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# MISSION SOIL INVESTMENT FORUM 2026




## Event Report

30 June 2026

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first Mission Soil Investment Forum (MSIF or Forum) took place in Brussels on 30 June 2026, bringing together 140 participants on site and a wider audience online. Participants represented a broad range of stakeholders, including financial institutions, philanthropic organisations, agri-food businesses, technology providers, farmers' organisations, research institutions, EU bodies, and national authorities.

It was organised by the European Commission's Mission Soil Secretariat within Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), with support from the Mission Soil Platform, and moderated by Shona Murray (Euronews).

The Forum aimed to foster dialogue between the soil health and the financial and business communities, encourage new partnerships and investment opportunities, and mobilise financing to support the wider deployment of innovative solutions for healthier soils. It marked an important step in the implementation of the EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' by bringing together actors that do not often engage in the same discussion: researchers, policymakers, investors, financial institutions, businesses, and practitioners. Throughout the day, participants explored how investment can support the transition to healthy soils, what barriers continue to limit the flow of finance, and what conditions are needed to translate scientific knowledge and policy ambition into investable opportunities.

Opening the Forum, Diego Canga Fano, Deputy Director-General (Acting) at DG AGRI (European Commission) and Mission Soil Manager, highlighted that **the Mission is entering a new phase**, **shifting towards deployment and impact**. This builds on the **progress achieved through research and innovation**, including **the establishment of Mission Soil Living Labs across Europe and substantial investment under Horizon Europe**. He emphasised that the next challenge is to **scale up successful approaches beyond publicly funded projects by mobilising public and private investment**. He underlined that healthy soils are fundamental not only for agricultural productivity, but also for climate resilience, biodiversity, water management, and long-term food security. Achieving these objectives requires stronger collaboration between public authorities, researchers, farmers, businesses, and financial actors.

The opening interview with Valentina Materia (Wageningen University & Research, Mission Soil project InBestSoil) and Kato Van Ruymbeke (KU Leuven, Mission Soil project SoilValues) introduced the scientific and economic context for soil valuation. The discussion highlighted the **importance of recognising the broader value of healthy soils beyond carbon sequestration and agricultural productivity**, including concepts of ecosystem services, resilience, social value, and long-term economic performance. They also emphasised that, while methods for measuring biophysical changes continue to improve, greater attention is needed to the social, behavioural, and governance factors that influence whether sustainable business models can be successfully implemented and scaled.

The two morning plenary sessions then explored how to move the discussion **from policy frameworks into concrete investments on the ground**. The first session, featuring representatives from DG AGRI, DG CLIMA, and the Novo Nordisk Foundation, examined the **potential contributions of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**, **the Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming Regulation (CRCF)**, **and philanthropic funding** that could together create favourable conditions for investment. The second session, with representatives from DG ENV, the European Investment Bank, the Gates Foundation, and EIT Food, **explored emerging approaches such as nature credits**, **blended finance**, **project aggregation**, **and long-horizon partnership models** needed to make soil health initiatives more financially viable and attractive to investors.

Throughout the Forum, a recurring message was that recognising the importance of healthy soils is not enough: **greater efforts are needed to create the institutional**, **financial**, **and governance conditions that enable investment to reach implementation at scale**. Discussions highlighted the need to strengthen demand for verified environmental outcomes and develop a pipeline for investable projects while improving coordination between research, policy, finance, and practice.

Three parallel sessions provided opportunities for **interactive discussions on financing structures and risk-sharing mechanisms**, **the role of data and scientific evidence in making soil health investable**, **and how innovation**, **philanthropy**, **and living labs can enable investment in soil health**.

A dedicated pitch session showcased projects that have already mobilised finance for soil health through a range of public, private, and blended funding models, as well as soil health initiatives seeking investors.

The event concluded with a plenary session bringing together key findings from the parallel sessions and highlighting the role of the Mission Soil Platform as a mechanism to strengthen collaboration and knowledge exchange. Overall, the discussions demonstrated the potential to build on existing scientific knowledge, policy frameworks, and financial instruments to accelerate investment in soil health. Moving forward, the challenge will be to connect these elements more effectively, develop viable investment opportunities, and support the wider deployment of solutions on the ground.

> ***"The investment case for soil health is no longer theoretical, as demonstrated by evolving policy, emerging financial models, and projects that are already delivering results. The challenge now is to strengthen collaboration across the entire ecosystem."*** ***— Shona Murray, closing the Forum***

# 1. OPENING AND STRATEGIC FRAMING

## 1.1 Welcome and Opening Address

*Speaker: **Diego Canga Fano**, Acting Deputy Director-General, DG AGRI, and EU Mission Soil Manager, European Commission*

Master of ceremonies, Shona Murray, opened the event by welcoming participants attending in Brussels and online. She highlighted the Forum as the first event dedicated to bringing together the communities needed to accelerate investment in soil health, including policymakers, researchers, financial institutions, businesses, farmers, philanthropic organisations, and practitioners. Introducing the programme, she explained that the discussions would examine how scientific evidence, public policy, and financial innovation can work together to move soil health solutions from research and demonstration towards large-scale implementation.

In his opening speech, Diego Canga Fano placed the event within the broader objectives of the EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' (Mission Soil). He recalled that the **Mission was launched under Horizon Europe with the ambition of establishing 100 Living Labs and Lighthouses by 2030** to test, demonstrate, and scale innovative approaches to soil restoration and sustainable land management. He noted that **the Mission has already built significant momentum, with 45 Living Labs already established**, **an additional 20 expected to become operational during 2026**, **and more than €800 million invested through Horizon Europe in soil-related research and innovation**.

