

ASP-VIII/23/Report



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



Report of the eighth meeting of the Asian Soil Partnership

Online meeting, 2 May 2023

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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 2023

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1. Introduction

The eighth meeting of the Asian Soil Partnership (ASP) took place on the Zoom® platform on 2 May 2023 (see agenda in Annex I). The meeting was attended by 48 out of 87 registered participants. Participants included Global Soil Partnership (GSP) national focal points, GSP partners from the Asian region and representatives from the GSP Secretariat, the FAO regional office for Asia and the Pacific (FAORAP), and the FAO country offices in Asia (see Annex II). The meeting aimed to update participants on ongoing and upcoming regional initiatives, including the work of the Centre of Excellence on Soil Research in Asia (CESRA) and the writing of the Status of the World's Soil Resources (SWSR) report 2025, discuss the establishment of an Asian Soil Health Action Framework, and review the ASP governance.

Gina Nilo, the ASP Chair opened the meeting by recalling the importance of the partnership for exchanging knowledge and for overcoming differences in information, capacity, investment and environmental challenges in the region. The ASP and its members and partners proved to be committed and effective in promoting sustainable soil management and in implementing the many activities proposed by the GSP over the years. However, the work is not over and efforts should now be put on implementing the 2022–2030 GSP Action Framework. Ronald Vargas, the GSP Secretary thanked Nilo for her inspiring words and reminded participants about the upcoming GSP Plenary Assembly in July 2023, the Global Symposium on Soils and Water on 2–5 October 2023 and the theme of the World Soil Day 2023, “Soil and water: a source of life”. He also recalled the role that soils play in addressing water and food security challenges, which are exacerbated by climate change and the current fertilizer crisis, and the importance for countries and regions to share their experience and best practices on how to tackle these issues. He concluded his intervention by presenting the results of a survey launched among the national focal points to assess the role and relevance of the Regional Soil Partnerships (RSPs) in the GSP. The results emphasize that RSPs provide valuable support to the promotion of sustainable soil management and meet stakeholders’ expectations, although the GSP needs to make better use of them. Areas of improvement include the strengthening of regional cooperation, aligning global and regional interests, enhancing planning, funding and programming, supporting bottom-up initiative and discussions, and providing resources for meetings and activities.

2. News and updates on ongoing regional activities

Global Soil Doctors Programme

Manzurul Hoque, national focal point for Bangladesh presented on the impacts of the Global Soil Doctors Programme in the country, informing participants on the actions that have been taken to extend its implementation to the whole country.

Sunsanee Arunyawas from the Land Development Department of Thailand presented the main activities and achievements of the project Scaling out of Soil Doctors in Lanchang-Mekong Countries (LMC) to assist LMC promoting sustainable land and agricultural management practices. Upcoming activities include the organization of international and national meetings, workshops, seminars, events, exhibitions and capacity-building activities. Additionally, publications will be released under the project.

Asian Soil Laboratory Network (SEALNET)

Gina Nilo, SEALNET Chair presented on the proficiency test (PT) exercise that the Philippines are organizing for the Asian region. The PT will be launched in the second half of 2023 and will evaluate the performance of soil laboratories in the analysis of soil pH, organic carbon, total organic carbon, available phosphorus, total nitrogen, exchangeable potassium and particle size analysis. All

laboratories in SEALNET will have the possibility to participate to this exercise, and customs liaison activities will start soon. In conclusion, Nilo proposed to identify champion laboratories in soil analysis to serve as regional training and service provision hubs under the name of CESLab. The proposal was approved and will be moved to GLOSOLAN through SEALNET.

National soil information systems

Markus Anda from the Indonesian Centre for Agricultural Land Resources Standardization (ICALRS) presented on the impact of the GSP's AFACI funded project on the strengthening of the Indonesian Soil Information System. He stressed the attention on the relevance of the system for students, researchers, academicians, different ministries, and for policymakers at local, regency, provincial and national levels. In practical terms, the system is a source of soil information in relation to soil productivity and ecosystem functions, helping to assess the land suitability for strategic national commodities. Soil property maps also give a guide for determining targeted areas for the allocation of fertilizer subsidy, conservation and rehabilitation. Soil maps are a basis for policymakers to prepare spatial planning for various usages at regency, province and national levels.

Publications of regional interest

Caon informed participants that the Soil Atlas of Asia will be officially launched at the eleventh GSP Plenary Assembly in July 2023. The organization of regional and national launch events is also encouraged and a workshop on how launch events can be implemented will likely be organized in June and July 2023. Participants were also encouraged to contribute to the writing of the Status of the World's Soil Resources report 2025 (see Section 5) and to the review of the Guidelines for Integrated Land Use Planning – an update (ILUP).

