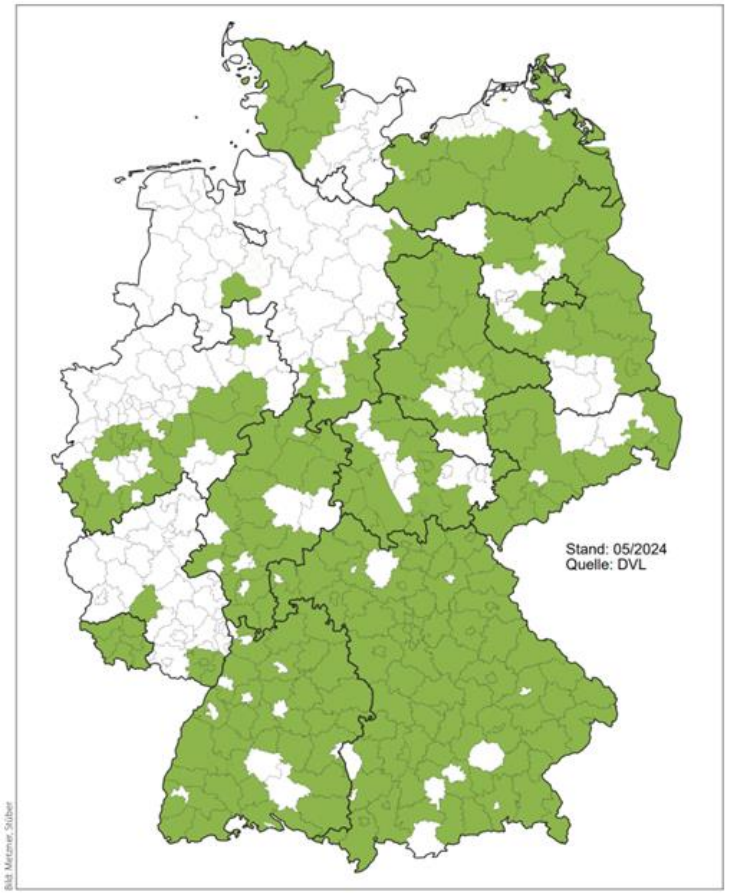


“Farmers, Nature and Water Resilience: Bringing EU Policy to Practice with Landcare Associations”

Corinna Friedrich –
Deutscher Verband für Landschaftspflege (DVL) e.V. / Landcare Germany

Deutscher Verband für Landschaftspflege (DVL) e.V. Landcare Germany



- Umbrella organisation of 200 regional Landcare Associations
- Founded 1993 by Landcare Associations
- Collaboration with >15.000 farmers (conventional & organic) and 4,000 municipalities & regions
- Equality of agriculture, nature conservation and municipalities is written in the Articles of Association
- Founding member of the organisation ‘Landcare Europe’

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WATER RESILIENCE IN EUROPE

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Water resilience – „nice-to-have“?!

Spain

The epicenter of Spain’s drought: 134 days without rain

The barren-looking municipality of Tomelloso has lost all its cereal crops and is now struggling to save its vineyards, which had traditionally kept growers afloat when everything else failed: ‘The situation is really bad’



