

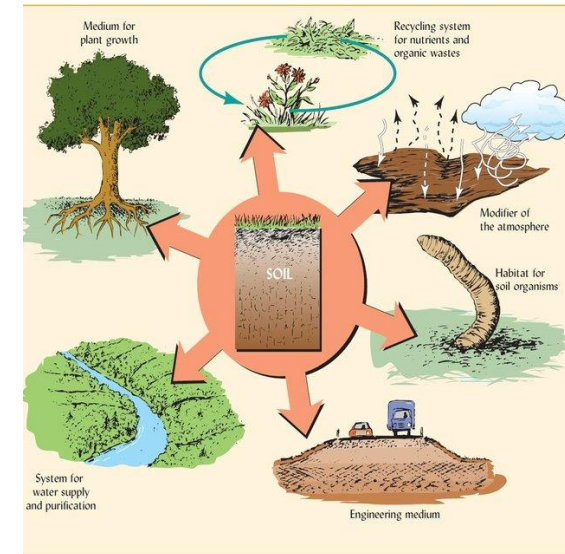
Practical Steps to Improving Soil Health

*Mark Plunkett,
Johnstown Castle Research Centre*

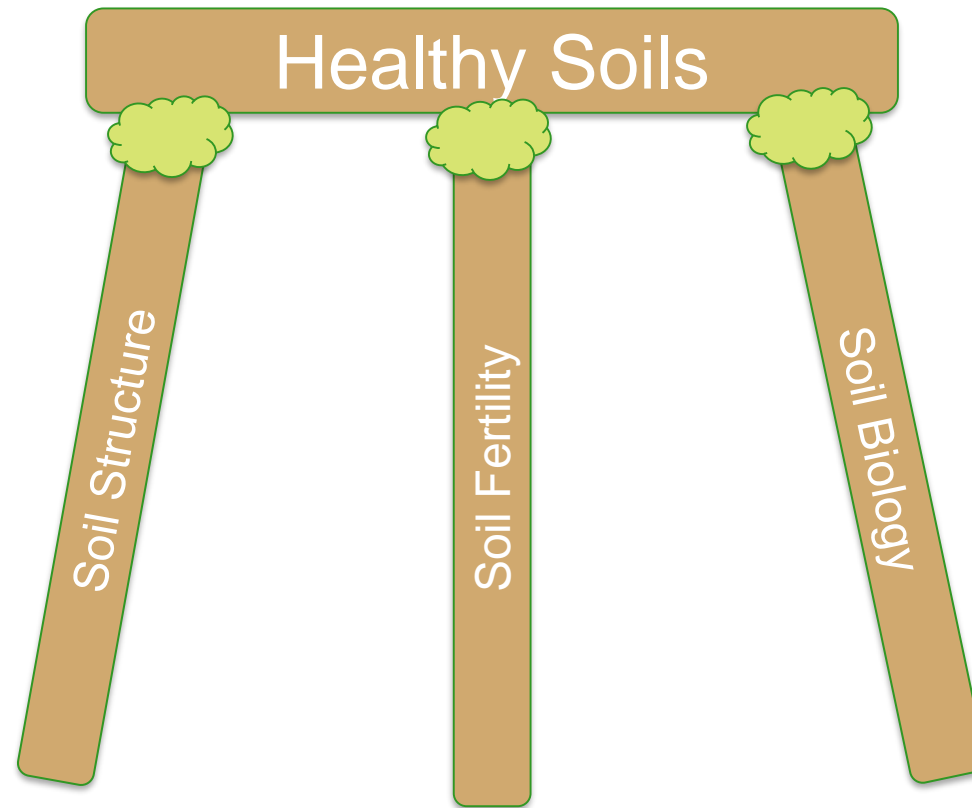


Soils have many functions

