



Friday, April 17th, 2025

## Asociación Semillistas wins the Land and Soil Management Award 2026



From left to right: Thierry de l'Escaille (jury president and co-founder), Silvia Aile (Deputy Head of Unit for Land use and management at DG Agri), Martin H. Gerzabeck (jury president), Kesenia Mishchenok (Corporate communications & media relations, accepting the diploma on behalf of Shyroskotup Farm), Óliver Ruiz Garrido (diploma of recognition: Asociación Semillistas), Max Newbert (Soil Health & Carbon Farming Technology Lead at Syngenta and jury member).

Brussels, April 17th - Óliver Ruiz Garrido joined us in Brussels to accept on behalf of his organization Asociación Semillistas the prestigious Land and Soil Management Award for the 2026 edition. The award was presented on stage during the Annual Conference of the Forum for the Future of Agriculture, under the joint chairmanship of Thierry de l'Escaille, Executive President of ELO, and Prof. Martin Gerzabek, former Rector of BOKU – University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences of Vienna.

Since its creation in **2008**, the Land and Soil Management Award has recognised innovative practices that protect and restore soils while promoting sustainable land use. It highlights efforts addressing erosion, degradation, compaction, biodiversity loss, and contamination, while fostering scalable solutions across Europe. This year's winner, [Asociación Semillistas](#), showcases a transformative approach to regenerative land management in Granada, Andalusia. Using **Biotechnological Direct Seeding (BDS)**, it replaces costly industrial transplantation by enhancing natural biological processes. Combining laboratory research with



community action, the project restores soil functionality and forest resilience in a climate-vulnerable region.

The initiative is built on three pillars: **SeedLab**, **Siembrabosques**, and **SeedToSeed**. Seeds are “primed” to align germination with rainfall and protected in “Seed-Shelters” that prevent predation and stimulate soil biology. Fieldwork takes place during optimal Mediterranean windows, using contour barriers to prevent erosion and support root growth. This “low-tech, high-knowledge” model is shared openly, enabling replication by rural communities worldwide.

The jury praised its holistic vision, combining economic viability with ecological restoration. By eliminating the nursery stage, costs are reduced and transplant shock avoided. The project has restored severely burned areas, mobilised over 600 volunteers, and reached more than 500,000 people through its communication strategy—demonstrating the power of nature-based solutions supported by biotechnology.

Three additional projects received **diplomas of recognition**:

- [Alnarp’s Agroecology Farm](#) (Sweden), a youth-led initiative integrating soil regeneration, agriculture, and social inclusion, significantly increased soil organic matter within two seasons and engaged over 3,000 people.
- **Soil Health and Biodiversity Conservation** (Ukraine), led by Shyroskotup Farm, applies **Plant Health Management** to restore pollinators and maintain high yields with fewer chemical inputs.
- **From Degradation to Regeneration** (Ukraine), by [Rock Harvst](#), combines biological soil activation and digital farming to reduce fertilizer use by 50% and combat erosion despite ongoing conflict.

This year, the jury reviewed over **30 applications** from across Europe. It expressed sincere gratitude to all participants, whose work reflects the diversity, innovation, and strong commitment driving sustainable soil management forward.



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[More information on the Land and Soil Management Award on ELO website](#)

By showcasing winning projects as good practices at European level, the Award also sheds light on outstanding achievements and promotes effective and sustainable land and soil management practices. Aiming to encourage new concepts of land and soil protection and their implementation in land management and enhance awareness of the importance of land and soil functions. The award is supported by the European Landowners' Organization, the European Commission DG ENVI and DG AGRI, the Joint Research Center, Syngenta, the University of Ljubljana, the University of KU Leuven and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna.

**About the European Landowners' Organization**

ELO is a leading voice representing the interests of landowners, rural entrepreneurs, and rural land managers in Europe. We promote sustainable land management practices, fosters innovation, and advocates for the recognition of landowners' crucial role in shaping Europe's landscapes and rural areas.

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