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Panel 1

Vienna Soil Dialog

Raiffeisen Forum

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Bild: LK Bgld., Claudia Winkovitsch



Soil Protection in Austria

- is an **important topic** in the **agricultural sector** for quite a long time already
- is a **shared legal competence between the Federal Ministries** (e.g. BMLUK forest soils, contaminated sites; BMF mining, soil taxation) **and the Federal States** (all soils except forest soils)
- is **at the heart** of the activities of
 - many **research and educational institutions** such as universities, federal research institutes, private research institutes ...
 - **official networks** such as the Advisory Board on Soil Fertility and Soil Protection, the Soil Forum, the Austrian Soil Science Association, the Mission Action Group Soil, Competence Center for Arable Land, Humus and Erosion Control in Styria, Soil and Water Advisory in Upper Austria, Brachflächendialog
 - **private networks** such as Verein Boden.Leben, Humusbewegung, Ökoregion Kaindorf



Main political instrument in the agricultural sector: **Common Agricultural Policy** and **ÖPUL**

Agri-environmental programme ÖPUL measures

facts: soil measures 2025

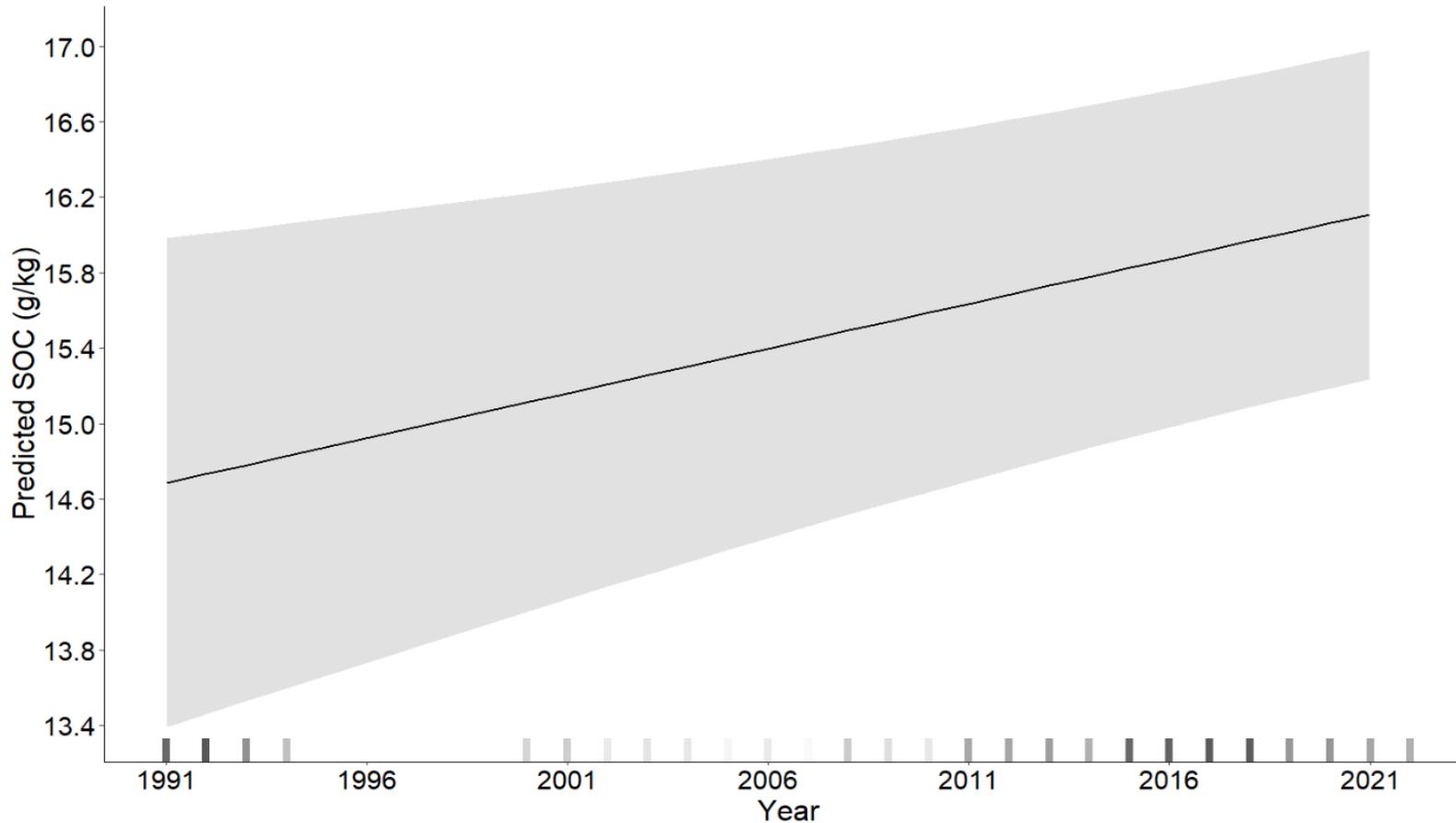
- **89,835 farms** (86% of total farms)
 - **1.86 mio. hectares** (83% exkl. Pastures)
 - **645.2 mio. €**
-
- **275,000 ha cover crops diff. to 2024 +25,000 hectares**
 - **225,000 ha permanent soil cover diff. to 2024 +300 hectares**
-
- **185,000 ha direct seeding, strip-till, mulch seeding, ridging, undersowing diff. to 2024 +12,000 hectares**
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- **239,000 ha arable land supported under the “Preventive Groundwater Protection – Arable Land” measure diff. to 2024 + 11,000 hectares**

