

## Global Soil Partnership Soil Data Facility

### 1. Introduction

In accordance with the Implementation Plan under Pillar 4 of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP)<sup>1</sup>, which has been endorsed by the International Network of Soil Information Institutions (INSII) and the 4<sup>th</sup> GSP Plenary Assembly, and in line with the GSP Rules of Procedure, the GSP Secretariat is herewith launching a call for proposals to host the GSP Soil Data Facility (SDF)<sup>2</sup>.

The GSP Soil Data Facility is to provide technical and infrastructure support to the Global Soil Information System (GLOSIS), to be established as per the Pillar 4 Implementation Plan. The major tasks of the SDF are outlined in Annex 1. Functioning of the Global Soil Information System will be overseen by INSII, which delegate operational management to the Pillar 4 Working Group (P4WG). The GSP Soil Data Facility will be a member of both INSII and P4WG.

The Facility is not a formal data owner: data are either released by the owners themselves, or the GSP Secretariat is explicitly asked by GSP partners/data owners to physically host and disseminate national soil data on their behalf. INSII through the GSP secretariat and the P4WG will assign tasks to the GSP Soil Data Facility to undertake as required. In this case, INSII members through the GSP secretariat will share the relevant data with the GSP Soil Data Facility. However, ownership remains with the data owner, unless specified otherwise.

### 2. Who can apply to become the GSP Soil Data Facility?

- Any member or consortia of members of the GSP, in particular members of the INSII network, can apply to take up the role of GSP Soil Data Facility.
- The GSP Soil Data Facility can be a single institution or a consortium of institutions.
- In this light, offers in response to this call must specify the information, as listed under Section 4: Selection Criteria.

### 3. Tasks of the GSP Soil Data Facility

According to Annex 3 of the Pillar 4 Implementation Plan (Terms of Reference of GSP Soil Data Facility), the GSP Soil Data Facility will:

- host, develop and maintain important elements of the spatial data infrastructure (SDI) for a distributed system<sup>3</sup>;
- provide as needed, infrastructure components for INSII members who choose not to develop and host their own web services;

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bl102e.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> In the Pillar 4 Implementation Plan, the GSP Soil Data Facility was originally referred to as the 'Global Soil Spatial Data Infrastructure Centre (GSSDIC)' but INSII preferred the shorter name for ease of use.

<sup>3</sup> It may be noted that following the Pillar 4 Implementation Plan, FAO is currently developing a corporate SDI, which will also be aimed at supporting the requirements for the Global Soil Information System. The finalisation of the overall SDI for the Pillar 4 Global Soil Information System will be discussed and agreed with the P4WG and INSII, clarifying respective involvement as well as ownership, accountability and responsibility for the infrastructure and services to be provided.<sup>4</sup> A general GSP data sharing policy is currently being prepared.

- actively participate in the P4WG;
- support various technical and product-related elements of the Global Soil Information System (see also Annex 1);
- support the design and implementation of the distributed Global Soil Information System and cooperate with FAO to support the delivery of SoilSTAT;
- provide data services that support the aims and objectives of the Global Earth Observation System of the Systems (GEOSS).

Annex 1 presents a summary of the technical tasks outlined in the Pillar 4 Implementation Plan.

#### **4. Selection criteria**

The selection of the institution, or consortium of institutions, to serve as the GSP Soil Data Facility, will be based on applications by GSP members who express interest in this open call in written form, and can demonstrate the following institutional capacities or features:

- Technical capability in hosting elements of a spatial data infrastructure (examples: discovery and download services, transformation services, soil thesaurus/vocabulary services);
- Adequate permanent technical support staff;
- Experience with managing soil geographic databases;
- Experience with interoperable systems;
- Extensive experience in international collaboration, including dealing with intellectual property issues concerning soils data;
- Approval and support from the pertinent national government, as specified in its statutes or terms of reference, or explicitly by letter;
- Adequate amount of self-funding, complementing GSP contributions (which are subject to availability of resources);
- Synergy with GSP and own SDI activities;
- Experience in soil-related education and training.

The Soil Data Facility will operate within the framework of the Pillar 4 Intellectual Property Rights/data policy requirements<sup>4</sup>. While this policy is currently under consideration, there is already an initial agreement that national data sets (or those of other than national institutions) remain in ownership thereof.

The screening of applications and assessment of compliance with the selection criteria will be conducted by the GSP Secretariat and P4WG. The Secretariat will submit to the 5<sup>th</sup> GSP Plenary Assembly (20-22 June 2017) a list of applicants that complied with the criteria. The selection of the GSP Soil Data Facility will rest with this session of the Plenary Assembly.

#### **5. Financing**

The GSP Soil Data Facility will be relying on its own funding for basic operations. Additional resources via the Healthy Soils Facility will be sought to support the execution of the Pillar 4 Implementation Plan.

#### **6. Timeline**

- Launch of the Call: 28 April 2017
- Application deadline: 20 May 2017
- Selection deadline: 20-22 June 2017
- The initial operational phase of the GSP Soil Data Facility will conform with the schedule outlined in the Pillar 4 Implementation Plan. Currently, the plan covers the period 2017 to 2020.

---

<sup>4</sup> A general GSP data sharing policy is currently being prepared.

Therefore, the appointment of the GSP Soil Data Facility will be till 31/12/2020, with a possibility of extension to be determined by the GSP Plenary Assembly.

Interested partners should send their applications to the [GSP-Secretariat@fao.org](mailto:GSP-Secretariat@fao.org) by 10 May 2017.

## **Annex 1: GSP Soil Data Facility technical tasks according to the Pillar 4 Implementation Plan**

1. Participation in meetings: INSII, P4WG, grid specification meetings;
2. Support to the development of data product specifications by the P4WG;
3. Support to developing the global polygon map;
4. Tier 1 and Tier 2 profile database: design and implementation, technical support, maintenance;
5. Development, installation and maintenance of a soil profile data up- and download tool;
6. Development of a web viewer for v0 and v1 gridded maps as part of the GSP data portal;
7. Harmonization of v0 grids 1 km;
8. Documentation of v0 gridded maps;
9. v1 grid server and network maintenance;
10. Support to the technical SDI of GSP: development of data services (WMS, WFS, WCS), catalogue services, support to metadata development, vocabulary services;
11. Support to the formulation of a capacity development program by P4WG;
12. Development of training materials and conduct of training courses.

In order to allow for orderly planning of SDF activities along the tasks defined in Pillar 4, and depending on the final design of the Global Soil Information System, a workplan will be developed at the beginning of each year.