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1 **Impacts of national scale digital soil mapping programs in France**

2 Dominique Arrouays^{1,*}, Anne C. Richer-de-Forges¹, Florence Héliès¹, Vera Leatitia Mulder²,
3 Nicolas P.A. Saby¹, Songchao Chen^{1,3}, Manuel P. Martin¹, Mercedes Román Dobarco¹,
4 Stéphane Follain⁴, Claudy Jolivet¹, Bertrand Laroche¹, Thomas Loiseau¹, Isabelle Cousin⁵,
5 Marine Lacoste⁵, Lionel Ranjard⁴, Benoît Toutain¹, Christine Le Bas¹, Thomas Eglin⁶, Marion
6 Bardy⁷, Véronique Antoni⁸, Jeroen Meersmans⁹, Céline Ratié¹, Antonio Bispo¹.

7 1. INRAE, US 1106, InfoSol, F-45000, Orléans, France

8 2. Soil Geography and Landscape Group, Wageningen University, PO Box 47 6700 AA
9 Wageningen, The Netherlands

10 3. UMR SAS, Inrae, Agrocampus Ouest, 35042 Rennes, France

11 4. Agroécologie – AgroSup Dijon, INRAE, Univ. Bourgogne Franche-Comté, F-21000, Dijon,
12 France

13 5. Inrae, UR 0272 Sols, F-45075, Orléans cedex 02, France.

14 6. ADEME, 20 av. du Grésillé F-49004, Angers, France

15 7. Ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation, Direction Générale de l'Enseignement et
16 de la Recherche, 75 007 Paris, France

17 8. Ministry for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition - Service de la donnée et des études
18 statistiques, 5 route d'Olivet - CS 16105 - 45061 ORLÉANS CEDEX 2, France

19 9. Université de Liège, Analyse des risques environnementaux, Passage des Déportés 2,
20 5030, Gembloux, Belgium

21

22 *Corresponding author: Dominique.Arrouays@inra.fr

23

24 **Abstract**

25 During the last 10 years, several attempts to map soil attributes at the scale of mainland
26 France have been realised. We exemplify them by seven major outputs: maps of organic C
27 stocks, trace elements (TE), microbial density and diversity, soil thickness, available water
28 capacity (AWC), extractable P, and changes in soil pH. We first briefly describe the data and
29 the methods used to produce these maps and summarise their main results. We then focus
30 on their impacts on various categories of the public, i.e. the general public and citizens;
31 farmers; private companies; non-governmental organisations; agricultural development
32 organisations, stakeholders, and national agencies; French governmental bodies; and
33 international organisations. We also analyse the demands that came to the French National
34 Soil Information Centre from 2008 to 2018 and the impact that our activities had in various
35 media. Soil organic C had the largest impact in nearly all categories of end-users, which may
36 be linked to the recent '4 per 1000' initiative launched by the French government during the
37 COP21 and to the fact that farmers are interested in increasing the organic matter content of
38 their soil for increasing the fertility. TE obtained high scores, which may be related to
39 citizens' care about health and to the fact that governmental bodies and national agencies
40 have a major interest in site contamination assessments. The soil P content, pH, and AWC
41 exhibited major impacts on the agricultural sector. Maps of the soil P content and pH were
42 used as geomarketing tools by private companies selling fertilisers and soil amendments,
43 whereas the AWC was already incorporated into decision-making aid tools for irrigation
44 management developed by development organisations for farmers. Microbial diversity
45 generated collaborations with a large network of farmers and had a large media impact.
46 Nevertheless, the visibility of soil information to the general public should be increased. This

47 can be done by using new multimedia and interactive tools. Overall, these selected examples
48 of digital soil mapping of soil attributes at the national scale in France clearly indicate that
49 the soil attributes have substantial impact on various categories of end-users, such as
50 farmers, professional organisations, stakeholders, and policymakers at different levels of
51 decision-making, among others. However, the impacts on the general public and citizens are
52 more difficult to quantify, and increasing the soil awareness of the general public should be
53 of high priority.

54 **Keywords**

55 Digital soil mapping, national scale, France, impacts

56

57 **1. Introduction**

58 The 1:250.000 soil mapping program of France is nearly complete. During this program,
59 mapping has mainly been conducted using conventional methods. However, there is a
60 discernible need to obtain more precise soil data using other methods, among which digital
61 soil mapping (DSM; McBratney et al., 2003) is attracting considerable attention (Richer-de-
62 Forges et al., 2019; Voltz et al., 2018). In their seminal paper, McBratney et al. (2003)
63 proposed a generic framework called the soil spatial prediction function with spatially auto-
64 correlated errors (scorpan-SSPFe) for producing digital soil maps (Minasny and McBratney,
65 2016). Since the early 1990s, a large number of French papers have dealt with DSM,
66 although they most often focused on local applications. These applications included various
67 methods, such as i) extrapolation of already mapped areas in various French regions (e.g.
68 Lagacherie et al., 1995; Voltz et al., 1997; Lagacherie and Voltz, 2000; Grinand et al., 2008);
69 ii) the use of disaggregation approaches (Nauman et al., 2012) such as DSMART (Odgers and
70 Clifford, 2014) to disaggregate conventional soil maps for Brittany (Vincent et al., 2016); iii)
71 DSM of specific soil attributes of interest (e.g. Bourennane et al., 1996, 2003; Bourennane

72 and King, 2003; Arrouays et al., 1995; Chaplot et al., 2000) or even of some diagnostic
73 horizons (Richer-de-Forges et al., 2017). More recently, regional attempts to map soil
74 attributes according to *GlobalSoiMap* specifications (Arrouays et al., 2014) have been made
75 in Southern France (e.g. Vaysse and Lagacherie, 2015, 2017), and considerable effort has
76 been directed towards investigating the potential of new sensors to map soil properties at
77 the local or regional level (e.g. Gomez et al., 2015, 2019; Vaudour et al., 2014, 2016, 2019;
78 Zaouche et al., 2017).

79 In addition to these regional attempts, national products have been delivered using all the
80 soil information available in the centralised national database of soil profiles 'DoneSol' and
81 in a centralised database of soil tests realised by various laboratories upon farmer requests,
82 referred to as the French National Soil Test Database. These databases and some of their
83 products are detailed in the Materials and methods section of this paper.

84 The objective of this study was to present an overview of the impacts of these products for
85 various end-users, including citizens and the general public; farmers; private companies;
86 stakeholders and national agencies; policymakers; and international bodies, such as the
87 Global Soil Partnership (GSP) of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN-
88 FAO). We present selected examples of predictions of soil organic C (SOC) stocks, the
89 available P content, changes in the pH trace elements (TE) content, soil thickness (ST), soil
90 available water capacity (AWC), and soil microbial density and diversity. We first briefly
91 describe the data and methods used and the main results of these predictions, and we
92 examine the impacts of these DSM products on various end-users.

93 **2. Materials and methods**

94 **2.1. French soil tests database**

95 The information stored in the French National Soil Test Database is a compilation of
96 requested soil analyses by farmers and landowners helping to improve the management of
97 their crops and non-permanent grasslands. Samples were taken from topsoil horizons of
98 cultivated or grassland fields, but the specific reasons why individual farmers requested soil
99 analysis were not known; therefore, the sampling strategy could not be controlled. In each
100 sampled field, approximately 15 sub-samples of the ploughed layer (or the 0–30-cm topsoil
101 layer in the case of pasture) were collected using a hand auger, and the extracted soil was
102 bulked to provide a composite sample, which was analysed. Results obtained via
103 standardised analytical procedures were sent by laboratories certified by the French Ministry
104 of Agriculture and were stored in the national database.

105 In France, approximately 2600000 soil samples were analysed between 1990 and 2014,
106 leading to a total of approximately 329000000 analytical results. Most of the analyses
107 involve classical agronomic parameters, such as the pH, organic C and N, extractable P with
108 various reagents, cation exchange capacity, and exchangeable cations. The uncontrolled
109 sampling strategy led to a heterogeneous distribution of the samples in both space and time
110 (Figure 1). For privacy, the location information in this dataset is limited to the
111 administrative district from which the soil sample was collected. Changes in the sampling
112 resolution may arise in space and time because the soil sample locations were selected
113 according to the needs of farmers rather than a statistical design.

