

# SoilCare recommendations for policy actions

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# Developing policy actions

## Barriers to the uptake of SICS

### Policy/institutional

Adverse policy effects, lack of coherence/policy conflicts, weak monitoring/enforcement top-down policies, unstable policy frameworks, lack of soil legislation/targets

### Socio-cultural

Awareness/value of soil, peer pressure, demand for sustainably products, traditional practices

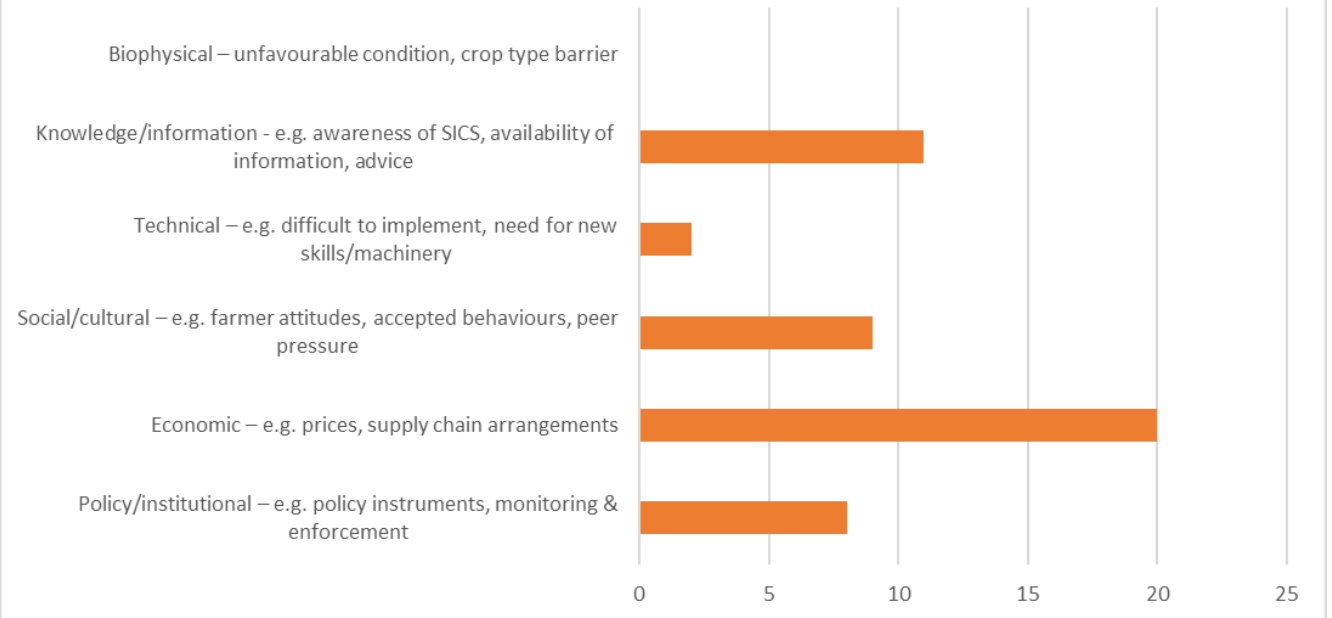
### Economic

Transition costs, time lag between change of practices and benefits, market demands, holistic approaches