General	Grassland	Arable land	Permanent crops	Animals
Environmentally sound and biodiversity-promoting management	Limitation of yield-increasing inputs	Greening of arable land - catch crops	Erosion control in vineyards, fruit and hops	Preservation of endangered livestock breeds
Organic Farming	Hay farming	Greening of arable land - “Evergreen” system	Non-use of insecticides in vineyards, fruit and hops	Animal welfare - herding
Near-ground application of liquid farm manure and manure separation	Management of mountain meadows	Erosion control arable land	Non-use of herbicides in vineyards, fruit and hops	Animal welfare – pasture
Nature conservation	Alpine pasturage	Preventive groundwater protection - arable land	Use of beneficial organisms in greenhouses	Animal welfare – stable husbandry (cattle)
Results-oriented management	Humus preservation and soil protection on grassland eligible for conversion	Water Framework Directive – agriculture		Animal welfare – stable husbandry (pigs)
	Natura 2000 and other protected areas - agriculture	Non-productive arable land and agroforestry strips		

= Eco Scheme (Art. 31)
 = N2000/WFD



Results of the ÖPUL evaluation - soil organic carbon



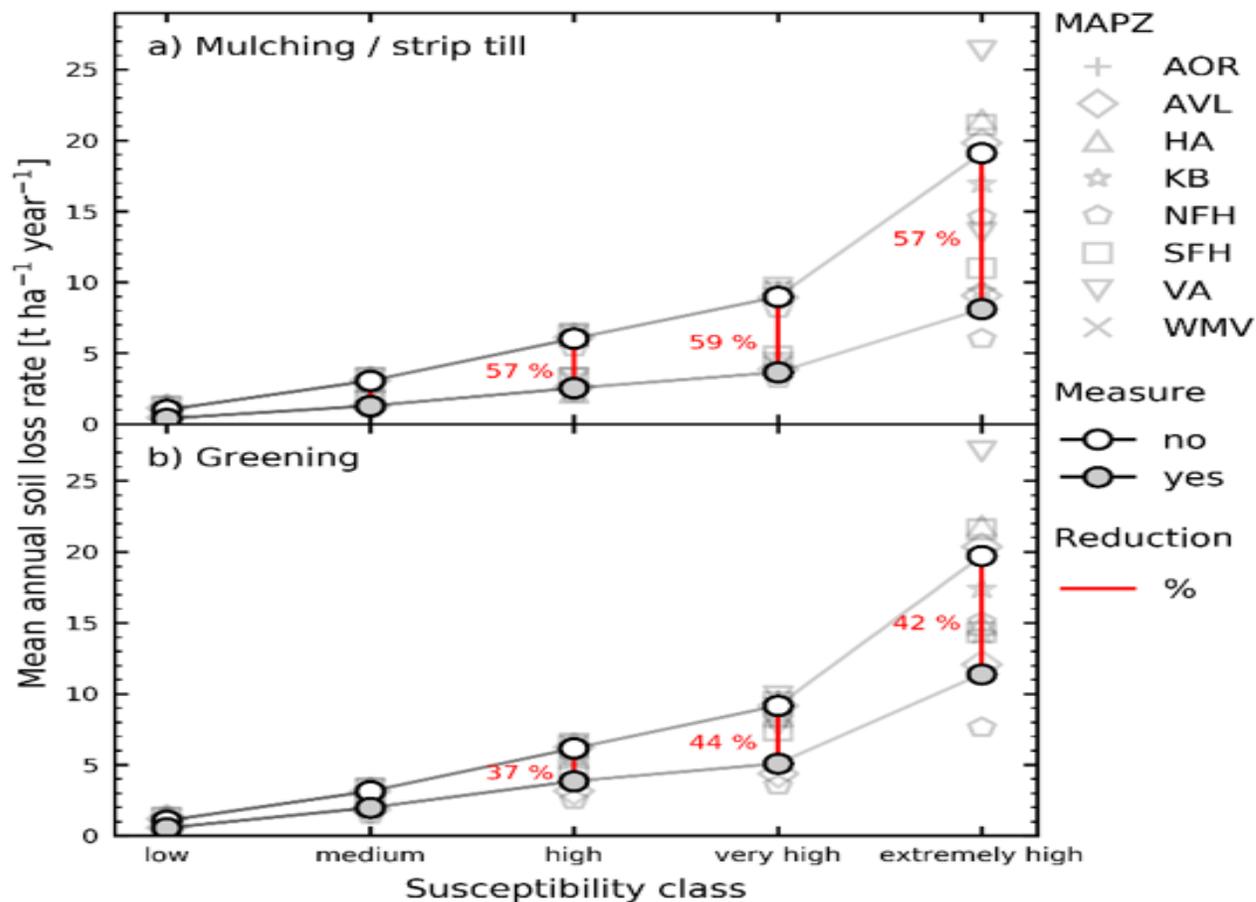
Quelle: Armin Bajraktarevic AGES

SOM (soil organic matter content) has **increased from 2.5% to 2.8%** (in the Marchfeld region from 2% to 2.6%)

Reasons:

- Ban on the burning of crop residues in 1993
- Increased incorporation of crop residues
- No-till farming has steadily increased Cover cropping and the