3. Asian Soil Health Action Framework

Participants agreed on the proposal to prepare a Regional Soil Health Action Framework to guide countries on the development of their national soil health action frameworks and the inclusion of soil health into national policies. An outline of the regional action framework was presented and shared with participants by email for their review. It consists of four components: 1. Soil assessment, monitoring and mapping; 2. Policy; 3. Investment; and 4. Field activities, with an extra addition of communication. Soil health is thus connected to One Health and to transboundary environmental issues like air and water quality. The framework does not aim to duplicate efforts but to improve the connection between ongoing projects, initiatives and programmes on the soil topic, looking at a broad range of stakeholders. While raising awareness, building partnership and increasing the impact of actions on the ground, the framework will also allow countries to compare and learn from each other in a harmonized way. Indeed, the development of national action frameworks under a common regional framework will ensure the comparability of data, information and performance indicators. This will facilitate regional reporting activities on soil health and its impact or contribution on One Health.

National action frameworks will aim to establish and strengthen national soil strategies, and improve the exchange of information and the synergy of actions of stakeholders ranging from farmers to researchers, the private sector and policymakers. Following the institutionalization of the national action frameworks and their inclusion in national legislations, governments are expected to create an enabling environment (technical and investment conditions) for the implementation of sustainable soil management, the monitoring of activities on soil, and the reporting on the status and trends on soil health.

Follow-up activities are to:

- identify countries in which to pilot the development and implementation of the national soil health action frameworks;
- improve the draft regional soil health action framework based on the work done in pilot countries;
- present the national soil health action framework to respective government in pilot countries for their endorsement and inclusion in or the development of National Soil Strategies;
- include the implementation of regional and national soil health action frameworks in projects for upscaling (this will go in parallel to the efforts to advocate for the allocation of budget to the implementation of the National Soil Strategy by the government); and
- provide technical support on the implementation of the action frameworks to countries in need and monitoring of their implementation strategy.

4. Report of the Centre of Excellence on Soil Research in Asia (CESRA)

Satira Udomsri, Director of the Department of Soil Information and Training at CESRA, informed participants that a workshop: *CESRA's national research network establishment* and the first CESRA's forum took place in 2022. Additionally, an e-training course: *The development of diagnostic skills of soil limitations for sustainable agriculture* was published on the CESRA's [website](#). In 2023, the second CESRA's forum and CESRA's capacity building workshops will be organized, a regional database on best practices on sustainable soil management will be released, and additional training material and research projects will be developed.

In order to increase the regional outreach and impact of CESRA, the Terms of Reference of the centre were reviewed during the meeting (see Annex III). Follow up actions include:

- the organization of the first CESRA's steering committee meeting in May 2023;
- the launch of a call of experts and establishment of the CESRA's technical committee;
- the distribution of the template for the reporting of countries' best practices on soil for the CESRA's online database on the topic;
- the identification of speakers and organization of webinars to add to the CESRA's e-learning platform; and
- the implementation of the second CESRA's forum.

5. Status of the World's Soil Resources (SWSR) report 2025

Jeyanny Vijayanathan, Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soil, Malaysia updated participants on the writing of the Status of the World's Soil Resources report 2025. In order to contribute to it, interested experts were kindly invited to submit their curriculum vitae (CV) following a prescribed template. The editorial board will review all candidates' profiles and assign writing tasks to those that meet the selection criteria. Participants were also invited to complete an Excel sheet to rank soil threats in their country, specifying the surface area affected by each threat. National information will be used for ranking soil threats in the region. The deadline for the submission of the CVs and the soil threats' ranking Excel sheets was extended to 7 May 2023.

6. ASP governance

Participants agreed to the following proposals:

- to have one Chair, one Vice-Chair and one ASP governance group;

- to have the ASP Chair to join the ASP governance at the end of their mandate;
- to have the Vice-Chair become the ASP Chair; and
- to create a working group under each Area of Action in the GSP Action Framework 2022–2030 (discussions on this proposal will continue offline as the impact of working groups on the five Pillars of Action of the GSP did not leave a mark on the partnership: therefore the establishment of working groups under the Areas of Action need to be properly evaluated).

The draft TORs for the positions are in Annex IV. The TORs will be reviewed and endorsed by email. National focal points were also asked to make a decision on keeping or dropping the position of ASP Secretariat because of the small role that this is currently playing in the partnership. A call for experts to engage in the different roles and online elections will follow.