### Knowledge/information

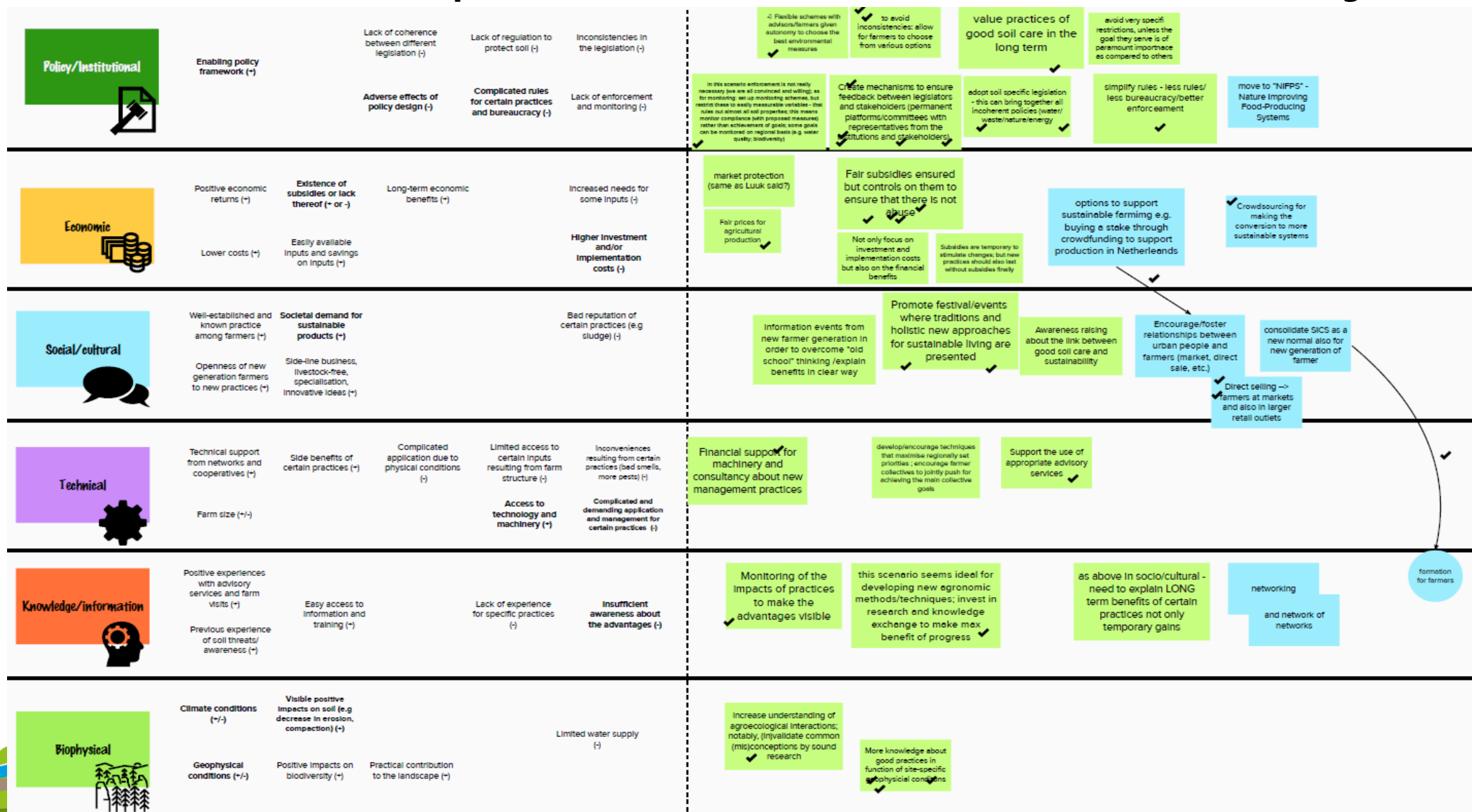
Availability of information, fragmented services, adviser expertise/quality, costs, continuity of funding for advisory services

## Which is the main barrier to the uptake of soil-improving cropping systems?



*How could EU and national/regional policy facilitate actions to promote the uptake of SICS?*

# Barriers and enablers for uptake of SICS Actions to overcome barriers or encourage enablers



# How to remove barriers and strengthen enablers?

Define long-term ambitions and targets

Increase coherence between policies/policy objectives

Design targeted (economic) instruments

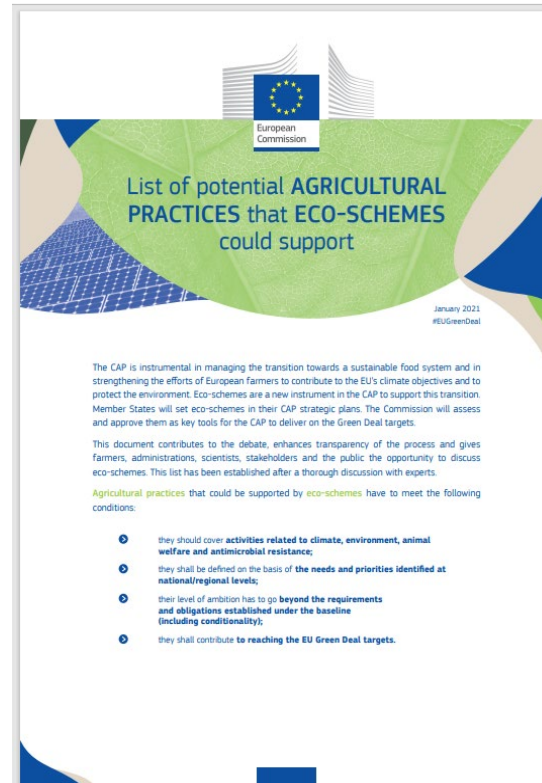


Strengthen policy monitoring and enforcement

Strengthen opportunities for learning and knowledge exchange for farmers

# Define long-term ambitions and targets

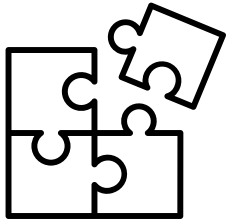
Develop **soil targets** as well as **specific targets for different pressures affecting soil functions/causing soil threats** for integration in new policy initiatives



