



The world's soils face a wide range of threats that could undermine the very basis to our current way of life. Recently Europe has seen flooding that dramatically and tragically demonstrates how such threats can impact on people's lives and property. Poor management of soils can exacerbate flooding and other soil threats.

In recognition of the pressing importance of threats to soils the United Nations has designated 2015 as the 'International Year of Soils' to bring to public attention the wide variety of threats to soil and the consequences that these can have on all of our lives. This year is being launched on World Soil Day on the 5th of December 2014.

As well as making people aware of the threats to soil, over the next four years European Scientists involved in an EU funded project called RECARE are working with those who manage soils - farmers, planners, builders, policy makers – to identify practical measures to ensure that these urgent threats are not just stopped, but whenever possible, reversed. Working on 17 case studies across Europe, from Iceland through to Cyprus, they are developing solutions to the problems of flooding and landslides, desertification, soil erosion, soil compaction, the contamination of soils, soil biodiversity, loss of organic matter, salinization and soil sealing.

Rudi Hessel, representing RECARE said. "Often all we hear about is the problems that the environment faces, but the good news is that in projects like RECARE we are not only developing practical answers, but also working with those who manage the soil to get these solutions into use. We all tend to take soil for granted, until something goes wrong and we then need urgent answers. Part of our task in RECARE is to help stop it going wrong in the first place, but when that doesn't happen to ensure that we have the best solutions we can develop ready to hand".

Jane Mills representing the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) at the University of Gloucestershire said, "The soil doesn't recognise national boundaries, the physical

and biological processes of the soil are the same everywhere. Working with colleagues from across Europe means that we can share knowledge and experience. This means that we can bring the best science to bear on the problems more quickly and effectively than we might without this collaboration."

As European science makes history by sampling the surface of a comet in deep space, we need to remember that there is still a great deal to learn about the soil around us. It may not be quite as dramatic as the Rosetta mission that has travelled about 4 billion miles through the solar system to reach the comet, but it is important for us all to learn more about the surface of our home planet. RECARE is part of the effort to bring the best of science to the people of Europe.

Throughout 2015 as part of the International Year of the Soil, the RECARE project will be taking part in a range of events to promote knowledge and awareness of threats to the soil, as well as the management and technological solutions to those problems.