

The state of soils in England

The Environment Agency has published a report on the state of soils in England and how they change over time. They look at why the health of soil is so important, because of its role in supporting the natural environment and the services that it provides to people. The report considers the current pressures on soil and the threats to future soil health to help people understand and manage them better.

The main findings are that:

- Soil is an important natural capital resource. It provides us with many essential services.
- Soil biodiversity and the many biological processes and soil functions that it supports are thought to be under threat.
- There are insufficient data on the health of our soils. Investment is needed in soil monitoring.

In England and Wales:

- almost 4 million hectares of soil are at risk of compaction
- over 2 million hectares of soil are at risk of erosion
- intensive agriculture has caused arable soils to lose about 40 to 60% of their organic carbon
- soil degradation was calculated in 2010 to cost £1.2 billion every year

Compaction and the loss of organic carbon are serious threats to soil health. They affect agricultural production and our resilience to climate change. UK soils currently store about 10 billion tonnes of carbon. This is roughly equal to 80 years of annual UK greenhouse gas emissions.

Wasting food and growing crops for bioenergy are putting additional pressure on soils. Spreading of some materials to land is poorly controlled and can give rise to contamination. Some 300,000 hectares are contaminated in the UK.

Microplastics are widespread in soil with unknown consequences.

The Full report can be found [HERE](#)