Photo: Luis Sevillano. Credit: El PAíS



Ahrtal, Germany, 2021, floodings, Credit: ard

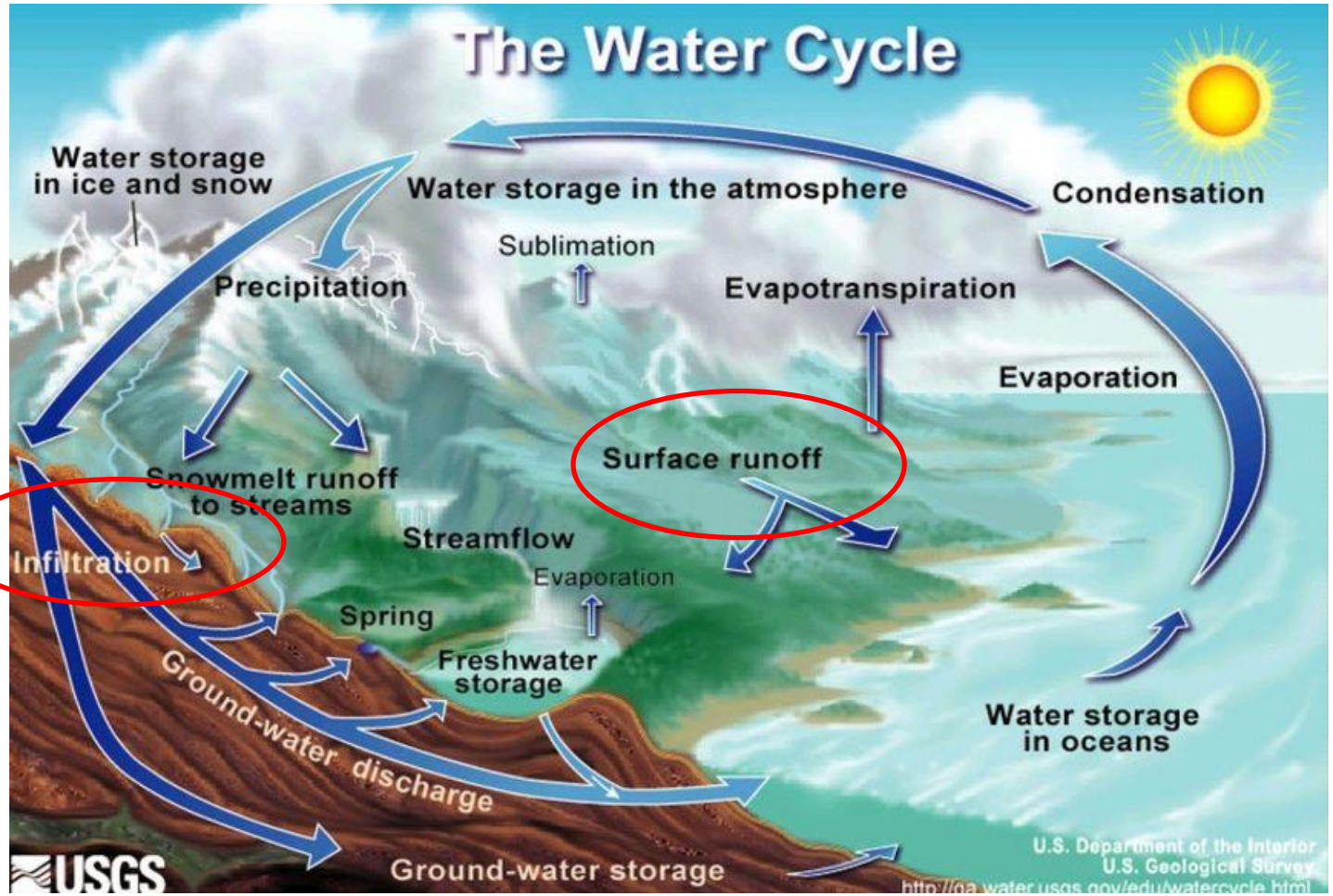


Hohen Venn, Belgium, 08/2026: Drained peatland burning underground, Credit: ARD/tagesschau

Droughts, floods & fires are becoming more severe in dry landscapes…

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The Water Cycle



John M. Evans, USGS

The water cycle is a closed system.
Water does not get lost!