7. ASP work plan 2023–2024

Through its eight plenary meeting, the ASP committed to implement the following activities in 2023–2024:

- support the implementation of the SEALNET proficiency test 2023;
- advertise CESRA and motivate national research centres to join the centre and contribute to the implementation of activities in the CESRA’s work plan;
- move the proposal to GLOSOLAN and SEALNET to identify excellence in soil laboratories under the name of CESLab;
- provide information on national developed “tools” for inclusion in the regional toolkit on SSM and SLM (they will also contribute to the organization and implementation of webinars on the topic);
- organize national launch events on the Soil Atlas of Asia;
- contribute to the SWSR report 2025;
- contribute to the writing of the Guidelines for Integrated Land Use Planning – an update (ILUP);
- provide national inventories consistent to the GSP Action Framework 2022–2030 (ASP Secretariat or ASP governance group to prepare a template);
- finalize the regional Soil Health Action Framework; and
- draft and develop national soil health action frameworks, and for pilot countries:
 - organize national multi-stakeholders meetings; and
 - test the framework before submission to the attention of their government for institutionalization.

8. Conclusions and way forward

The ninth ASP meeting will take place around May 2024. The meeting will be either in person or virtual depending on the availability of financial resources and the presence of a hosting country.

Annex I. Agenda



Food and Agriculture
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Eight Asian Soil Partnership meeting

2 May 2023

From 10.00 to 13.00 GMT+7

Virtual meeting

Agenda

- 10:00–10:10 Opening remarks, endorsement of the agenda and group picture
Gina Nilo, ASP Chair, Philippines
Ronald Vargas, GSP Secretary
- 10:10–10:20 Regional Soil Partnerships' survey results
Ronald Vargas, GSP Secretary
- 10:20–11:00 News and updates on ongoing regional activities:
- The implementation of Soil Doctors programme in Bangladesh by Manzurul Hoque, Bangladesh.
 - Lancang Mekong Soil Doctors Programme by Sunsanee Arunyawas, Thailand.
 - The Asian Soil Laboratory Network (SEALNET) by Gina Nilo, SEALNET Chair, the Philippines.
 - Establishment of the National Soil Information Systems in Indonesia by Markus Anda, Indonesia.
 - Updates on publications of regional interest by Lucrezia Caon, FAORAP.
- Moderator: Ms. Lucrezia Caon, FAO*
- 11:00–11:15 Regional priorities and needs
Lucrezia Caon, FAORAP and Gina Nilo, ASP Chair

- 11:15–11:30 Report of the Centre of Excellence for Soil Research in Asia (CESRA)
Satira Udomsri, Thailand
- 11:30–12:15 Status of the world's soil resources report 2025: updates and way forward
Jeyanny Vijayanathan, Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soil, Malaysia
- 12:15–12:30 ASP work plan 2023-2024
Moderator: Lucrezia Caon, FAO
- 12:30–13.00 ASP governance
Moderator: Lucrezia Caon, FAO
- 13.00 Closure of the meeting