114

115 <Insert Figure 1 about here>

116

117 **2.2. Soil point data used for national DSM**

118 **2.2.1. French soil profiles database ‘DoneSol’**

119 This database contains all point-based soil information coming from conventional soil
120 mapping and inventory programs at all scales (Inventaire Gestion et Conservation des Sols,
121 IGCS). Consequently, these points (soil profiles and augering descriptions) are irregularly
122 spread over the French mainland territory and are sometimes clustered in areas of specific
123 economic interest, such as vineyards. As a whole, they represent approximately 160000
124 point data.

125 **2.2.2. French Soil quality monitoring network (RMQS) systematic grid**

126 The French Soil quality monitoring network (Réseau de Mesures de la Qualité des Sols,
127 RMQS) is a systematic grid (16 km × 16 km) covering the entire French mainland with 2240
128 sites (Arrouays et al., 2002). This network covers a broad spectrum of climatic, soil, and land-
129 use conditions (croplands, permanent grasslands, woodlands, orchards and vineyards,
130 natural or weakly anthropogenic lands). Every 15 years at each site, soil samples are taken,
131 measurements are performed and observations are made. The first campaign occurred from
132 2000 to 2015, and the second is ongoing from 2016 to 2027. At these sites, the SOC content,
133 particle-size distribution, main total TE (As, Cd, Co, Cr, Cu, Hg, Mo, Ni, Pb, Tl, Zn), and bulk
134 densities were determined for 0–30- and 30–50-cm layers. Samples from the laboratory
135 analyses were realised on a bulked sample of 25 core samples via unaligned sampling in a
136 400-m² square area. A soil pit was dug 5 m away from the area to reduce disturbance of the
137 test site. The pit allows to describe the soil horizons, to obtain samples from bulk density
138 and coarse element fragments and to determine the ST when a lithic or paralithic material
139 could be reached (Soil Survey Division Staff, 1993). The locations of the ICGS and RMQS sites
140 are plotted in Figure 2.

141

142 <insert figure 2 about here>

143

144 **2.2.3. SOILHYDRO and GEVARNOVIA databases**

145 The SOLHYDRO database contains data on physical, chemical, and hydraulic characteristics
146 of samples collected from 1985 (Bruand et al., 2004). The soil types are mainly Cambisols,
147 Luvisols, Planosols, Albeluvisols, Podzols, and Fluvisols (IUSS Working Group WRB, 2015)
148 sampled over the French metropolitan territory. The geographical distribution of the
149 sampling locations is mostly concentrated in the northern half of France, with little
150 representation of the more mountainous southern and eastern regions, but covers a wide
151 range of parent materials and textures. The land use varies among the sampling locations,
152 including forests, poplar plantations, vineyards, grasslands, fallow, and oleaginous crops, but
153 mostly consists of cereal monocultures. In 2017, SOLHYDRO comprised 689 horizons, of
154 which 157 were topsoil horizons (depth of 0–30 cm) and 532 were subsurface horizons
155 (depth of >30 cm). Samples were collected when soil was close to the field capacity and
156 stored in a cold chamber before measurements (Román Dobarco et al., 2019a). The
157 gravimetric water content was determined via a pressure-plate apparatus at field capacity
158 (FC) at –10 kPa and permanent wilting point (PWP) at –1580 kPa water potential, by using
159 undisturbed aggregates (10–15 cm³) (Bruand and Tessier, 2000; Bruand et al., 2003). The
160 particle-size distribution, SOC content, and bulk density were measured according to
161 international standards. Then, the volumetric water content (θ_{FC} and θ_{PWP}) for each horizon
162 was calculated by multiplying the gravimetric soil moisture content measured for
163 undisturbed aggregates by the horizon bulk density. In 2017, 689, and 457 horizons were
164 subjected to measurements at –1580 kPa, and –10 kPa, respectively.

165 The GEVARNOVIA database was used as an independent validation dataset and consisted of
166 309 observations from different French institutes, including academic institutes such as INRA
167 and agricultural technical institutes dedicated to cereal crops, oleaginous fruits, or seed
168 selection (Román Dobarco et al., 2019b). The soil samples were collected mostly in the
169 northern half and southwest of metropolitan France, with few samples collected in the
170 southeast quadrant. The predominant land use was agricultural land or pastures. The
171 database comprises information regarding the particle-size distribution, SOC content, bulk
172 density, and volumetric soil moisture content measured for soil aggregates after equilibrium
173 at -10 and -1580 kPa.

174 **2.2.4. Data and methods used for main national DSM products**

175 **2.1.4.1. Soil P**

176 In the database, a total of 850606 results from soil analyses contained available P content
177 values (in $\text{mg P}_2\text{O}_5 \text{ kg}^{-1}$). These values were determined by one of the three standardised
178 methods (AFNOR, 1996) used by French soil analysis laboratories, i.e. the "Dyer" method
179 (NFX 31-10), which involves the measurement of soluble P in a citric acid monohydrate
180 solution; the "Joret-Hébert" method (NFX 31-161: determination of soluble P in an
181 ammonium oxalate solution); and the "Olsen" method (ISO 11263: determination of P in a
182 sodium hydrogen carbonate solution). The originality of the method used lies in quantitative
183 results originating from the French Soil Test Database and their evaluation using the RegiFert
184 software (Denoroy et al. 2004), which incorporates soil characteristics and crop sensitivity to
185 nutrient availability. Briefly, RegiFert introduces two threshold values (L1 and L2, with $L1 <$
186 $L2$) to interpret the P content in soils according to crop needs. These threshold values
187 depend on the sensitivity of plants to the P availability, on the analytical methods chosen for

188 P₂O₅, as well as on the soil characteristics: the CaCO₃ content, pH, clay fraction, and SOC
189 content. This methodology constituted an attempt to gather all analytical results into a
190 common diagnostic framework on the national scale (for France), while taking into account
191 the local pedological context and crop production requirements. Data stored in BDAT over
192 the period of 1990–2004 were originally geographically located on a municipal scale but
193 were then aggregated on the "cantonal" scale for statistical and legal reasons. The French
194 "cantons" are administrative jurisdictions defined as a grouping of several municipalities
195 with a mean land area of 140 km².

196 **2.4.4.2. Changes in soil pH**

197 Recently, Saby et al. (2017) assessed the changes in the pH and cation saturation in French
198 agricultural topsoils (1996–2010). Assessment of these changes considering values older
199 than 1996 was not possible, because of a change in the standard analytical method after
200 1995. Calcareous samples were excluded from this analysis. To obtain enough samples for
201 spatiotemporal comparisons and to assess changes over a large time interval, two periods
202 were analysed (1996–2000 and 2006–2010). Calcareous soil samples were excluded from
203 this study. A total of 488117 samples were used for the statistical analysis. Data were
204 aggregated into spatial entities corresponding to their small agricultural regions (SARs). In
205 France, an SAR is an agricultural census unit that combines several districts. The average
206 agricultural area of an SAR is 355.12 km². Employing this spatial unit allows the use of
207 sufficient data to run non-parametric statistics. For running these non-parametric statistics,
208 Saby et al. (2017) proposed a statistical approach that takes into account the possible bias in
209 the database using resampling techniques. Detailing this method is outside of the scope of
210 this synthesis; however, a key point is that this methodology does not require any

211 assumption regarding the precise pH measurement location, this is important because we
212 often do not know it due to privacy legislation..

