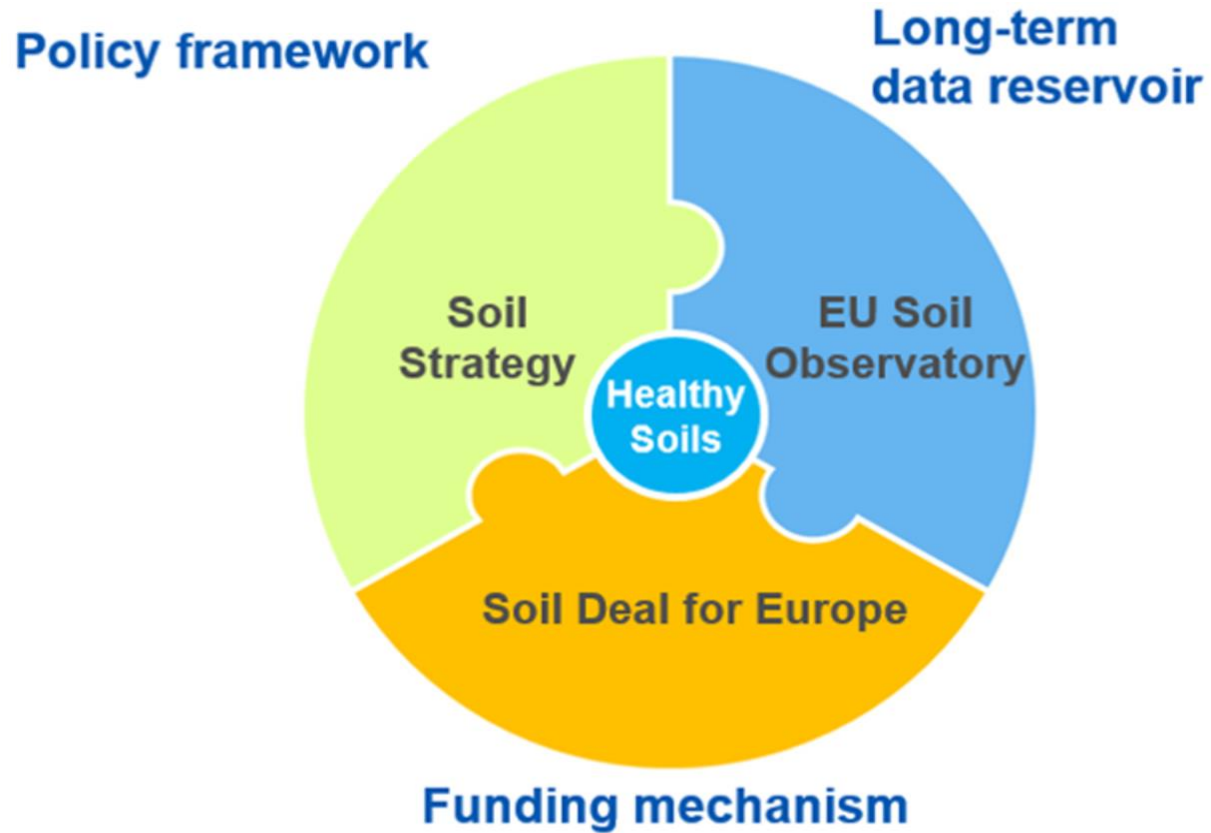
**390.000**  
contaminated  
sites to be  
remediated

**25%**  
of land in Southern,  
central and Eastern  
Europe at high or  
very high risk of  
desertification

Erosion, compaction, organic matter decline, pollution, loss of soil biodiversity, salinization, desertification, land take and sealing



# Science-policy framework





# The vision for soil

- By **2050**, all EU soil ecosystems are in **healthy** condition and are thus more **resilient**, which will require very **decisive changes** in this decade.
- By then, **protection, sustainable use and restoration of soil** has become the norm.
- Healthy soils contribute as key **solution to our big challenges** to achieve climate neutrality, a clean and circular economy, revert biodiversity loss, safeguard human health, halt desertification and revert land degradation.

# | Existing objectives (long term)

- By 2050, reach **no net land take**.
- By 2050, **soil pollution** should be reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to human health and natural ecosystems and respect the boundaries our planet can cope with, thus creating a toxic-free environment.
- By 2050, achieving a **climate-neutral Europe**, and as the first step by 2035 to achieve land-based climate neutrality in the EU.
- By 2050, achieve a **climate-resilient** society, fully adapted to the unavoidable impacts of climate change.