He set out why the Commission convened an investment forum for the first time: r**esearch and innovation are necessary but not sufficient**. If Europe truly intends to restore its soils, **solutions must move from demonstration to deployment at scale — and scale requires investment**. Many of the benefits generated by healthier soils are public goods, while the costs and risks of transition are often borne privately, by farmers and land managers; business models remain emergent, markets are only beginning to form, and financial institutions need projects that are mature, scalable, and investment-ready. He described this gap as the 'next frontier' for the Mission.

Looking ahead, Diego Canga Fano introduced the Mission Soil Platform as an important component of this next phase. **The Platform will provide a space for knowledge exchange**, **showcase successful business models**, **facilitate collaboration among stakeholders**, **and support the development of investment-ready projects**. It will also contribute to improving the visibility of investment opportunities and strengthening the evidence base needed by financial actors interested in supporting soil health initiatives.

He also placed the Forum in the context of the evolving European policy landscape. The future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), implementation of the Carbon Removal and Carbon Farming Regulation (CRCF), the Soil Monitoring Law, and discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) all create opportunities to strengthen investment in soil health. At the same time, he underlined that policy alone will not deliver the Mission's objectives. Success will depend on the

ability of researchers, farmers, businesses, investors, and public authorities working together in developing credible projects that can attract and sustain investment.

Rather than presenting the Forum as a one-off event, the Mission Manager described it as the beginning of an ongoing dialogue between the soil and the investment communities. He argued that bringing these groups together is essential if healthy soils are to become an integral part of future business decisions, agricultural value chains, and investment strategies across Europe.

> ***"Healthy soils are also an economic opportunity. If we want soil health to become part of mainstream business decisions, supply chains and investment portfolios, we need to build bridges between communities that do not often sit around the same table."*** ***— Diego Canga Fano***

## 1.2 Opening Interview – The Ground Beneath Capital: Reframing Soil and Rewiring Capital

*Speakers:* ***Valentina Materia*** *(Associate Professor at Wageningen University & Research, InBestSoil) and* ***Kato Van Ruymbeke*** *(Postdoctoral researcher at KU Leuven, SoilValues)*

Before the plenary discussions on finance, moderator Shona Murray invited two researchers from Mission Soil-funded projects to establish the scientific and practical context for the day's discussions. The interview explored how research is reshaping the understanding of soil value, business models and the conditions needed to support long-term investment in soil health.

The discussion highlighted that understanding soil health requires combining different forms of evidence. Quantitative measurements remain essential for monitoring environmental outcomes, but they need to be complemented by qualitative information that explains why particular approaches succeed or fail under different social, economic, and institutional conditions. Both speakers argued that this broader understanding is particularly important when developing business models capable of attracting long-term investment.

The subsequent audience discussion reinforced several themes that reappeared throughout the Forum. They noted that different users—including farmers, businesses, investors, and policymakers—require different information and that no single set of indicators is likely to satisfy all purposes. They also argued that discussions about soil investment should increasingly focus on the economic consequences of failing to restore soil health, rather than only on the costs of adopting new practices. Finally, the importance of improving soil literacy throughout food value chains was also highlighted, stressing that stronger understanding among businesses, consumers, and investors is necessary if demand for soil-positive products and investment opportunities is to grow.

Together, the session established an important foundation for the Forum. It demonstrated that investment in soil health depends not only on financial innovation but also on improving how soil value is understood, measured, and communicated. Throughout the day, discussions repeatedly returned

to the need for evidence that is scientifically robust, meaningful for decision-makers, and capable of supporting practical investment decisions across different sectors and regions.

> ***"A business model is not a top-down approach that starts and finishes — it's a cycle, and the knowledge created along the way is functional to improving it."*** ***— Valentina Materia***

## 2. PLENARY SESSION 1 — FINANCING SOIL HEALTH: FROM POLICY TO CAPITAL

*Speakers:* ***Christian Holzleitner****, Head of Unit - Climate and economy and Carbon removals, DG CLIMA;* ***Gijs Schilthuis****, Director 'Sustainability', DG AGRI;* ***Claus Felby****, Vice President for AgriFood, Novo Nordisk Foundation*

Introducing the session, Shona Murray noted that successful investment markets depend on clear policy frameworks, credible public commitment, and financial instruments that reduce uncertainty. The discussion explored how emerging EU policies can create the conditions for greater investment in soil health.

Gijs Schilthuis highlighted the role of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in supporting the transition towards more sustainable land management. He pointed to the growing uptake of practices such as cover crops and improvements introduced through Member States' CAP Strategic Plans, while emphasising that the next CAP should continue supporting farmers through greater flexibility and measures that reduce the risks associated with adopting new practices.

Christian Holzleitner outlined progress on implementing the Carbon Removal and Carbon Farming Regulation (CRCF), including the development of certification methodologies and an EU registry. He stressed that certification alone will not create a functioning market: investor confidence also depends on credible demand, transparent governance, and clear rules that ensure transparency while avoiding double claiming.

Claus Felby argued that philanthropy has an important role in supporting early-stage innovation and generating the scientific evidence needed to underpin future investment. However, he emphasised that restoring soil health requires long-term collaboration between public authorities, philanthropic organisations, and commercial investors, as many benefits emerge only over extended timescales while farmers face immediate transition costs and risks.

