

June 2020

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Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly



Eighth session

Virtual, 3-5 June 2020

Highlights of the work of GSP Pillars (GSPPA: VIII/2020/8)

Executive Summary

- The five “Pillars of Action” underlie the technical work of the GSP, which is carried out at all the appropriate levels, from the global through the regional down to country level. “Plans of Action” for each Pillar have been agreed by the PA, and are more concretely addressed through so-called implementations plans.
- The implementation of activities under all pillars has proceeded, supervised by dedicated working groups.
- Due the virtual modality used for this Assembly session, the present document only covers in very brief fashion the implementation of the Fertilizer Code, the Protocol for the assessment of the impact of Sustainable Soil Management practices, SoiLEX, GLOSOLAN and work for Pillar 4 and global maps. However, the report of each Pillar will be available as complementary documents.

Suggested action by the GSP Plenary Assembly

The Plenary Assembly may wish to:

- Welcome the efforts made to disseminate the Fertilizer Code.
- Support the widespread implementation of the Fertilizer Code, also inviting countries to apply this code as appropriate at national level.
- Call on resource partners to financially support the implementation of the Fertilizer Code.
- Endorse the Protocol for the assessment of the impact of Sustainable Soil Management practices.
- Acknowledge the extensive work done in developing SoiLEX.
- Invite members to review the legal frameworks available for each country under SoiLEX.
- Urge the GSP National Focal Points to carry out the necessary consultations and ensure the appointment of national soil information institutions to be part of INSII and the GloSIS development.

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- Extend the timeline of the current Pillar 4 Global Implementation Plan and the mandate of the SDF until the 9th PA where a modified plan and strategy should be considered.
- Encourage national soil information institutions to prepare technical cooperation project proposals to mobilise resources to establish viable soil information systems.
- Invite countries to engage fully into the two important exercises of preparation of Global Soil Organic Carbon Sequestration and Global Soil Salinity maps by preparing national maps as per the respective technical specifications and country guidelines.
- Welcome the substantive work performed by GLOSOLAN and its regional networks, and invite members to support all the ongoing activities encouraging more soil laboratories to join the networks.
- Endorse the establishment of the International Network on Fertilizers Quality Assessment.

Pillar highlights

Implementation of the International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers

1. The International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers (“Fertilizer Code”) was endorsed by the 41st session of the FAO Conference.
2. The Secretariat published the Fertilizer Code in six languages and distributed it widely.
3. An implementation plan was developed and is presented in [Annex 1](#) for further consideration.
4. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the planned global dissemination workshop was not held and was replaced by a webinar held in May 2020.
5. The Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN) started to work on fertilizer quality assessment proposed the establishment of the International Board on Fertilizers Quality Assessment (INFA). In this regard, national bodies and institutions officially appointed by their government to work on the topic were identified. It was not possible to organize the launch meeting of INFA to agree on a global work plan. However, GLOSOLAN carried on an online consultation to get information on national procedures for the assessment of fertilizers quality as well as foreseen obstacles to the development of global standards. The consultation also looked at retrieving information on capacity needs and opportunity for international cooperation.
6. A project on nutrition-sensitive soil management is currently being implemented on the ground with trials in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso and Malawi.

Protocol for Sustainable Soil Management

7. The ITPS and the GSP Secretariat had previously identified the need for developing a protocol to assess if a given soil management practice is in line with sustainable soil management, as defined by the ITPS in 2017. A first draft was presented at the 6th session of the PA, where it was recommended to refine the document. A new draft was submitted to 7th session of the Plenary Assembly. The Assembly requested the Secretariat and ITPS

to further improve this protocol by opening a round of consultation in order to refine the proposed indicators.

8. To serve a very inclusive process of consultation, the Protocol was extensively modified to better reflect its objective and to use the most suitable and feasible set of indicators. The ITPS and the Secretariat had many iterations on the text and also invited a group of experts nominated by GSP focal points from different regions to review the draft.
9. This new protocol is available in [Annex 2](#).

Development of SoiLEX database

10. SoiLEX is a living tool that will contribute to raising awareness of the importance of legal frameworks for soil protection and conservation.
11. An extensive analysis of the legislations and policies available in FAOLEX has been conducted by the GSP Secretariat and the more relevant instruments have been selected to populate the SoiLEX database. Other sources of information have also been consulted, such as the European Soil Wiki.
12. A short questionnaire has been prepared and distributed for Member States to corroborate the relevance, updating and connection of the selected legal instruments to the themes proposed for the database.

