

CONSEQUENCES OF SOIL POLLUTION

The **toxic substances** that are deposited on the earth's surface harm our health and well-being and affect food, water and air quality. The most important effects of soil pollution according to IPBES and the FAO are indicated below:



Damage to health

Soil pollutants enter our body through the food chain, causing **illnesses to appear**. Moreover, the spread of antibiotics in the environment increases the pathogens' resistance to these drugs.



Poorer harvests

Soil pollution agents **jeopardise world food security** by reducing the amount and quality of harvests.



Climate change

In the first decade of the 21st century, soil degradation released between **3.6 and 4.4 billion tonnes of CO₂** into the atmosphere.



Water and air pollution

Soil degradation affects the quality of air and water, particularly in developing countries.



Population displacement

Soil degradation and climate change will have driven between **50 and 700 million people** to [emigrate](#) by 2050.



Species extinction

Soil contamination is one of the main causes that could trigger the **sixth mass extinction event in history** — the population of land vertebrates fell by 38 % between 1970 and 2012 —.



Desertification

The number of inhabitants in the most arid areas of the earth could account for 45 % of the world's population in 2050, while **world wetland areas have decreased in size by 87 %** over the last three centuries.



Economic impact

Global economic losses caused by soil degradation are expected to exceed **10 % of the world's annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**.

SOLUTIONS TO REDUCE SOIL POLLUTION

Soil degradation is **a complex problem that requires governments, institutions, communities and individuals to take joint measures**. The following are just some of the things we can do to improve its health:

- Eat [sustainable foodstuffs](#), **properly recycle batteries**, produce homemade compost and dispose of drugs in the places authorised for this purpose.
- Encourage **a more eco-friendly model for industry**, farming and stock breeding, among other economic activities.
- Improve urban **planning** and transport planning and waste water treatment.
- Improve the **management of mining waste**, restore the landscape and conserve topsoil.
- Involve local communities and **indigenous peoples** in the design, implementation and assessment of sustainable land and soil management.