



Conclusions EEB seminar “Protecting soils, protecting livelihoods”

On July 22, 2008 the EEB organised a seminar “Protecting Soils, Protecting livelihoods” with the aim of discussing with the French Presidency ways to make progress on Council negotiations on the proposed Soil Framework Directive. Below follow the key conclusions that the EEB drew at the end of the seminar:

- ✓ An effective protection of soils is of fundamental importance in ensuring long term food security and Europe has so far failed to achieve this.
- ✓ France, as presidency of the European Council and one of the 5 blocking countries has a special responsibility in ensuring progress now.
- ✓ Given the heavy environmental agenda of the French Presidency, a deal must be reached at this October Environment Council which means that negotiations in the Working Party should start immediately.
- ✓ The Portuguese presidency in December 2007 already made major compromises towards the 5 opposing Member States. A final compromise in Council should therefore respect the position of 22 supportive Member States, the Commission and the European Parliament and most importantly ensure that the final directive will lead to real and significant environmental improvements.
- ✓ More flexibility can be agreed on the measures but not on the ultimate objectives and the requirement for MS to undertake action. Moreover the final Directive needs to be enforceable.
- ✓ The reality of organic farming practices shows that soil protection measures are feasible without jeopardising productivity.
- ✓ Key issues which are absolutely essential to maintain in the final compromise are:
 - A systematic approach to addressing contaminated sites including the requirement to prepare an inventory and make the results public
 - Addressing the loss of soil organic matter content as well as other threats stemming from unsustainable land use practices through a risk area approach should be mandatory
 - A requirement for Member States to start addressing the problems linked to soil sealing given the irreversible loss of often productive and fertile agricultural land this result in.