



TOPIC NOTE

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www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/CoCoFe

Online consultation for developing the Code of Conduct for the Management of Fertilizers

Dear Stakeholders and Members,

We are tasked with a unique opportunity to mould the future of fertilizer use globally and are seeking inputs on the development of a Code of Conduct for the Management of Fertilizers (CoCoFe). The creation of the CoCoFe is being proposed to promote the responsible and judicious use of fertilizers in the interest of the following objectives:

- (i) maintaining or increasing global food production;
- (ii) maximizing the efficient use of plant nutrients to enhance sustainable agriculture;
- (iii) minimizing the environmental impacts from the use of fertilizers including pollution by loss of nutrients via runoff, leaching, greenhouse gas emissions and other mechanisms;
- (iv) minimizing environmental and human health impacts from pollutants such as heavy metals in fertilizers;
- (v) maintaining and increasing food safety.



The aim of the CoCoFe is to assist member countries design policies and regulatory frameworks for the sustainable use of fertilizers. The focus is more on discouraging fertilizer overuse whereas a second document, to be developed later, will address scenarios with low or no fertilizer use under the topic of integrated soil fertility management. The CoCoFe should assist policy makers at the regulatory and extension levels to outline the roles and responsibilities of the multiple stakeholders involved in various aspects of fertilizer management including governments, industry, universities, NGO's, traders, farmers organizations, etc.

Note: The CoCoFe is not designed to provide specific recommendations on field applications of fertilizers, i.e. rates, placement, timing, etc., but rather broader recommendations on what should be considered when designing strategies to manage fertilizers sustainably.

Your input is necessary to allow the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS)¹ to better frame the multifaceted needs of all stakeholders who would use the CoCoFe or be impacted by the use of the CoCoFe

This online consultation, through a series of questions, invites you to address the following:

- Given the global scope of the CoCoFe, do you think the objectives are appropriate? If not, how would you add to them or modify them?
- How should be the CoCoFe be structured to have the maximum positive impact?
- Who would be the best audience for the CoCoFe to meet our objectives and how could we broaden and diversify this audience to increase its influence?
- What should the scope of the CoCoFe be? Which nutrient input sources should be included; only synthetic fertilizers, or also manure, biosolids, compost, etc.? Should other products such as bio-stimulants, nitrification inhibitors, urease inhibitors, etc., be included as well?
- Will the CoCoFe assist in promoting responsible and judicious use of fertilizers? Why or why not? What other suggestions do you have to help the CoCoFe meet our objectives?

Thank you very much for engaging in this critical process. We look forward to receiving your valued inputs to make these guidelines a reality.

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Facilitators

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Background and process

The recently published Status of the World's Soil Resources (SWSR)² report identified ten major threats to our soils that need to be addressed if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, urgent efforts are required to enable and engage with sustainable soil management (SSM) at all levels.

The Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM)³ produced by the Global Soil Partnership (GSP)⁴ is a first step to addressing these threats. Two of these are nutrient imbalances and soil pollution and that involve plant nutrient applications that can be excessive, insufficient, or polluting, none of which are sustainable. Chapter 3.3 - *Foster nutrient balances and cycles* and Chapter 3.5 - *Prevent and minimize soil contamination* of the VGSSM provide initial guidance on promoting sustainable nutrient use in relation to soils, agriculture and the environment, however further support is required to implement these recommendations.

The ITPS was tasked to develop the CoCoFe and this online consultation soliciting input on what should be included in a CoCoFe is one of the early steps in the process. This input will be utilized to develop a zero-order draft that will be reviewed by ITPS, followed by further review

of a first draft by a panel of experts representing all major partners and stakeholders. The process will then continue with the finalization of the CoCoFe and submission to the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly, the Committee on Agriculture (COAG)⁵ and, if endorsed, to the FAO Council⁶.

Achieving SSM will generate large benefits for all, therefore, the availability of comprehensive guidelines on the use and management of fertilizers is of major importance.

References

- 1 ITPS - <http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/intergovernmental-technical-panel-soils/en/>
- 2 SWSR - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5199e.pdf>
- 3 VGSSM - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6874e.pdf>
- 4 GSP - <http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/en/>
- 5 COAG - <http://www.fao.org/coag/en/>
- 6 FAO Council - <http://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/gsbhome/council/en/>