Status of Pillar 4 and Global maps

13. The 5th INSII Meeting was held on 21 – 23 October 2019 at FAO HQ to discuss the status of the Pillar 4 Global Implementation Plan. The meeting report is available on the [GSP website](#).
14. The IUSS Global Soil Map Working Group jointly with the Pillar 4 Working Group (P4WG) presented their work plan to contribute to the development of fine resolution soil grids of soil properties during the above 5th INSII session.
15. The Pillar 4 Global Implementation Plan and the mandate of the GSP Soil Data Facility (ISRIC) are expiring in 2020. A new implementation plan is being prepared by the Pillar 4 Working Group and will be finalised after the 8th Plenary Assembly taking into consideration the outcomes of the GSP stock-taking exercise. Regarding the role of the SDF, there is a need to review the progress made and its functions in the framework of the new plan.
16. INSII endorsed two key documents for GloSIS development: 1) Conceptual design of the Global Soil Information System infrastructure; 2) Tier 1 and Tier 2 data in the context of the federated Global Soil Information System (GLOSIS).
17. The Global Soil Organic Carbon map (GSOCmap) was updated to version 1.5 and currently includes national submissions from 85 countries covering 73% of the land area. The P4WG decided to put the GSOCmap under the creative commons attribution license – CC BY.
18. The Global Soil Salinity map is under development after the appointment of experts by countries. Technical material was prepared and regional training activities organized (only two in-situ and the rest virtual due to the COVID19 situation):

- Technical manual, technical specifications, country guidelines, and capacity building tools ([4 lecture training materials and 4 software packages](#)).
- Training in:
 - Asia: 18 countries with 70 participants (Online training between 23 March – 7 April 2020).
 - Eurasia: 9 countries with 18 participants (Online training with participants gathered in Izmir, Turkey between 2 – 7 March 2020).
 - NENA: 15 countries with 19 participants (Physical meeting in Tunisia between 28 Nov-3 Dec 2019).
 - Pacific: 17 countries with 97 registered participants (Online training between 4 - 22 May).
 - Africa: 43 countries (Online training between 11 - 22 May).
 - Latin America and the Caribbean: 19 Countries (Online training between 11 - 22 May).
 - Europe and North America: harmonization and contribution are planned for end of May 2020.
- Countries not requiring training are invited to prepare their map according to the technical specifications and submit it accordingly.
- The preparation of the Global Soil Organic Carbon Sequestration map (GSOCseq) is on path. The draft technical specifications are being reviewed by the P4WG, the ITPS and other panels. Once finalized, the training material for implementing regional capacity development activities will be available during the second semester 2020.

Global Soil Laboratory Network

19. In order to meet the request of some countries and laboratories, participants in the 3rd GLOSOLAN meeting approved the proposal to get the network to work also on the harmonization of methods for the assessment of fertilizers' quality. However, it was pointed out that this topic is strongly linked to individual countries' legislations and is usually dealt by specific laboratories. In this regard, it was proposed to establish an International Network on Fertilizers Quality Assessment (INFA) to work under GLOSOLAN. If this proposal is endorsed by the 8th GSP PA, the launch meeting of INFA can be organized in the second half of June 2020.
20. The Regional Soil Laboratory Networks for Africa (AFRILAB), Europe and Eurasia (EUROSOLAN) and the Pacific (ASPAC) were established. The Regional Soil Laboratory Network for NENA (NENALAB) will be launched on the second week of June 2020 through an online meeting.
21. The work plan agreed at the second GLOSOLAN meeting was fully implemented and all documents including Standard Operating Procedures on total, organic and inorganic carbon were published online.
22. The initiative on soil spectroscopy was launched on the Earth Day 2020. The work plan of the initiative was summarized into two concept notes available on the GLOSOLAN webpage. Leading partners on the topic are already working on the implementation of the agreed activities. Priority is given to the establishment of a global soil spectral calibration library and the writing of global protocols and standards on soil spectroscopy.
23. A global proficiency test (PT) was performed in 2019. The one hundred laboratories that participated in it were divided into two groups based on their performance. Laboratories in

need of training will be assisted accordingly. Good performing laboratories will be given the opportunity to compete for equipment. The report of the GLOSOLAN PT 2019 will be published online soon together with a cookbook on how data are statistically analysed and reported by GLOSOLAN.

24. GLOSOLAN published several training material including good practices on equipment purchasing and use. Training videos will be recorded and made available online as soon as the COVID-19 emergency is over.
25. Great efforts were made to prepare the customs control procedures database that will facilitate the execution of external quality control tests (also called proficiency testing) at the regional and global level. Country profiles are currently being validated but the database will be made available online before the end of June 2020. The Regional Soil Laboratory Networks for Africa (AFRILAB), Europe and Eurasia (EUROSOLAN) and the Pacific (ASPAC) were established. The Regional Soil Laboratory Network for NENA (NENALAB) will be launched on the second week of June 2020 through an online meeting.