



# CALL TEXT AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Call: Section 1 – Management of Water 2021


Topic 1.1.1-2021(RIA) Sustainable soil and water  
management for combating land degradation and  
desertification and promoting ecosystem restoration

Version 1.0  
17 February 2021



The PRIMA programme is supported and funded under Horizon 2020, the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation

*Topic 1.1.1-2021(RIA) Sustainable soil and water management for combating land degradation and desertification and promoting ecosystem restoration*

	<p><i>SRIA priorities addressed</i></p> <p>1.2 Soil sustainability</p> <p>Topic 1.1.1 refers to Priority 1.2 Water sustainability in the Mediterranean region should be ensured through improved technical tools coupled with socio-economic <u>tools and governance, organisational and/or business models</u> to define the limits of water use in certain key regions under present and future global change scenarios.</p> <p><u>OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 2/LAND AND WATER SUSTAINABILITY</li><li>- Cross-Cutting theme: SOIL SUSTAINABILITY</li></ul>
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**Challenge**

Drylands cover 33.8% of the Mediterranean and poor soil and water management, overgrazing, deforestation and wildfires are turning large sections of these areas into deserts. Some studies have estimated that 30% of semi-arid Mediterranean drylands are now affected by desertification, which is also a security issue as it has the potential to force migration from the Middle East and North Africa into Europe.

The causes of land degradation are not only environmental and technical (improper water management, soil erosion, land and water salinisation, drought, flooding and forest fires), aggravated by climate changes, but also socio-economic as a consequence of the lack of governance and appropriate policies. Small-holding farmers usually occupy areas impacted by land degradation, and agriculture is a primary source of livelihood. Therefore, the socio-economic impacts of land degradation are affecting the stability of the local population and particularly rural women and youth. Actions taken by single countries are not sufficient to deal with the challenges, research and innovation are needed to foster efforts at the transnational level to prevent land and water degradation considering different processes and mainly both prevention of desertification and soil and water quality restoration. At the same time, the current knowledge about the economics of sustainable land and water management and recovery is still needed to support decisions on investments. As a consequence, more applied research is required to quantify the final impacts of the proposed measures.

**Scope**

Good practices and approaches have been developed to enhance sustainable management of agricultural soils to avoid further degradation and to support the restoration of already degraded lands. These include sustainable land/soil management practices such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, sustainable pasture management, agroecological practices, safe use of unconventional water resources including corresponding assessment, planning and management tools. Proper and sustainable management of agricultural soils can reduce degradation of land and soils (in particular soil erosion and loss of organic matter), preserve and increase soil health and fertility.

Actions should be now taken to adapt and enhance the scaling up and out of the already available practices to increase areas under sustainable soil and water management resulting in tangible impacts on the environment and livelihoods.

The "living lab" approach should be considered to demonstrate the scaling out of successful sustainable management option at massive scale. Proposals should identify representative sites based on previous works done in different Mediterranean countries, taking into account land degradation hot spots and following a participatory method that ensures the involvement of key stakeholders and decision-makers at different levels. At the same time, tools for assessment and monitoring of land degradation should be harmonised and standardised. The identification of site-specific constraints that hinder the widespread uptake of good practices is needed. The proposals should identify actions, at different levels, to enhance the enabling environment and promote a wider uptake and implementation of sustainable land and water management options. This includes knowledge, capacity, socio-economic, such as high costs and lack of incentives, inappropriate policies and governance, access to finance and markets and absence of strategic planning among others constraints and barriers to be considered.

Indeed, the proposals should set up a methodology for the participatory assessment of the impact of the implemented solutions, for instance through living lab approach, to ensure sustainability beyond the project lifespan. Research on investment opportunities on innovative sustainable land and water management within the context of climate change should be considered. This includes the investigation of the cost and benefits (in terms of environmental, social, economic and climate-related) building up examples of business models to enhance investment, and organise the outcome of this work into a public domain available data to improve the investment on sustainable land and water management.

