

Project “EU partnership to protect agricultural land in the face of climate and environmental challenges. Caring for future generations” (ProLand)

Program Erasmus+, project KA220-HED - Cooperation partnerships in higher education (2024-1-PL01-KA220-HED-000252809)

REPORT

SUSTAINABLE SOILS FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

WORKSHOPS AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Roma Tre University, Department of Law,

Via Ostiense n. 161, Roma - Sala del Consiglio

October 20-22, 2025

The workshops and international conference “Sustainable Soils for Sustainable Agriculture”, held at Roma Tre University (Rome) from 20 to 22 October 2025, represented a key milestone within the project activities and was organized under the scientific and organizational direction of Professor Giuseppe Spoto (Roma Tre University), in his role as Local Project Coordinator. The event served as a space for scientific synthesis and dialogue between academic research, institutional perspectives, and territorial practices.

Structured around scientific sessions and field-based workshops, the conference addressed the protection and sustainable management of soils as one of the most pressing challenges facing contemporary agriculture and environmental governance. Soil was discussed as a fundamental natural resource and as a cornerstone of food security, ecosystem services, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience, while also being increasingly threatened by erosion, contamination, sealing, loss of organic matter, and unsustainable land use.

The conference promoted an interdisciplinary discussion on soil protection, integrating legal, economic, environmental, and policy-oriented perspectives, with particular attention to the evolving European framework on soil monitoring and resilience, the role of the Common



Agricultural Policy, national legal systems, and the challenges posed by territorial governance, digitalization, and European integration processes. The opening of the conference was marked by institutional addresses delivered by Antonio Carratta, Director of the Department of Law at Roma Tre University, Leonardo Pastorino, President of the World Union of University Agrarians (UMA), and Maria Esther Muñiz, President of the European Council for Rural Law (CEDR). These remarks emphasized the centrality of soil protection within contemporary legal and policy debates on sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Following the institutional addresses, Giuseppe Spoto (Roma Tre University), acting as Local Project Coordinator, delivered the conference presentation. His introductory remarks framed the event as a key moment of scientific exchange and dialogue between academic research, institutional actors, and territorial practices, highlighting the strategic relevance of soil protection within current European debates on sustainability and agricultural policy.

The scientific sessions followed a coherent thematic progression, moving from European-level perspectives to national legal frameworks and sectoral policy instruments.

Cristina Vaquero Piñeiro (Roma Tre University), in her contribution "Protection of Soils from an Economic Perspective", framed soil protection as both an environmental and economic priority. She highlighted the economic risks associated with soil degradation and emphasized the role of agroecology, public policies (especially the Common Agricultural Policy), and innovation in promoting sustainable land management. The presentation underlined the importance of coordinated, place-based policies and referred to empirical research showing how incentives can positively influence farmers' practices.

Fernando de Moral Torres (University of Almería), in "Soil as a Legal Frontier: Edaphic Keys to the European Soil Monitoring Framework", illustrated the scientific foundations of the proposed EU Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive. Soil was presented as a living system essential for ecosystem services, food security, and resilience. The contribution introduced key concepts, indicators, and threats relevant to soil health, stressing that soil protection is a scientific, political, and strategic imperative.

Building on this framework, Lorenzo Mellado Ruiz (University of Almería), in "Legal Elements of the European Proposal for a Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive", analyzed the main legal features of the draft Directive on Soil Monitoring and Resilience. He highlighted its ambition to

ensure healthy soils across the EU, the harmonization of objectives and risk assessment methodologies combined with flexibility in national implementation, and its close connection with the EU objectives of zero pollution and climate neutrality by 2050. The effectiveness of the framework was presented as dependent on extensive internal development and sustained implementation efforts by Member States.

Monika Jakubus (Poznań University of Life Sciences), in “The European Union Guidelines as Tools for Sustainable Soil Management”, reviewed key EU strategies and instruments relevant to soil protection, including the Soil Strategy for 2030, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy, and the Common Agricultural Policy. Particular emphasis was placed on Eco-Schemes and GAEC standards as practical tools to support sustainable practices. The role of farmers’ knowledge and engagement was identified as crucial.