213 **2.1.4.3. SOC stocks**

214 The most recent product predicting SOC stocks at the national scale (Mulder et al., 2016)
215 used all available point data for France, from both the French Soil Mapping and Inventory
216 Program and RMQS, i.e. the systematic monitoring grid. For estimating SOC stocks, only the
217 soils that these profiles precisely georeferenced and that had measurements of the SOC
218 content were retained, leading to a total of approximately 36000 profiles. Details regarding
219 these two datasets were presented by Mulder et al. (2016). Briefly, Mulder et al. (2016) used
220 these point data and 23 available covariates related to climate, relief, parent material and
221 soils, biomass production, and land use to predict the SOC over a 90 × 90 m grid according to
222 *GlobalSoilMap* specifications (Arrouays et al., 2014). The tool used for modelling was CUBIST
223 (Kuhn et al., 2014; Quinlan, 1992), and the confidence intervals were determined using 10-
224 fold cross-validations. Subsequently, the maps were masked by the modelled total soil depth
225 (Lacoste et al., 2016), and the SOC stock was calculated in accordance with the work of
226 Meersmans et al. (2012). This grid was further aggregated by Martin et al. (2017) to generate
227 a 1-km² grid together with 90% confidence intervals and delivered to the UN-FAO GSP as a
228 bottom-up product for the Global Soil Organic Carbon (GSOC) map
229 ([http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/pillars-action/4-information-and-data-
230 new/global-soil-organic-carbon-gsoc-map/en/](http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/pillars-action/4-information-and-data-new/global-soil-organic-carbon-gsoc-map/en/)).

231 **2.1.4.4. Trace elements**

232 TE data from the RMQS systematic grid were used to deliver various products. A first
233 product was delivered by Villanneau et al. (2008) and is available online at

234 <https://doi.org/10.15454/UEZXBY>. These authors took into account both the natural
235 pedogeochemical background and the diffuse contamination to quantify background levels
236 of TE by using robust statistics (Tukey's whisker). Whiskers were calculated for each RMQS
237 site using at least 10 neighbour sites within a 50-km circle. High background contents for
238 four elements (Pb, Zn, Cu, and total and extractable Cd) indicated either high natural
239 contents or anthropogenic diffuse contamination. Most importantly, their method allowed
240 the calculation of an indicator for detecting a suspicious TE amount while taking into account
241 the local context. Later, more sophisticated methods were developed by Marchant et al.
242 (2010) and Saby et al. (2011). They developed robust geostatistical algorithms to map the
243 underlying variation of six TEs (Cr, Cu, Pb, Ni, Tl, and Zn) across France, allowing background
244 values attributable to a geogenic or large diffuse contamination origin to be mapped. A
245 similar approach was employed by Marchant et al. (2017) for the As and Hg contents in
246 French soils.

247 **2.1.4.5. Soil microbial density and biodiversity**

248 Samples from the 0–30-cm layer of RMQS sites (first campaign) were used for DNA
249 extraction. The total content of microbial DNA was determined. The methods for
250 characterising the density and diversity of the microbial communities relied on molecular
251 tools such as the quantitative polymerase chain reaction (PCR), DNA fingerprinting, and high-
252 throughput sequencing of soil DNA extracts. Additional information was presented by
253 Ranjard et al. (2010, 2013), Dequiedt et al. (2011), Terrat et al. (2017), and Karimi et al.
254 (2018, 2019). The methods allowed the elaboration of simple indicators of microbial diversity
255 and the mapping of their amounts and distribution across the French territory using DSM

256 techniques involving covariates such as the climate, soil parent material, clay content, and
257 land use.

258 **2.1.4.6. Soil thickness**

259 The first product predicting the ST at a national scale (Lacoste et al., 2016) was produced
260 using 2116 sites from the RMQS database and 14113 sites from the IGCS database. The
261 RMQS dataset had a better spatial coverage and was collected via a standardised procedure.
262 The RMQS dataset was used for calibration; the IGCS dataset was used for validation. The ST
263 (or depth) was defined according to the USDA Soil Survey Manual as the depth (in cm) to a
264 lithic or paralithic contact (Soil Survey Division Staff, 1993).

265 Chen et al. (2019b) further demonstrated how right-censored data can be accounted for in
266 the ST modelling of mainland France. They used the random survival forest (RSF) method for
267 ST probability mapping within a DSM framework. Among 2109 sites of the French Soil quality
268 monitoring network (RMQS), 1089 observed STs were defined as being right-censored. Using
269 RSF, the probability of exceeding a given depth was modelled using freely available spatial
270 data representing the main soil-forming factors.

271 **2.1.4.7. Available water capacity**

272 The prediction of the AWC was performed in two steps. First, soil properties used as input
273 for pedotransfer functions and coarse elements were predicted over mainland France using
274 the *GlobalSoilMap* depth interval. Data of the particle-size distribution and coarse elements
275 were extracted from the IGCS dataset, resulting in a total of 81671 soil profiles and soil
276 cores. Particle-size fractions were predicted with regression-cokriging models [Cubist models
277 (Kuhn et al., 2014; Quinlan, 1992) + linear model of coregionalisation (Goulard and Voltz,
278 1992)], and coarse elements were predicted with a regression model (quantile regression

279 model, Meinshausen, 2006). All the regression models were fitted using 44 environmental
280 covariates describing *scorpan* factors. For calibration, data of the particle-size distribution
281 and coarse elements were extracted from the IGCS dataset, resulting in a total of 81671 soil
282 profiles and soil cores. The RMQS dataset was used as an independent evaluation sample for
283 particle-size distribution and coarse element predictions. Then, the volumetric soil moisture
284 content ($\text{cm}^3 \text{ cm}^{-3}$) at field capacity ($-10\text{kPa} = \theta_{FC}$) and at a permanent wilting point (-1580
285 $\text{kPa} = \theta_{PWP}$) for the fine fraction were estimated with PTFs developed by Román Dobarco et
286 al. (2019a) using the SOLHYDRO database. These PTFs used the content of clay (%) and sand
287 (%) as predictor variables. The predictions of the volumetric soil moisture contents of the
288 fine fraction were evaluated with the GEVARNOVIA georeferenced observations. Finally, the
289 AWC (mm) was calculated as $(\theta_{FC} - \theta_{PWP}) * (1 - R_v) * t$, where R_v represents the
290 volume of coarse elements (%), and t represents the thickness of the *GlobalSoilMap* depth
291 interval (mm). The uncertainty of the AWC was quantified via first-order Taylor analysis. The
292 uncertainty analysis accounted for two sources of uncertainty: the PTF coefficients and the
293 soil input properties.

294 **3. Synthesis of main results**

295 **3.1. Soil P maps**

296 Follain et al. (2009) assessed the P bioavailability in arable topsoils in France at a national
297 scale. Using this procedure, they concluded that 77% of cantons were on average below the
298 critical level regarding crop needs. In France, a canton is an administrative unit that
299 combines several municipalities. From an environmental standpoint, this situation could be
300 considered as generating the lowest water pollution risk. Nevertheless, 23% of the cantons
301 exhibited a soil P accumulation that is not necessary with regard to agricultural uses. In this

302 case, no fertilisation is required, and the pollution risk is increased. For instance, focusing on
303 Brittany—a region with intensive livestock production—Lemerrier et al. (2008) showed a
304 strong P accumulation in soils with an increased risk of P losses into water bodies and thus of
305 eutrophication.

306 **3.2. Changes in soil pH**

307 The authors showed that the soil pH increased in 36% of arable soils monitored from 1996 to
308 2010, indicating that soils became less acidic across the country. Conversely, reductions in
309 the pH were almost never detected. Their statistical framework smoothed the effects of
310 some limitations of the database, i.e. the variable number of samples collected during both
311 periods and sampling location uncertainties. For large parts of France, no trend was
312 confirmed, indicating that the program should either gather more samples or wait for a
313 longer time to detect such evolutions.

314 **3.3. Trace elements**

315 Detailed results are provided by Villanneau et al. (2008), Saby et al. (2011), and Marchant et
316 al. (2017). Villanneau et al. (2008) and Saby et al. (2011) reported that high concentrations of
317 Pb, Cr, Ni, and Zn occurred in soils on crystalline rocks, whereas the Cd concentrations were
318 high in soils developed on Jurassic rocks. Volcanic parent material led to high concentrations
319 of Cr, Cu, Ni, and Zn but low concentrations of Pb and Tl. The diffuse pollution of certain
320 elements (mainly Pb and to a lesser extent Zn) was evident in industrial regions in the north
321 and the northeast of France and close to Paris. The pattern of some outlying values was
322 indicative of more local anthropogenic processes, such as diffuse industrial pollution in the
323 north of France and close to Paris and application of Cu in vineyards, as well as of geological
324 anomalies, such as high concentrations of some TEs in the south of the Massif Central

325 Mountains. Marchant et al. (2017) used geostatistical methods to map the expected
326 concentrations of As and Hg in the topsoil and determine the probabilities that legislative
327 thresholds are exceeded. They found that with the exception of some areas where the
328 geogenic concentrations and soil adsorption capacities are very low, the As concentrations
329 are often higher than the thresholds, indicating that further assessment of some areas is
330 required. There were regions with elevated Hg concentrations, which could be related to
331 volcanic material, natural mineralisation, and industrial contamination. These regions are
332 more diffuse than the hotspots of As, reflecting the greater volatility of Hg and therefore the
333 greater ease with which it can be transported and redeposited.