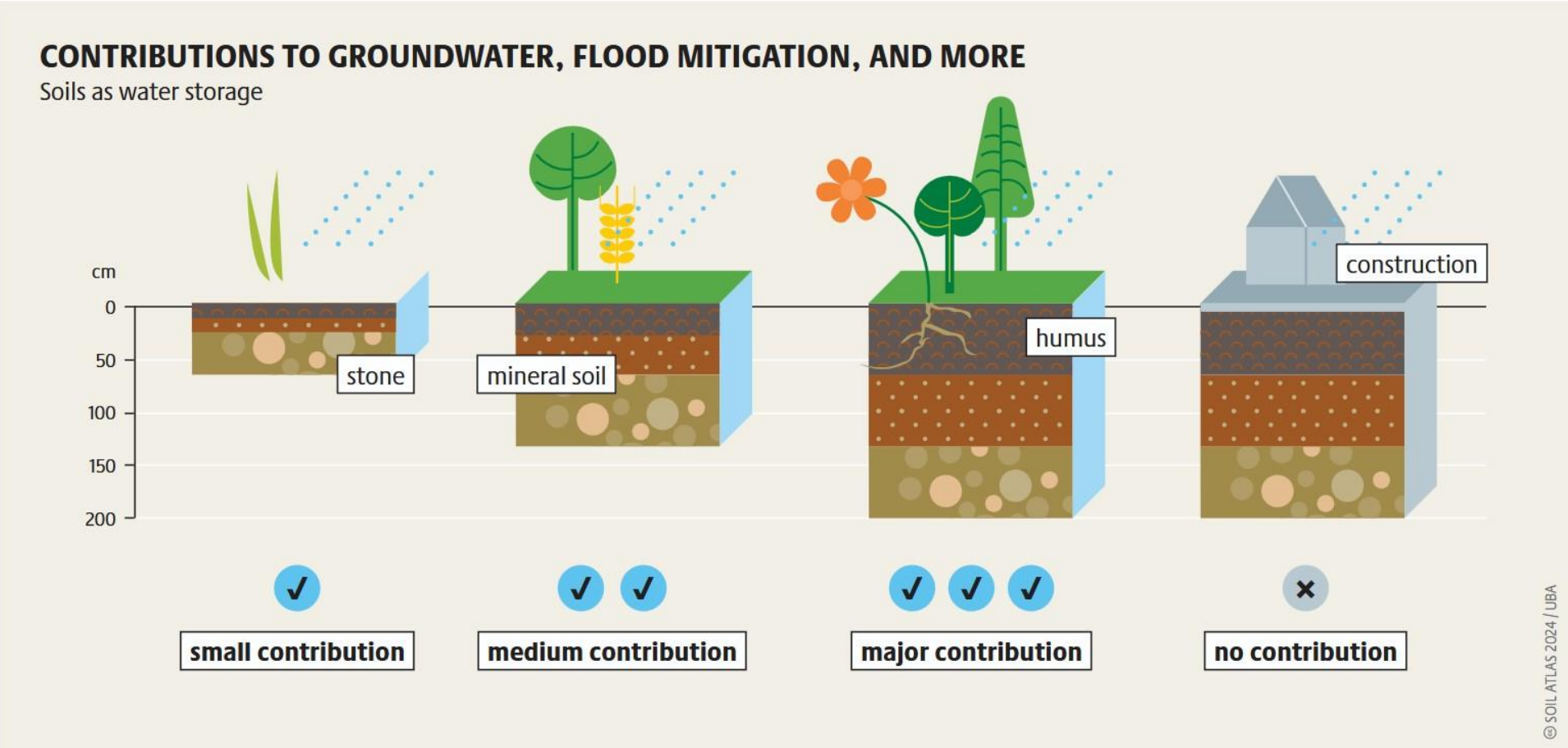
Changes in the water cycle / distribution of water due to:

- Climate change &
- Land management change!