The discussion with the audience focused on the practical conditions needed to scale investment. Responding to questions on the interaction between the CAP and the CRCF, Christian Holzleitner clarified that carbon farming finance can complement CAP support where additionality requirements are met. Both Commission representatives emphasised the need to simplify participation for farmers by reducing administrative burdens, improving access to common monitoring tools, and involving Member States more closely in implementing MRV systems. Questions from the audience also

highlighted the challenge of treating investments in soil health as long-term assets rather than short-term operating costs. While acknowledging that this remains an evolving area, the panel highlighted the growing interest in recognising natural capital within financial reporting and stressed that credible valuation methods, advisory services, and improved data will be essential to unlock wider investment.

Overall, the session concluded that policy frameworks such as the CAP and the CRCF provide an important foundation for investment, but scaling soil health finance will depend equally on reducing implementation costs, strengthening measurement and advisory systems, and developing financial models that better recognise the long-term value of healthy soils.

> ***"We need to accept higher risk now, because we need soil health to be okay in 10 or 20 years, and that is governed by what we do now."*** ***— Claus Felby, Novo Nordisk Foundation***

## 3. PLENARY SESSION 2 — FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: BUILDING THE SOIL FINANCE TOOLBOX

*Speakers:* ***Ion Codescu****, Head of the Land use and Management Unit, DG ENV;* ***Felipe Ortega Schlingmann****, Head of the Bioeconomy Division, European Investment Bank;* ***Nuria Molina****, Deputy Director, EU and Benelux, Gates Foundation;* ***Richard Zaltzman****, CEO, EIT Food*

The second plenary explored how the policy frameworks discussed earlier in the day can be translated into practical financing mechanisms. Drawing on perspectives from the European Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB), philanthropy, and the agri-food innovation ecosystem, panellists examined the conditions needed to make soil health projects investable and scalable.

Ion Codescu (DG ENV) presented the European Commission's ongoing work on the Nature Credits initiative, being developed with a broad expert group representing academia, business, and public authorities. He explained that, compared with carbon, measuring positive outcomes for nature is inherently more complex, requiring robust methodologies, transparent governance, and credible monitoring before a functioning market can emerge. Referring to the recently adopted Soil Monitoring Law, he stressed that regulation alone will not improve soil health and must be accompanied by incentives, practical examples, and greater awareness among farmers and consumers. He also highlighted the importance of demonstrating viable business cases that combine public support with market-based opportunities, illustrating how innovative value chains can generate additional revenues while improving soil health.

Felipe Ortega Schlingmann outlined the conditions the EIB considers essential when assessing soil health investments: predictable cash flows, a stable policy environment, and sufficient scale. Because individual farm-level projects are typically too small and fragmented for institutional finance, aggregation and intermediary structures are critical to creating investable portfolios. He also highlighted the importance of blended finance, combining loans with grants and public guarantees to support activities that generate environmental value but limited short-term revenues. Responding to

questions from the audience, he emphasised that technical assistance will also be crucial. While advisory schemes such as ELENA work well for large-scale infrastructure projects, agriculture presents a different challenge because it involves millions of individual farmers. Strengthening national advisory and extension services, together with project development support, will therefore be essential to improve investment readiness.

Drawing on the Gates Foundation's collaboration with the European Commission and the European Investment Bank, Nuria Molina described how different forms of capital can be combined to unlock investments that would not otherwise be commercially viable. Using the Human Development Accelerator as an example, she illustrated how philanthropic funding, EU guarantees, and development finance can work together to reduce risk and mobilise significantly larger investments. She suggested that similar blended-finance approaches could help accelerate soil health investments, particularly where projects require long development periods and returns may only materialise over many years.

Richard Zaltzman argued that carbon markets can contribute to financing the transition but will not be sufficient on their own. The greater opportunity lies in transforming agricultural value chains so that regenerative farming generates additional economic value through diversified production, local processing, new products, and stronger relationships between producers, processors, retailers, and consumers. He presented EIT Food's landscape approach as an example of how costs, risks, and benefits can be shared across multiple actors rather than remaining concentrated at farm level.

The discussion concluded that no single policy instrument or financing mechanism will unlock investment at the scale required. Rather, panellists emphasised the need to combine enabling policies, project aggregation, blended finance, technical assistance, and innovative partnerships capable of supporting activities that generate substantial environmental benefits but only limited short-term financial returns. Several speakers also stressed that these approaches must be adapted to the realities of Europe's fragmented farming sector, where advisory services, intermediary organisations and stronger collaboration across the value chain will be critical to connecting farmers with finance and bringing investment-ready projects to market.

> ***"If I had to identify what prevents the EIB from financing significantly more soil health projects, I would say bankability: credible and predictable cash flows, which, in practice, require robust business models."*** ***— Felipe Ortega Schlingmann, European Investment Bank***

# 4. PARALLEL SESSIONS

After lunch, the Forum split into three parallel thematic sessions running from 13:30 to 15:00, each examining a different layer of the soil health investment ecosystem: financing structures, measurement and data, and the innovation and philanthropic ecosystem that connects the two.

## 4.1 Financing Structures and Risk-Sharing Mechanisms

*Moderator:* ***Eduardo Brunet*** *(Investment Advisory & Capital Mobilisation Expert, Mission Soil Platform)*

*Speakers:* ***Paul Martin*** *(International Soil Carbon Industry Alliance);* ***Guillaume Suc*** *(Groupama);* ***Alex Datema*** *(Rabobank);* ***Paul McMahon*** *(SLM Partners);* ***Béla Jankovich de Jeszenice****, (Jankovich Birtok & Mission Soil Ambassador)*

This session examined how different financial actors can support the transition to healthier soils, bringing together perspectives from banking, insurance, private investment, land management, and the soil carbon sector. Rather than identifying a single financing model, speakers highlighted the complementary roles of different sources of capital throughout the investment cycle.