334 **3.4. SOC maps and maps of potential of additional SOC storage**

335 A detailed description of SOC maps was presented by Mulder et al. (2016). Briefly, the maps
336 showed large effects of climatic conditions (particularly in mountains), as well as major
337 effects of the land use, soil parent material, and soil clay content. The predicted SOC content
338 was unbiased and exhibited good agreement with the measured SOC, despite poor model
339 diagnostics and a performance reduction with increasing depth. Moreover, the national map
340 outperformed SoilGrids, which is a global map (Hengl et al., 2014). The total SOC for the
341 upper 0–30-cm soils of France was estimated to be approximately 3.6 Pg. By aggregating
342 these results to a coarser resolution (1 km), Martin et al. (2017) found similar geographic
343 distributions and total SOC stocks.

344 The SOC storage potential was modelled by Chen et al. (2019a). They defined different C-
345 landscape zones (CLZs) in France for modelling the soil C sequestration, thereby building
346 upon the research of Mulder et al. (2015). They then computed estimates of the highest
347 possible values using percentiles of 0.8, 0.85, 0.9, and 0.95 of the measured SOC stocks

348 within these CLZs for arable soils. The SOC storage potential was calculated as the difference
349 between the maximum SOC stocks and the current SOC stocks.

350 **3.5. Soil thickness**

351 Lacoste et al. (2016) compared three spatially explicit modelling approaches for the ST for
352 mainland France (540 km²): i) regression tree modelling (RTM), ii) gradient boosting
353 modelling (GBM), and iii) multi-resolution kriging (MrK) for large datasets. The RMQS dataset
354 was used for calibration; the IGCS dataset was used for validation. Exhaustive environmental
355 data were used to characterise the climate, the organisms, the topography, and the other
356 known soil forming factors, according to the Soil-Landscape paradigm (Jenny, 1941;
357 McBratney et al., 2003). The maps' accuracy and difference were assessed by comparing the
358 ST predictions to observed data (RMQS and IGCS datasets) and to an available soil map
359 (1:1M). As expected, the three DSM approaches predicted the ST trend mainly from the
360 covariates derived from the digital elevation model. The three predictive maps exhibited
361 similar accuracy and were consistent with the 1:1M map. The four maps exhibited similar
362 spatial patterns at the country scale. The three maps had poor performance for estimating
363 the highest and lowest ST values. The mean soil depth for France was approximately 1 m.

364 Chen et al. (2019b) produced maps showing the probability of exceeding the thickness of
365 each *GlobalSoilMap* standard depth: 5, 15, 30, 60, 100, and 200 cm. Additionally, a
366 bootstrapping approach was used to assess the 90% confidence intervals. The results
367 indicated that the RSF method was able to correct for right-censored data entries occurring
368 within a given dataset. The RSF was more reliable for thin (0.3 m) and thick soils (1–2 m), as
369 they performed better (overall accuracy ranging from 0.793 to 0.989) than soils with a

370 thickness between 0.3 and 1 m. This study provided a new approach for modelling right-
371 censored soil information.

372 **3.6. Available water capacity**

373 Román Dobarco et al. (2019a) developed class-PTFs and continuous-PTFs with associated
374 uncertainties and assessed their domain of applicability across metropolitan France. Román
375 Dobarco et al. (2019b) predicted the AWC for mainland France according to the
376 *GlobalSoilMap* specifications for depth intervals and uncertainty, to quantify the uncertainty
377 of the AWC accounting for the uncertainty of the soil input variables and the PTF
378 coefficients. Spatial predictions for θ_{FC} and θ_{PWP} overestimated the soil moisture contents for
379 coarse textures and underestimated the soil moisture contents for fine and very fine texture
380 classes. Across the majority of mainland France, the main sources of uncertainty of the
381 elementary AWC were coarse elements and soil texture, but the contribution of the
382 uncertainty of the PTF coefficients increased in areas dominated by very sandy and clayey
383 textures. The modelling framework allows the continuous improvement of the AWC
384 estimates through the replacement of each component of the AWC calculation when more
385 accurate maps (e.g. next versions of *GlobalSoilMap* for clay, sand, and coarse elements) and
386 new PTFs are developed (see sections 5.1 and 5.3).

387 **3.7. Soil microbial density and biodiversity**

388 Ranjard et al. (2010, 2013) provided the first extensive maps of the soil microbial biomass and
389 bacterial biodiversity at the scale of mainland France. The maps revealed large
390 biogeographical patterns of microbial density and bacterial biodiversity, indicating an
391 heterogeneous and spatially structured distribution of these microbial parameters (Dequiedt
392 et al., 2011; Terrat et al., 2017). The main factors driving the microbial distribution on a wide

393 scale are the physicochemical properties of soils (texture, pH, and organic C contents) and the
394 land use. Soils from land used for intensive agriculture—particularly cropland and vineyards—
395 exhibited the smallest biomass pools but the highest bacterial diversity. This observation
396 supported a positive relationship between bacterial diversity and soil disturbance due to
397 cropping intensity, which decreased in the following order: Vineyards-Orchards > Crops >
398 Grasslands > Forests. Using the bacterial diversity data, Karimi et al. (2018) characterised the
399 biogeography of each major and minor bacterial taxonomic group and deduced their
400 ecological attributes as well as their distribution patterns.

401 They also investigated the bacterial interactions (co-occurrence) network of the bacterial
402 community according to land use. In contrast to the bacterial richness, the network complexity
403 was found to decrease from vineyards to forests, with a loss of >80% of the interactions
404 (Karimi et al., 2019). Overall, they concluded that soil perturbation due to intensive cropping
405 significantly reduces the complexity of the bacterial network, although the richness is
406 increased, suggesting a potential negative impact on the soil bacterial functioning of the crop
407 system. In this book, the soil microbial habitat was designed on a wide scale, as for macro-
408 organisms. Sixteen distinct terrestrial microbial habitats were defined, emphasising the
409 importance of upgrading policies for biodiversity conservation by integrating microbial
410 habitats.

411 **4. Main impacts**

412 In this section, we examine the main impacts of these examples of DSM and monitoring in
413 France.

414 **4.1. Soil available P**

415 Aggregated maps of classes of P availability for crops are freely available at
416 <https://doi.org/10.1594/PANGEA.865249>. *Farmers* can access basic statistics for
417 their canton and compare their results to those available in their region. Moreover, they can
418 determine whether the amount of available P is reaching a critical threshold under which
419 crop deficiency might occur. *Stakeholders*, such as river basin management agencies, can
420 prioritise the areas where action is needed to protect the surface water quality. *Private*
421 *companies*, such as producers of P fertilisers, use the maps to target areas exhibiting
422 significant P deficiency, thus using the maps for geo-marketing. *Policymakers*, such as the
423 ministries for agriculture or the environment, use these results to ensure broad
424 communication to a large audience (e.g. CGDD/SOeS, 2009, 2014, 2015) regarding the status
425 of P deficiency or P excess in French soils. They also use the results for reporting at a higher
426 policy level or reviewing data, figures, maps, and fact sheets published by the European
427 Environmental Agency (EEA and JRC, 2010).

