Co-designing new business models for soil health – first insights from a case study in Germany

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Background and objectives

Achieving the Green Deal ambitions

• The EU’s Farm to Fork Strategy identifies the role of agroecology and soil health management in achieving its ambitions of sustainable and resilient farming and food systems.

Recognising benefits of soil health

• Healthy soils are essential for sustainable agriculture and require continuous investments from farmers to be kept in a good condition.
• Soils are also important for society as a whole, generating ecosystem services such as clean water, carbon sequestration and biodiversity.
• Benefits of healthy soils are insufficiently captured in value chains and too little recognised by the public, resulting in underinvestment in soil health.

Aims of the SoilValues project

• To improve the understanding of how to enhance the conditions for developing values-based soil health business models.
• To co-design and analyse business models for soil health and to identify key factors for scaling-up soil health management.

Integrating practical and scientific knowledge to co-design business models for soil health

Flourishing business canvas – application for soil health

Co-design processes and methods

• Visual collaborative tool that considers the interdependencies of a soil health business model with economy, society and environment and contributes to shared learning about co-creating values.
• Actor and needs analysis: Mapping of actors with an interest in the business model and their needs that explain that interest.
• SWOT analysis: Analysing internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats of the pursued business model.
• Value, Process and Outcomes analysis: Participative process of reflecting upon the different components of the business model with all relevant stakeholders.

Soil health case in Germany – enhancing the circularity of the system and generating added value within the region

Key issues for co-designing the business model

• Tailored, contextualised strategies and approaches to motivate, facilitate and support collaboration between stakeholders
• Involving a trusted local actor as intermediary facilitates identification and recruitment of different actors
• Recognising different perceptions, patterns of interactions between stakeholders and the roles of influencers
• Allowing for flexibility in composition of participants at workshops and to enable a plurality of perspectives
• Providing an open space for sharing practical experiences and lessons learnt in developing soil health business models