The discussion explored how banks are beginning to integrate soil health considerations into lending decisions, how insurers can help reduce transition risks for farmers, and how private capital can support longer-term land restoration and regenerative agriculture. Speakers also discussed the role of soil carbon markets, recognising their potential to generate additional revenue while emphasising that carbon credits alone are unlikely to provide a sufficient business case for most projects. Credible measurement, transparent standards, and diversified income streams were identified as essential to attracting investment.

A recurring theme was risk-sharing. Panellists agreed that farmers currently bear a disproportionate share of the costs and uncertainties associated with changing management practices, while many of the environmental and societal benefits accrue elsewhere. Scaling investment will therefore require financing structures that distribute risks more effectively among farmers, lenders, insurers, investors (including venture capitalists), supply-chain actors, and the public sector.

Reporting back to the closing plenary, Eduardo Brunet concluded that the outlook for soil finance is positive, with many of the key building blocks already in place, including improving measurement systems, emerging investment models, and early insurance products. However, he highlighted a persistent ‘pre-finance gap’ between the upfront investments required from farmers and the point at which returns can be realised. As the session's main recommendation, he called for stronger knowledge exchange and collaboration between investors, banks, insurers, and other financial actors to build the critical mass needed to scale investment in soil health.

> ***"The market is still fragmented, on the demand side more knowledge and experience-sharing is needed to create critical mass to make it scale."*** ***— Eduardo Brunet, reporting from Parallel Session 1***

## 4.2 Making Soil Health Investable: MRV, Data, and the Science-Finance Interface

*Moderator:* ***Prof. Dr Harry Vereecken*** *(Jülich Research Centre / University of Bonn — Mission Soil Board, Working Group on Business Models and Investment)*

*Speakers:* ***Will Stephens*** *(Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENs);* ***Damien Jourdan*** *(Danone);* ***Samo Login*** *(LoginEKO);* ***Meghan Sapp*** *(EARA);* ***Rachel Creamer****, (Wageningen University & Research)*

Opening the session, Prof. Vereecken highlighted the growing demand from businesses and investors for credible evidence that investments in regenerative agriculture deliver measurable outcomes. While many organisations already monitor farming practices, demonstrating improvements in soil health remains more challenging, making robust, transparent, and practical monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) systems essential for scaling up investment.

Damien Jourdan described Danone's transition from monitoring farming practices towards assessing broader resilience outcomes across soil health, climate, biodiversity, and water. He stressed that data collection should inform decision-making rather than become an objective in itself, arguing the broader role of MRV systems in creating value for farmers, businesses, and investors.

Meghan Sapp reviewed the current landscape of MRV frameworks, noting that no existing system fully captures the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of regenerative agriculture. She advocated that future approaches should combine scientific rigour with practical indicators, enabling outcome-based incentives while remaining feasible for farmers to implement and useful for decision making.

Rachel Creamer emphasised that there is no universal set of indicators suitable for all situations. Instead, MRV systems should be tailored to their intended users and objectives, recognising that farmers, businesses and policymakers require different types of information. Referring to the Soil Monitoring Law, she also noted that European-scale monitoring can help identify regional risks and priorities, while farm-level decisions require more context-specific assessments and advisory support for farm-level decisions.

Will Stephens presented how Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENs) has developed practical approaches to monitoring environmental outcomes across multiple landscapes to support collective financing of regenerative practices by farmers, businesses, and other organisations. Samo Login emphasised that encouraging farmers to adopt more sustainable practices should remain the priority, with greater data transparency helping to build trust and strengthen verification over time. He also

emphasised the importance of improving the processes for collecting and preserving soil samples, in order to enhance the consistency of analyses and the use of the data.

The discussion concluded that MRV should serve better land management and investment decisions. Panellists agreed that no single framework will meet every need and requires contextualisation, and that successful systems must balance scientific credibility with affordability (shared across the value chain), transparency, and usability, combining outcome-based with action-based indicators. Building trust between farmers, businesses, investors, and public authorities, supported by stronger advisory services and clearer governance of data, was also identified as an essential condition for wider uptake.

> ***"One-size-fits-all doesn't work for MRV if we look at the larger scale. Measurement should be outcome-based and linked to the actions farmers should take."*** ***— Harry Vereecken, reporting from Parallel Session 2***

## 5. From Field to Finance: Innovation, Philanthropy, and Living Labs as Investment Enablers

*Moderator:* ***Erik Mathijs*** *(Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics, KU Leuven)*

*Speakers:* ***Marie Lorre*** *(Fonds de Dotation Roullier);* ***Alejandro Trénor*** *(Soil Capital);* ***Hanne Bang Bligaard*** *(Arla Foods);* ***Tristano De Gregoris*** *(SAE INNOVA & Living Labs Project Coordinator);* ***Adrián Ferrero*** *(Biome Makers)*

Opening the session, Erik Mathijs noted that building a market for soil health requires a diverse ecosystem of actors and business models. Bringing together representatives from technology, agribusiness, philanthropy, Living Labs, and carbon markets, the discussion explored how innovation, partnerships, and intermediary organisations can help translate soil health benefits into investable opportunities.

Adrián Ferrero described Biome Makers' evolution from a soil microbiology start-up into a global soil analytics platform operating in more than 50 countries. He explained how advances in soil biology, combined with falling testing costs and growing reference datasets, are making soil health information increasingly relevant for farm management, supply-chain decisions, and financial risk assessment.

