

## 1st PRESS RELEASE



### **SOILVEG project kicked off in Italy, in the European Capital of Culture 2019**

*"Improving soil conservation and resource use in organic cropping systems for vegetable production through introduction and management of Agro-ecological Service Crops"* ([SoilVeg](#)) is an innovative European research project, led by the Italian Agricultural Research Council (CRA) and funded, at European level, by Core Organic Plus.

It has kicked off last March 2015, in [Matera](#), the Italian city recently awarded [European Capital of Culture](#): for 3 years, 9 European countries and 14 partner Institutions will be working together with the aim to study the better management of Agro-ecological Service Crops.

Agro-ecological Service Crops (ASC) introduced in the agro-ecosystem in order to provide or enhance ecological functions, represent a powerful tool for organic farmers. ASC are able to positively influence the agro-ecosystem, promoting the whole soil-plant system equilibrium in space and time, having impact on soil fertility and on occurrence of weeds, diseases and pests. If appropriately managed, ASC can contribute to reduce nutrient losses from the agroecosystem, to increase soil C sink potential and to improve system energy use efficiency.

During the next three years, SOILVEG research activities will aim at verifying the hypothesis that the use of the roller crimping technology for ASC termination is able to:

- i) maintain yield of the cash crops and vegetable products quality,
- ii) reduce soil disturbance and enhance soil quality, improving internal system use of nutritive elements,
- iii) reduce fossil fuel energy consumption,
- iv) create a suppressive environment for pests, diseases and weeds.

The main challenge of the project will also be to test the hypothesis that, compared with the incorporation of ASC into the soil as green manure, the use of the roller crimper reduces nutrient losses from the soil/plant system and GHG soil emission.

The main expected result is the optimisation and the spreading of novel ASC management strategies aimed to improve soil quality and to enhance resources use in organically managed systems for vegetable production.

All the researchers are ready to start their field experiments both in the Northern and in the Southern European climatic areas. First results will come out by the end of the first year and will be disseminated to all the stakeholders and, mainly, to the organic vegetable producers from the involved European countries.

Stefano Canali, the Italian scientific project coordinator, underlines: *"the smart designing of cropping system and the use of ASC have been included in the list of the most promising techniques to improve N use efficiency and reduce the risk of nitrate leaching. It is expected that the results obtained in this project in the area of the cropping system smart designing and Agro-ecological Service Crops exploitation will contribute to meet the increasing demand of innovation and to give to the European OFF sector a leading role in a global perspective"*.



*SOILVEG partners at Matera, during the kickoff meeting - 18/03/2015*

*Note: This press release has been translated and broadcasted at national level by the project partners in all the involved Countries (Italy, Slovenia, Denmark, Spain, Belgium, France, Latvia, Estonia)*

