



Permanent Mission
of Lesotho to the
UN



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



United Nations Convention
to Combat Desertification

World Soil Day celebration 2016

“Soils and pulses, a symbiosis for life and for halting soil degradation”

Hosted by the Permanent Missions of Lesotho, Thailand and Turkey, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Friday, 2 December 2016 (9:30-12:00)

Conference Room 12, UN Headquarters, New York

On 20 December 2013 the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly designated 5 December as World Soil Day (WSD) and 2016 as the International Year of Pulses. Fittingly, World Soil Day 2016 will bring together these two observances under the theme “Soil & Pulses: a symbiosis for life”.

Soils hold around a quarter of the world’s biodiversity and are where 95 percent of our food is born.

Degradation of soils and water scarcity are major threats to food production which will worsen with climate change. According to FAO, approximately 33 percent of the Earth’s soil is degraded, and approximately 40 percent of these degraded lands are in areas with high poverty rates. At the same time, the population is expected to increase from the current 7 billion to approximately 9 billion in 2050, requiring a 70 percent increase in food production by then.

Pulses, a staple food for billions of people worldwide with a significant nutritious value and quick production cycles, contribute to soil health in various ways. They are responsible for the biological fixation of atmospheric nitrogen and for the solubilisation of phosphate ions. Pulses also contribute to increasing soil organic matter, improving soil structure and maintaining soil biodiversity, leading to overall increased soil health.

Healthy soils and pulses can support sustainable development and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by ensuring food security and healthy diets, while combating and adapting to climate change and preserving biodiversity and natural resources. They can also contribute significantly to achieve land degradation neutrality as provided for in SDG Target 15.3.

The New York celebration will take place on Friday, 2 December 2016, in an event co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of Thailand and Lesotho to the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the UN and the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The event will pay special tribute to His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, a soil scientist and advocate for sustainable soil management, on whose birthday World Soil Day is celebrated.

During the event, a new book “Soils & Pulses: symbiosis for life” will be launched. The book presents scientific facts, information and technical recommendations on the symbiosis between soils and pulses to decision makers and practitioners. It ultimately explores the way in which good practices could be implemented in contribution to the effort of ending hunger and malnutrition, adapt to climate change, halt soil degradation and achieve overall sustainable development.

The World Soil Day is a major platform to raise awareness at the international, regional and national levels about the essential role of soils for human life. It is part of the efforts to promote sustainable soil management, which support our path towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.