# What is a healthy soil?

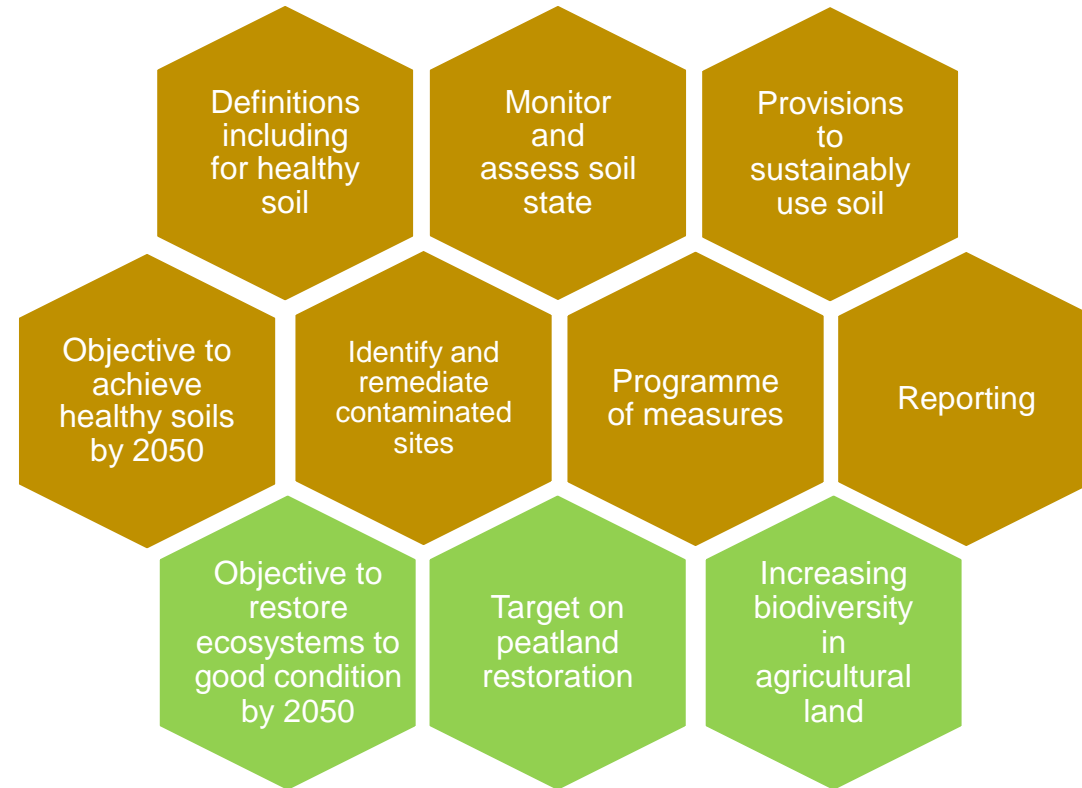
Soils are healthy when they are in good chemical, biological and physical condition, and thus able to continuously provide as many of the following ecosystem services as possible:

- provide food and biomass production, including in agriculture and forestry;
- absorb, store and filter water and transform nutrients and substances, thus protecting groundwater bodies;
- provide the basis for life and biodiversity, including habitats, species and genes;
- act as a carbon reservoir;
- provide a physical platform and cultural services for humans and their activities;
- act as a source of raw materials;
- constitute an archive of geological, geomorphological and archaeological heritage.





# Soil health law



# Nature restoration law

# | Key actions

- **Soil health for climate change mitigation and adaptation**



- Assess the **state of peatlands** in the Global Peatlands initiative
- Join the global **4 per 1000 initiative**
- Present **carbon farming initiative** (2021) and proposal on **carbon removal certification** (2022)

- **Soil health and the circular economy**



- Benchmark streams of **excavated soils** in the EU (2023)
- Promote the **land take hierarchy** and ask MS to **set targets** for 2030
- Provide guidance and exchange of practices to **reduce sealing** (2024)
- Close the nutrient and carbon circle by **safely recycling biowaste**

- **Soil biodiversity for human, animal and plant health**

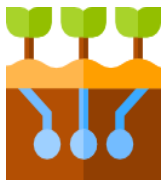


- Assess **soil biodiversity, antimicrobial resistance** (2022) and **invasive alien species**
- Put soil biodiversity on the **international agenda** (e.g. CBD COP 15, GSP)



# | Key actions

- **Healthy soils for clean water**



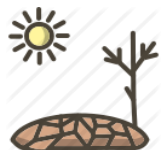
- Improve **soil-sediment-water nexus**
- Guidance on sustainable management of **sediment**
- Better integrate soil and land use management in the **River Basin Management Plans**

- **Making Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) the new normal**



- **Set of SSM practices** and criteria to phase out unsustainable practices
- Launch together with MS the **Test Your Soil For Free initiative**
- Promote **sustainable soil management through the CAP** and build a network of practitioners

- **Prevent desertification**



- Develop a common **methodology to assess desertification and land degradation** and report regularly
- Propose to declare the **EU as affected party under the UNCCD**
- Continue to support development projects **outside the EU**



# | Key actions

- Prevent pollution



- Improve the **risk assessment of chemicals on soil quality** and of soil contaminants on human health and the environment
- **Restrict microplastics** (2022) and **PFAS** under the REACH Regulation, and develop a policy framework on bio-based, biodegradable and **compostable plastics** (2022)
- Revise the **SUP Directive**, evaluate the **Sewage Sludge Directive** (2022) and review the **Fertilising Products Regulation** (2026)

- Restore degraded soil and remediate contaminated sites



- Facilitate an exchange between MS on **risk assessment methodologies**
- Develop an **EU priority list for soil contaminants** (2024)
- Revise the **Industrial Emissions Directive** (2022) and evaluate the **Environmental Liability Directive** (2023)



# | Key actions

- Improve digital knowledge, monitoring and research on soil



- Implement the **EU Soil Observatory**, the **Land Information System for Europe** and the **Soil Mission**

- Enable the transition to healthy soil

- With private finance and EU funding



- Publish a **guide** with an overview of EU funding opportunities for healthy soils (2022)
- Foster investments towards sustainable soil management through the **EU Taxonomy Regulation**

- Through soil literacy and societal engagement



- Launch a **soil literacy initiative**
- Exchange and **share best practices** in communication and engagement on soil
- Use the European common reference framework of **sustainability competences**



# Thank you! Questions?

Humberto.delgado-rosa@ec.europa.eu



© European Union 2020

Unless otherwise noted the reuse of this presentation is authorised under the [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license. For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders.

