



5 KEY POINTS for farmers

1. UNDERSTAND the “influencers” of soil health & carbon	2. WHAT do you want to know and WHY?	3. CHOOSE the right tests	4. REMOVE variation for future monitoring	5. SMALL changes are OK!
<p>Soil type – and limitations e.g., building soil carbon is harder on sandy soils</p>	<p>Baseline of soil organic <i>matter</i> or soil organic <i>carbon</i>?</p>	<p>Soil organic matter by loss on ignition – presents a result in % SOM, typical cost £7/sample (needed for SFI).</p>	<p>Sampling consistency is really important, i.e.:</p>	<p>You don’t need to make drastic changes and transform your system. Simple things might include:</p>
<p>Land use / cropping – and ability to make changes</p>	<p>Rough guide to soil health?</p>	<p>Simple (& free) in-field tests such as VESS, worm counts, infiltration tests – see The Soil Carbon Project – Swarm Hub</p>	<p>At the same time of year for repeat tests</p>	<p>Reducing slurry application rates to help worms – lighter applications minimise impact.</p>
<p>Management – how the farming system influences soil carbon and opportunities for new techniques.</p>	<p>Validation of the current system?</p>	<p>Some lab tests are expensive and not necessarily accurate, e.g., soil biology tests and soil respiration tests to measure micro-organisms. In-field tests will tell you this for free!</p>	<p>Using the same laboratory – as the methods they use can differ.</p>	<p>For grassland, rest periods are important to allow root reserves to replenish – but this doesn’t have to mean moving to rotational grazing.</p>
	<p>Monitoring outcomes of a planned change? [You could keep a soil sample in a freezer to test at a later date if unsure what to test for]</p>	<p>Dry combustion (DUMAS) test likely to be needed for carbon trading, as it helps measure carbon stock (tons per ha).</p>	<p>Taking repeat samples from the same site – using GPS plots.</p>	<p>Looking at soil structure and remediating compaction by soil aeration or increasing species diversity in grassland to increase rooting depth.</p>