



EPA/ESAI Grassroots Workshop

Molecular Ecology and Nematode Research Group,
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South East Technological University (SETU)

Soil health and nematodes: enablers and indicators for sustainable environment and food

On June 13th, 2026, a grassroots workshop titled *"Soil Health and Nematodes: Enablers and Indicators for a Sustainable Environment and Food"* was successfully held at An Gairdin Beo, in Carlow. The event was led by Dr Loriane Murphy, who also served as the event MC, and was attended by approximately 25 participants.

The primary objectives of the event were to deepen participants' understanding of soil ecosystems, including soil health and the role of nematodes as enablers and indicators for a sustainable environment and food systems, foster collaboration among stakeholders, and promote eco-friendly agricultural practices.

The workshop featured key speakers including Dr David Ryan, VP for Sustainability at SETU, who opened the workshop with remarks emphasizing the importance of soil health. Dr Thomais Kakouli-Duarte, Director of Research at enviroCORE and Lecturer at SETU, further highlighted the importance of soil health and the role of nematodes in it.

The session included practical demonstrations led by Alejandra Vieyra-Ramirez on nematode sampling and soil quality assessments, Lilian Atira on DNA extraction techniques, and Islam Darwish on culturing beneficial nematodes. Invited speakers such as Dr Anusha Pulavarty from the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine

provided insightful talk on plant parasitic nematodes and their sustainable management, and Dr Anna Karpinska from Kilkenny County Council on the role of nematodes as environmental indicators.

Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Participants praised the educational and friendly atmosphere, appreciated the practical demonstrations, and expressed increased awareness of the vital role of nematodes in soil health. Many attendees also indicated interest in future events and collaborative opportunities, emphasizing the importance of community-driven initiatives to support sustainable soil management.

Overall, the workshop successfully raised awareness of soil biodiversity, promoted sustainable practices, and laid the foundation for potential partnerships among researchers and community members.

The organiser wishes to acknowledge the support of the EPA via the ESAI Grassroots Funding Programme.





















