

Can you introduce yourself and share what drives your passion for agriculture?

I am a 32-year-old Italian woman with a genuine passion for nature and science. My curiosity about the natural world led me to study chemistry, eventually specialising in soil and agricultural chemistry. I focus on phosphorus – an essential nutrient for plant growth that poses significant environmental risks if not managed properly. Phosphorus also has geopolitical implications, as its supply and management are critical to EU and global food security. In my everyday job, I'm driven by a desire to find sustainable solutions that balance agricultural needs with environmental protection.

What challenges have you faced in your career and how did you overcome them?

My biggest challenge was leaving academia to start my current job. Many tried to convince me that I wasn't the right fit for the role at ESPP or that I wasn't good enough, but in reality, they were projecting their own ideas of what was best for me. That experience taught me an important lesson: I need to make choices for myself, not to meet others' expectations. Trusting my instincts and following my own path was key to overcoming that challenge.

What led you to your current role? Was there a defining moment?

I always look for new challenges and inspiration. After a few years in academia, I felt something was missing. Around that time, I became increasingly interested in EU-level work on agriculture and sustainability so I started following the European Sustainable Phosphorus Platform, a non-profit organization working with industry, researchers, cities, and regions across Europe to promote phosphorus sustainability and recycling.



Veronica Santoro

PhD, European Sustainable Phosphorus Platform (ESPP)

When they were looking for someone to represent them in Brussels, I saw the opportunity, applied, and here I am.

What advice would you give to women entering your field today?

“ Don't be afraid of not being 'good enough' – skills can be learned, networks can be built, and being a woman in a male-dominated field shouldn't make you doubt your path. Confidence grows with experience, so trust yourself and keep pushing forward. Another key piece of advice is to support and uplift other women. Building a strong network where we empower each other makes a real difference, not just for us individually, but for the future of the sector as a whole. ”

How does your work contribute to the future of agriculture?

I cover multiple roles in the organization, which is small in size but highly impactful! As its representative in Brussels, I attend meetings, conferences, and workshops on Circular Economy and sustainability, engaging with the European Commission and key stakeholders. My work focuses on promoting

phosphorus recycling for EU food security and ensuring the sector's needs are reflected in future policies. I also manage communication – social media, website, newsletters, and events – to raise awareness about this central topic that is often overlooked.

Can you share a moment when you felt particularly supported or uplifted by other women in your field?

“ I have been fortunate to work with inspiring women in academia, research, industry, and institutions. Their success gives me hope for change. Being part of this progress motivates me, and I hope my journey inspires younger women to believe in their potential, just as I was once inspired. ”