



Roadmap for Soil Restoration published just as  
Food System Transformation appears for the first time on the COP 28 Agenda

*Sustainable Soils Alliance welcomes Parliamentary report on  
the policy challenges facing England's soils*

- **Parliament's EFRA (Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee) calls out government for "lack of leadership and focus" on soil**
- **A regulatory framework is needed to fill "significant gaps" in soil regulations with the situation "likely to get worse" - construction, planning and agriculture all flagged under "Polluter Pays" principle**
- **Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) need to be better funded and more ambitious, attractive and accessible if soils are to be protected**
- **Committee calls for ring-fenced funding for soil monitoring, data management and farmer guidance**
- **Food systems transformation high on the agenda at COP 28 for the first time**

**5 December:** To coincide with both World Soils Day and COP 28, Parliament's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has [published the report](#) summarising its year-long inquiry into soil health in England. It includes a number of recommendations for government action that reflect the range and variety of policy challenges that face England's soils, made urgent by the nature and climate crises being discussed in Dubai.

The Sustainable Soils Alliance (SSA) welcomes the report which provides an exhaustive list of actions required of the government, as well as a clear, unacceptable message that soil lags behind other, equivalent indicators of the natural environment – air and water.

SSA Director, Ellen Fay, said: *"We welcome this report which paints an accurate and worrying picture of the state of England's soils, but also the extent and variety of government action needed to address them.*

*The actions on the government's to-do-list are numerous. The report points to how fragmented and disjointed soils policy in England is: no agreed soil health indicators, limited data and huge gaps in the regulatory, guidance and incentive frameworks. It is hard to imagine any other keystone component of our environment and farming systems being subject to such neglect and oversight for so long.*

The report comes seven years after the last major inquiry into soil health, and while many of the themes and challenges remain the same, the climate and nature crises have dramatically

increased the urgency of the action required, making it extremely timely, says SSA Co-Director, Matthew Orman:

*“It is noteworthy that the report coincides with COP28 where the link between food security and climate change, and the need for food systems transformation, is high on the agenda for the first time since COP began in 1995. Soil health is critical for climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience and this report provides an invaluable roadmap on how to achieve it.*

*“The Committee’s recommendations are clear, proportionate and realistic. We urge this and future governments to embed them into their strategies for a fair and robust food supply chain and for strategies to meet both climate and nature targets”.*

Despite the extensive list of actions, the Committee did not expect a new Action Plan for Soil – instead calling for direction and leadership to come through the promised Land Use Framework which will advise on the best uses of land as well as any trade-offs that may be needed.

#### Annex

- The inquiry was launched at the end of 2022. Over the course of five evidence sessions the Committee heard from over 20 experts as well as policymakers, on top of the written evidence submitted by over 80 organisations.
- This year’s COP 28 summit will feature a dedicated Food, Agriculture and Water Day on Dec. 10. On Friday, more than 100 world leaders are expected to sign the landmark Emirates Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action. Led by the COP 28 presidency.
- Friday will also see the launch of a major action agenda and coalition on regenerative agriculture. It will bring together farmers, local governments, agribusinesses, civil society, philanthropic organisations, and other funders to transition large-scale landscapes to more sustainable food production practices — with the aim to showcase specific goals by COP 30.
- The Sustainable Soils Alliance was set up in 2017 to unite fragmented interests to create an inclusive soil community and a single compelling case for urgent soil restoration to prevent flooding, mitigate the effects of climate change and promote national food security. It aims to restore Britain’s quality soil within a single generation by working with scientists, innovators, policymakers, farmers and other land managers to promote political and public appreciation of soil and build powerful coalitions of support.
- 84% of the UK’s fertile topsoil has been lost since 1850. ([CCC 2015](#))
- Soil degradation and carbon loss costs the UK £3.55 Billion a year ([SFT 2019](#))
- Of all the money spent on monitoring England’s water, air and soils, soil receives just 0.4% ([SSA, 2018](#))