A national legal perspective was offered by Izabela Lipińska (Poznań University of Life Sciences) in “Soil Protection in Poland – Selected Legal Issues”. She explained that soil protection in Poland is regulated through fragmented legal provisions and is not governed by a single comprehensive act specifically devoted to soil protection. The main legal framework is the Act of 3 February 1995 on the Protection of Agricultural and Forest Land, which regulates land use as well as the restoration and improvement of land use value. The contribution highlighted the limits of the existing legal instruments and emphasized the need for stronger legal coherence, greater EU-level harmonization, and standardized monitoring criteria for soil health.

Zuzana Bohátová (Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra), in “Agricultural Land: Problems and Challenges in Terms of Legal Regulation”, addressed the Slovak context, focusing on land fragmentation, insufficient protection against land conversion, and environmental degradation. The presentation proposed legislative and institutional measures to improve land governance and promote sustainable use.

The role of the Common Agricultural Policy was analyzed by Krzysztof Róžański (Poznań University of Life Sciences) in “Protection of Land in the Common Agricultural Policy”. He illustrated how conditionality, direct payments, and agri-environment-climate measures support soil protection. While CAP instruments were recognized as valuable, the contribution stressed the need for better implementation, stronger monitoring, and greater coherence between environmental and economic objectives.

Katarzyna Leśkiewicz (Adam Mickiewicz University), in “Land Protection Instruments – selected aspects”, examined legal tools such as soil classification systems and spatial planning instruments. While these mechanisms have a protective function, their practical application was described as often ineffective. The forthcoming EU soil monitoring framework was presented as an opportunity to strengthen enforcement and coherence.

The final contributions focused on the Ukrainian context. Volodymyr Nosik (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv), in “Legal Protection of Land: Ukrainian Realities and European Dimensions”, analyzed soil protection within the broader legal concept of land protection, as defined by the Law of Ukraine “On Land Protection”. He emphasized the impact of the Russian–Ukrainian war, the evolution of legislation across different historical phases, and the ongoing transformation of legal and institutional frameworks in line with European integration. Soil protection was described as a complex system of legal, organizational, and technical measures aimed at preserving and restoring soil fertility, preventing degradation, and ensuring environmentally safe land use. Particular attention was devoted to the role of the EU accession process and the Association Agreement with the EU as key drivers of legislative approximation.

This perspective was complemented by Tamara Sarkisova (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv), in “Soil Protection Management System: Ukrainian Reality and European Dimension”, who focused on the structure and functioning of the soil protection governance system in Ukraine. She recalled that the legal basis of soil protection includes the Land Code of Ukraine (2001) and the Laws of Ukraine “On Land Protection” and “On State Control over the Use and Protection of Land” (both adopted on 19 June 2003). The presentation examined the competences of state and local authorities and highlighted current challenges, including the disruption of control activities due to wartime conditions, staff shortages, and the lack of a fully operational modern monitoring system. At the same time, she pointed to significant progress in the use of digital instruments, such as the State Land Cadastre, the State Agrarian Register, and emerging registers of contaminated land, as well as recent legislative developments aimed at aligning environmental monitoring with EU approaches.

Overall, the scientific sessions provided a comprehensive overview of soil protection as a strategic issue at the intersection of law, policy, economics, and sustainability. A shared understanding emerged that

effective soil protection requires coherent legal frameworks, reliable monitoring systems, institutional capacity, and the active involvement of farmers and local authorities. These reflections created a solid conceptual basis for the field-based workshops that followed.

Alongside the scientific sessions, the conference included a structured programme of field-based workshops, conceived as an integral component of the overall methodology. The workshops were designed to connect theoretical and legal discussions with concrete territorial experiences and to foster dialogue between soil law, agricultural policies, sustainable land management practices, and their cultural and social dimensions.

The workshops followed a coherent progression from global to local perspectives. The first workshop took place at the Food and Agriculture Museum & Network (FAO MuNe) within the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. This experience situated soil protection within a global framework of food security and sustainable development, highlighting the cultural and historical dimensions of the relationship between societies, land, and food systems, and reinforcing the link between soil protection, the right to food, and international governance.

The second workshop was held at the Giardino dei Monaci, within the Abbey of Saint Paul Outside the Walls. This visit offered an opportunity to reflect on soil sustainability through traditional agronomic practices and historical knowledge, while also connecting soil protection to urban contexts, spatial planning, and community engagement. The workshop emphasized the relevance of traditional knowledge and the potential role of urban agriculture in environmental education and territorial regeneration.

