

InBestSoil, a project financed by the European Union through the Horizon Europe program, is launched

This European project, which has a budget of more than 5 million euros will try to give economic value to the different services provided by healthy soil.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The project

"InBestSoil - Monetary valuation of soil ecosystem services and creation of initiatives for investing in soil health: establishing a framework for the inclusion of soil health in business and policy-making" led by the University of

Vigo and coordinated by the researcher Diego Soto Gómez, started this January. This European project, which has a budget of more than 5 million euros and involves 19 institutions from 10 countries, will try to give economic value to the different services provided by healthy soil.

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InBestSoil aims to contribute to developing the EU Soil Strategy for 2030 by co-creating an enabling framework for investments in the conservation and restoration of soil health”

Diego Soto Gómez, the coordinator of the InBestSoil project

The kick-off meeting took place in Zagreb (Croatia) between January 31 and February 1. During this first meeting, the project partners met in person to discuss the project's first steps, which will be carried out over the next four years, with the participation of private companies, universities, NGOs, farmers' associations, and other entities from different European countries.

InBestSoil is a Horizon Europe project of the Missions program, jointly funded by the European Commission in partnership with the British and Swiss governments, with a budget of almost 6 million euros (4.6 million euros from

the European Commission).

“Our mission is to emphasize the fundamental importance of soils for our well-being and



livelihoods, and tackle the central challenges of our time. Soil is a critical link between global environmental issues such as climate change, water management, and biodiversity loss. At the same time, it is an essential non-renewable resource for agriculture, providing the basis for producing food and other necessary resources for the circular economy", stated Diego Soto Gómez, the coordinator of the InBestSoil project and researcher at the University of Vigo.



This project will address the challenge of giving an economic value to soil health, considering its different functions: from fiber and food production to its role in preserving the cultural heritage. To this end, experimental areas have been selected throughout Europe, where effective soil health improvement techniques ("lighthouses") are used. These include different regions, such as a Spanish meadow area where agropastoralism is utilized for regenerating soil depleted by conventional agriculture, or peri-urban areas in Vilnius and Zagreb, where agriculture improves soil infiltration and reduces the incidence of flooding. Other experimental regions include, for example, the fields of a Dutch initiative that aims to diversify the farmers' production in the area and increase soil fertility by including lupines in their rotations, two abandoned mines whose soils have been rehabilitated, and a boreal forest where remains from the timber industry are used to improve soil characteristics.

The soil health improvements and the possibility of exporting these techniques to other places will be analyzed in these lighthouses, as well as developing a framework that allows companies to invest money in these solutions.

The project team is multinational with diverse expertise in agriculture, research, and communication. The coordinator is the University of Vigo, Spain, responsible for leading and organizing the project by providing a clear management structure and procedures to ensure effective administration and technical coordination. The other work package coordinators are:

- Zabala Innovation Consulting, Spain - Stakeholder communities for co-creation, co-innovation, and co-learning.
- Polytechnic University of Cartagena - Economic valuation of the soil ecosystem services and the impacts of soil interventions.
- FiBL - Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, Switzerland - Impacts and scalability of current soil health interventions across Europe.

- Wageningen University, Netherlands - New business models for soil health.
- Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change, Italy - Policy and incentives to facilitate investment in soil health.
- June Communications, Romania - Communication, dissemination, and exploitation.

The other partners of the InBestSoil project are Inxenia Desarrollos Tecnológicos - Spain; Centro de Valorización Ambiental del Norte - Spain; Fundación Global Nature - Spain; University of Zagreb - Croatia; Mykolas Romeris University - Lithuania, Latvian State Forest Research Institute "Silava" - Latvia; Ekoboerderij de Lingehof - Netherlands, Agris Sardegna - Italy, LGI Sustainable Innovation - France, Udea BV - Netherland, Actyva Sociedad Cooperativa- Spain; The University of Exeter - UK.

About InBestSoil

The InBestSoil project, led by the University of Vigo and coordinated by the researcher Diego Soto Gómez, started in January 2023. InBestSoil aims to create a framework for investing in the conservation and restoration of soil health by developing a system for the economic valorization of the ecosystem services provided by healthy soil and incorporating it into business models and incentives development. This enables public and private organizations to design strategies with local stakeholders and work collectively to deliver EU policies, providing data, evidence, tools, and models to assess how investments in soil health can contribute to the transition to a durable and long-term resistance of the soil. This 48-month project has a budget of more than 5 million euros and is funded by the European Union through the Horizon Europe program. It involves 19 partners from 10 countries with very different profiles - universities, small and medium-sized enterprises, consultancies, farmers, NGOs, and other entities.

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