

# [***Government needs to take soil health seriously, urges EFRA committee***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69T3-7GW1-JBJF-10GH-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

On World ***Soil*** Day (December 5), the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee ( EFRA) called for ***soil health*** to be put on 'the same footing' as water and air quality when it comes to government policy.

The report published by EFRA outlined how ***soil*** was vital in 'sustaining life on earth, producing food and sustaining rich ecosystems', but warned ***soil*** in the UK had become heavily degraded, through 'over use, compaction and pollution'.

***Soil health***

The inquiry examined how Government could 'turn the tide' on ***soil*** degradation by introducing statutory targets on ***soil health***, alongside existing water and air quality targets by 2028, adding it must be underpinned by data and agreed ***soil health*** indicators.

Read also:  [*Resilience key for 2023* ***Soil*** *Farmers of the Year*](https://www.farmersguardian.com/feature/4133486/resilience-key-2023-soil-farmer)

The report recommended the Government to fund the widespread, standardised testing of ***soil*** through its Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes and to work with industry on an agreed set of metrics of ***soil health*** by next year.

**Environmental Land Management**

The Committee also suggested he Government aimed 'for nearly all farmers and growers (90% or more) to be part of an ELM scheme by 2040'.

Read also: [*Grassland guide: Understanding* ***soil health***](https://www.farmersguardian.com/advice/4116267/grassland-guide-understanding-soil-health)

[*Better* ***soil****, better farming? Easy steps to help start your journey to better* ***soil health***](https://www.farmersguardian.com/news/4118460/soil-farming-easy-steps-help-start-journey-soil-health)

[*'Getting back to basics' key to improving* ***soil health***](https://www.farmersguardian.com/news/4120499/getting-basics-key-improving-soil-health)

Despite the importance and potential of ELMs to improve ***soil health***, the report pointed out it cannot work alone and is not the 'whole story'.

**EFRA Committee**

The Committee instead called for a regulatory framework to focus on preventing ***soil*** degradation and contamination across various sectors, including construction and planning, as well as agriculture.

Chair of the EFRA committee, Sir Robert Goodwill, said:  "Threats to ***soil health*** are in turn threats to our domestic food supply.

"The Government's ELM schemes are a good start, but we call on the Government to make these schemes more ambitious, aiming to get nearly all farmers involved and ensuring that they adopt a variety of sustainable ***soil*** management practices across their land. We also encourage the Government to use ELMs to fund the collection of the data we desperately need to understand our ***soils***."

Mr Goodwill reiterated it was not only farmers who have an impact on ***soils*** and encouraged England wide regulation, to ensure 'everyone' played their part in protecting ***soil health***.

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