



# CALL TEXT AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Call: Section 1 – Farming Systems 2023


Topic 1.2.1-2023 (IA) Actions to restore and return  
degraded lands in the Mediterranean region into  
productive agroecosystems

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**Topic 1.2.1-2023 (IA)** Actions to restore and return degraded lands in the Mediterranean region into productive agroecosystems.

	
<b>Alignment with SRIA</b>	Thematic Area 2 - Operational Objective 5 - Research Priority 3- Cross-Cutting: Soil sustainability
<b>Alignment with EU policies</b>	<a href="#">EU Soil Strategy for 2030</a> <a href="#">Biodiversity Strategy for 2030</a> <a href="#">EU Adaptation Strategy for climate change</a>

## Challenge

PRIMA is proposing an action aiming to galvanize sustainable solutions for land restoration and drought resilience to restore soil health in Mediterranean drylands in collaboration with the [EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe.'](#)

The objective of this call is very much aligned with the conclusions of the [UNCCD 15th session of the Conference of the Parties | UNCCD](#). Many areas of the Mediterranean Basin are classified as drylands<sup>1</sup>, with one-third already showing signs of desertification and likely to be more impacted in the coming years.

Desertification is accelerated and exacerbated by climate change (long drought periods), leading to the loss of vegetal cover and fertility of the soil, making these areas increasingly unsuitable for agriculture.

Desertification has significant environmental consequences in the region due to biodiversity loss and decreasing biological productivity.

In this context, most of the current varieties cannot afford and withstand the occurrence of more extreme conditions. It also has a severe socio-economic impact on the more vulnerable categories of people, such as small-holding farmers for whom agriculture is a primary source of livelihood, creating income reduction, and thus also triggering migration.

Cropland expansion and intensification of agriculture are among the drivers of land degradation processes that can lead to desertification.

Urgent action is needed to ramp up efforts to restore and return degraded lands to productive agroecosystems by adopting sustainable land management practices and

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<sup>1</sup> Drylands are characterized by a scarcity of water, which affects both natural and managed ecosystems and constrains the production of livestock as well as crops, wood, forage and other plants and affects the delivery of environmental services. (FAO: <https://www.fao.org/dryland-forestry/background/what-are-drylands/en/>)

genetic intervention to reverse degradation while increasing biodiversity, soil health, and food production

## Scope

The call supports the deployment of measures and practices adapted to biophysical and socio-economic conditions in the Mediterranean region to restore degraded natural resources and their ecosystem functions.

Proposals should scale up existing local knowledge and/or propose practices already tested at a research scale in the Mediterranean region to restore soil health on degraded lands capitalising on agroecological practices. The use of species, varieties and breeds, previously or de novo generated by classic and novel breeding techniques and better adapted to local climatic conditions with minimal watering/inputs and generating incomes and food for the local holders are strongly encouraged.

Proposals should be built on demonstration sites located in different Mediterranean Partner Countries<sup>2</sup> (land degradation hot spots) and follow a participatory method that ensures the involvement of key stakeholders.

Proposals should assess the costs and benefits of agricultural practices to restore drylands already affected by desertification by building up business models to enhance investments and create new market opportunities and social wealth.

Since an engagement at a large geographical scale and coordinated actions are needed to combat desertification in the long term, this action should prepare the ground for developing soil restoration Mediterranean lighthouses<sup>3</sup> that allow efficient exchanges of expertise and best soil and land management practices to be adopted in regions already affected by desertification. The project's proponents should use solutions against desertification from projects funded by previous PRIMA and Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe calls by developing a close partnership during the implementation of respective projects. A multi-actor approach, including all the relevant stakeholders (public and private actors), is strongly encouraged to ensure the system's sustainability even after the project's end.

Proposals should perform these tasks using a business model that guarantees the functioning of the network and its services beyond the project's lifespan.

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<sup>2</sup> Mediterranean Partner Countries as defined in section 5.1.1 of the PRIMA Annual Work Plan 2023 include the following Third Countries associated to Horizon 2020 (AC): Israel, Tunisia, and Turkey. Also included are the following Third Countries not associated with Horizon 2020 (TC), having concluded international agreements for scientific and technological cooperation setting out the terms and conditions of their participation in PRIMA: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco.

<sup>3</sup> Lighthouses are single sites, like a farm or a park, where to showcase good practices. These are places for demonstration and peer-to-peer learning. Good practices are tested or in place and can be showed to inspire other practitioners to move towards sustainable land management. In addition, in lighthouse sites, researchers work together with land managers to ensure that research responds to concrete needs encountered in the field  
([https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research\\_and\\_innovation/funding/documents/soil\\_mission\\_implementation\\_plan\\_final\\_for\\_publication.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/funding/documents/soil_mission_implementation_plan_final_for_publication.pdf))

Proposals should set a clear plan on how they will collaborate with other projects selected under this and any other relevant topic by participating in joint and common communication and dissemination activities.

Projects are expected to build links with the [EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe'](#).

