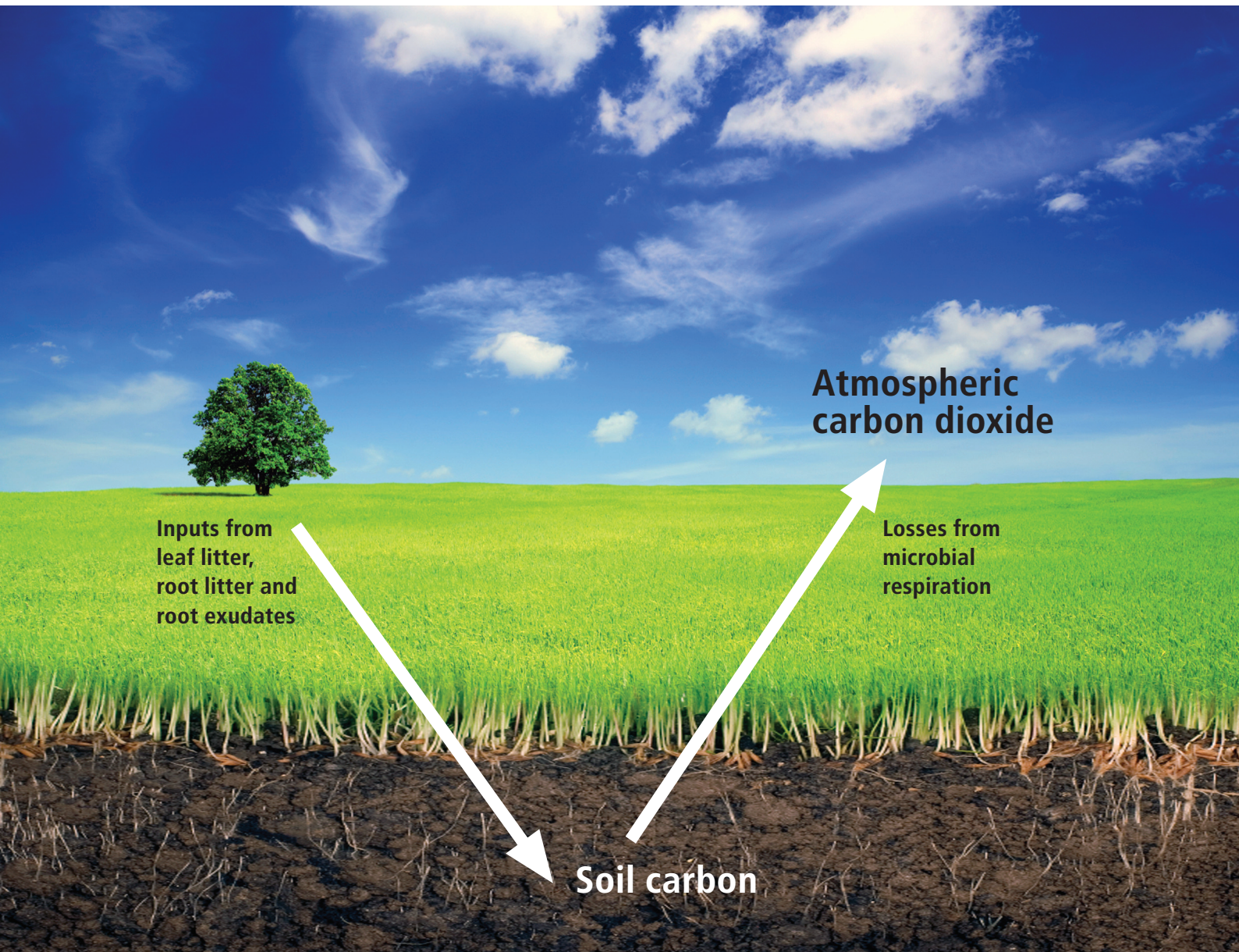


Is Scotland's soil disappearing into thin air?

The carbon content of soil can increase due to plant derived inputs such as dead leaves and root exudates (carbon containing compounds which leak out of roots). However, soil microbes utilise these sources of carbon, converting them to carbon dioxide which is lost to the atmosphere in the process of respiration.



The long term carbon content of the soil will depend on the balance between inputs and losses. Changes in Scotland's climate may alter this balance. If the losses increase then Scotland's soil may literally disappear into thin air.

The analyses performed in this laboratory help our understanding of the processes involved in determining the carbon content of Scotland's soil.