Alejandro Trénor presented Soil Capital's model of rewarding farmers for regenerative practices through partnerships with food and beverage companies seeking to reduce Scope 3 emissions and strengthen supply-chain resilience. He argued that companies typically engage where regenerative agriculture contributes to regulatory compliance, investor expectations, business resilience, or long-term competitiveness – highlighting the importance of linking environmental outcomes to clear commercial value.

Marie Lorre explained how the Fonds de Dotation Roullier supports soil health innovation by funding projects that combine scientific excellence with strong stakeholder engagement. She emphasised the role of philanthropic capital in supporting emerging topics, fostering collaboration with farmers, and helping projects generate lasting impact beyond the initial funding period.

Tristano De Gregoris described how the GOV4ALL Living Labs are developing governance models that combine soil restoration with wider territorial objectives, including climate resilience, rural development, and social innovation. He identified three recurring pathways for creating long-term value: making regenerative farming practices more visible through branding, certification, and contract agreements, reducing transaction costs through advisory services and farmer networks, and developing infrastructure and governance models capable of attracting funding beyond the initial project lifetime.

Hanne Bang Bligaard outlined Arla Foods' Farmer HEAD programme, developed over more than a decade in collaboration with its farmer-owners. Combining environmental monitoring with financial incentives linked to verified sustainability performance, the programme illustrates how long-term relationships, decision-making support, and continuous collaboration with farmers can underpin large-scale implementation of regenerative practices.

The discussion focused on how data, collaboration, and intermediary structures can create value for farmers and investors. Panellists agreed that individual farm data has limited value in isolation but becomes significantly more valuable when linked to supply-chain partnerships, Scope 3 programmes, and advisory services that help farmers improve decision-making. Speakers also stressed the importance of complying with the EU Data Act and GDPR while maintaining farmers' trust in how their data are used, and the importance of regulation as a lever. A part of the discussion examined how Living Labs can become financially sustainable beyond EU funding, with participants highlighting territorial branding, advisory services, certification schemes, physical infrastructure, and stronger links with public authorities as potential long-term business models. Finally, participants discussed the potential role of Living Labs in supporting implementation of the Soil Monitoring Law by providing local knowledge, advisory capacity, and tested solutions for policymakers.

Reporting back to the closing plenary, Erik Mathijs highlighted three overarching conclusions. First, building trust and effective collaboration takes time and should be considered as an investment in itself. Second, collaboration generates significant transaction costs that need to be acknowledged and reduced through intermediary organisations such as Living Labs. Finally, he stressed that Europe's soil health ecosystem encompasses a wide diversity of business models and investment needs—from community-based initiatives with limited data requirements to highly standardised corporate programmes—and that this diversity should be recognised and supported rather than reduced to a single model.

> ***"You have this diversity of needs enhance the diversity of business models, and maybe some of them don't even need soil data. Acknowledge this diversity and foster the diversity, because Europe is about diversity."*** ***— Erik Mathijs, reporting from Parallel Session 3***

## 6. PLENARY SESSION 3 — FROM FORUM TO FOLLOW-UP ACTION

*Speakers:* ***Henri Delanghe****, Head of the Research and Innovation Unit and Mission Soil Secretariat, DG AGRI, European Commission*

***Prof. Dr. Harry Vereecken*** *(Jülich Research Centre & Mission Board Member);* ***Eduardo Brunet****, (Mission Soil Platform);* ***Erik Mathijs*** *(KU Leuven, Belgium)*

The closing plenary opened with reports from the moderators of the three parallel sessions, who highlighted the main messages emerging from the discussions and identified priorities for future action. Together, the sessions underscored the need to strengthen collaboration across the soil health investment ecosystem by improving access to finance, developing practical and credible measurement systems, supporting diverse business models, and reducing the transaction costs associated with building partnerships.

### The Mission Soil Platform: Maintaining Momentum

Henri Delanghe, Head of the Research and Innovation Unit at DG AGRI and Head of the Mission Soil Secretariat, presented the Mission Soil Platform as the mechanism for sustaining the momentum generated by the Forum. He emphasised that the Platform is intended to connect researchers, farmers, businesses, investors, and public authorities, helping them **move from dialogue to practical collaboration and investment**.

Building on the discussions throughout the day, he explained that **the Mission Soil Platform will provide practical guidance**, **market intelligence**, **capacity-building activities**, **and opportunities for networking and matchmaking**. Its objective is to **strengthen the pipeline of investment-ready initiatives by helping project promoters develop stronger business cases**, **connect with potential investors**, **and learn from successful examples across Europe**. The Platform will also support the sharing of knowledge and experience across the Mission Soil community, helping to reduce transaction costs and foster collaboration between different sectors.

Henri Delanghe stressed that the Forum should mark the beginning of an ongoing process rather than a one-off event. Looking ahead, he expressed **the ambition to build a larger and more connected community around soil health investment**, **with regular opportunities for collaboration**, **project development**, **and exchange** before the next Mission Soil Investment Forum. He concluded that translating scientific knowledge and innovative practices into **investable projects will require continued cooperation between researchers**, **policymakers**, **businesses**, **financial institutions**, **and farmers**, with the Mission Soil Platform serving as a catalyst for that collaboration.

> ***"The challenge is not generating ideas — we've seen many inspiring examples today — but making sure these ideas become projects that investors are actually able to finance."*** ***— Henri Delanghe, Head of the Mission Soil Secretariat***

## 7. PITCH SESSION: SOIL HEALTH INNOVATORS

*Moderator:* ***Luis Sánchez Álvarez*** *(Head of Sector at Unit Research and Innovation, DG AGRI, European Commission)*

The Forum concluded with a series of short pitches from innovators, businesses, and project developers showcasing practical approaches to financing soil health. The presentations demonstrated the diversity of emerging business models, ranging from circular bioeconomy initiatives and carbon farming to digital technologies, landscape restoration, and biodiversity monitoring. While their financing models differed, all highlighted the importance of combining scientific innovation with practical implementation, strong partnerships, and diversified sources of funding.