Promote SICs through relevant strategic and sectoral policies

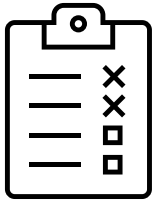
- Provide **EU-level advice on Eco Schemes (CAP)**
- Scope for Commission action within the **formal review/approval process of the new CAP Strategic Plans and subsequent annual monitoring**

# Increase coherence between policies/policy objectives



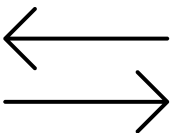
Carefully analyse and align policy conflicts/potential synergies

- Future-looking **policy evaluations which cover soil health** as a criteria
- Soil is cross-cutting in nature as a mediator of multiple land-based services and should be a **higher priority in any policy evaluation**



New CAP proposes changes to improve the overall coherence of CAP with environmental legislative instruments

- **Potential conflicts with other sectoral legislation**, such as energy and waste, at EU and national level might need to be better addressed



**Two-way communication platforms** between policy makers, farmers and advisory services to create feedback loop



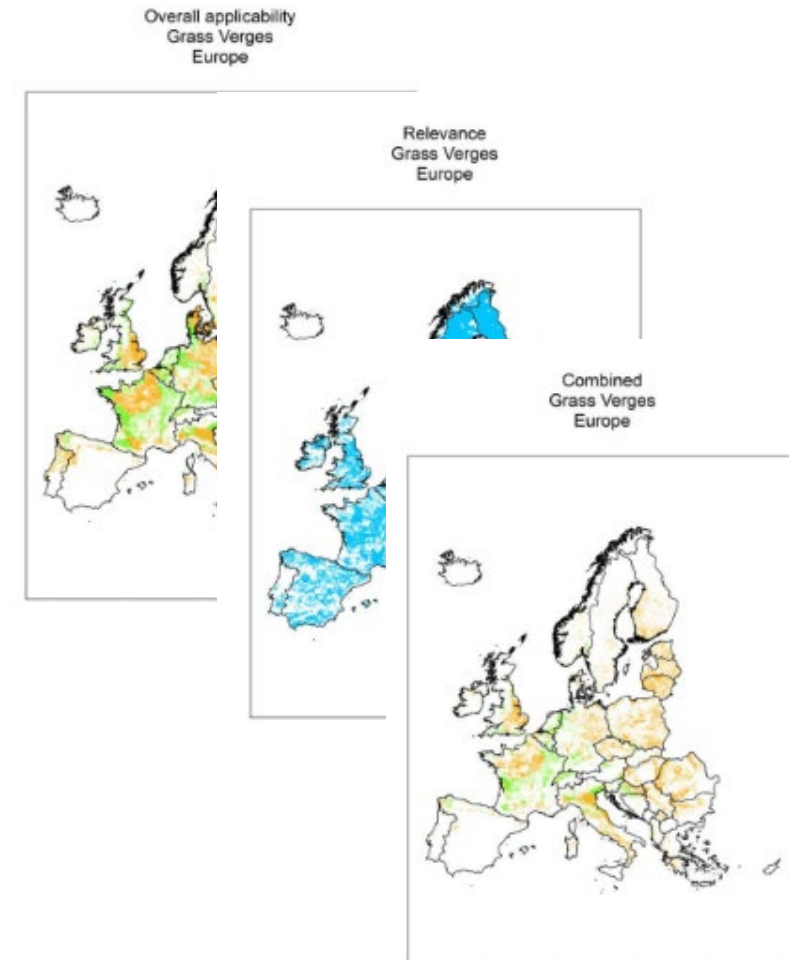
# Design targeted (economic) instruments

Financial **incentives need to be more targeted**, both tied to specific actions and region (or environmental/geographic conditions) to result in the desired change

- New CAP model provides **opportunity to define different regional mandatory requirements** (GAECs) and **voluntary measures** (Eco schemes)
- Prioritise **farming techniques that serve multiple objectives**, i.e., food production, sustainability and profitability
- **Reward benefits** delivered (“carbon farming certification”)
- **Involve farmers** (and other relevant stakeholders) in development of CAP interventions/other instruments

Facilitate a **long-term transition to sustainable practices**

- Encourage **non-financial economic instruments**, for instance, schemes for sharing equipment and/or collective buying or national seed banks
- **Long-term arrangements (>7 years)** enabled in policy frameworks are essential to win trust from influential farmers



# Strengthen policy monitoring and enforcement

Establish **clear, robust, and reliable policy monitoring and enforcement frameworks and institutions**

- For the CAP, move **from monitoring of target areas/proportions** covered by a specific policy measure **to assessing environmental improvements**
- Integrated systems for **coordinated monitoring of relevant policies** to enhance reliability and reduce administrative burden on public authorities
- **Training of farm inspectors**
- **Agencies/units dedicated to monitoring** of impact of policies on soil health