Proposals should include dedicated tasks and appropriate resources for coordination measures and joint activities with relevant projects funded by the EU Mission, such as Work Programme 2023 topics HORIZON-MISS-2023-SOIL-01-04, HORIZON-MISS-2023-SOIL-01-08 and HORIZON-MISS-2023-SOIL-01-09<sup>4</sup>, the latter ones promoting the creation of Living Labs and Lighthouses. Funded projects are expected to contribute to the Soil Deal Mission's project portfolio.

Where appropriate, PRIMA projects selected under this call should contribute to the [PRIMA WEFE Community of practice](#) through networking of selected demonstration sites, knowledge-sharing and capacity building.

*Due to the specific challenge of this topic, and in line with our principles of allowing maximum participation from Southern Mediterranean Countries to foster both North-South and South-South cooperation, the following additional eligibility criteria apply: "In addition to the minimum number of participants set out in the standard eligibility conditions (section 5.1.3 of the PRIMA Annual Work Plan 2023), consortia must include at least one independent legal entity established in any of the MPCs."<sup>5</sup>*

### Expected Impacts

- Restored desertified landscapes: improve the functionality of ecosystems and landscapes to continue providing ecosystem goods and services, and offer proven and cost-effective solutions for land restoration
- Increased biodiversity, soil health, and food production
- Decreased land degradation. Increased /stabilized the surface of lands suitable for cultivation and other related ecosystem services.
- Contribute to improving employment, especially for women and youth

### Key Performance indicators

- Hectares of desertified areas restored
- Number of innovative solutions applied for land restoration
- Number of business models deployed?
- Number of stakeholders engaged

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<sup>5</sup> Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPC) are considered the Third Countries associated to Horizon 2020 (AC): Israel, Tunisia, and Turkey and the Third Countries (TC) having concluded international agreements for scientific and technological cooperation setting out the terms and conditions of their participation in PRIMA: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco

## Contributions to EU policies, HE Mission and Partnerships

The proposal should indicate linkages to relevant EU policies and objectives in the context of the European Green Deal and relevant [EU Missions and Partnerships](#). In particular, the EU Mission “A soil Deal for Europe/ Specific Objective 1 “Reduce land degradation relating to desertification.”

## Contribution to SDGs

The proposals should indicate their contribution to relevant SDGs and methodology to contribute to reporting SDG indicators.

*Supporting information for the Section 1 call for Proposals, Topic 1.2.1*

Type of action	Innovation Action (IA)
The total indicative amount allocated to this call	EUR 8.2 million
Funding level	According to Horizon 2020 Rules. 70% (except for non-profit legal entities, where a rate of 100% applies).
Technology Readiness levels (TRL)	<b>TRL 6-8</b> Proposals should clearly state the starting and end TRLs of the key technology or technologies targeted in the project.
Budget and duration of the grants	PRIMA considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU in the range of <b>EUR 4.1 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 submitting and selecting proposals requesting other amounts or duration.
Eligibility conditions for participation	Please refer to section 5.1.1 of the PRIMA Annual Work Plan 2023 for the List of countries eligible for funding.

<p><b>Specific additional requirements for the calls 2023</b></p>	<p><i>Due to the specific challenge of these topics, and in line with our principles of allowing maximum participation from Southern Mediterranean Countries to foster both North-South and South-South cooperation, the following additional eligibility criteria apply:</i></p> <p><i>"In addition to the minimum number of participants (3 legal entities) set out in the standard eligibility conditions (mentioned above), consortia must include at least one additional independent legal entity established in any of the MPC.</i></p> <p><i>So the eligibility rules can be read as follows:</i></p> <p><b>At least four legal entities established in at least three different countries considered as PRIMA Participating States, out of which:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-at least one must be established in an EU Member State or a third country associated with Horizon 2020 and not being an MPC</li> <li>-at least two must be established in third country/countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea (MPC): Algeria, Jordan, Israel, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey."</li> </ul> <p>Examples:</p> <p>Germany-Greece-Morocco-Turkey is eligible  Germany-Greece-Morocco entity 1-Morocco entity 2 is eligible  Germany entity 1-Germany entity 2-Greece-Morocco IS NOT ELIGIBLE, lack of the 4<sup>th</sup> partner from a MPC  France-Algeria-Egypt is NOT ELIGIBLE, lack a 4<sup>th</sup> partner that can be from a MPC OR from a EU PRIMA PS</p>
<p><b>Submission and evaluation procedure</b></p>	<p>The call will be organised according to a two-stage submission process. For the first step, a first-stage proposal (<b>maximum of ten pages</b>) must be submitted within the first-stage submission deadline.</p> <p>Successful applicants in the first step will be invited to the second step to submit a full proposal (<b>maximum 50 pages</b>).</p> <p>A timeline for submitting and evaluating applications can be found in <a href="#">Table 6</a> of the PRIMA Annual Work Plan 2023.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation rules</b></p>	<p>The award criteria, scoring, thresholds and weightings for RIAs, listed in part <a href="#">5.1.7</a> of the PRIMA Annual Work Plan 2023 will be used.</p>
<p><b>Grant agreement</b></p>	<p>PRIMA MGA (multi-beneficiary), based on Horizon 2020 MGA.</p>
<p><b>Consortium agreement</b></p>	<p>Participants in projects resulting from this call for Proposals must conclude a consortium agreement before the conclusion of the PRIMA grant agreement.</p>