



Analysing the impact of urban pressures on agricultural land

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Land, and here in particular soil, is a finite and essentially non-renewable resource. EU-wide, land take, i.e. the increase of settlement area over time, consumes more than 1000 km² annually of which half is actually sealed and, hence, lost under impermeable surfaces. Land take and in particular soil sealing has already been identified as one of the major soil threats in the 2006 EC Communication “Towards a Thematic Strategy on Soil Protection” (Soil Thematic Strategy), and has been confirmed as such in the report on the implementation of this strategy.

The aim of this study is to relate the potential of land for a particle use in a given region with the actual land use. This allows evaluating whether land (in particular the soil dimension) is used according to its (theoretical) potential. To this aim, the impact of a number of land cover flows related to urban development on soils with a good, average and poor production potential were assessed and mapped. Thus, the amount and quality (potentials and/or suitability for agricultural production) of agricultural land lost between the years 2000 and 2006 was identified. In addition, areas with high productivity potential around urban areas indicating areas of potential future land use conflicts for Europe were identified.