#### **Expected impacts**

- Restoring degraded landscapes: improve the functionality of agro-ecosystems pastures and natural Agro-Ecosystems landscapes.
- Promotion of proven and cost-effective solutions to land, water (water quality and quantity) and agro-ecosystem degradation.
- Promote the scaling-out of sustainable management options supported by an appropriate enabling environment to combat land degradation, enhance productivity and livelihoods.
- Contribution to the development of scientific decision-support tools and policy solutions to land and water degradation challenges.
- Promote public and private investment opportunities for the adoption of sustainable land and management practices.
- Decrease land degradation as a strategy to avoid migration and to increase productive livelihood, to ensure food security, and to contribute to improving employment, especially of women and youths.

#### **Key Performance Indicators**

- Number of practical solutions to land, water (quantity and quality) and agro-ecosystem degradation
- Decision-support tools and policy solutions to land and water degradation challenges.
- Number of investment opportunities for the adoption of sustainable land and management practices.

### Links with EU Policies

The proposal should indicate linkages to relevant EU policies and objectives in the context of the EU Green Deal and relevant Horizon Europe Missions and Partnerships<sup>1</sup>

- Farm to Fork Strategy<sup>2</sup>
- Biodiversity Strategy<sup>3</sup>
- Horizon Europe Mission on Soil Health and Food<sup>4</sup>
- European Partnership Water Security for the Planet (Water4All)
- European Partnership accelerating farming systems transition: agroecology living labs and research infrastructures
- European Partnership Agriculture of data
- European Partnership for Safe and Sustainable Food Systems
- European Partnership for rescuing biodiversity to safeguard life on Earth

### Links with SDGs

The proposal should indicate linkages to relevant SDGs and methodology to contribute to the reporting of SDG indicators

- SDG Target 1.5.3: By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world. May be measured based on whether biodiversity, ecosystem functions and services are stable or increasing in each of the focal ecosystems.
- SDG 6 Target: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all.
- SDG Target 2.3: Double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers.
- SDG Target 13.1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Horizon Europe Partnerships: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe/european-partnerships-horizon-europe/candidates-food-security\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe/european-partnerships-horizon-europe/candidates-food-security_en)

<sup>2</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system" [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:ea0f9f73-9ab2-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:ea0f9f73-9ab2-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

<sup>3</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives" [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:a3c806a6-9ab3-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:a3c806a6-9ab3-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe/missions-horizon-europe/soil-health-and-food\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe/missions-horizon-europe/soil-health-and-food_en)

## Supporting information for Section 1 Call for Proposals, Topic 1.1.1

Type of action	Research and Innovation Action (RIA)
Total indicative amount allocated to this call	EUR 8.25 million
Funding level	According to the Horizon 2020 Rules: rate of 100% applies
Technology Readiness levels (TRL)	TRL 4-5 Proposals should clearly state <u>the starting and end TRLs of the key technology or technologies targeted in the project.</u>
Budget and duration of grants	PRIMA considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU in the range of <b>EUR 2.75 million</b> and with a duration of <b>36 months</b> would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts or duration.
Eligibility conditions for participation	Please refer to section 5.1.1 of the PRIMA Annual Work Plan 2021. The standard admissibility (section 5.1.2) and eligibility conditions (section 5.1.3) apply.
Submission and evaluation procedure	The call will be organised according to a two-stage submission process. For the first step, a first-stage proposal ( <b>maximum ten pages</b> ) must be submitted within the first-stage submission deadline. Successful applicants in the first step will be invited to the second step to submit a full proposal ( <b>maximum 50 pages</b> ). A timeline for the submission and evaluation of applications can be found in Table 5_ of the PRIMA Annual Work Plan 2021.
	The award criteria, scoring, thresholds and weightings for RIAs listed in part 5.1.7 of the PRIMA Annual Work Plan 2021 will be used.
Grant agreement	PRIMA MGA (multi-beneficiary), based on Horizon 2020 MGA.
Consortium agreement	Participants in projects resulting from this Call for Proposals will be required to conclude a consortium agreement before the conclusion of the PRIMA grant agreement.