Goals:
- Less surface runoff (+ erosion)
- Higher infiltration

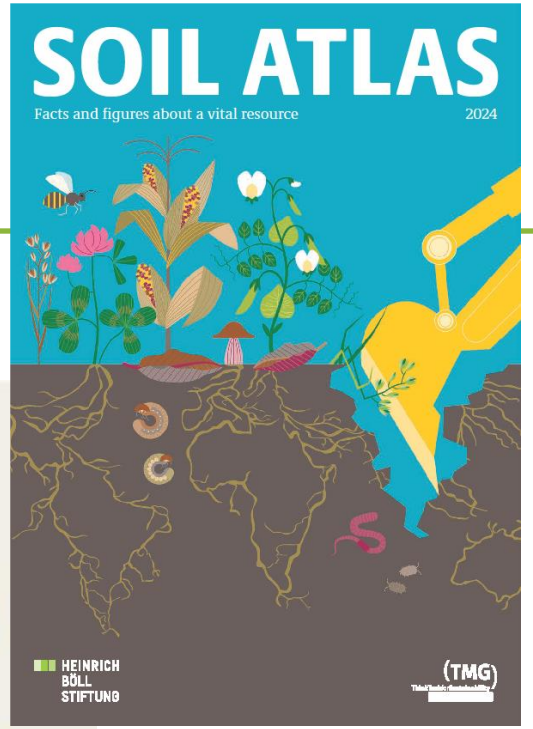
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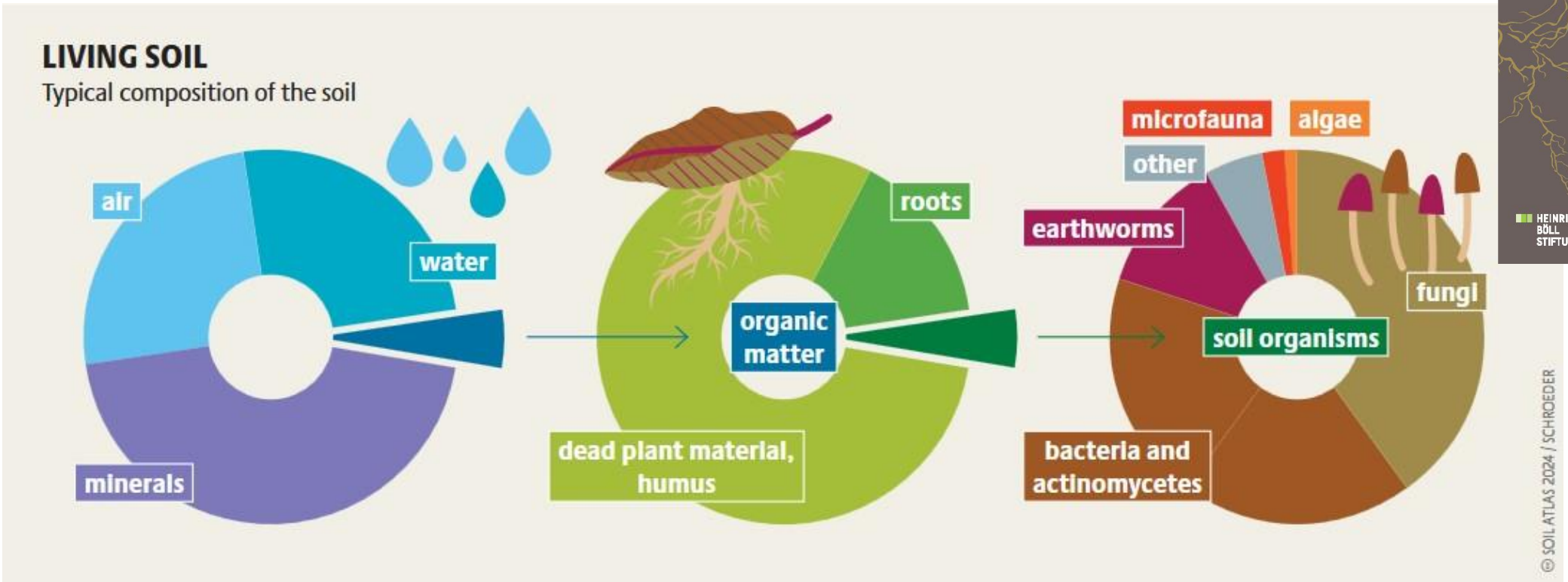
Healthy soils improve water storage



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Healthy soils





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Water resilient landscape



Forest

Mosaik landscape

Extensively managed grassland

Agroforestry/ Orchards

Meandering river

Arable land in flat areas

Healthy soils

Pond

slope-parallel farming

Hedges & trees

Riparian strip

No drainage!

