



Impact Assessment of Soil Protection Policies in Europe

Nadia Glæsner, Katharina Helming, Luca Montanarella & Wim de Vries, Leibniz-Zentrum für Agrarlandschaftsforschung (ZALF), Muencheberg, Germany.

ABSTRACT

Soil protection plays an evident role for grand societal challenges, such as food security, climate change mitigation, and increased resource efficiency. Despite this, a common legally binding framework for soil protection does not exist at European level. In 2006, the “Thematic strategy for soil protection” [COM(2006)231] was proposed by the European Commission, including a proposal for a legally binding soil framework directive [COM(2006)232]. The final adoption of the proposed directive was opposed by a minority of EU member states with arguments of excessive administrative burden and alleged violation of the subsidiarity principles. Furthermore, the scientific evidence was not convincing to decision makers at that time, and particularly monetary information related to soil degradation was not sufficient. At present, ongoing activities within awareness raising, research and policy integration of the EU Soil Thematic Strategy are taking place [COM(2012)46].

We believe that action at European level is necessary for meeting upcoming grand societal challenges. Our study aims at revisiting the 2006 impact assessment [SEC(2006)620] with new insights in view of i) focusing on soil functions in relation to grand societal challenges instead of soil threats, ii) new role of soil issues in other environmental policies, iii) analysis of soil related policies since 2006, using new tools for impact assessment which allows new insight through different integration of existing knowledge. The review will aid in developing stronger science evident base for the proposed soil protection framework directive.

An important reason for a revisited impact assessment is that soil degradation is now much more prominent on the awareness list than it was in 2006. It has been stressed in many policy related documents in the last decade that soils are fundamental pillars of sustainable development [COM(2013)92].