

The EU Takes a Major Step for Soil Health — Now Comes the Hard Part | PES Technologies

The EU has formally adopted the Soil Monitoring Directive, marking the bloc's first ever legal framework for assessing, monitoring, and protecting soils at scale.

What's in the Directive & Why It Matters

- Every Member State must monitor soils using a harmonised methodology, assessing physical, chemical, and biological parameters.
- Countries will publicly register potentially contaminated sites and manage unacceptable risks to human health and environment.
- The directive introduces land-take mitigation principles, focusing on soil sealing (e.g. when soil is covered by impermeable surfaces).
- Targets at EU and national level will be non-binding, meaning that ambition and enforcement will depend heavily on political will.
- Member States will have **three years** after entry into force to transpose the directive into national law.
- Soil is critical to food security, water regulation, carbon storage, biodiversity and ecosystem services.

What does it do

- It fills a longstanding legal gap: until now, unlike air or water, soil did not enjoy a dedicated EU-wide framework or protection.
- It can trigger coordinated action, shared best practices, common metrics — enabling cross-border comparability and collective learning.

The Risks & Caveats

- Because many key elements (such as targets) are non-binding, the strength of this law will ultimately depend on national implementation, enforcement and funding.
- Some NGOs already warn it is lacking ambition, especially regarding mandatory soil health plans and binding goals.
- Regional and local actors call for more support, intermediate review points (e.g. 2035) and clarity on how local contexts will be handled.

What's Next & What to Watch

- The European Parliament will vote to endorse the directive.
- Member States must transpose it into their national systems.

- Monitoring data will start flowing, revealing where soil health is improving or worsening.
- Citizens, researchers, practitioners and private sector players must engage — pushing for accountability, additional ambition, and meaningful action.

This new directive is a milestone — it puts soil on the legislative map of Europe. But its success will depend heavily on how seriously governments, institutions, and stakeholders treat it. Implementation must go beyond monitoring and toward real restoration, resilience and regeneration.

If you work in agriculture, land use planning, environmental services or sustainability, now is a good moment to reflect on how this will shape your work — and where your voice or expertise can help steer implementation in the right direction, as well as how you can monitor and protect your own soil.

Want to find out how we can help with that? Get in touch to book a demo:
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