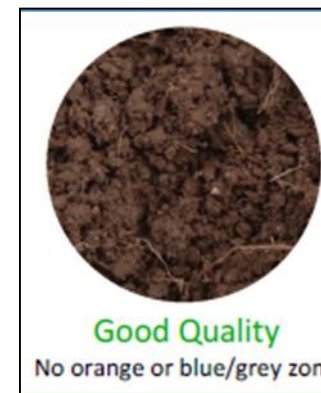
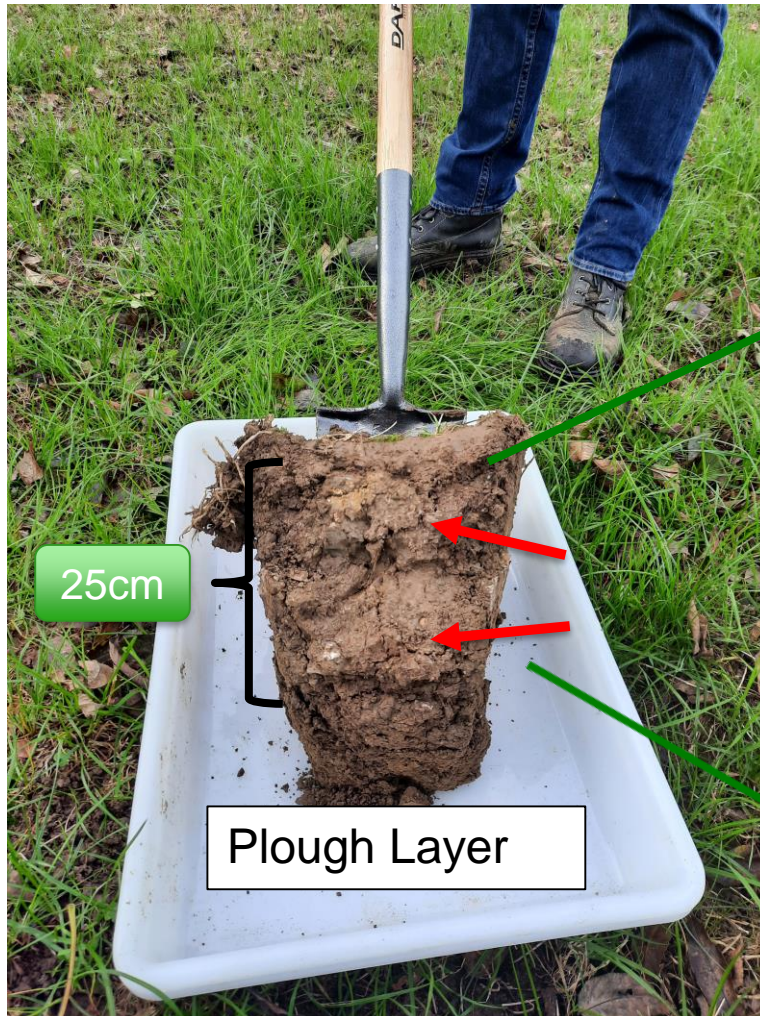
- Production of food
- Nutrient storage & cycling
- Purify water & storage
- Weed & pest management
- Store of soil carbon
- Soil biodiversity



