

Why SoilCare?

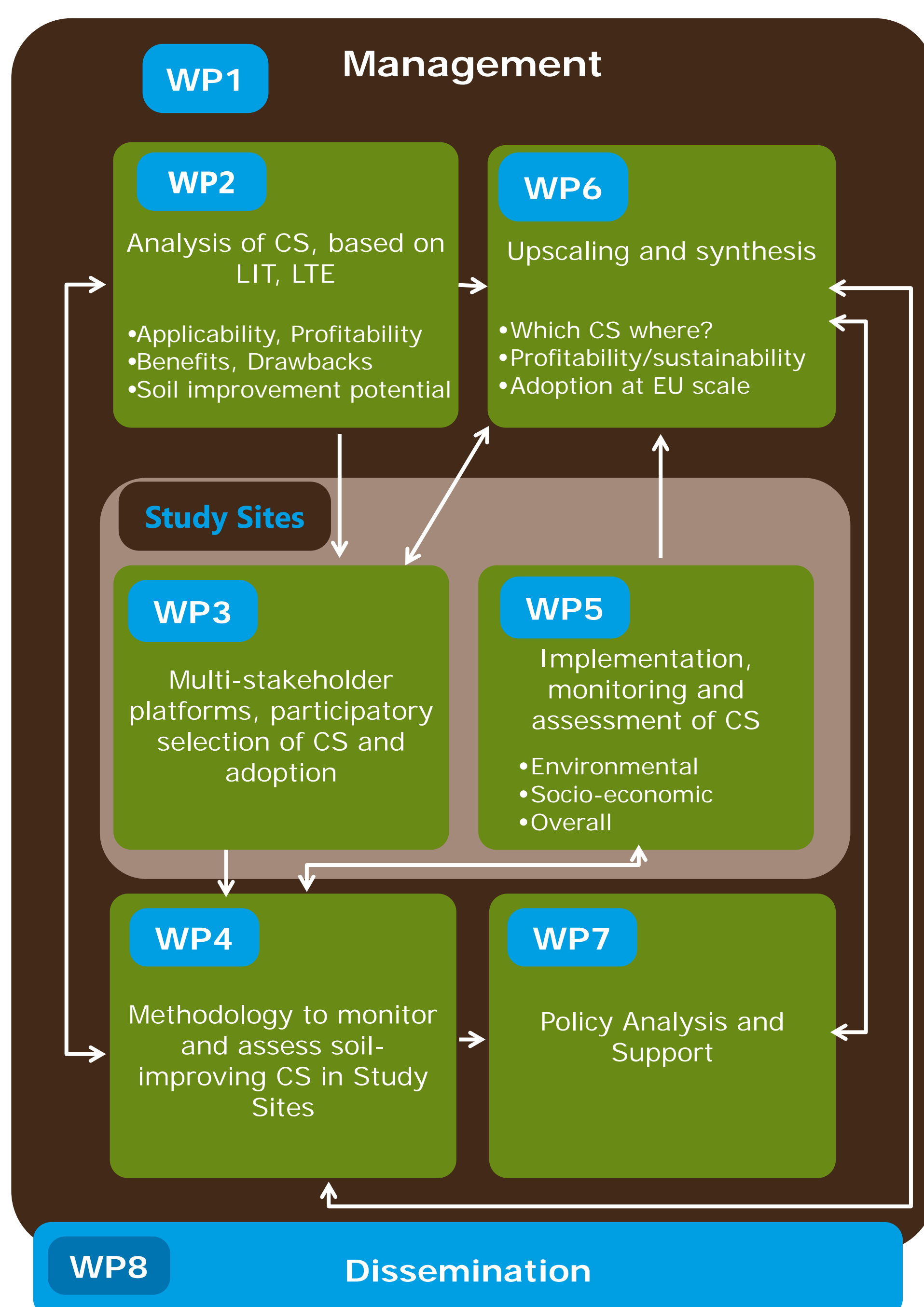
European production levels in some cropping systems are maintained by increased inputs and technology, which masks losses in productivity due to reduced soil quality. Such increased use of agricultural inputs may reduce profitability due to their costs, while also negatively affecting the environment. Soil improvement is necessary to break the negative spiral of degradation, increased inputs, increased costs and damage to the environment.

What is SoilCare?

SoilCare aims to assess the potential of soil-improving cropping systems and to identify and test site-specific soil-improving cropping systems that have positive impacts on the profitability and sustainability in Europe.

Key objectives

- To review which cropping systems can be considered soil-improving, their benefits and drawbacks and current and potential impact on soil quality and the environment.
- To trial soil-improving cropping systems in 16 study sites and assess their benefits and limitations and profitability and sustainability.
- To identify barriers to adoption and appropriate incentives to encourage adoption.
- Upsale results to a European level and develop an interactive tool for selection of soil-improving cropping systems across Europe.
- To analyse the effect of agricultural and environmental policies on adoption.



The SoilCare Study Sites

Soil-improving cropping systems will be trialled in 16 Study Sites across Europe with different pedo-climatic zones and socio-economic conditions.



SoilCare defines soil-improving cropping systems (SICS) as cropping systems that result in a durable increased ability of the soil to fulfil its functions, including food and biomass production, buffering and filtering capacity, and other ecosystem services. SICS are a combination of crops/crop rotations and agronomic management techniques, including tillage management, nutrient management, irrigation & drainage management, pest management, machine & traffic management (seeding, harvesting), manure use, and liming.



Crop rotations



Incorporating straw



Reduced tillage
(Photo: Natural England, Peter Roworth)



Cover crops
(Photo: Alfred Grand)

Project Partners

The SoilCare project consortium consists of 29 partners from 18 European countries

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| 1. Wageningen Environmental Research (Alterra) (Project Coordinator), (NL) | 11. NIBIO (NO) | 21. Institute of Agrophysics of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PL) |
| 2. University of Newcastle upon Tyne, (UK) | 12. Bodemkundige Dienst van België (BE) | 22. Wageningen University & Research (NL) |
| 3. KU Leuven (BE) | 13. Aarhus University (DK) | 23. University of Pannonia (HU) |
| 4. University of Gloucestershire (UK) | 14. Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (UK) | 24. Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SE) |
| 5. University Hohenheim (DE) | 15. Teagasc Research Institute (IE) | 25. Agro Intelligence ApS (DK) |
| 6. Research Institute for Knowledge Systems (NL) | 16. SoilCares Research (NL) | 26. Crop Research Institute (CZ) |
| 7. Technical University of Crete (GR) | 17. Escola Superior Agrária de Coimbra (PT) | 27. University of Almería (ES) |
| 8. Joint Research Centre (IT) | 18. National Research and Development Institute for Soil Science, (RO) | 28. Fédération Régionale des Agrobiologistes de Bretagne (FR) |
| 9. University of Bern (CH) | 19. Agrochemistry and Environmental Protection (RO) | 29. Scienceview Media B.V. (NL) |
| 10. Milieu LTD (BE) | 20. University of Padova (IT) | |

What will SoilCare deliver?

- Identification of scientifically proven soil-improving cropping systems, techniques and machinery across Study Sites.
- Insights into how barriers to adopt these techniques can be minimized and overcome.
- Assessment of the opportunities for and the effects of upscaling widespread adoption at the European level.
- An interactive map tool showing which soil-improving techniques would be most suitable where.



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