428 **4.2. Soil pH and changes in soil pH**

429 Regarding P, aggregated maps of classes of pH and pH changes are freely available at
430 <https://doi.org/10.15454/SVDTOU>. *Farmers* can access basic statistics and compare their
431 results with those available in their region. Although the pH is increasing slightly, many areas
432 of France still have very low pH values; therefore, *private companies*, such as producers of
433 liming products, may use the maps to target areas still exhibiting these values, thus using the
434 maps for geo-marketing. Additionally, the French Union of Fertilizer Industries (UNIFA) can
435 use these results to estimate the total amounts of liming products that are necessary to
436 increase the pH values of all soils over commonly accepted standards (e.g. 6.2 or 6.5).
437 *Policymakers*, such as the ministries for agriculture or the environment, use these results to

438 ensure broad communication regarding soil acidity (CGDD/SOeS, 2015) and liming
439 recommendations to a large audience. We can validate changes only in areas with many
440 samples, which suggests that additional collection may help detect new changes. Therefore,
441 this study advocated for further pursuing and developing this program and obtaining funding
442 from *governmental bodies*, such as the French Ministry for Agriculture. From a policy
443 viewpoint, increasing the number of samples gathered by farmers would benefit the
444 robustness of our estimates. As suggested by Saby et al. (2017): '*This policy could be*
445 *accomplished via dedicated subsidies allocated to farmers for soil tests [...] or allocating*
446 *existing subsidies to regularly perform soil analyses.*'

447 **4.3. Trace elements**

448 The whiskers product (Villanneau et al., 2008) and more elaborated products (Saby et al.,
449 2011; Marchant et al., 2017) are available online at <https://data.inra.fr/dataverse/gissol>.
450 They are used by *private companies* in charge of assessing potentially contaminated sites as
451 references to determine whether a given site is locally contaminated and requires further
452 investigation/remediation. Using these tools, and as a major *stakeholder* being the
453 organisation in charge of orphan sites (an orphan site is a site for which the person or
454 corporation that created the pollution is unknown or out of business), the French
455 Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME) recently published guidelines to
456 estimate background values of TE in soils (ADEME, 2018a, 2018b). Background values of
457 various TE (As, Ba, Cd, Cd, Cr, Cu, Hg, Mo, Ni, Pb, Sb, Se, and Zn) are also used to determine
458 where non-contaminated excavated soil can be reused, as stated in the French reference
459 guide on excavated soil management (MTES, 2017). The reused material should not degrade
460 the soil quality of the receiver site.

461 **4.4. Soil organic carbon**

462 From a *policy* viewpoint, soil C has become an important issue, as the French Government's
463 Climate Plan aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. Average SOC stock values by land
464 use are now used to apply a Tier 2 approach for national greenhouse-gas emissions
465 accounting (Citepa, 2017). SOC stocks maps were used for an expert report about the C
466 storage potential at the demand of the French Ministry for Agriculture and ADEME (Pellerin
467 et al., 2019). They helped to estimate the SOC storage potential under different scenarios of
468 changes in land use and management and to indicate the areas/situations for which
469 maintaining existing large stocks should be a priority. At a more local scale, changes in SOC
470 are now mandatory for C accounting of medium to large intercommunal cooperation bodies
471 (>20000 inhabitants) according to the French decree n°2016-849 of 28 June 2016,
472 establishing the territorial climate–air–energy plan. ADEME, which is the state agency in
473 charge of the climate policy implementation, has developed a diagnostic tool providing
474 default estimates of the C stocks and stock changes at this French administrative level using
475 data from the French soil quality monitoring network (ADEME, 2019) and encourages the
476 development of spatially explicit analyses (Duparque et al., 2016). At the *international policy*
477 *level*, the aggregated product at a 1-km resolution was delivered to the UN-FAO GSP as the
478 French contribution to the GSOC map of the world ([http://www.fao.org/global-soil-](http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/pillars-action/4-information-and-data-new/global-soil-organic-carbon-gsoc-map/en/)
479 [partnership/pillars-action/4-information-and-data-new/global-soil-organic-carbon-gsoc-](http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/pillars-action/4-information-and-data-new/global-soil-organic-carbon-gsoc-map/en/)
480 [map/en/](http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/pillars-action/4-information-and-data-new/global-soil-organic-carbon-gsoc-map/en/)). For the *general public*, results and statistics from the series of SOC maps
481 produced in France via DSM were used by stakeholders and ministries to communicate the
482 importance of SOC for preserving the soils and the environment from degradation and for
483 mitigating climate change. For instance, the brochure 'Organic carbon in soils: Meeting
484 climate change and food security challenge' was edited by ADEME to highlight the important

485 role of soil C in the French climate change mitigation strategy and to promote actions in the
486 agricultural and forestry sectors (ADEME – GIS Sol, 2015).

487 Another example concerns the publication of a four-page leaflet focusing on the C amounts
488 of French soils and their evolution over time (Ifen, 2007). For instance, it showed that the
489 agricultural soils released C during the periods of 1990–1995 and 1999–2004.

490 Although the method developed by Chen et al. (2019a) suggests a high sensitivity of this
491 approach to the selected percentile, it offers advantages from an operational viewpoint, as it
492 allows targets for SOC storage to be set according to both *policymakers'* and *farmers'*
493 considerations about their feasibility.

494 **4.5. Soil thickness**

495 Surprisingly, the ST by itself had few noticeable impacts. However, it is one of the bases for
496 calculating SOC stocks and AWC. We anticipate that the ST may have future impacts, for
497 instance, on the engineering of large public works, such as the construction of new high-
498 speed train lines and bypass roads around cities, as well as pipeline burial. In the recent past,
499 we received such demands and replied using the conventional soil maps. We consider that
500 the ST product is insufficiently publicised but that the use of DSM products will increase
501 quickly. We also consider that the new product developed by Chen et al. (2019b), which
502 involves mapping the probability to exceed a given ST, may be of interest for companies
503 involved in geotechnical works. For geotechnical work, one would be also interested in soil
504 geotechnical properties, e.g. shrinkage capability, clay content. A French map of shrinkage
505 capability is already available at [https://www.georisques.gouv.fr/donnees/bases-de-](https://www.georisques.gouv.fr/donnees/bases-de-donnees/retrait-gonflement-des-argiles)
506 [donnees/retrait-gonflement-des-argiles](https://www.georisques.gouv.fr/donnees/bases-de-donnees/retrait-gonflement-des-argiles) (last access 19 Aug. 2020), and the clay content
507 product has been elaborated down to 2m by Mulder et al. (2016).

508 **4.6. Available water capacity**

509 Román Dobarco et al. (2019a) provided various PTFs based on the available data. They also
510 provided PTF *users* with tools for classifying new samples as within or outside the
511 applicability domain of the PTFs. The majority of horizons outside the domain of applicability
512 were located in forests and natural areas or managed pastures. This has a big impact on
513 some *final end-users*, i.e. *agricultural development companies* and *farmers*. These PTFs are
514 already incorporated into *decision-making aid tools for irrigation management* developed by
515 development organisations for farmers. For example, the ‘Arvalis-Institut du Végétal’
516 institute, which is dedicated to cereal crops, included a new version of AWC estimation in its
517 CHN model that is incorporated into a decision tool for irrigation. Provided that a detailed
518 field-scale mapping is available (e.g. Duferra et al., 2007; Fortes et al., 2015; Li et al., 2019),
519 these PTFs open the door to precision agriculture for optimising water efficiency for crops,
520 particularly in drought situations (Lo et al., 2017). For larger areas, these PTFs associated
521 with the uncertainties in the AWC were used in a regional project in southwest France in a
522 decision tool dedicated to the evaluation of irrigation quotas (Lalu, 2017). At the national
523 scale, such information is also needed by ministries and agencies to adapt agriculture and
524 forest sectors to climate change. Apart from numerous scientific papers and
525 communications, the necessity to develop PTFs with a high spatial resolution for the AWC
526 was published in technical journals for farmers (Bouthier, 2015; Nicolas, 2015) and in
527 newsletters (Labidi et al., 2017), as well as presented in numerous technical seminars, and
528 was communicated to a broad audience of *citizens and farmers* during various agricultural
529 events (e.g. International Agriculture Exhibition, Paris, 2016 (approximately 610000 visitors,
530 mainly from a general public audience; French Agricultural Days ‘Les culturales’

531 (approximately 13000 farmers from all French regions)). A practical guide on how to
532 estimate the soil AWC will soon be freely released.

