

Towards a Eurasian Soil Partnership for food security and sustainable development

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the Online Consultation “*Towards a Eurasian Soil Partnership for food security and sustainable development*”, which will be held 26th August to 15th September 2013, in both Russian and English. This three-week online consultation is initiated by the **Eurasian Center for Food Security (ECFS)** in collaboration with FAO’s **Global Soil Partnership (GSP)**, FAO’s **Global Forum for Food Security and Nutrition (FSN Forum)** and the **World Bank**.

The ECFS was established by the Government of the Russian Federation at Moscow State University as a follow up to the commitment made by G8 leaders, known as the *L’Aquila Food Security Initiative*, to implement measures to improve world food security.

The Global Soil Partnership, a recent mechanism established by FAO aiming at consolidating joint efforts of partners interested in the preservation, conservation and rehabilitation of soils as a finite natural resource, foundation of ecosystem services and food production. It was a long-awaited step, because for many decades the importance of soils for human well-being was underestimated. The perception that soils are everywhere makes us overlook the fact that it is a non-renewable resource on a human time-scale.

This E-consultation is inviting to contribute to the development of a joint platform of the Eurasian Soil Partnership (EASP) for food security under the framework of the Global Soil Partnership. The GSP is designed to be implemented through regional and/or sub-regional partnerships of regional nature, based on common language, culture, physical location or other considerations. The priorities of each region regarding soil resources depend on its own specific geographical, socioeconomic, and cultural peculiarities that make it unique in the world.

The discussion is meant to engage in a constructive dialogue everyone interested in soil resources and its different uses and applications, and will contribute to: a) the development of a joint platform for the establishment of the regional Eurasian Soil Partnership for food security, b) to the identification of priorities on soil resources for portraying potential actions towards the sustainable management of soils in the Eurasian region that could be implemented by researchers, decision-makers, private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders.

For a brief overview on the current status on the implementation of the GSP and the perspectives for the EASP, we suggest to consult the background paper:

- [Towards a Eurasian Soil Partnership for food security and sustainable development](#)

The discussion should consider the following main issues:

- Healthy soils greatly contribute to the sustainable production of nutritious food.
- Food security in Eurasia region is closely connected to the status of soil health.
- The soil-water-energy nexus should be considered when designing any intervention. Soil should be part of an interdisciplinary setting under the food security and sustainable development agenda.
- A regional trans-boundary mechanism that allows interaction and partnership towards the sustainable management of soils is required.

In order to stimulate and enrich this discussion, we propose the following guiding questions:

- Are land degradation and climate change limiting factors to food security in the Eurasian region, especially in Central Asia? How will these issues be addressed from the soil dimension?
- How *a sub-regional soil partnership* should be structured in order to ensure food security and sustainable development using an example of Central Asia?
- What particular items related to soil management and conservation should be included in the agenda of the Eurasian Soil Partnership?

The outcomes of the consultation will serve as the basis for the discussion at an International Conference to be organized by the ECFS in autumn 2013. The results will also feed into the process for the development of the Plans of Action for the GSP pillars, which is facilitated by the GSP Secretariat, and to the successful creation of the community of practice of the ECFS in the Eurasian region.

We wish to thank you in advance for actively participating in this consultation and believe that your participation and comments will prove to be very valuable and that both you and your organization will benefit from the online-interaction with other experts in the region.

We look forward to an interesting and rich discussion.

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