



The European Parliament Environment & Agriculture Committee meeting in Brussels, March 22, 2023.

Possible Problems with European Soil-Based Framework

By Mark Fogarty

A European framework on soil-based carbon sequestration may become a pattern worldwide, but some think it could prove problematic.

At a “Scrubbing the Skies” webinar by the Institute of Carbon Renewal Law and Policy, founding co-director Wil Burns noted “the European Commission has published its proposed framework for carbon removal certification, and the proposal is now being discussed by the European Council and Parliament.”

But, Burns said, “a new report contends that incorporation of soil carbon removals into the framework could prove problematic,” and so the Institute convened [a webinar featuring the authors of the report](#), Hugh McDonald, a Fellow at the Ecologic Institute, and Anne Siemons, Senior Researcher, energy and climate, at Oko-Insitute Postdoctoral Research.

McDonald noted that the pair have actually written several papers on the topic.

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“The first one had a look at what the global and European potentials of nature-based solutions were, and dove in a bit more detail into the definitions of the term nature-based solutions.”

In addition, “We have a series of fact sheets and a paper discussing the specific climate actions that we’re talking about when [we talk] about climate-friendly soil actions and how they can deliver climate mitigation.”

Then, “We have two upcoming papers, the first one focused on challenges related to funding climate friendly soil management. We’ll touch on a lot of those issues in today’s presentation, and then a final one where we evaluate 10 existing climate friendly soil management mechanisms, methodologies, and make some conclusions about the challenges and the way forward for those issues.”





Hugh McDonald presenting on the Challenges of Certifying Carbon Farming at the Parliament Environment & Agriculture Committee meeting in Brussels, March 22, 2023.

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McDonald reviewed policies of the European Union on carbon removal and emissions reduction and found a gap.

The gap, McDonald said, includes lack of individual action on removals with biogenic storage, and also lack of incentives for removals with geologic storage.

“Broadly we're starting to see emissions fall within the EU. However, on the removal side, there's a pretty significant gap. And so to fill this gap, the EU Commission, which is the executive arm of the European Union, has proposed this carbon removal certification framework.”

On the private side, “we're seeing a growth of private voluntary carbon markets for removals. So that gap has been filled, but not by central policymakers.”

“This framework was proposed for funding in December last year and the objective was to increase carbon removals through certification. The idea is that by improving and streamlining the certification of removals, this will support the development of markets and other uses of these carbon removals.”

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The framework is quite broad in scope. But one thing left wide open is what the removals will be used for, McDonald concluded.