### 1. SoilValues Belgium

*Speaker:* ***Ennio Facq****, Researcher, Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (ILVO)*

Ennio Facq presented a regional initiative that transforms biomass removed from nature reserves into compost for agricultural use through a cooperative model involving local farmers. Rather than creating new environmental markets, the project demonstrates how existing public expenditure can be redirected to generate both environmental benefits and economic value for farmers, while strengthening collaboration between public authorities and the agricultural sector.

### 2. Racines de France

*Speaker:* ***Sara Ligeard****, Project Manager*

Sara Ligeard presented a landscape restoration model combining carbon sequestration, biodiversity, water management, and soil restoration through tree-based interventions. She emphasised the importance of diversifying revenue streams by combining environmental credits, consultancy services, and philanthropic funding, reducing dependence on a single financing mechanism, and increasing long-term resilience.

### 3. betterSoil

*Speakers:* ***Azadeh Farajpour****, Co-Founder/CEO;* ***Dr. Tobias Orthen****, Co-Founder/CFO and* ***Fritz Köcher****, Agricultural Strategist*

The betterSoil team demonstrated a digital decision-support platform combining satellite observations, soil information, and weather data to optimise crop rotations and improve soil fertility. Looking ahead, they described ongoing work to demonstrate how improvements in soil health can strengthen farm financial performance and support new approaches to agricultural lending.

### 4. eAgronom

*Speaker: **Robin Saluoks**, Founder and CEO*

Robin Saluoks outlined eAgronom's journey from farm management software to one of Europe's first large-scale soil carbon programmes. He highlighted the importance of reducing administrative burdens through digitalisation and automation while arguing that stable policy frameworks and market certainty will be essential to scale carbon farming across Europe.

### 5. Verdi Technologies

*Speaker: **Lara del Solar**, Founder's Associate*

Lara del Solar presented Veridi Technologies' AI-based system for automated soil biodiversity monitoring, enabling faster and more affordable identification of soil organisms used as indicators of soil health. She highlighted the potential of digital technologies to support more consistent and scalable biodiversity monitoring while reducing analytical costs.

### 6. Land Life

*Speaker: **Kathleen Ceulemans**, EU Public Affairs and Engagement Lead*

Kathleen Ceulemans presented Land Life's experience in financing large-scale ecosystem restoration through long-term partnerships with corporate buyers of carbon and nature credits. She argued that successful landscape restoration depends on patient investment, strong local partnerships, and transparent governance, while calling for closer integration of agricultural and forestry financing approaches.

## Key messages

The session showed that no single pathway can finance soil health. Instead, successful initiatives combine different forms of capital—including public funding, private investment, corporate partnerships, and philanthropic support—with robust scientific evidence, practical implementation, and collaboration across the value chain. Moderating the session, Luis Sánchez Álvarez concluded that the presented examples demonstrated the growing maturity of Europe's soil health innovation ecosystem and the increasing diversity of investment models emerging across the sector.

> ***"It's a very nice way of concluding the session today, giving also some light to projects that are successful or are still in their way." — Luis Sánchez Álvarez, closing the pitch session***

## 8. CLOSING REMARKS

*Speaker: **Peter Wehrheim**, Head of Unit - Bioeconomy and Food Systems, DG RTD and Deputy Mission Soil Manager, European Commission*

Closing the Forum, Peter Wehrheim thanked the speakers, moderators, organisers, and participants for a day characterised by ambitious ideas, practical experience, and open discussion on how to move soil health from commitment to implementation. He noted that the Forum had demonstrated the growing maturity of the soil health investment agenda and the shared commitment across research, policy, finance, and practice to accelerate action.

He emphasised that soil health is no longer a niche environmental issue but a strategic priority for Europe's future, underpinning food security, water resilience, biodiversity, climate adaptation, rural livelihoods, competitiveness, and strategic autonomy. While restoring healthy soils requires changes in land management, innovation, advisory services, and better data, he stressed that these changes will not happen at the necessary scale without greater investment and stronger collaboration across the public and private sectors.

Reflecting the discussions throughout the day, Peter Wehrheim highlighted the need for a balanced financing ecosystem. Public funding will remain essential to support research, innovation, and early deployment, but must increasingly be complemented by private investment, blended finance, and stronger risk-sharing mechanisms. He also underlined the importance of developing emerging instruments such as carbon, biodiversity, and nature credits with robust measurement, transparency, and environmental integrity, arguing that finance ultimately depends on confidence: confidence in the evidence, in the policy framework, and in a pipeline of credible investment opportunities.

A recurring theme of his remarks was collaboration. Farmers and land managers are central to the transition but cannot deliver it alone. Researchers, businesses, investors, public authorities, advisory services, civil society, and local communities all have complementary roles to play, while public-private partnerships and stronger engagement by Member States will be essential to connect European initiatives with regional and local implementation. He also pointed to Horizon Europe, Mission Soil, and wider EU innovation instruments as providing a strong foundation, while stressing that existing tools need to be used in a more connected way to help projects move from proof of concept to investment-ready scale.

Looking ahead, Peter Wehrheim identified four priorities: building stronger pipelines of investment-ready soil health projects; improving measurement, monitoring, and verification through trusted methodologies; scaling and replicating successful approaches across different regions; and maintaining the cross-sector community established during the Forum. He concluded that Europe already has the knowledge, emerging business models, and policy direction needed to accelerate investment, and that the shared task now is to translate ambition into action through stronger partnerships and practical implementation.

