



SAUR - Suoli Agricoli Urbani Rigenerati - ID 310

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Publishable summary

The SAUR - Suoli Agricoli Urbani Rigenerati (Regenerated Urban Agricultural Soil) pilot project was implemented over 12 months in Padua, Italy, to tackle key soil challenges such as soil sealing and degradation—issues tied to urban sprawl and intensive agriculture. It aimed to promote soil regeneration through urban agriculture by engaging stakeholders across sectors using participatory methods.

At the heart of the project was the creation of a Territorial Management Agreement (TMA)—a shared strategic framework to guide future policies and actions for improving urban soil health. The TMA was developed collaboratively with actors representing the quadruple helix: academia, civil society, public institutions, and the farming sector. Although not legally binding, the TMA reflects a joint commitment and outlines specific actions under four pillars: education and training, sustainable agriculture, research, and public engagement.

The project followed a structured methodology. It began with a state of the art analysis that assessed Padua’s agricultural landscape and mapped relevant stakeholders. This was followed by a vision-building workshop and several focus groups to identify challenges, priorities, and strategic goals. The final draft of the TMA was co-written using Open Space Technology during a collective workshop and presented at a closing event in June 2025.

Various educational and participatory activities supported the process, including public events on soil health, hands-on workshops in regenerative agriculture, and training sessions for farmers. The project also leveraged cross-project collaboration, particularly with the [“Coltiva Padova”](#) initiative, to strengthen local networks.

Despite strong engagement from academia and civil society, farmers’ participation was limited, which emerged as a key challenge. Moving forward, better engagement strategies are needed to ensure farmer involvement, as their practical experience is crucial to successful soil regeneration.

Another potential risk is the non-binding nature of the TMA, which may affect implementation. While the agreement outlines biannual monitoring over two years, concrete enforcement and stakeholder accountability remain areas for development.

Nonetheless, SAUR succeeded in several impactful ways. It introduced soil health into the city’s political agenda, created new synergies among diverse actors, and promoted a systemic view linking environmental, social, and political aspects of urban agriculture. The project laid the groundwork for co-managing Padua’s new agricultural park and revitalized a dormant participatory process around it. SAUR also highlighted the need for better data and research on urban soil health. Partners’ research efforts underscored existing gaps in accessible information.

As part of the broader HuMUS initiative, SAUR demonstrated the value of collaborative soil governance. For the project partners Deafal and GeoAtamai, it enabled new cross-sector alliances and reinforced the role of research in policy development. The project now serves as a model for other cities seeking to regenerate urban soils through inclusive, systemic strategies.