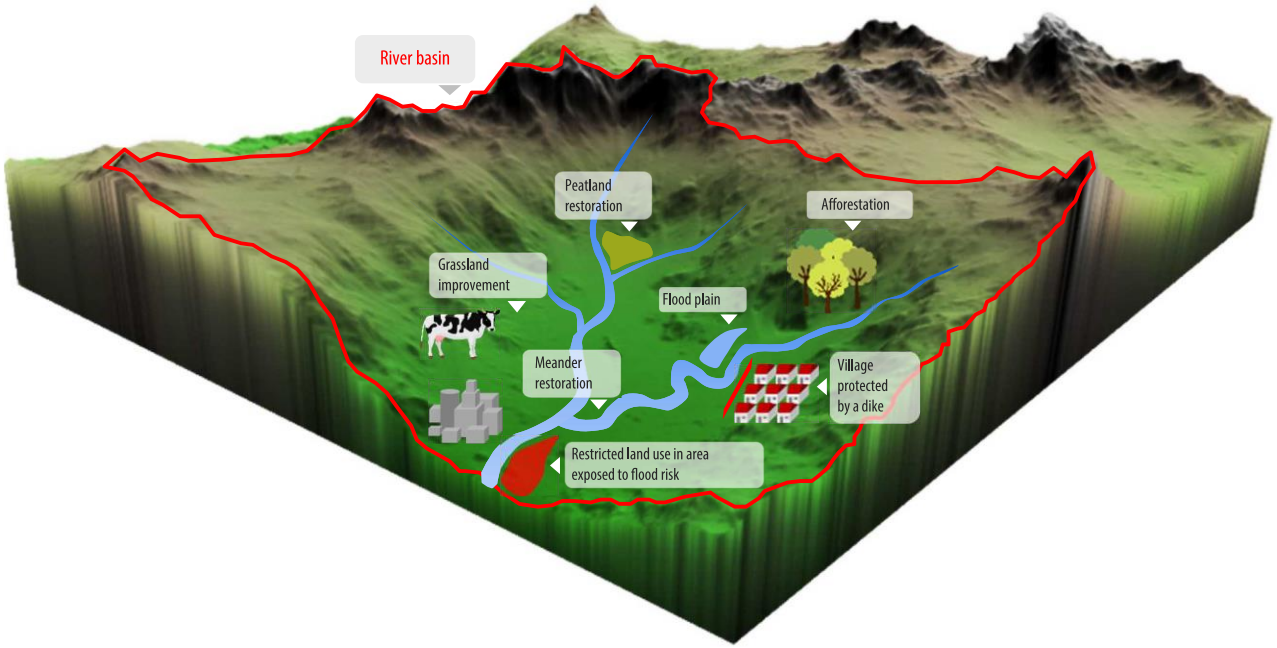
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EU Water Resilience Strategy (2025)

- Objective 1/3: „Restoring and protecting the water cycle as basis for sustainable water supply."
- restoring the "natural sponge function" of landscapes.
- "sustainable food systems are a major ally for water resilience"
- Examples:
  - improving soil health and water retention;
  - organic farming and agroecological approaches;
  - improved soil management;
  - reducing nutrient and pesticide pollution;
  - landscape features that contribute to water resilience.

Further strategies…

- EU Soil Strategy for 2030
- Floods Directive
- Water Framework Directive (WFD)
- EU Adaptation Strategy



Source: European Court of Auditors (2018): Floods Directive: progress in assessing risks, while planning and implementation need to improve, Special Report No 25/2018, Fig. 3. CC BY 4.0



© Roggenthin

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Further strategies…

- EU Nature Restoration Regulation (2024): restoration of wetlands, rivers, floodplains and ecosystems
- EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030: restoration, ecological connectivity and resilient ecosystems
- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post 2027: baseline requirements and farming incentives → many practices & programms determined by the Member States



© Ludmila Korešová

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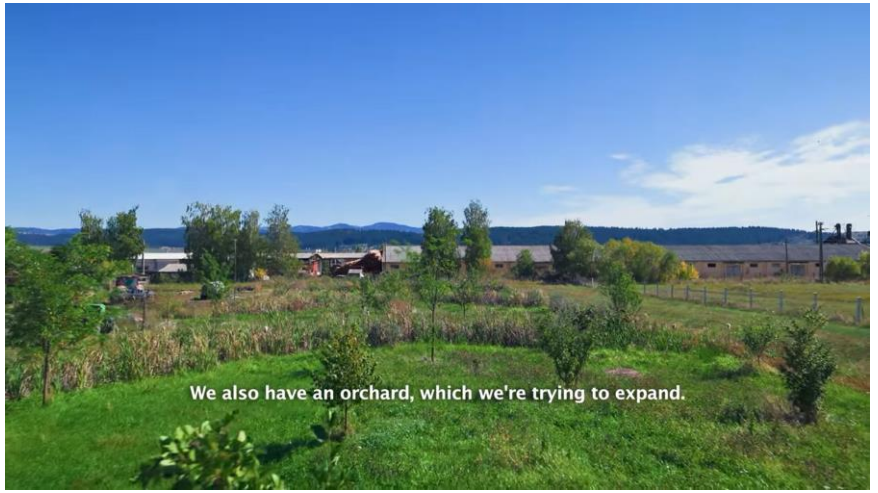
What can farmers do?

