



As World Soil Day on 5th December 2015 marks the ending of the International Year of Soils, it is reassuring to know that scientists will still be working to find solutions to protect our soils.

2015 was declared 'International Year of Soils' by the United Nations in order to raise awareness of the profound importance of soil for human life . As well as providing us with food and fibre, soils can also play an important role in climate change mitigation by storing carbon and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere. This means that they have a vital role to play in the current Climate Change discussions in Paris.

As global attention now moves away from soils, scientists working on an EU funded project called RECARE will still be developing solutions to the problems of soil erosion, soil compaction, soil contamination, flooding and landslides, desertification, soil biodiversity loss, decline in organic matter, salinization and soil sealing. The challenges to peoples' lives and homes are detailed in an international series of documentaries showing how damaging soils, damages lives .

RECARE researchers, including teams from the University of Gloucestershire, the University of Leeds and the University of Reading, are working with the local people across Europe in 17 case study areas to put soil saving solutions into practice. Low tech but scientifically informed interventions are set to transform the protection of soils and the lives of those affected by them. Examples include, grassed waterways, straw mulching or terracing to prevent soil erosion and flooding, the use of intercropping to increase soil organic matter, or the planting of particular tree species to remove the toxins from contaminated soils. RECARE has already produced a review of potential measures that can be applied to combat these soil threats .

Professor Coen Ritsema is the RECARE Project Co-ordinator and is based at Wageningen University, The Netherlands. He said,

“As the International Year of Soils draws to a close, it is good to know that work continues to

protect this precious resource. The project team is committed to ensuring that we are able to provide people with practical, affordable ways in which they can protect our soil resources. 2015 has raised awareness of the soils vital role in all of our lives, now we need to take action”.

RECARE researchers will continue their work to develop effective prevention, remediation and restoration measures in the battle against soil threats until 2018, when the project is due to finish.