> ***"Soil health is no longer a niche environmental topic. It's now a strategic issue for Europe's future."***
> ***— Peter Wehrheim, Deputy Mission Soil Manager***

Shona Murray closed the Forum by reflecting on the day's progression—from science and policy to financial instruments, practical business models, and real-world examples of investment in soil health. She emphasised that the Forum marked the beginning of a longer-term collaborative effort, before inviting participants to continue discussions during the networking reception. She also highlighted the event badges, printed on biodegradable paper embedded with wildflower seeds and linked via QR code to a soil regeneration project, supported by the event organiser, as a symbolic reminder that restoring healthy soils requires practical action and sustained commitment. She concluded by inviting participants to the next European Mission Soil Week, to be held in Dublin on 17-18 November 2026.

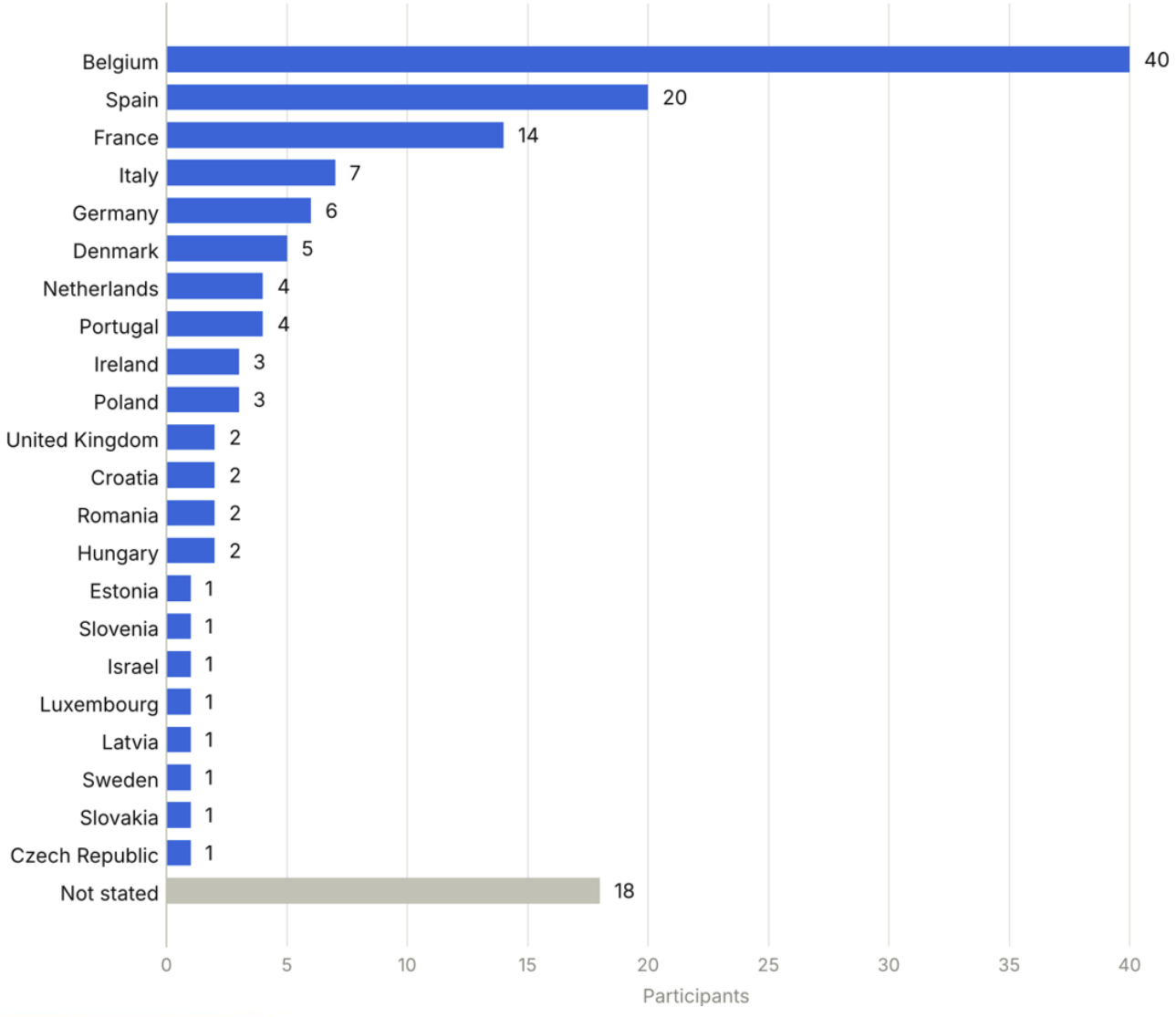
# ANNEX 1: STATISTICS OF THE EVENT

## Participation

The first Mission Soil Investment Forum brought together 140 participants onsite in Brussels, and over 100 online, representing EU institutions, Member States, financial institutions, investors, philanthropic organisations, businesses, research organisations, farmers, Living Labs, and civil society.