Health soils and humus building:

- Maintain or introduce **organic or regenerative farming**.
- **Keep the soil covered** with plants, e.g., with cover or catch crops, perennial crops, winter crops, untreated stubble fields over the winter.
- Diversified **crop rotations** and crop diversification.
- Use **legumes** and legume mixtures.
- Reduce/**avoid synthetic chemical and mineral fertilizers** and pesticides.
- **Return biomass to the soil**, e.g. mulching of crop or pruning residues.
- **Reduce tillage** for minimal soil disturbance.



Good practice on „Water retention & storing carbon in agriculture.“ Romania
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vyb8vuSX2u0,
© András I. Gábor, Fazakas Bence



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What can farmers do?

Grassland

- Maintain or extend **grassland areas** to avoid erosion.
- Integrate **animals and their manure** back into the landscape where possible.
- Apply **mob grazing** according to the regional conditions to strengthen the grassland (turf) and maintain healthy, humus-rich soils.



Good practice on rotational grazing, BEF, Lithuania
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7UvJBusAEo, © *Kostas Kajėnas*



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What can farmers do?

Trees, bushes, structural elements:

- Maintain or **integrate modern and traditional agroforestry systems** in arable land and grasslands, e.g., hedges, fruit and nut trees, trees for valuable timber and trunk wood.
- Integrate **flower areas, buffer strips, riparian zones**, or grass margins along waterways. Leave fallow land with spontaneous vegetation.



Good practice: „Building healthy soils to sequester carbon and improve biodiversity“, Czech Republic
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yA2gpVwvNJ8, © *Ludmila Korešová*



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What can farmers do?

Peatland and wetlands

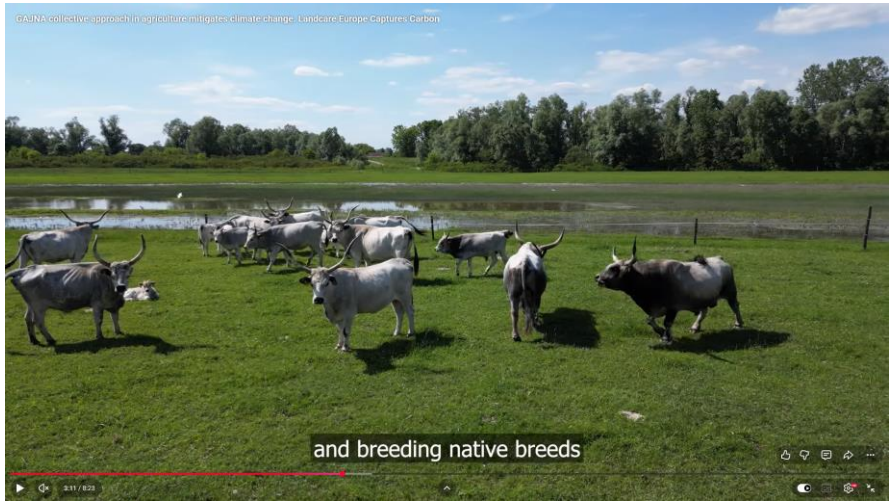
- Farm **peatlands and wetlands with raised water-levels with paludiculture** (Wetland-adopted crops and traditional cattle or water buffalo) and use soil-protecting machinery e.g., small and lightweight, wide tires/ caterpillar tracks.



© *Mark Walter*



Good practice on „Peatland climate farmer Sebastian Petri“, Germany
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbG-TdGBIN0, © *Mark Walter*



Good practice on „*Gajna* – Collective approach of grazing native livestock in floodplains for climate mitigation “, Croatia
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbG-TdGBIN0, © *Danijel Soldo*

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LANDCARE ASSOCIATIONS

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How do Landcare Associations support the transition?

- **Consulting farmers** on management practices and supporting agri-environmental and climate measures and other funding programs.
- One-on-one agroecology consulting with farms, with a **holistic concept** including ecological, economic, and social aspects.
- Organizing **field days** and **farmers-to-farmers trainings**, including e.g., machine demonstrations with soil-conserving technology.



