



Problem encountered and objective

Portuguese Montado farms, typified by cork production, struggle with tree mortality and profitability because most farms are passed through generations and are hundreds of years old. New generations of land managers are becoming increasingly concerned about this, prompting the uptake of alternative management strategies for soil health within the SoilValues project. The Portuguese CoP focusses on assessing whether introducing animals, applying soil corrections, or combining both can improve soil health in a cost-effective manner, reducing the loss of trees.

Main Results and Outcomes

The Keyline technique was initially considered for the Portuguese testing ground. This soil management method optimizes water distribution, prevents erosion, and improves fertility through contour plowing and strategic water channel placement. However, since the terrain lacks sufficient slope, experts ruled out this option and instead recommended focusing on animal impact and soil corrections. The current strategy centers on field trials, supported by a growing stakeholder community. Soil experts indicate that combining grazing animals with targeted soil amendments could double grass productivity, enhancing soil health and, over time, leading to healthier trees, though results will take years to become visible.

Practical recommendations

Farmers in Montado systems should assess the role of livestock in soil health, balancing benefits with tree protection—especially for younger trees. Soil correction may complement this, but needs clear baseline data, so soil testing is crucial. Engaging local experts early helps avoid missteps, and collaborating with farmer groups or cooperatives can support knowledge sharing and scaling. The CoP has also the role of positively contributing to the development of possible incentives that lead to the implementation of good practices that will decrease tree mortality, working closely with policy makers.



ABOUT SOILVALUES

SoilValues is a Horizon Europe project that will contribute to the development of successful soil health business models across the EU to improve soil quality and provide land managers with the necessary incentives.

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USEFUL LINKS

 <https://soilvalues.eu/>

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 <https://zenodo.org/communities/heuropesoilvalues>

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