

## Feed the Soil Project Briefing Document

Version 5 22 November 2024

1. Project Details	
<b>Project Name</b>	Feed the Soil
<b>Project Lead</b>	The Organic Research Centre (ORC)
<b>Project Partner(s)</b>	The Land Gardeners (LG)
<b>Primary Contact</b>	Dr Julia Cooper, Organic Research Centre <a href="mailto:Julia.c@organicresearchcentre">Julia.c@organicresearchcentre</a>
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<b>Time frame</b>	The project begins 1 October 2024 and runs to 31 December 2026
<b>Project summary / purpose</b>	<p>Working with The Land Gardeners we aim to establish a research and knowledge exchange hub and a network of satellite sites trialling a range of approaches to feeding the soil, centred around the use of composts, their teas and extracts at farm scale.</p> <p>We will conduct a comparison of different composting methods and application strategies under robust, controlled, conditions so that clear guidance for farmers can be developed.</p> <p>Ultimately, we will produce practical and accessible advice for farmers to answer the question: what composting systems and application methods are most appropriate for my farming context? Remembering that context is one of the key principles of regenerative agriculture.</p>
2. How will farmers & composting practitioners be involved with the project?	
<p>a. The first stage of the project will involve a survey of current practices on selected farms and composting operations. We will interview compost practitioners to gather information on their composting methods. This data will form the basis of case studies (for knowledge exchange) and highlight gaps in knowledge.</p> <p>b. Farmers and composters may be asked to provide samples of their compost and/or compost products (teas and extracts) for analysis.</p> <p>c. We plan to conduct trials on some farms beginning in the spring of 2025. These may include strip trials in fields comparing different applications of compost and their products.</p> <p>d. The impacts of different composting methods will be assessed through monitoring of crop growth and development in the field.</p> <p>e. The impacts of different composting methods will be assessed through monitoring a range of soil health indicators in the field and laboratory.</p>	

### 3. What will you be required to do?

- a. Participate in an initial farm visit and interview (1-2 hr) and provide information on the type of composting methods you use. This will include information on the feedstocks that you use, management during the composting process and end use of the compost.
- b. Provide samples of your compost and/or teas/extracts for analysis.
- c. If your farm is selected as a study site, you may be asked to collaborate to design trials to test the effects of composting methods and uses on your land. This might include strip trials with and without compost and/or compost products. Impacts on crop growth and quality and soil health will be assessed by ORC researchers.
- d. Provide ORC researchers with access to any experimental fields for surveys and assessments during the growing season (by pre-appointment only; we will always contact you at least 24 hours in advance of a visit).
- e. Assist ORC researchers with the collection of compost, compost tea/extract samples when required (by pre-appointment only; we will always contact you at least 24 hours in advance of a visit).
- f. Allow documentation of your composting process and experiences in the project via video, photos, text files for use in developing knowledge exchange materials and for promotion of the project on social media.
- g. Inform the ORC team of any inconvenience or problem with your participation to allow mitigating actions or alternative plans

### 4. What will be the benefits of participating in the project?

- a. You will learn from the researchers and fellow participants in the project about methods for optimal compost management.
- b. You will be provided with the results of the analysis of your compost and soils for a range of chemical and biological parameters.
- c. You will be compensated financially for your input to the project:
  - a. The compensation for the initial farm visit and interview will be £200<sup>1</sup> plus the results of compost chemical and biological analysis with interpretation.
  - b. If your farm is selected for on-farm trials with compost or compost products, you will be compensated for any inconvenience with an annual payment<sup>2</sup> (year 1 – April 2025-March 2026; year 2 – April 2026-December 2026) plus an annual report including all results of compost, soil and plant analysis on your farm.

### 5. Risks involved in joining the Feed the Soil project

- a. We will make all possible efforts to assist you in these operations, but acknowledge that some of the interventions and trial designs (e.g. strip testing in fields) might require some activities additional to your normal operations and could create extra burden.

<sup>1</sup> unclaimed compensation will be gifted in kind to ORC as an unrestricted donation

<sup>2</sup> To be determined

- b. We cannot guarantee that the methods tested will have a positive effect on your economic bottom line; so there may be a small financial risk to joining the trial.

#### 6. If you change your mind and want to withdraw from the project

Your participation in Feed the Soil is strictly voluntary and you will be free to withdraw at any moment from participating in the project.

#### 7. Personal data protection

Your personal data will be processed safely by the **Organic Research Centre** in accordance with our privacy policy which can be found by following this link.

- [Organic Research Centre Privacy Policy](#)

Your contact details will be shared with the **Land Gardeners** so that they can also contact you regarding the project.