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Linking Soil Monitoring and Resilience to Policy

Challenges to address and opportunities to exploit

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Why and where soil matters!

❑Jointness of economic and environmental output

- Splitting farm income from environmental obligations comes at a measurable cost, **addressing farm economic and environmental output together** taps on existing but underutilised opportunities

❑Sustainable productivity

- The **polarisation** of the policy debate **around climate change action and food security** distorts fact-based global needs and **leads to inefficient policy choices**

❑Simplification in enhancing policy performance

- **CAP simplification** is a **prerequisite for** policy performance only if it does not lead into lowering policy ambition but enhancing performance by **exploiting synergies** in policy measures with similar impacts

What focus on soil could do for policy

❑ Put the horse in front of the cart on timing and targeting of support measures

- ✓ **Focusing on adaptation measures** rather than mitigation is essential to make tangible existing solutions
- ✓ **Prioritising soil** simultaneously helps water, air and biodiversity – the opposite is not true
- ✓ Every farmer has basic knowledge of their soil – **support should be based on trying to improve soil health**

❑ Cover all agricultural area with payments conditioned on improvement of soil health

- ✓ **Use available data** (soil maps, Lucas surveys…) **to define regions based on agronomic criteria** (this exists!!!)
- ✓ **Merge all direct payments into one multiannual system with a common conditionality prioritising soil**
- ✓ Provide a **smooth transition** to new support level recognising economic/social realities of EU agriculture

❑ Reflect in policy design the slow and variable impact of land management practices

- ✓ **Measure** regional 3-year average **soil health at beginning and end of transition** (incentivise farm level data)
- ✓ **Further redistribute payments at the end of transition based on** measurable results of **soil improvement**
- ✓ **Benchmark redistribution** based on deviation from average performance (with regional discounts/premia)

What soil research could do for policy

❑ Clarify and improve the level of aggregation needed for indicators

- ✓ **Both regional/national and farm-based indicators are needed** – but they should not be the same
- ✓ **Regional details matter** for the continuous (annual) monitoring of policy performance
- ✓ A **limited** number of **measurable indicators** is needed **at farm level**, collected but not assessed annually

❑ Identify the causality link and define the monitoring objective of different indicators

- ✓ At farm level, indicators should reflect **what is endogenous in farm management practices**, thus soil matters
- ✓ **At regional level** the role of exogenous factors (prices, weather) also matters, probably more for biodiversity
- ✓ The link of farm to regional level should **distinguish site- and management-specificities from**

❑ Link land management and soil to carbon farming

- ✓ Identify the **limited number of common indicators** that is already mature **to implement in public policy**
- ✓ **Encourage private schemes and research to experiment** with additional diversified means of monitoring
- ✓ Provide a **causality link facilitating public policy to prioritise targeting** (e.g. soil vs biodiversity targets)

Summary Conclusions

❑Site matters

- ➢ We need to clarify what is mature to measure at farm level and what at more aggregate level

❑Causality matters

- ➢ What policy conclusions to derive from the regionally diverse hierarchy between exogenous factors (climate) and endogenous (land management)?

❑Long-term matters

- ➢ Policy design needs to reflect this, and research should clarify the link of short- to long-term

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Thank you!

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