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## European Compost Network launches the S.O.S. Soil Initiative

### 'SAVE ORGANICS IN SOIL' at the ISWA World Congress in Bilbao

At the ISWA World Congress in Bilbao today, 8th October, the President of the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), Mr Antonis Mavropoulos, and Chair of the European Compost Network (ECN), Mrs Kristel Vandebroek signed the new S.O.S. Soil Initiative 'Save Organics in Soil'.

The initiative, led by the European Compost Network (ECN) and the Italian Compost and Anaerobic Digestion Association (CIC), aims to highlight the importance of soil organic matter to encourage policy makers to develop instruments to move Europe towards implementing sustainable, climate proof soil management practices. It was promoted yesterday at the ISWA conference session on 'Benefits of compost and digestate on soil'.

At the opening event signing the manifesto, the European Compost Network's Chair, Kristel Vandebroek, stressed that *'Soil is a vital, non-renewable resource for ecosystems, playing an essential role in services such as water purification and food production. It is also a major global carbon sink, with significant potential to remove climate-changing gases from the atmosphere. However, the ability of soil to deliver ecosystem services — in terms of food production, as a biodiversity pool and as a regulator of gasses, water and nutrients — is under severe pressure.'*

#### Loss of soil organic matter impacts CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

A Technical Report issued in November 2015 by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research pointed out that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by EU soil organic matter losses amount to 173 M tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>/year: it means that the EU is, after Indonesia and before the Russian Federation, the World's second largest emission hotspot due to organic soil degradation, mainly induced by human activities.

#### Reduce soil erosion and increase soil organic matter

The urgency for the wider land use sectors to increase efforts to address climate mitigation and adaptation has increased since the signing and ratification of the Paris Agreement, with its ambitious targets. Therefore, the fresh challenge for policy makers is to develop instruments to better balance private and societal interests while swiftly moving towards sustainable, climate-proof land management practices, according to few priorities, such as:

- **Protecting the existing carbon stock of carbon rich soils.** It is a priority to ensure the protection of remaining carbon rich soils where they occur in Europe, both through

preventing the ploughing of those soils already under permanent grassland and minimizing further losses of carbon from cultivated carbon rich soils;

- **Maintaining soil organic matter by respecting the biological cycle.** Therefore, adding stabilised quality organic matter from the biological treatment of sustainable biomass (e.g. bio-waste) should be promoted;
- **Minimising losses of, and increasing, soil organic matter on all soils;**
- **Encouraging the use of recycled nutrients and the more efficient management of nutrients on agricultural land.** This would not only benefit the climate but would also be particularly beneficial to improve water and air quality.

ISWA's President Antonis Mavropoulos said *'As President of ISWA I am very proud to host the launch of this soil initiative for saving organic matter in soil. Organic recycling plays an important role in circular economy. It is a key element in climate mitigation and in preserving soil fertility. With this initiative the importance of soil in the circular economy is stressed. I am very pleased to have ISWA as one of the first signatories of this initiative.'*

Also, Carlos RV Silva Filho, Vice President of ISWA and Director Abrelpe, Benjamin Bill Vierira de Souza, President of the Intermunicipal Consortium for Solid Waste Management CONSIMARES from Brazil, and Atilio Savino, the President from ARS Argentina and the Chair of the ISWA initiative for Latin America signed the manifesto.

We encourage all organisations, companies, NGOs, researchers and citizens to sign the manifesto 'Save Organics in Soil'!

The manifesto will be published on ECN's website after the ISWA World Congress (7-10/10/2019)





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**Notes to editors:**

1. The European Compost Network (ECN) is the leading European membership organisation promoting sustainable recycling practices by composting and anaerobic digestion of organic resources and guarding over the quality and safe use of the recovered organic fertilisers/soil improvers.
2. The manifesto 'Save Organics on Soil' can be assessed through ECN's website [www.compostnetwork.info](http://www.compostnetwork.info).
3. If you want to sign, please get in contact the ECN office at [info@compostnetwork.info](mailto:info@compostnetwork.info)

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