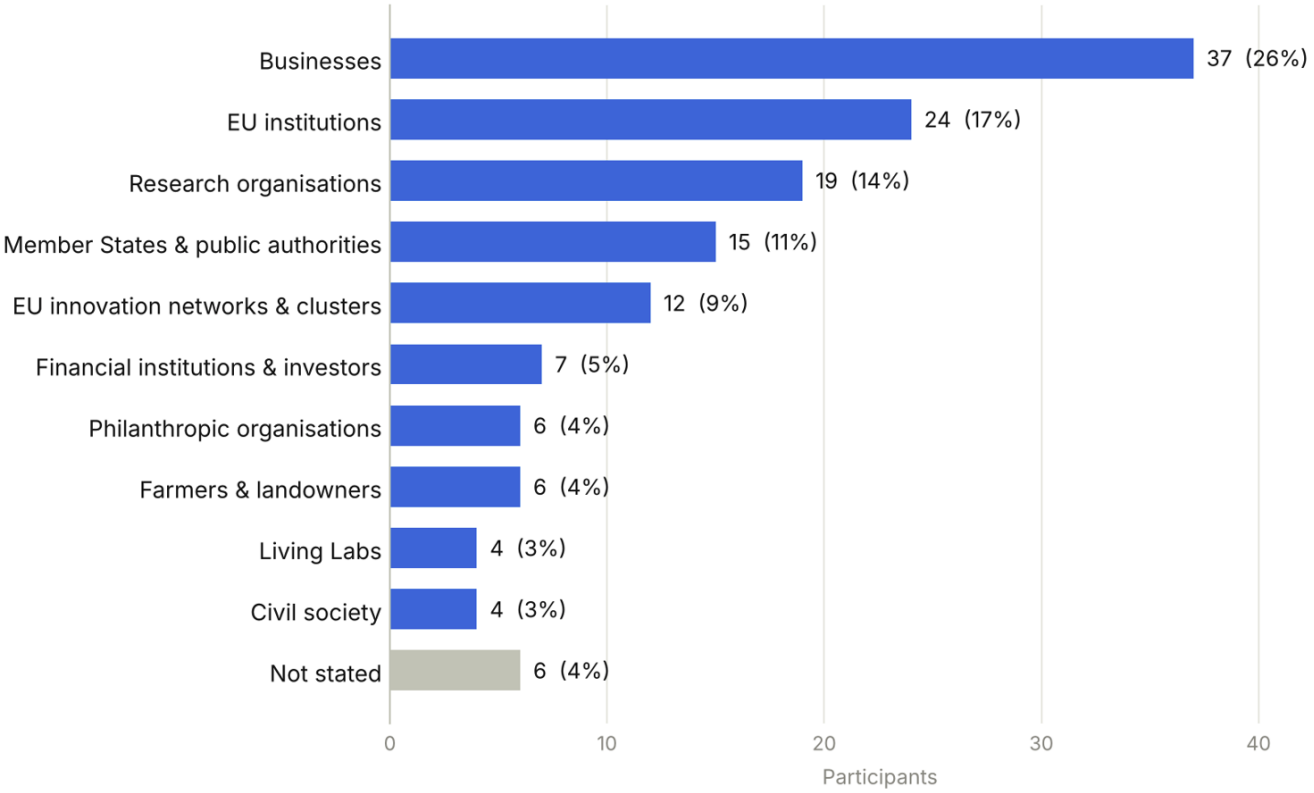
## Onsite participants by country

The event attracted 140 in-person participants from 22 countries, demonstrating its international reach and strong European representation, with 20 of the 27 EU Member States represented. Among the in-person participants, Belgium was the most represented country, accounting for 29% of attendees, followed by Spain (14%), France (10%), Italy (5%), and Germany (4%). Participation also included



representatives from other EU Member States, as well as from non-EU countries such as the United Kingdom and Israel, reflecting a geographically diverse audience.

### Onsite participants by organisation type




### Social media reach

Social media communication around the Mission Soil Investment Forum 2026 generated strong visibility and engagement across LinkedIn, Facebook, and X. Across the analysed posts, the campaign generated approximately 58,500 impressions and 551 interactions, with LinkedIn accounting for the largest share of overall visibility and engagement.

#### Overall performance

| Platform | Posts analysed | Impressions | Interactions | Engagements |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LinkedIn** | 5 | 43,400 | 356 | 1,256 |
| **Facebook** | 3 | 4,700 | 57 | 122 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **X** | 6 | 10,376 | 138 | 292 |
| **Total** | **14** | **58,476** | **551** | **1,670** |

*Figures are based on the available platform analytics. Metrics may not be directly comparable across platforms due to differences in platform definitions*

### LinkedIn

Five LinkedIn posts generated 43,400 impressions, 356 interactions, and 1,256 engagements. The strongest post was the registration announcement, with 15,100 impressions, 403 engagements, 124 interactions, and 251 clicks. The highest engagement rate (5.10%) was recorded by the post highlighting healthy soils as a strategic investment in Europe's future.

### Facebook

Three Facebook posts generated 4,700 impressions, approximately 3,480 reach, 57 interactions, and 122 engagements. The registration announcement performed strongest, generating 1,700 impressions, 1,200 reach, 48 engagements, and 25 clicks, with a 3.99% reach engagement rate. All recorded impressions were organic.

### X

Six posts on X generated approximately 10,400 impressions, 138 interactions, and 292 engagements. The registration announcement recorded the highest number of interactions (33), while the "Meet the voices shaping the conversation" post achieved the highest engagement rate (7.25%), with 49 engagements from 676 impressions.

### Instagram Stories

A total of 11 Instagram Stories generated 2,611 views. Before the event, two Stories generated 552 views, while during the event, nine Stories generated a combined 2,059 views, supporting real-time visibility and coverage of the Forum

## ANNEX 2: RESOURCES

The following resources are available through the Mission Soil Investment Forum website:

- ✓ Mission Soil Investment Forum recordings, pictures, presentations
- ✓ Matchmaking platform
- ✓ Mission Soil Platform website
- ✓ European Mission Soil Week 2025