

Cefic views to the new EU Soil Strategy¹

Sustainable use and protection of the soil environmental quality is a priority for the chemical industry. Cefic welcomes the initiative to update the EU Soil Thematic Strategy, as it recognises European soil as a valuable natural resource, and the need to maintain its highest quality.

The chemical industry is committed to reducing its environmental impacts and has shown support to the European Green Deal through the Commission's Zero Pollution Ambition, the Circular Economy Action Plan, Chemical Strategy for Sustainability, and the Carbon Neutrality Strategy. Our industry takes its responsibility seriously by building on operational excellence standards to protect people and environment, for instance through [Responsible Care](#)[®].

Soil and groundwater contamination prevention remains one of the chemical industry's highest priorities, along with prompt remediation measures in case of accidental spills or long-lasting contamination. The industry applies the latest technologies and procedures to comply with the broad European² and national legislation frameworks³.

With more than 320 major soil types⁴, along with its complex properties and static positioning, unlike water and air, soil quality can widely vary across Europe. **Cefic therefore supports soil protection to be addressed through an EU wide strategy supported by national action plans.** Uniform European standards and uniform rules would hamper efficient and sustainable soil management in the individual countries where expertise in soil local specificities and long-term experience is required.

Cefic would like to share few key considerations for the new Soil Strategy:

- The Strategy should guide Member States to ensure coherence between national legislations and the initiatives stemming from the EU Green Deal. It should be limited to precautionary aspects and focus on avoiding overlapping objectives and preventing the source of soil pollution.

¹ This paper is an abstract summarising the general position of Cefic as part of more comprehensive reply to the [public consultation on the "Healthy soils – new EU soil strategy"](#) issued on 26 April 2021.

² E.g. European legislation with relevance for soil protection: Environmental Liability Directive, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive; Sewage Sludge Directive; Regulation on fertilisers, Mercury Regulation, Land use, land use change and forestry Regulation, Common Agriculture Policy, Seveso Directive. For instance, Industrial Emissions Directive include provisions on soil to ensure that this resource is fully protected, and that contamination is avoided during the life of the permit. These provisions include some background information on the current state of the soil (e.g. details on former activities and potential contamination). Likewise, requirements are formulated in the Directive describing remediation requirements at cessation of activities.

³ Many EU countries and regions have in place soil legislation, e.g. the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium (Flanders/Wallonia/Brussels), France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Austria.

⁴ [Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection \[SEC\(2006\)620\] \[SEC\(2006\)1165\]/ COM\(2006\)231 final](#)

- With the subsidiarity principle as the guiding principle, considering the various types of soil in Europe, their properties and functionalities, the national perspective should be used to address the issues of pollution/degradation. Remediation measures of contaminated sites are currently addressed in targeted national legislation in many countries; it is the responsibility of the National Competent Authorities to determine the identification procedure for contaminated land and set priorities according to the local conditions.
- A risk-based approach consistent with how the land is used should apply to soil investigation and remediation measures. Such a risk-based approach would identify when there is a real risk to human health and the environment, taking into account the land use and would help to identify the appropriate and proportionate measures to prevent harm. This is of key importance to set the right priorities in an economically feasible way.
- In full respect of the national legislations, the strategy should preserve the right for private owners to conduct commercial transactions including considerations related to management of potential future liabilities.

Cefic looks forward to sharing its ideas and exploring potential policy solutions with the European Commission and stakeholders in due course.

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About Cefic

Cefic, the European Chemical Industry Council, founded in 1972, is the voice of large, medium and small chemical companies across Europe, which provide 1.2 million jobs and account for 17% of world chemicals production.