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Agroforestry: Can trees change aggregate stability?

Why?
Soil erosion in farmlands is a major cause of water quality degradation and reduced crop production potential throughout the European countries.

Soil aggregate stability can be positively correlated to soil organic matter content, roots presence and soil biota (Graf and Frei 2013). In agroforests, if the role of tree lines as physical barriers to runoffs is easily understanding, processes involving rooting systems and soil erodibility are still unknown.

Objectives
- Do the presence of a tree line improve soil aggregate stability?
- What are the mecanisms underlying?

Are there effects of the tree line on soil aggregate stability?

For each sample we measured:
- soil aggregate stability (Le Bissonnais 1996)
- microbial metabolic activity and diversity (microcrop®)
- root biomass and root trait diversity
- characteristics of the vegetation structure and soil properties.

What factors drive the soil aggregate stability?

The root proportion in the soil is positively linked with the aggregate stability.

Then... what next?

Most of sites are too young to reveal a distance effect to the line. New sampling design with hedges.

Next analysis to better explain our results: Soil organic matter content / Root morphological traits / Microbial activity & metabolic diversity.