533 **4.7. Soil microbial abundance and diversity**

534 The use of soil molecular techniques to characterise soil microbial abundance and diversity
535 in >2200 soils allowed the standardisation of indicators and the design of corresponding
536 wide-scale references for soil biological diagnosis (Horrigue et al., 2016; Bouchez et al.,
537 2016). These indicators are now embedded in the *French biodiversity observatory* (ONB,
538 <http://indicateurs-biodiversite.naturefrance.gf/en>), which aims to provide robust indicators
539 for the French strategy for biodiversity (MEDTL, 2010). Other initiatives concerning soil
540 biodiversity are communicated at a *regional level* (Gip Bretagne Environnement, 2016). From
541 a *policy* viewpoint, they are also integrated into national reporting by the French Ministry of
542 Environment (MEDTL, 2010) and embedded into the French Ministry of Agriculture
543 Agricultural biodiversity observatory (OAB, <http://observatoire-agricole-biodiversite.fr/>).
544 From an *agricultural development* viewpoint, these soil bioindicators have allowed the
545 development of a *citizen science* project allowing researchers and farmers to work together
546 with the same objective, to achieve a better understanding of the impact of agricultural
547 practices on the soil biological quality and more largely on the durability of crop production
548 (Cannavacciulo et al., 2017). To date, the network involves more than 400 farmers
549 distributed across France in croplands and vineyards, and the data accumulated in this
550 network are analysed to produce robust trends regarding the impacts of different practices
551 (pesticide input, soil tillage, grassland, crop rotation, organic vs. conventional crops, etc.)
552 on soil biological quality and services. Finally, for the general public, a didactic French atlas
553 of soil bacteria (Karimi et al., 2018) based on the results obtained via the RMQS soil sampling

554 was published in 2018 and sold >1000 copies in less than a year. The publishing of this atlas
555 was reported in numerous forms of media, e.g. radio, television (TV), and national press,
556 highlighting the role of soil quality in the durability of agriculture for the public.

557 **5. Discussion**

558 **5.1. Importance of data capturing and rescuing**

559 Arrouays et al. (2017) gave some examples of success stories on data capturing and rescuing at the
560 world, continental and country level from selected projects that achieved such kind of products,
561 thereby demonstrating the importance of data rescue activities of existing soil data.

562 In France, an important data rescue effort led to a 69% increase of the number of soil profiles data
563 from 2009 to 2015 giving an impressive coverage at adequate density of the French territory. In
564 2015, the total number of points in mainland France soil database was about 160000 and is now (end
565 of 2019) about 190000. This effort of capturing data benefited from the implementation of the
566 1:250,000 soil mapping program for which it was mandatory to deliver the soil profiles information to
567 the national database. For this purpose, INRA developed an easy-to-use data entry interface with a
568 smallest error potential as possible. Meanwhile, many other legacy data from maps at other scales
569 and from other programs were rescued by INRA, by entry and collation of legacy soil profiles and
570 data (e.g. point location and year of recording, soil classification, soil morphologic observations and
571 soil analytical measurements including values, units and methods used) from soil reports into the
572 national soil profile database. The number of measurements, however, was highly variable,
573 depending on the soil properties. In particular, AWC measurements are much less dense and
574 irregularly spread over the territory. A sampling strategy has been designed to complete AWC
575 measurements geographical coverage in the framework of the second campaign of the RMQS. Other
576 hydraulic properties, such as for instance hydraulic conductivity, still remain very sparse in the
577 national database. This type of measurements has mainly been realised in localised areas for

578 drainage of irrigation projects. Rescuing them to build PTFs would require specific efforts and funding
579 that are still under discussion.

580 Trace elements measurements came from the RMQS, ensuring a perfect homogeneity in sampling,
581 analytical procedures and geographical coverage. The data capturing for the BDAT came from
582 contracting with private laboratories. From 1999 to 2014, the number of samples increased regularly
583 at a rate of about 120000 per year, and reached about 2600000 in 2014. The analyses, however,
584 mainly concern agricultural soils and routine agronomic measurements from topsoil (e.g. pH, SOC,
585 CEC, clay content, available P and K). Even with such a number of measurements, they remain
586 irregularly spread, and some temporal trends are not yet detectable over the entire French territory.
587 This advocates for pursuing data capturing in order to confirm observed trends or to detect new
588 ones.

589 **5.2. Impacts of DSM at French national scale and ways to increase them**

590 In this section, we first summarise and discuss the impacts of French national DSM products.
591 Then, we elaborate on potential further developments. Striking impacts of DSM at the
592 national scale in France are revealed. These impacts cover a wide range of end-users, some
593 of which supply data to the French ministries for their own publications at the national
594 (CGDD/SOeS, 2015; CGDD/SOeS, 2014) or at regional level (e.g. DREAL Centre Val de Loire,
595 2015a, 2015b). At the European level, the indicators reported by France towards various
596 instances (OCDE, Eurostat, DG Environment of the European Community, European
597 Environmental Agency) are aggregated at the national or sub-national (French regions) level.
598 In this study, we decided to focus on seven striking examples at the national scale, but many
599 other ongoing projects are presently delivering new DSM products, often at a more local
600 scale, such as an ongoing project that aims at using DSM to better quantify soil ecosystem
601 services and to provide tools for land-use planning in peri-urban areas (see

602 <https://www6.inra.fr/soilserv/>). We decided to focus on these seven examples, but other
603 DSM national products are available, for instance, on persistent organic pollutants (e.g.,
604 Villanneau et al., 2013). These products, together with products related to TE, are largely
605 used at a high policy level (French Ministry for the Environment) to evaluate the
606 environmental exposure of populations to contaminants and to map environmental health
607 inequalities (e.g. Caudeville, 2013, 2015; Caudeville et al., 2017; Saib et al., 2014, 2015).
608 There is no doubt that relating human health to soil conditions will increase soil awareness
609 among the general public and national and local authorities.

610 The examples provided here illustrate the impacts of DSM in France. However, many other
611 traditional soil map products are also used at the national, regional, and local levels, in
612 combination with other digital sources of information. Among the most important ones are
613 the elaboration of guidelines for the delineation of erosion risk areas (Cerdan et al., 2006)
614 and of wetlands to be protected (MEDDE and Gis Sol, 2013). At the European Union (E.U.)
615 level, France was asked to contribute to the delineation of agricultural areas subject to
616 natural constraints, i.e. 'Agricultural Areas with Natural Handicaps' (Jones et al., 2014), and
617 used the 1:250000 soil map to assess the biophysical criteria for this delineation. However,
618 prior to the use of the 1:250000 soil maps, boundaries between regions were harmonised
619 using DSM methods. Other examples of the use of traditional soil maps include their use in
620 conjunction with other environmental information for assessing soil ecosystem services and
621 taking them into account for land-use planning (Keller et al., 2012), particularly in peri-urban
622 areas. Another ongoing project called MUSE ([https://www.cerema.fr/fr/actualites/projet-](https://www.cerema.fr/fr/actualites/projet-muse-integrer-multifonctionnalite-sols-documents)
623 [muse-integrer-multifonctionnalite-sols-documents](https://www.cerema.fr/fr/actualites/projet-muse-integrer-multifonctionnalite-sols-documents)) aims at developing tools for taking into
624 account soil multifunctionality in urban land-use planning.

625 We attempted (Table 1) to classify the soil attributes mapped using DSM according to their
 626 impacts on different categories of end-users.

627 Table 1: Classification of soil attributes predicted via DSM in France according to their
 628 impacts on various end-users.

| End users | Soil attribute | | | | | | Microbial abundance and diversity |
|---|----------------|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----------------------------------|
| | Soil P | Soil pH | TE | SOC | ST | AWC | |
| International organisations | x | o | x | xxx | o | o | xx |
| Governmental bodies | xx | xx | xxx | xxx | o | xx | xxx |
| Stakeholders/national agencies | xx | xx | xxx | xxx | o | xx | xxx |
| Agricultural development organisations | xx | xxx | xx | xxx | xx | xxx | xx |
| Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) | x | o | xx | xxx | o | o | x |
| Private companies | xxx | xxx | xxx | xx | x | xx | xx |
| Farmers | xxx | xx | xx | xx | x | xxx | xxx |
| Citizens/general public | x | o | xx | xx | o | x | xx |

629 Impact: xxx very high, xx high, x moderate, o unknown

630

631 As expected, the SOC topic had the largest impact in nearly all categories of end-users, which
 632 may be linked to the recent '4 per 1000' initiative launched by France during the COP21
 633 (Soussana et al., 2019) and to the fact that farmers are interested in increasing the organic-
 634 matter content of their soil for increasing the fertility. TE obtained high scores, which may be
 635 related to citizens' care about health and to the fact that governmental bodies and national
 636 agencies have a major interest in site contamination assessment. Soil P and pH exhibited
 637 large impacts on agricultural sectors, which is logical. Microbial abundance and diversity
 638 attract increasing interest from citizens, farmers, governments, and international
 639 organisations in biodiversity conservation and extinction prevention (IPBES, 2019).