- “Immergrün” system also contributed to this increase

Results of the ÖPUL Evaluation – water erosion



- Reduction in the average annual soil loss rate for the ÖPUL measures “Mulching/Striping” (a) and “Greening” variants (b), broken down by risk class (low: 0–2, medium: 2–5, high: 5–8, very high: 8–11, extremely high: >11; all in $t\ ha^{-1}\ year^{-1}$)
- Percentage reductions are indicated by the red numbers
- The major agricultural production zones (MAPZ) are marked by the gray labels

Quelle: Elmar Schmaltz, Thomas Brunner BAW

Soil related EU legislation and research activities

- **Directive (EU) 2025/2360 on soil monitoring and resilience**
- Nature Restoration Regulation (EU) 2024/1991
- Regulation (EU) 2024/3012 establishing a Union certification framework for permanent carbon removals, carbon farming and carbon storage in products
- Regulation (EU) 2018/841 on the inclusion of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF)
- European Joint Programming Soil
- **EU Mission Soil – A Soil Deal for Europe**

Directive (EU) 2025/2360 on soil monitoring and resilience

Timeline:

- **2023:** submission of the proposal for the directive
- **2025:** compromise text was published in the Official Journal on November 12
- **2026 - 2028:** submission of numerous guidelines from the Commission (e.g. concerning soil units, the setting of target and trigger values)
- **2027:** Commission is conducting the LUCAS 2027 survey (as an offer to support the Member States)
- **End of 2028:** MS have to finish the implementation

