Soils for Europe

# PROJECT IMPACT ON VALUE CHAIN ORGANIZATION AND PRACTICES

*Nóvoa, T., Roca, R. & Naciph, K. (2025). Identification and description of the KPIs to monitor the Mission R&I priorities.*

*Deliverable D5.2 EU Horizon Europe.*

## 15. Member States introducing a soil health certificate per type of certification

QUANTITATIVE




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# INTRODUCTION

SOLO introduces a comprehensive impact assessment framework designed to evaluate the real-world effects of Mission Soil research and innovation activities across society, the economy, policy, and practice. This adaptable tool supports Mission Soil projects in monitoring and evaluation, with future potential for ex-ante assessment and project design. Beyond defining key components, qualitative indicators, quantitative metrics, and impact narratives, SOLO also outlines the mechanisms needed to effectively implement the framework in practice.

The assessment framework allows for the evaluation of 5 types of impact of Mission Soil Research and Innovation (R&I) activities:

1. **Project impact in practice**: focus on impact among land managers, advisors, urban planners and other stakeholders;
2. **Project impact on policy and administration**: focus on policy strategies and tools, and other institutional arrangements;
3. **Project impact on value chain organisation and practices**: focus on market mechanisms, business models and requirements;
4. **Broader societal impact**: focus on literacy, awareness, school programmes and education;
5. **Impact on research and innovation:** focus on academic institutions, researchers, publications and funding.

These 5 types of impact correspond to categories under which key performance indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, are grouped.



The other component of the impact assessment framework is the **impact narrative**: a compelling, substantiated statement which reflects the contributions of R&I activities to society, the economy, policy and practice beyond numbers and quantitative targets.

An **impact narrative** must describe the societal challenge to be tackled; identify the stakeholders and beneficiaries who are positively impacted, explaining how they have experienced meaningful change; describe the situation at the start of the project vis-a-vis the goal of the assessment; describe the specific outcomes and results of the R&I activities; describe changes in behaviour, practices and policies; include real-world examples and stories; be supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence; connect the impact to broader societal goals; and provide insights into the potential future implications and opportunities resulting from the developed R&I.

# Member States introducing a soil health certificate per type of certification

## DESCRIPTION AND IMPORTANCE

Assess the level of market integration of soil health requirements, by considering various types of certifications resulting from the Mission Soil's action.

The creation of a "voluntary soil health certification for land-owners and managers" (Halleux, 2024) as initially proposed in the early versions of the Soil Monitoring Law has been dismissed in the current proposal (European Commission, 2024). The fact that evidence suggests that certification schemes are not appealing to farmers, particularly small-scale producers (Vanzini et al., 2024), may have weighed in the decision.

Considering this potential limitation, this indicator accounts not only for certifications that attest to a healthy soil, but also for other types of related certification, such as accredited training in soil health (e.g., London College of Foreign Trade), soil science professionals (e.g., Soil Science Society of America, 2023) and sectoral certifications (e.g., environment, agriculture) that, in spite of not being focused on soil, explicitly encompass soil health standards (e.g., Soil Association, 2024).

For the purposes of this indicator, the introduction of soil health certificates must be traceable to Mission Soil, both directly (e.g., certificate as an outcome of a MSoil project) or indirectly (e.g., certificates that have been introduced due to the MSoil activities).

To evaluate whether the introduction of soil health certificates is traceable to the Mission Soil, it is recommended to apply the Process Tracing methodology. This monitoring and evaluation methodology has the purpose of establishing how a cause influenced a specific change (INTRAC, 2017). Although there are specific tests that may be applied to the existing evidence which links potential causes to the change ("Straw in the wind", "Hoop", "Smoking gun", "Doubly Decisive"), the methodology may be summarised in 5 analytical steps (INTRAC, 2017):

- Step 1: Identify the change or changes to be explained
- Step 2: Establish the evidence for the change
- Step 3: Document the processes leading to the change
- Step 4: Establish alternative causal explanations
- Step 5: Assess the evidence for each causal explanation

## DEFINITION

Number of MS with a soil health certificate, per type of certification.

## MEASUREMENT

This indicator measures the number of Member States that have introduced soil health-related certifications.

In order to provide additional information, the indicator disaggregates by:

- Type of certification:
  - Soil health certificate
  - Accredited training
  - Soil science professionals
  - Sectoral certifications encompassing explicit soil health standards
  - Other
- Level of certification:
  - National / Federal
  - Supranational / International
  - Other
- Type of entity issuing the certification:
  - Public / State institution
  - Private company
  - Non-governmental organisation
  - Academic institution
  - Other
- Type of target audience (multiple option)
  - Producers / Farms
  - Private companies / Brands
  - Soil professionals

## LEVEL

MS

## DATA SOURCE

MS reporting

## PERIODICITY

Quadrennial

## TYPE

Outcome



## CLASS

Market take-up

## REFERENCES


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