640 It was challenging assessing whether the resulting maps led to changes in practices of the
641 farmers. However, the maps have been consulted by technical advisers and consultants from
642 agricultural development organisations (agricultural chambers, agricultural cooperatives).
643 Therefore, we may think that farmers pay now more attention to order some soil tests to
644 monitor several soil properties in the areas that were identified as problematic (e.g. areas
645 with low pH, low P availability, low SOC content or high TE). The technical advisers also give
646 recommendations to farmers to counter-balance undesirable evolutions (e.g. liming, organic
647 or inorganic P fertilization, adopting conservation agriculture practices). Another example of
648 impact is the farmers' network monitoring soil biological indicators under different practices
649 (see section 4.7). Besides, the demand from farmers for microbial analyses is increasing and
650 the biggest private soil analysis laboratory in France (55% of the market share) recently
651 added microbial abundance and diversity to his laboratory test catalogue. AWC is already
652 incorporated into decision-making aid tools for irrigation management developed by
653 development organisations for farmers. This is briefly discussed in sections 4.6 and 5.3.

654 Another way to assess the impact on soil awareness is to analyse the demands that came
655 since 2008 to the INRA InfoSol Unit, which can be considered as the national centre for soil
656 information in France (Figure 3).

657

658 <insert Figure 3 about here>

659

660 Figure 3 shows that the largest demands to INRA InfoSol were related to research, either
661 asking to provide data or asking for a research collaboration. Other major demands came
662 from private companies, national stakeholders, policymakers, and agricultural development

663 companies. Interestingly, there were noticeable demands from citizens and the media,
664 whereas demands from farmers and NGOs were almost absent. The low percentage of
665 farmers' demands is not surprising as they usually ask questions to local advisers rather than
666 at the national level. The sharp increase of demands beginning around 2009 corresponds to
667 the period during which InfoSol began to publish online information, and the sharp decline
668 from 2017 might be due to the fact that InfoSol developed numerous webservice allowing
669 people to find information without having to ask for it. The low interest from citizens and the
670 general public confirms that there is a real need to increase the soil awareness of the
671 population (McBratney et al., 2014; Koch et al., 2014). One may wonder if this disinterest is
672 due to a lack of communication from the national centre for soil information.

673 Since 2008, the INRA InfoSol has been involved in >210 media communications. Figure 4
674 presents the proportions of the main categories of media in which InfoSol participated.

675

676 <insert Figure 4 about here>

677

678 Figure 4 indicates that the visibility of soil information to the general public should be
679 increased (see the low proportions of TV and radio interviews). This can be done by using
680 new multimedia tools, particularly targeting the young public, which gathers most of its
681 information through internet tools. For instance, InfoSol recently created a Twitter account
682 (@InfosolOrleans) to communicate regarding its activities and products and raise general
683 awareness of soil issues. The most popular tweet thus far was the publication of the national
684 map of C stocks. Moreover, interactive tools allowing people to visualise changes that may

685 occur under different scenarios (changes in land use, climate, agricultural practices, etc.)
686 should be adopted.

687 It is expected that DSM will progressively move towards digital soil assessment (DSA, Carré
688 et al., 2007; Minasny et al., 2012; Arrouays et al., 2020). DSA is the application and
689 interpretation of DSM maps for specific uses (e.g. agricultural productivity, land suitability,
690 land-use planning, C accounting), which often require using soil data as inputs to models
691 (e.g. crop models, ecosystem services assessment tools, greenhouse-gas accounting models).
692 For instance, national DSM maps are already used together with other information to model
693 soil functions or services as soil habitats (Karimi et al., 2018; Rutgers et al., 2016) or to model
694 the C storage potential depending on land use and practices (Pellerin et al., 2019). One main
695 advantage of DSM is that it indicates the uncertainty on soil attributes, which can be used to
696 test the sensitivity of these models or to use probability density functions of soil attributes
697 instead of average of dominant values. Moreover, these interpretations may also include
698 social and economic factors, allowing societal needs to be better addressed. Examples
699 include the assessment of the services rendered by soils (e.g. Dominati et al., 2010; Turner et
700 al., 2016), as in the programs Soilserv (<https://www6.inra.fr/soilserv/>) and SoilVer, i.e. a soil
701 and land research funding platform for Europe (<https://www.soilver.eu/>), contributions to
702 soil-related local decision making and economics issues (e.g. Cotching and Kidd, 2010; Kidd
703 et al., 2014; 2015), and contributions of soils to the adaptation of agriculture and forest
704 sectors to climate change and to the sustainable development goals and the achievement of
705 Land Degradation Neutrality (e.g. Keesstra et al., 2016; Bouma, 2019). All these actions will
706 increase the soil awareness of the general public and of policymakers.

707 Soil awareness is increasing at a policy level. Good examples are the GSP initiative from the
708 UN-FAO (<http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/en/>), the 4 per 1000 initiative
709 (Soussana et al., 2019), which has already been signed by >40 countries, and large research
710 initiatives launched in E.U., such as the European Joint Programme on Agricultural Soil
711 Management 'Towards climate-smart sustainable management of agricultural soils' (EJP
712 Soil), which will help to realise reporting under CAP, the sustainable development goals, and
713 the achievement of set climate targets, among other objectives. Moreover, EJP Soil will
714 support farmers in their role as stewards of land and soil resources. A central role in this
715 project is data harmonisation and creation of soil information. Here, DSM will be used for
716 generating bottom-up maps of soil and derived thematic information on soil functioning for
717 Europe. In this framework, it is expected that France and the French experience in DSM will
718 play a central role.

719 **5.3. Future of DSM in France**

720 At the *governmental* level, The French Ministry for Agriculture is now aware about the
721 need to introduce an action plan that would incorporate DSM at regional levels to accelerate
722 soil mapping programs and to boost DSM methods giving accuracy assessments and
723 reproducible and updatable results. In order to reach this objective, the French Ministry for
724 agriculture modified accordingly its annual call for soil mapping actions.

725 The RMQS is now in its second round of sampling. The sampling strategy has been revised to
726 optimise the sampling in both space and time for detecting changes in soil conditions earlier
727 (particularly regarding SOC stocks). New variables have been added to the analytical menu of
728 the second campaign (AWC, particulate organic matter) or are subject to feasibility studies
729 for future integration (pesticide contents, soil biodiversity parameters). Consequently, for

730 example, the validity of the evaluation statistics for soil hydraulic properties will improve
731 when ongoing work of the RMQS second campaign increases the representativeness of
732 pedoclimatic conditions and spatial distribution in soil hydraulic measurements at the
733 national level. The BDAT collection of analytical results ordered by farmers is also ongoing.
734 Both programmes will move from DSM to digital soil monitoring and will increase their
735 impacts at all levels.

736 All RMQS soil samples are stored in a soil archive repository (European soil sample
737 conservatory in Orléans) under light-, moisture-, and temperature-controlled conditions.
738 This will allow use of these samples when new analysis technologies become operational. A
739 large number of new projects are already employing this sample library (e.g. Silicon (Landré
740 et al., 2018), ³⁵Cl by Rock Eval analysis, ¹³⁷Cs for modelling sedimentary transfers at the
741 watershed scale, fungicide contents to assess the links with human infertility, SOC by Rock-
742 Eval pyrolysis, etc.). This soil-sample archive also provides an excellent way to communicate
743 about soil and has been visited by approximately 3000 people since 2014, including the
744 general public, professional agencies, researchers, NGOs, sciences academies, stakeholders,
745 and policymakers.