Field day in Czech Republic © M. Kadava



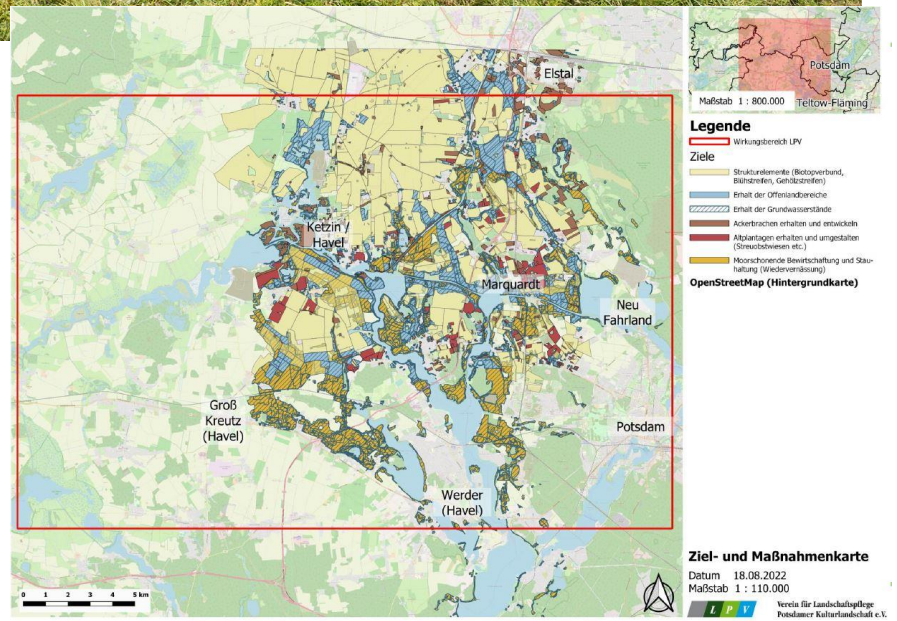
Regulating the water level with the wooden shadors (© Jūratė Sendžikaitė)

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On a landscape level

- Developing **regional soil and water management plans** together with farmers, authorities, and planners.
- Contact and **communicate with the local administrations** for agriculture, the environment, and/or water.
- Support farmers that want to **introduce paludiculture on peatlands** with raised water levels with consultation, planning, help with administrative tasks, coordinating the rewetting process.





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Professional expertise in nature restoration

- Implement **grassland restoration** of species-rich grassland.
- **Species protection**, **biotope network**, and **biotope management** for peatlands with paludiculture or species-rich grasslands.
- **Protection of traditional agroforestry systems** like orchards, wooden pastures, dehesas or landscape elements.
- **Landscape features** and other non-productive features
- + **technical solutions**: drainage, weirs…


© BED, Croatia

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Including the public

- Organize **communal planting** and/or harvesting campaigns.
- **Build regional value chains**, e.g., for agroforestry products, paludiculture or for free-range meat and dairy products.
- **Environmental education** and public outreach