The third workshop took place at the Garibaldi Agricultural Cooperative, which integrates agricultural production with social and labour inclusion programmes for young people with disabilities, particularly individuals on the autism spectrum. This experience illustrated the social dimension of soil sustainability, presenting agricultural land not only as a productive resource but also as a space of inclusion, education, and social cohesion, and highlighting the need for greater integration between soil protection policies and broader social policies.

Taken together, the workshops strengthened an integrated understanding of soil sustainability, confirming that soil protection cannot be addressed as a purely technical or sectoral issue but must be embedded within broader strategies that combine legal frameworks,



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public policies, cultural values, and social practices. They functioned as practical laboratories in which the theoretical insights developed during the conference were tested and contextualized.

Overall, the workshops and conference Sustainable Soils for Sustainable Agriculture confirmed the relevance of soil protection as a cross-cutting issue at the intersection of law, policy, science, and society. By combining academic analysis with field-based experiences, the event contributed to a shared and interdisciplinary reflection on sustainable soil management and opened further perspectives for research, cooperation, and policy development within the project framework.

A total of 37 people took part in the event, including 10 remotely. These figures refer to participants in the entire conference, but during the conference, numerous students who did not attend the entire event showed great interest.

The conference and workshops took place in conjunction with the lecture schedule, but despite this, there was widespread participation and interest from many students who still wanted to attend during the breaks between lectures.

Reporter:
Giuseppe Spoto
1/11/2025



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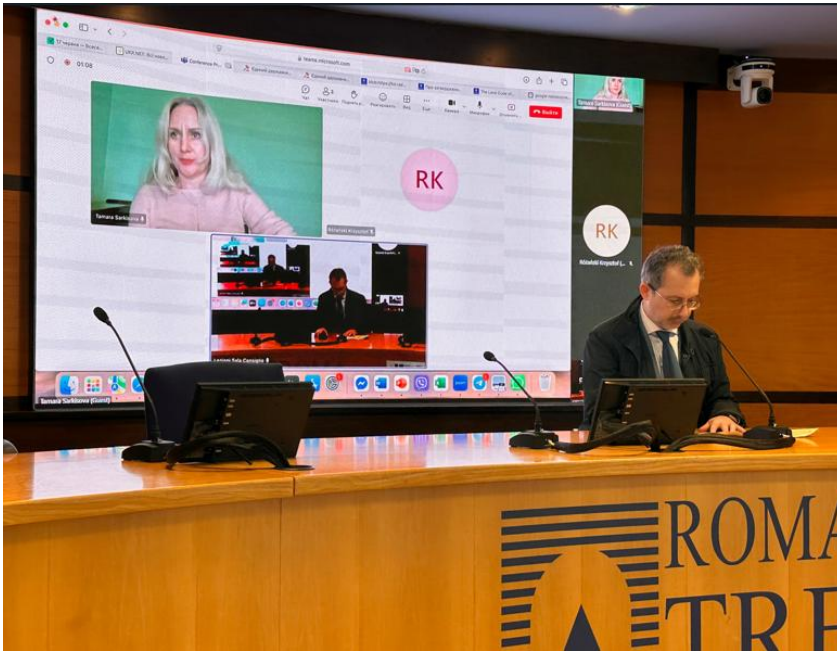
Photos Conference



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Workshop day 1



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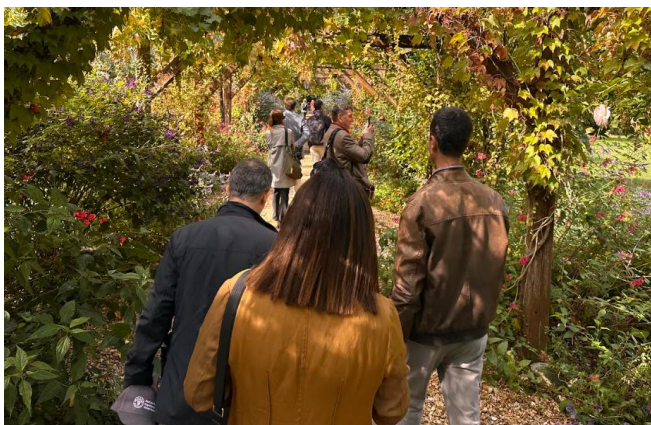
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Workshop day 2



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