Content:

- **Soils** in the EU should be in a **healthy condition by 2050**
- **Directive covers all soils**
- **Member States have to establish** a coherent **soil monitoring framework**
- **Member States have to identify and reduce soil contamination** to levels that are not harmful to human health and the environment
- **Soil organic carbon** is one of many indicators which have to be monitored

EU Mission Soil – A Soil Deal for Europe



- Ambition: Achieve healthy soils across Europe by 2030
- 4 operational objectives: build capacities & **knowledge base** | 100 **Living Labs and Lighthouses** by 2030 | Harmonised **soil monitoring** | Increase **soil literacy**
- Implementation: **Horizon Europe** – annual calls for collaborative, transnational R&I projects
- Austria: Strong participation (~€7M), contributing in projects across the Mission Soil objectives

National Mission „Healthy Soils“

1. **Mission Action Group “Healthy Soils”** with **133 experts** from public authorities, research and educational institutions, farms, companies, private soil associations and federal agencies
1. **Mission Action Plan** as Austria’s strategic framework for the EU Soil Mission
2. **Implementation through events** including Mission Expert Talks, exchange meetings and networking formats, **social media and poster**
3. **Data – analysis** of all Austrian Soil Science projects for a potential portfolio management.



Conclusions

■ agricultural soils are under threat by climate change, by increasing competitive pressure on soils (energy use, infrastructure, housing ...)

■ not all requirements/descriptors/targets/ideas stipulated in the current and planned legal regulations are understandable from an agricultural and soil science perspective (e.g. the SOC:Clay Ratio, equal treatment of agricultural and forestry soils ...) and therefore difficult to communicate

+ increased awareness about the importance of soil health in Austria as well as on EU level (numerous ongoing activities - legislative, research, awareness raising and private from farmers, associations ...)

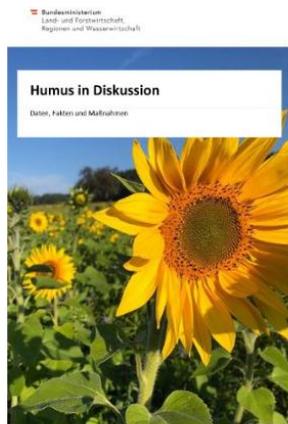
+ soil quality increased during the last decades in Austria (success could be achieved through good combination of legal requirements, subsidies, awareness raising, practice-oriented research)

➡ greater consideration of practical experiences and needs (soil pioneers, living labs)

➡ agriculture needs more support to adapt to the effects of climate change (e.g. development of innovative soil cultivation methods, innovative fertilizers, breeding of climate adapted varieties,)

➡ set realistic targets and understandable requirements for nature based systems (high uncertainties)

Let's continue to work together for soil health!



<https://www.bmluk.gv.at/service/publikationen/landwirtschaft/humus-in-diskussion.html>
Humus // Schlüssel zur Bodenfruchtbarkeit - YouTube

Ausbildung zum Bodenpraktiker

<https://www.bio-austria.at/bio-bauern/beratung/pflanzliche-erzeugung/ausbildung-zum-bodenpraktiker/>

Boden. Pioniere2050

Bodenaufbauende Bewirtschaftungskonzepte für die österreichische Landwirtschaft

<https://dafne.at/projekte/cnsoil>; more than 100 pioneer farms work together



Projekt Drygrass: <https://raumberg-gumpenstein.at/forschung/aktuelles/gruenland-im-klimawandel.html>



<https://www.bodenistleben.at/eip-boden.biodiversitaet/>



<https://www.ages.at/umwelt/boden/wissen-und-bildung>



How2SoilWalk

Handbuch zur Durchführung bewusstseinsbildender Spaziergänge zum Bodenschutz

<https://dafne.at/projekte/soil-walks>; support for awareness raising concerning land take

Soil Walks



Optimierung des Erosionsschutzes im Kartoffelbau

<https://www.optero-kartoffel.at/ergebnisse-2020/>

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