

## **Can the answer be in the soil? RECARE - finding and sharing solutions to protect our soils**

A growing world population has to deal with increasingly urgent issues of food security, flooding and drought, as well as pollution which threaten agricultural productivity and the environment. The answer to all these urgent issues could rest in the soil.

Soil is vital to supporting food production as well as the filtering of water consumed by humans and plants. In addition, soil cycles and stores nutrients which are key to supporting life, as well as holding water to alleviate the stresses of both drought and flooding and storing carbon to mitigate against climate change.

Due to growing human intervention and unsustainable management, soils are currently under increasing threat from a wide range of processes, such as soil erosion, compaction, desertification, salinization, sealing, contamination and loss of organic matter and biodiversity. They need to be adequately protected and conserved to ensure that their many functions and services to all of society are not lost or diminished.

With the importance of soil in mind, the EU has funded a 5 year research project which will be looking at measures to prevent and remediate soil degradation in Europe.

The project, entitled RECARE, will bring together a multidisciplinary team to find ways of assessing the current threats to soils and finding innovative solutions to prevent further soil degradation across Europe, from Iceland to Cyprus. Researchers from 27 different organisations, including Wageningen University and ALTErrA, both coordinators of the project, will share information regarding the current evidence and approaches to resolve the main threats to soils.

Professor Coen Ritsema, based in Soil Physics and Land Management Department at Wageningen University and the lead for the project says that 'the exciting thing about this project is that it seeks to look at soils across the whole of Europe. RECARE includes 17 Case Studies of soil threats that will study the various conditions that occur across Europe and find appropriate solutions using an innovative approach combining scientific and local knowledge".

As good communication is essential to optimise the value of research, the project results will be continuously disseminated through a dedicated RECARE Information Hub. Given the critical state of the environment, it is essential that the research outputs are shared between researchers, but also feed through to those working with and advising on soils, so that soils can function as effectively as possible, to the benefit of all.

*For more information about the project go to <http://www.recare-project.eu/> or the RECARE Information Hub <http://www.recare-hub.eu>.*

*Further information is also available on Twitter @RECARE\_EU and Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/channels/RECARE>*

The RECARE Project Co-ordinator is Professor Coen Ritsem at Wageningen University, The Netherlands

Tel: +31 317 48 65 17 Email: [coen.ritsema@wur.nl](mailto:coen.ritsema@wur.nl)

The Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire, UK is responsible for the Communication and Dissemination activities of the RECARE project. Contact Jane Mills: Tel: +44 1242 71 4137 Email: [jmills@glos.ac.uk](mailto:jmills@glos.ac.uk)