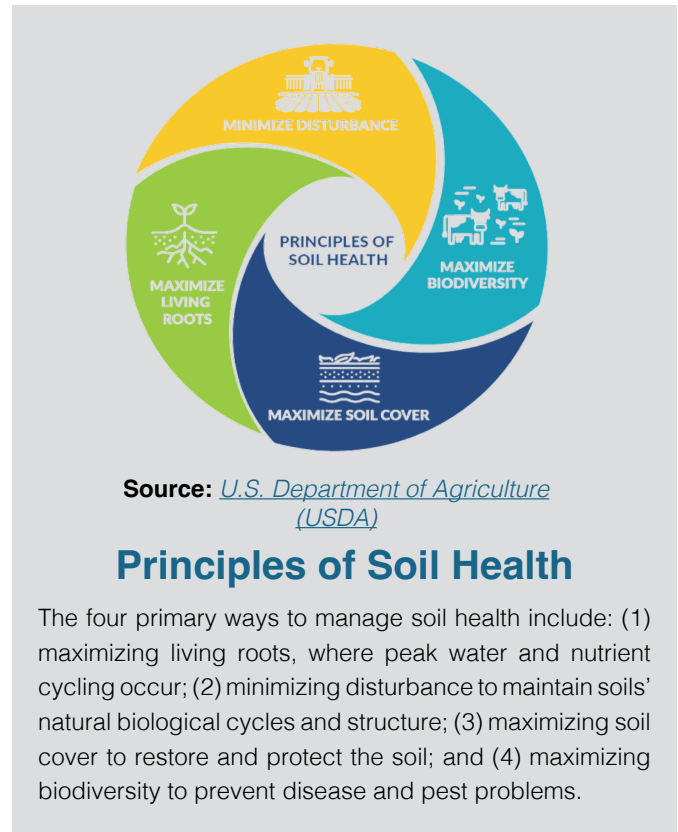




## Overview

[Soil health](#) refers to the ability of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. Healthy soil is essential to clean air and water, diverse wildlife, abundant crops, forests, grazing lands, and vibrant landscapes. Throughout the nation, healthy soil can:

- **Increase Farm Profitability:** Healthy soils can increase farm profits through higher [crop yields](#), [resistance to disease](#), and [reduced water usage](#).
- **Reduce Flood Risk and Improve Drought Resilience:** Through higher water infiltration rates and increased water holding capacity, healthy soils contribute to [flood and drought resilience](#). Healthy soils can collect excess flood water more quickly than degraded land and withstand the shocks of drought, which also reduces erosion.
- **Improve Water Quality:** By [retaining more water](#), healthy soil can reduce the concentration and amount of [excess nutrients that enter waterways](#).
- **Sequester Carbon:** Healthy soils can [sequester significant amounts of carbon](#), which can help to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from farms.



## State Soil Health Programs

States can play a key role in supporting soil health initiatives for farmers by providing funding, technical assistance, education, and other resources. Below are some examples of existing state soil health programs:

- **Maryland:** The [Maryland Healthy Soils Program](#) provides financial support to farmers to improve soil health, carbon storage, and farm profitability. Established via Maryland [HB 1063](#) in 2017.
- **Minnesota:** The [Minnesota Office for Soil Health](#) provides technical assistance and research to farmers on soil health. The [Minnesota Soil Health Financial Assistance Grant Program](#), established in 2023 by [HF 1316](#), provides cost-sharing for the purchase and retrofit of soil health equipment.
- **Wisconsin:** The [Wisconsin Soil and Water Resource Management Program](#) now requires the state's Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection to [support soil health](#) through grants, resources, and events for farmers.

## Policy Options

Legislation is an effective tool to increase state funding for soil health, as well as technical assistance and resources for agricultural producers. Below are a few examples:

- **Colorado HB 1249 (Enacted 2024):** Established a state income tax credit for agricultural stewardship practices, including practices that increase soil health.





- **Illinois SB 1701 (Enacted 2023):** Created the Illinois Healthy Soils Initiative to improve soil and water quality, agricultural productivity, and ecosystem resilience through voluntary and incentive-based soil health efforts.
- **Oregon HB 2998 (Introduced 2023):** Would create the Oregon Soil Health Initiative to provide technical assistance, education, outreach, and support to agricultural producers to promote soil health.

## Additional Resources

- [Soil Health](#) | National Caucus of Environmental Legislators (NCEL)
- [Soil Health Resources](#) | U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- [Soil Health Toolkit](#) | American Farmland Trust
- [Economics of Soil Health Systems in Midwest Corn and Soy](#) | Soil Health Institute