## ***How to measure soil quality?***

*Indicators proposed for measuring soil quality (and yield) over a 2-3 year period*

Category	Indicator (Unit)	Method
Soil productivity	Crop yield or crop biomass in dry matter ( $\text{t ha}^{-1}\text{year}^{-1}$ )	Yield measurement or quadrat sampling
Soil physical properties	Water stable aggregates (%)	Wet sieving (250 $\mu\text{m}$ – 2mm)
Soil biological activity	Earthworm presence (number/ $\text{m}^2$ )	Mustard extraction method
Soil organic carbon	Total Organic Carbon (%)	Walkley- Black method



# Strengthen opportunities for learning and knowledge exchange for farmers

Establish **regular** training and information on:

- Explain **costs and benefits** of new practices
- Provide **evidence** of **short-term as well as long-term benefits**
- **Policy requirements**, and administrative procedures
- Findings from **research projects** and **long-term field experiments** within the region

**Engage with** farmers and **trusted organisations** to deliver advice and training

Support **local networks of farmers/bottom-up** initiatives

## Strengthen the capacity of Farm Advisory Services

- Funding for continuity of services through CAP and national governmental funds to ensure that the advice delivered reflects current knowledge and remains impartial.
- Training of providers to keep up with new developments and to ensure coherent quality
- Farm Advisory Service increasingly privatised creating a two-track system (public vs private goods) with different objectives. -> opportunities for synergies between public and private advice for soil management should be exploited

**Soil health** needs to be a strong component of **vocational training/continued education** for farmers at national level

Farmers operate in a **complex agri-food system**, and they do not always have the capacity to follow advice

- Dissemination of knowledge, awareness raising, and education should be used **in parallel with economic and legislative instruments**

# Strengthen opportunities for learning and knowledge exchange for farmers



Lighthouses/living labs to demonstrate how to use and adapt different SICS in the region



Support local farmer-led networks where farmers can learn about “what works” for soil health from the experiences of others



## What about the consumers?

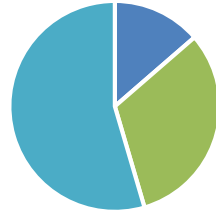
Educate consumers about the advantages and disadvantages of conventional farming practices vs. sustainable practices to ensure increased demand for sustainably produced products and encourage the retail sector to make these more widely available to all sections of society.

- Innovation awards
- “Soil footprint” label

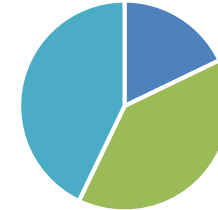
# Priority actions identified by stakeholders

How likely are the actions to succeed in facilitating an uptake of SICS?

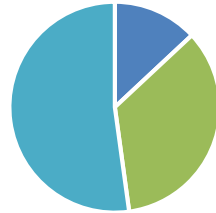
Making soil health part of future sustainability assessments in policy evaluations



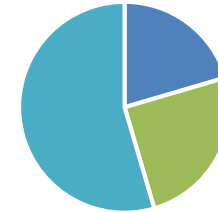
Labelling and certifications (e.g., with soil footprint displayed on products)



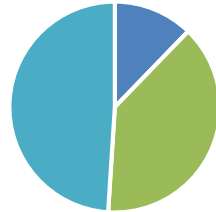
Create mechanisms to ensure feedback between legislators and stakeholders



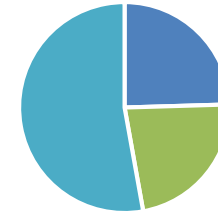
Consumer taxation on products derived from "unhealthy" soil practices to fund reinvestment into SICS



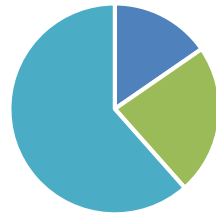
Fair subsidies with strong controls to limit abuse



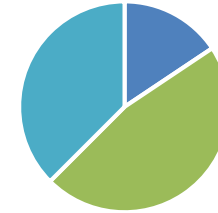
Lighthouse projects raising awareness for the need for SICS and providing examples of best practices adapted to local conditions



Optimise technologies to minimise external inputs



Local knowledge exchange groups facilitated by advisory organisations.



■ Not so  
■ Somewhat  
■ Very

# Thank you!

## Further information

- SoilCare deliverable D7.2: Recommendations for policy actions
- Country reports and policy summaries
- Policy briefs:
  - Soil health policies for CAP and agri-environment Directives
  - Soil health policies towards SDGs
  - Farmer networks and social capital for sustainable soil management
  - SoilCare contribution to the EU Soil Strategy Consultation
  - SICS adoption factors and opportunities

