

[Press release: World Soil Day marks importance of healthy farmed environment](#)

Today (5 December) is [World Soil Day, a UN-led campaign](#) to highlight the importance of healthy soil and the role it plays in society.

Soil holds three times as much carbon as the atmosphere, reduces the risk of flooding by absorbing water and delivers 95 per cent of our global food supplies. For World Soil Day 2018 the UN is calling on people to [#StopSoilPollution](#), noting that one third of our global soils are already degraded.

Outside the EU and the Common Agricultural Policy, a new system of “public money for public goods” will reward farmers for environmental outcomes such as clean air and water, flood prevention, thriving plants and wildlife and the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Soil is an important asset that can help deliver many of these outcomes.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey, who has been an advocate for soil health after seeing first-hand the benefits of effective management on a [farm visit in Lincolnshire](#), said:

Everybody has a role to play in looking after our soils and initiatives such as World Soil Day are vital in highlighting the environmental benefits that soil provides for us all.

As we leave the European Union, we have the opportunity to reward farmers for the outcomes they provide by protecting this essential global resource.

Throughout the year, farmers and land managers can take advantage of the free advice, training and events run through [Catchment Sensitive Farming](#), which provides advice on how to improve soil health, make better use of farm resources and help protect the environment.

Earlier this week Natural England scientists visited Wheatsheaf Farming in Micheldever, Hampshire, to see some of these techniques in practice – including no-till drilling which avoids disturbing the soils and help improve organic matter.

Many farmers and land managers are already signed up to Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship schemes to deliver benefits for nature, including better management of soil. The next application window for Countryside Stewardship is expected to open in early 2019, with the simpler “wildlife offers” for arable, upland, lowland grazing and mixed farmers all available online.

An ['Ecological Site Classification' system](#) has also been designed by Forest Research to help land managers to find out what trees are ecologically best suited to growing in the soil at their sites. This tool allows them to input a site's grid reference and soil type to give a detailed description of its suitability for growing different tree species.