

Thursday , 15 October 13:30– 15:00

Sheikh Zayed Centre

Sustainable soil management: healthy soils for food security and nutrition

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ORGANIZERS

FAO International Year of Soils Steering Committee

International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)

International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA)

World Farmers' Organization (WFO)

Abstract: Soil is a finite resource, whose degradation is not recoverable within a human lifespan. The most widely recognized function of soil is its support for food production, but despite being the support where life thrives, today 33 percent of soils are moderately to highly degraded, due to erosion, salinization, compaction, acidification and chemical pollution. Sustainable management of the world's soil resources has become necessary for reversing the present soil degradation trend, thus ensuring future food security.

This side event –which will consist of an open discussion among multiple stakeholders- will present evidence and lessons learnt from successful policy measures, as well as civil society and private sector initiatives, related to sustainable soil management that have been beneficial in enhancing food security and nutrition. Representatives from various sectors will share their practical experience as a case for guiding future actions, especially taking the momentum created by the International Year of Soils and linked to an agenda for action such as the Global Soil Partnership.

KEYWORDS: Soil health , Best practices , Soil governance , Food security and nutrition, Sustainable soil management

Languages: EN, FR, SP, RU

Refreshments

Summary: Mr. Moujahed Achouri, FAO; H.E. César Hugo Cocarico Yana, Minister of Rural Development and Land, Bolivia; H.E. Sergey Levin, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Russian Federation; H.E. Javier Rodriguez, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Argentina; Professor Claire Chenu, Special Ambassador for the International Year of Soils; Dr. Sergey Shoba, Director, Eurasian Centre for Food Security; Ms. Naida Quispe, IFOAM; Ms. Charlotte Hebebrand, Director General, IFA; Dr. Kurt Weinberger, President, AIAG; Dr. Robert Delve, IFAD.

The welcoming remarks of the event counted with a high level political representation, with the presence of the Minister of Rural Development and Land of Bolivia and the Deputy Ministers of Agriculture of Argentina and the Russian Federation. This contributed to one of the objectives of the International Year of Soils, which is that the work on awareness raising around soils gets translated into effective policies and actions.

During this section, it was highlighted the importance of innovation and technology in soil management as well as coordination between the public and private sectors in these efforts. There was also emphasis on the need to adopt these technologies side by side with ancient techniques and indigenous traditions to ensure healthy and productive soils, as well as the importance of nurturing the link between people and Mother Earth. In addition, the importance of developing Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Management of Soil Resources (VGSMS) was stressed as a major step towards a more efficient global effort to establish a coherent strategy for soil protection.

The second part of the event consisted on a lively panel discussion chaired by the Special Ambassador for the International Year of Soils, Professor Claire Chenu.

During the open discussion many issues were raised around sustainable soil management, such as the importance of having databases with soil information; the need to create enabling environments, which include programmes, incentives, safety nets and risk mitigation measures, needed to allow households, communities and governments to invest in and protect their soils; the importance of crop insurance for a stable agricultural sector; the importance of agroecology, particularly in the context of climate change; or the need to apply the principles of sustainable fertilizer management when the use of fertilizers is needed.