INVITATION

INCEPTION WORKSHOP “ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST SOIL SCIENCE NETWORK (REGIONAL SOIL PARTNERSHIP) AND THE MIDDLE EAST SOIL INFORMATION SYSTEM”

Background

FAO, with the support of the European Commission has launched the Global Soil Partnership in September 2011 to raise awareness of decision makers on the vital role of soil resources for achieving food security, adapt to and mitigate climate change and guarantee provision of environmental services. The improvement of soil information and its use in developing sound soil policies and improved decision making for soil protection and management are the main aims of the GSP. In that regard, the GSP will address five main pillars of action:

1. Promoting sustainable management of soil resources and improved global governance for soil protection and sustainable productivity.
2. Encouraging investment, technical cooperation, policy, education awareness and extension in soils.
3. Promoting targeted soil research and development focusing on identified gaps and priorities and synergies with related productive, environmental and social development actions.
4. Enhancing quantity and quality of soil data and information: data collection, data analysis, validation, reporting, monitoring and integration of data with other disciplines;
5. Harmonization and establishment of guidelines of methods, measurements and indicators of soil resources;

Soils are a finite natural resource. On a human time-scale they are non-renewable. However, despite the essential role that soil plays in the life of people, there is increasing degradation of soil resources due to inappropriate practices, population pressures and inadequate governance over this valuable resource. The conservation and, if possible, enhancement and restoration of the soil resources of the world through a sustainable and productive use should therefore be the ultimate twinned goal of the GSP.

The vision of the Global Soil Partnership is the improvement of the global governance of the limited soil resources of the planet in order to guaranty healthy and productive soils for a food secure world.

Current regional databases are still essentially using a mixture of information collected more than 50 years ago at the time of the compilation of the first global soil map by FAO/UNESCO and subsequently the more recent collection of new soil data under SOTER (Soil and Terrain Database) and other Regional
or national programs. The most recent Harmonized World Soil Database is essentially a compilation of these existing soil data into a common raster map at 1 km of spatial resolution. There is an urgent need for updated high-resolution data and information on global, regional and local soil resources, both for food security and for climate change related issues.

In this regard, it is necessary to build a regional soil partnership among the various soil institutions in the region in order to develop synergies for producing the Middle East Soil information System. Under the umbrella of the Global Soil Partnership, in December 2011, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) signed a Letter of Agreement for the establishment of the Middle East Regional Soil Network/Partnership and for the development of the Middle East Soil Information System Phase I.

Is in this regard that a kick-off workshop of the aforementioned projects is now plan to take effect in March 2012.

**Participants**

The objectives of the workshop are threefold:

- To present the aim and components of the project;
- To discuss about the status and challenges of soil information in the region and how to establish a joint regional information system;
- To establish the Middle East Regional Soil Partnership

**Participants**

The participants of the workshop and the project in general will include representatives from the following countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Tunisia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

**Sponsors**

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through the Global Soil Partnership (GSP).

**Workshop Program**

The workshop is planned for the 01-05 April 2012, which will include country presentations, plenary sessions for both technical and logistic issues of the project. More details will be available soon.

**Invitation and call for Presentations**

Invited participants will be provided with air-ticket (economy class) and accommodations during the workshop. No registration fee will be collected. Each representative has to make a presentation on the status and challenges of national soil information in their countries.
The Registration Form is enclosed. Please fill in the Registration Form and then send it back before 28 February 2012 to Dr. Mahmoud Alferihat (Mahmoudalferihat@yahoo.com).

Organizing Committee

President: Dr. Radi Tarawneh
Secretary General, of Ministry of Agriculture

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