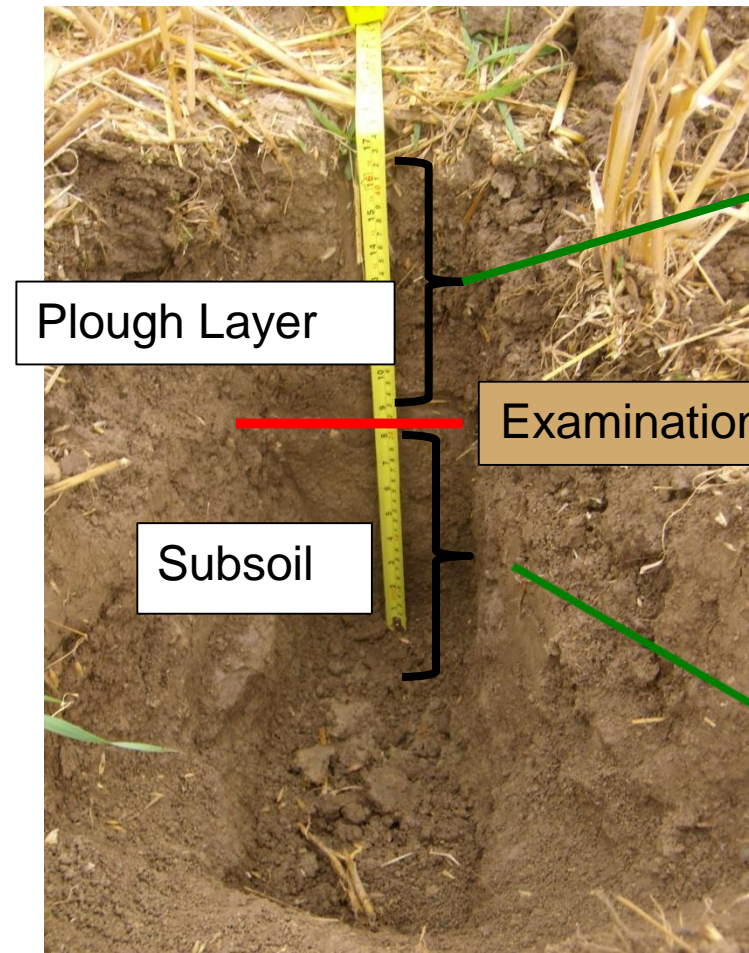
Soil Health – 3 legs to Stoll



Grassland - GrassVess



Tillage - Double Spade



Plough Layer

Examination Zone

Subsoil



Good Quality
Predominantly small



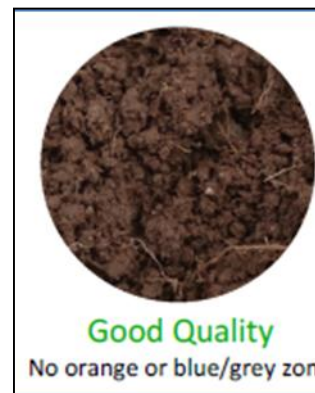
Poor Quality
Predominantly large



Good Quality
Many growing
throughout



Moderate Quality
Fewer but within
aggregates



Good Quality
No orange or blue/grey zones



Poor Quality
Orange or blue/grey zones

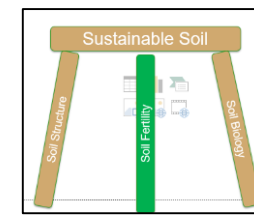


Managing Soil - Compaction

- Grassland soils
 - Soil trafficability
 - Grazing conditions
 - FYM on headlands / poached fields
- Tillage Soils
 - Field conditions
 - » Heavy field operations
 - Organic manures
 - Cover crops



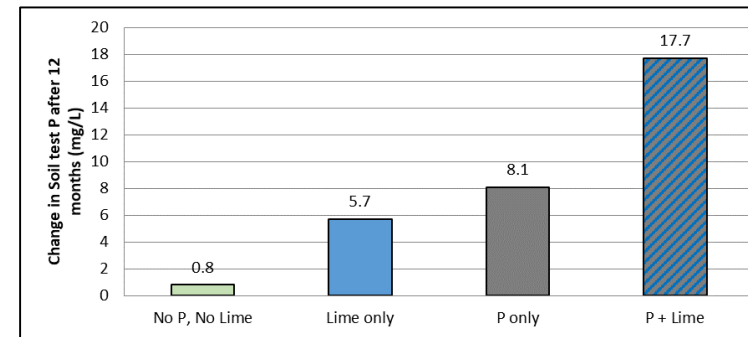
Soil Fertility – Nutrient Balance



- Soil testing
 - Soil pH Optimum
 - Soil Carbon
 - Soil P, K & Mg
 - Nutrient efficiency



Lime Unlocks Soil P !

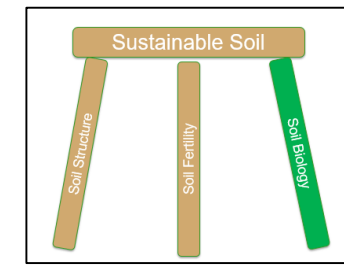
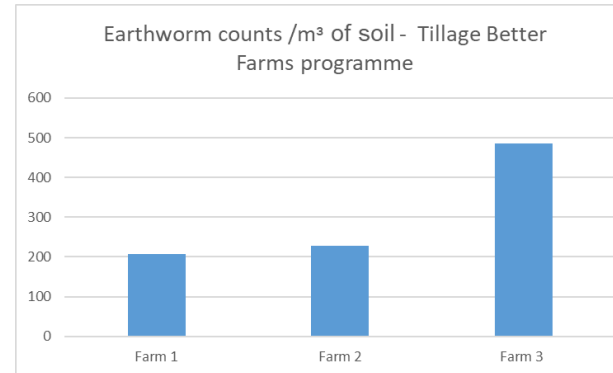


- Fertiliser Planning
 - Lime plan
 - Organic fertiliser plan
 - Fertiliser programmes



Soil Biology – Soil Engine / Life

- Soil life – Healthy Soils
 - Earthworms counts
 - Other soil life – Bacteria & Fungi
- Nutrient cycling
- N fixation
- Pathogen suppression
- Soil drainage / aeration



Feeding Soil
Biology

