

Executive Summary

World Living Soils Forum, October 2024

Cultivating a Sustainable Future through Regenerative Agriculture

The **World Living Soils Forum** (WLSF), created in 2022 by Moët Hennessy, and co-organized with ChangeNOW for its second edition in October 2024, convened stakeholders from diverse sectors - including farmers, scientists, NGOs, policymakers, startups and industry leaders - to tackle the urgent challenge of soil regeneration. The WLSF program was fully co-created with an external advisory board of fourteen experts from diverse backgrounds. Held across three locations—France, the USA, and China—the event brought together **600 attendees** and featured **70 sessions** with over **180 speakers**. The forum presented innovative and impactful solutions to accelerate the adoption of regenerative agriculture, emphasizing collaboration, innovation, and education as levers for transformation.

The case for soil regeneration

- **Soil degradation crisis:** 40% of global soils are degraded due to erosion, pollution, and overexploitation^[1]. This threatens biodiversity, food security, and climate resilience, with annual costs exceeding 10% of global GDP^[2]. Yet, unsustainable agricultural practices are causing the loss of 2,000 hectares of fertile soil daily^[3].
- **Critical role of soils:** soils store twice as much **carbon** as the atmosphere^[4] and **host 50% of terrestrial biodiversity**^[5]. Soils with higher organic matter content can store up to 20 times more water^[6].
- **Carbon sequestration potential:** restoring soils could sequester **3 GT of CO₂ annually by 2030**^[7]—making it a pivotal lever in combating climate change.

Regenerative agriculture practices: beyond sustainability, a resilience strategy

Regenerative agricultural practices, with their proven ability to strengthen **business resilience across diverse industries**, should not remain confined to small-scale operations. The urgency and necessity of scaling up these practices to realize the maximum benefits cannot be overstated. Cover cropping, agroforestry, ecological corridors, and forest regeneration are key levers to enrich and preserve natural ecosystems. These **practices** have demonstrated their efficiency in mitigating **yield losses** during extreme weather events, improving **soil health**, fostering **biodiversity**, preserving **pollinators** over time, and regulating the water cycle.

Healthy soils also play a crucial role in fighting climate change. It is also now known that wetlands and peatlands can store more carbon than all the world's forests combined. Without drastically shifting the current trends and adopting these practices, the changes to reach the objectives of Paris Agreement and the Global Biodiversity Framework are seriously compromised. By gradually reducing **costs** and **risks** over time, the implementation of regenerative agriculture practices provides win-win solutions all across the value chain.

Farmers at the heart of the transition: collective support needed

74% of farmers recognize the need to act, yet 67% lack the tools to align sustainability^[8] with profitability.

Farmers at the Forum insisted on the major risks they are facing in their transition to regenerative practices: **upfront costs, delayed production** and **slower economic returns**, etc. Collective action—co-financing models, long-term procurement contracts, and shared knowledge—is critical to relieve them of this burden and help them gradually support change. At the heart of a successful cooperative relationship lies transparency—enabled by traceability and certification schemes—which ensure that effort made in the field are recognized and valued all the way to the end consumer.

From soils to consumers: new narratives about agriculture

The transition to regenerative agriculture needs a holistic approach. It must be linked to a wider social evolution where storytelling is crucial to raising consumer awareness and improving understanding of actions that bring positive impact. New narratives embedded in **Art, Culture and Gastronomy** are strong levers for a better understanding of the importance of the soil ecosystem. They hold the power to positively influence the decisions of every citizen on a daily basis; driving consumer choice towards regenerative agricultural products.

Private sector and public institutions leadership: catalysts for systemic change

Corporations have a dual role to play by providing financial support for pilot projects and harnessing their influence to drive systemic change. By forming **coalitions** and by **leading innovation**, they can transform entire value chains and set new sustainability benchmarks as mentioned by CEOs from different industries at the WLSF. Public institutions, for their part, can activate **financial levers** through multilateral banks and national support mechanisms, and shaping **regulatory frameworks**, at both national and supranational levels, to accelerate the transition.

Education and public awareness: shifting to a new paradigm

Education plays a pivotal role in the transition of today's agriculture. Knowledge on soils leads to a new paradigm in agriculture which needs to be included in the core of today's education programs for **agronomists, farmers, and future leaders**. The role of agronomic engineering schools is instrumental in providing education to those who represent the future of agriculture.

Initiatives like the **Living Soils Workshop**, a learning game based on collective intelligence, aims to establish a common language around the functioning of soils and the issues linked to their preservation. Launched at the WLSF 2022, it continues to be deployed across multiple perspectives, from business executives to public.

The power of inspiration and innovative solutions: demonstrating regeneration's potential

It is necessary to continue and accelerate the exchange of ideas and know-how. This year, through more than 20 pitches and testimonies from speakers across three continents, the **Forum fostered a collaborative spirit**, with a variety of innovative solutions shared. It highlighted tangible field experiments, pioneering financing mechanisms, and trailblazing initiatives across institutional, educational, societal, and business domains. Every stakeholder could find relevant sources of inspiration and actionable ideas, reinforcing the sense of being part of a team working towards a common goal.

The WLSF jury awarded the innovative project of **EF Polymer**, a 100% organic super absorbent polymer that retains water close to the roots, increasing crop yields by 15% and reducing irrigation requirements by 30-40% and fertilizer requirements by 20%.

Measurement and certifications: converging to drive action and increase impact

Measuring soil health is mandatory to monitoring the outcome of regenerative practices but measuring is complex. Many solutions exist to measure soil health. But many indicators are needed to accurately define soil characteristics and highly granular data is required. Therefore, companies, policymakers, all stakeholders connected to soils, must now **converge towards common definitions and methodologies** to support shared frameworks and global certifications.

Soil health: think global, act local

Soil regeneration is an urgent global issue that requires the implementation of specific and local practices, supported by international collaboration. The forum, which featured a core event in Arles, aimed to bring together European stakeholders, along with **two satellite events in the USA and China**, to address soil issues on a global scale. By recognizing the complexity of local conditions, discussions around the world enhanced our understanding of the living soils challenge and provided tailored solutions for each context and territory.

From ideas to action: a call for collective responsibility

The WLSF demonstrated that technical agronomic solutions do exist, and systemic enablers have been clearly identified. Regulation mechanisms, cross-industry partnerships, innovative financial models, harmonized measurement frameworks and outcome-driven certifications can all support the transition to regenerative agriculture. Yet, to scale such solutions, we all need to act, and to act now.

Join our [Call to Action](#) and start your regeneration journey with us!

Protecting soil health is not just an environmental necessity but a societal responsibility. By regenerating soils, we also regenerate ecosystems, economies, and communities. The momentum built at the WLSF must not stop here. Together, we can ensure that soil health becomes a global priority—not just for our generation, but for those to come.

For more information, please refer to the full report available on www.worldlivingsoilsforum.com



**The time to act is now.
Soil health is our shared foundation
—let's protect it together.**



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