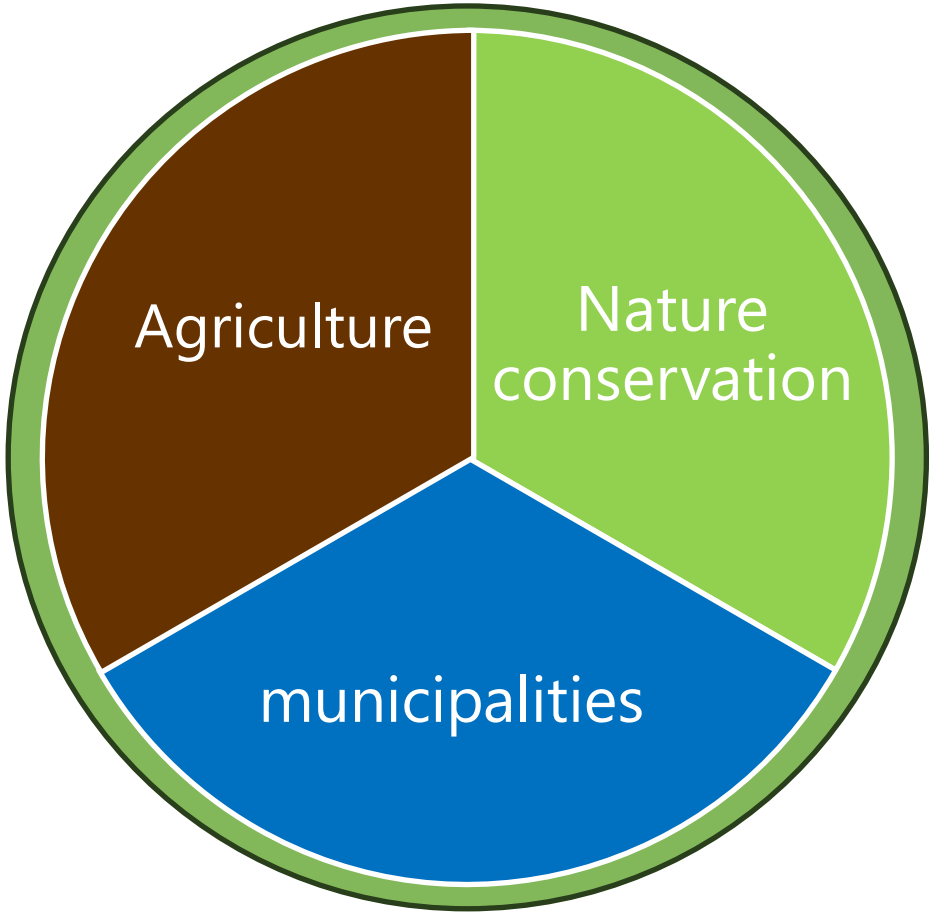


The Landcare Association „LPV Mittelfranken e.V.“ is training farmers and citizens in landcare measures in the project „Landschaft anpacken“, Link to movie (DE)

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How Landcare Associations (LCA) operate

- Cooperatively
- Voluntarily
- Regionally
- Interdisciplinary
- Independently





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Landcare Europe – supporting natural carbon sinks

- Project: "**Supporting natural carbon sinks in agricultural landscapes**" (2023-2026)
- Farmers-to-farmers trainings
- Good practice examples
- Workshops and excursions in (e.g. Romania 2024 agroforestry, soil health in Czech Republic 2025, grassland in Croatia 2024, Peatlands in Lithuania 2025
- Policy papers on "healthy soils", "extensively managed grasslands", "agroforestry", "peatlands with paludiculture"
- Participating in EU CAP network Thematic Group on "Water Resilience in Rural Areas through the CAP" (2025/2026)



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Water~Farmers

- **Project duration:** 12/2025 – 06/2028
- **Programme**: Erasmus KA220-VET Cooperation partnership, vocational training
- **Goal:** develop a learner-centred, innovative, flexible training program to train farmers and agroecology consultants in sustainable water and soil management
- **Partners:**

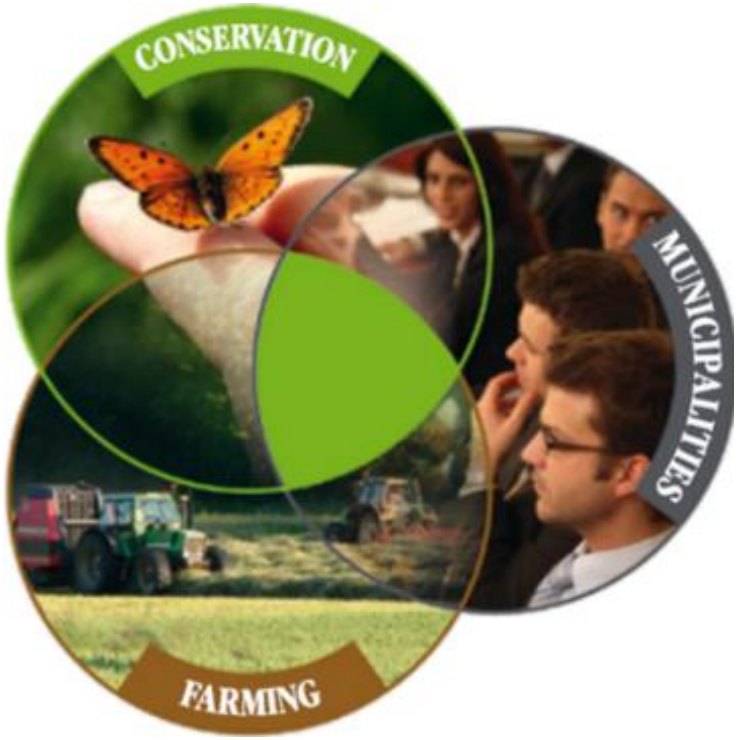


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Thank you for your attention

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