746 Similar to the soil-sample archive, a DNA archive and platform is now available at INRA Dijon:
747 Genosol (https://www2.dijon.inra.fr/plateforme_genosol/protocoles). It contains all DNA
748 extracted from RMQS topsoil samples and allows genomics to be applied to a large spectra
749 of topics, including topics related to plant and human health. Such topics will certainly have
750 a large impact on the general public though their dissemination in national and international
751 media.

752 Additionally, all samples from the RMQS were used to build a national spectral library
753 including visible, near-infrared, and mid-infrared spectra (e.g. Caria et al., 2011; Goge et al.,
754 2014). This library opens the door to low-cost mapping of new elements that were not
755 initially included in the analytical menu of the RMQS (e.g. emerging contaminants such as
756 antibiotics and microplastics and human exposure to some contaminants).

757 Finally, the efforts made by InfoSol to assemble national covariates will be beneficial to all
758 people performing DSM at a more local scale. As an example, Loiseau et al. (2019) recently
759 produced a multirate mosaic of bare soil data reflectance using the new Sentinel 2 satellite
760 products, and this product is already employed for large-scale monitoring of the SOC in a
761 cost-efficient way in small representative areas (Vaudour et al., 2019) using high-resolution
762 Earth Observation (EO) data for generating DSM maps. Internationally, there is a large
763 amount of interest in global soil monitoring using EO data (e.g. Chabrilat et al., 2019, and
764 see <http://worldsoils2019.esa.int/>). Finally, the new partnership GLADSOILMAP
765 (<https://www6.inra.fr/gladsoilmap-consortium/>) is a recently established consortium that
766 was established to scientifically support many of these international initiatives and advance
767 methods for realising urgently needed products.

768 **6. Conclusion**

769 The selected examples of DSM at the national scale in France clearly have substantial impact
770 on various categories of end-users, such as farmers, professional organisations, private
771 companies, stakeholders, and policymakers at different levels of decision making. If we
772 consider the TE and SOC, the impacts on stakeholders and policymakers are very large. TE in
773 soil are related to human exposure and health and are therefore popular research topics.
774 The SOC is now considered a priority for climate adaptation and mitigation, as exemplified
775 by the launch of the 4 per 1000 initiative by France at the COP21. The impact on private

776 companies is important, particularly for companies dealing with fertilisers or amendment
777 production (see the results for P and pH) and those involved with potentially contaminated
778 sites. The impacts on the general public and citizens are less quantifiable and should be a
779 high priority if we wish to raise the soil awareness of the general public. It appears that
780 increased efforts should be dedicated to deliver usable products rather than to deliver raw
781 soil properties, even if the raw soil properties provide a basis without which DSA and digital
782 soil monitoring cannot be developed. Formerly, the traditional soil survey was generally
783 followed up by soil-survey interpretations (mainly empirical and qualitative). Soil mapping
784 has been modernised through DSM, but the interpretation and the production of real digital
785 assessment appears to still be in infancy in France. Additionally, relating human health to soil
786 conditions will undoubtedly increase the soil awareness among the general public and
787 national and local authorities.

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1200 **Captions to figures**

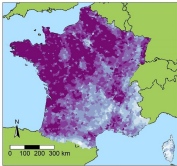
1201

1202 Figure 1. Density of soil tests per canton. A canton is an administrative unit, the mean
1203 agricultural area of which is 148 km².

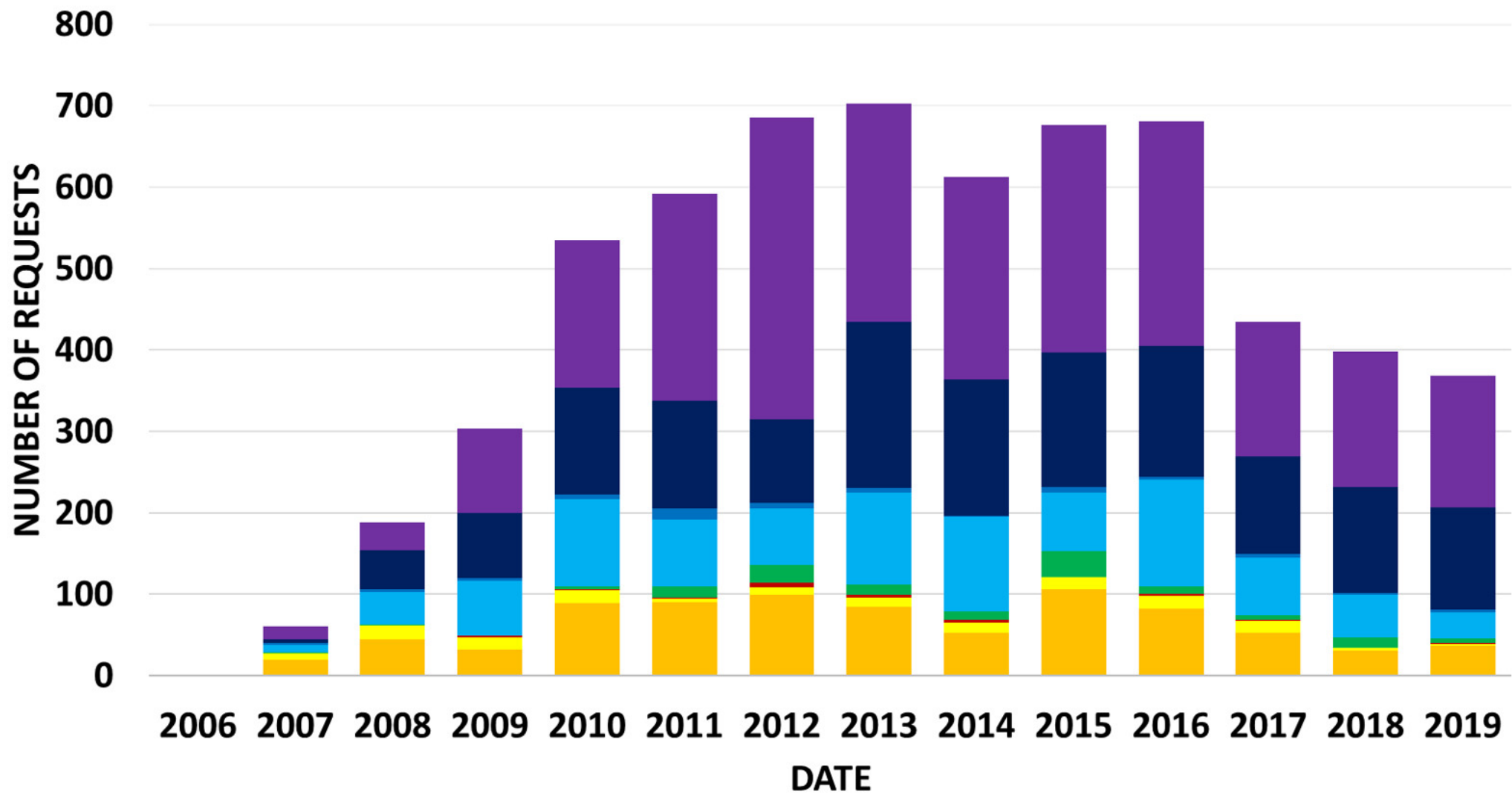
1204 Figure 2. Locations of point data available in the soil survey database (IGCS, in green) and the
1205 soil quality monitoring network (RMQS, in red) for mainland France.

1206 Figure 3. Number of demands arriving to the national centre for soil information INRA
1207 InfoSol from 2008 to 2018.

1208 Figure 4. Proportions of the media categories in which the INRA InfoSol Unit has participated
1209 since 2008. 1: Daily national press; 2: National general public magazines; 3: Magazines
1210 specialising in agriculture or the environment; 4: Magazines of scientific vulgarisation; 5:
1211 Radio interviews or debates; 6: TV studio interviews or TV report broadcasts; 7: information
1212 on websites. Calculations on about 200 communications from 2008 to 2018.







- Agricultural development companies
- Citizens-general public
- Farmers
- Medias
- National stakeholders and policy makers
- Non governmental organisations
- Private companies
- Research