Annex II. List of participants

1. F.M. Manzurul Hoque, Bangladesh
2. Ajay Kumar Mishra, India
3. Amardeep Gautam, India
4. Anand Arya, India
5. Ankitkumar Chauhan, India
6. Anna Tsuchiya, Japan
7. Asghar Khan, Pakistan
8. Bazarradnaa Enkhtuya, Mongolia
9. Bella Anis, Malaysia
10. Bhanudas Pendkar, India
11. Bilguudei Bayarsaihan, Mongolia
12. Birkha Bahadur Tamang, Bhutan
13. Biswajit Bera, India
14. Brajendra Parmar, India
15. Bunjirtluk Jintaridth, Thailand
16. Chiranjeev Kumawat, India
17. Dhaval Pandya, India
18. Dharmesh Verma, India
19. Florfina Sanchez, Philippines
20. Gina Nilo, Philippines
21. Golda Edwin, India
22. Harisadhan Malakar, India
23. Herlen Ganhuyag, China
24. Hideo Kubotera, Japan
25. Icalrs Ina, India
26. Jegan Sekar, India
27. Jintu Dutta, India
28. John Adrian Pascua, Philippines
29. Joydeep Phukan, Thailand
30. Juthamard Kaiphoem, Thailand
31. Kien Nguyen Van, Viet Nam
32. Kreeyaporn Devehastin, Thailand
33. Madeeha Khan, Pakistan
34. Mallika Srisutham, Thailand
35. Markus Anda, Indonesia
36. Mahbub Alam, China
37. Melissa Ong, Malaysia
38. Mirza Hasanuzzaman, Bangladesh
39. Moumita Sen Sarma, India
40. Muhammad Ariful Haque, Bangladesh
41. Munkhbat Batjargal, Mongolia
42. Muthu Nandhivarman, India
43. Namita Singh, India
44. Napaporn Phankamolsil, Thailand
45. Napaporn Soil Ku Kps, Thailand
46. Narayan Solanke, India
47. Neha Kaushik, India
48. Nguyen Trinh Le, Viet Nam
49. Nivong Sipaseuth, Lao People's Democratic Republic
50. Nusrat Yaqoob, Pakistan
51. Parimal Parashar, India
52. Partha Pratim Chakravorty, India
53. Pimporn Pornprommin, Thailand
54. Pirach Pongwichian, Thailand
55. Pitayakon Limtong, Thailand
56. Pradeep Mohapatra, India
57. Praveena Sridhar, India
58. Preeti Singh, India
59. Raghavendra Shastry, India
60. Rapolu Mahender Kumar, India
61. Rengalakshmi Raj, India
62. Rupa Dasgupta, India
63. Saengrawee Khanpijit, Thailand
64. Saranya Norkaew, Thailand
65. Sarkal Jyakhwa, Nepal
66. Sasirin Srisomkiew, Thailand
67. Satira Udomsri, Thailand
68. Saysongkham Sayavong, Lao People's Democratic Republic
69. Sayyad Nadaf, India
70. Selvamukilan Bose, India
71. Shabir Bangroo, India
72. Shafiq Ur Rehman Memon, Pakistan
73. Shoab Sultan, Pakistan
74. Sumitra Watana, Thailand
75. Sunsanee Arunyawat, Thailand
76. Suphakarn Luanmanee, Thailand
77. Surendran U, India
78. Suresh Kumar Chaudhari, India
79. Syed Ali Abbas, Pakistan
80. Totsanat Rattanakaew, Thailand
81. Uday Sharma, India
82. Vang Seng, Cambodia
83. Xaysatith Souliyavongsa, Lao People's Democratic Republic
84. Zahir Ahmad, Pakistan

From FAO

Fozia Memon, FAO Pakistan
Lucrezia Caon, FAORAP
Ronald Vargas, GSP

From the ITPS

Harsha Kadupitiya, Sri Lanka
Jeyanny Vijayanathan, Malaysia
Nopmanee Suvannang, Thailand

Singvilay Olayvanh, FAO Lao People's
Democratic Republic
Win Thein, FAO Myanmar

Ranjan Bhattacharyya, India

Annex III. Revised terms of reference of CESRA

CESRA's steering committee

The CESRA's steering committee is the highest governance body of the centre. It is chaired by the ASP Chair and composed of the director of CESRA, the directors of the Department of Soil Information and Training (DSIT) and the Department of Soil Research and Development (DSRD), the GSP Secretariat, the ASP Vice-Chair, the ASP Secretariat and the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAORAP). Additionally, the steering committee is composed of a representative of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils from the Asian region, and by two representatives of each subregion identified in the Status of the World's Soil Resources report 2025 (Southeast Asia, East Asia and South Asia).

National focal points to the GSP in Asia are welcome to join the CESRA's steering committee meetings. They are kept informed on CESRA's activities by the ASP Chair, the ASP Vice-Chair, the GSP Secretariat and FAORAP.

The steering committee is tasked to:

- review and agree on the annual work plan of CESRA as well as its financials;
- identify annual priority activities building on the inputs received from national soil institutions, the GSP Secretariat, FAORAP and the DSIT and DSRD departments;
- maintain relationships with international agencies and United Nations (UN) organizations as well as with donors and external parties to CESRA;
- advise the Director of CESRA and the Directors of DSIT and DSRD departments any time it is needed;
- select the members of the CESRA's technical committee; and
- perform any other function as and when considered necessary to achieve the objectives of CESRA.

The mandate of the members of the steering committee follows that of their official role in the ASP, except for the GSP Secretariat and FAORAP.

Following the decision made by ASP member countries at the fourth ASP meeting in May 2018, the steering committee will meet at least once per year as part of the ASP's annual meeting. If required, unscheduled meetings can take place by web-conference or, when possible, in person at CESRA's headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand.

The steering committee makes its decision following the majority rule and with the support and advice of external advisors, including international organizations as needed.

CESRA's director

In order to facilitate the communication and interactions with the hosting country of the centre, the director's position of CESRA is held by the Land Development Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Thailand.

The director is tasked to:

- supervise the overall activities of CESRA and as such initiate, advise, coordinate, facilitate, implement, monitor and evaluate CESRA's programmes, projects and activities;
- inform and coordinate activities with soil institutions, institutes, departments, universities, agencies, etc. member to CESRA;
- mobilize financial resources and keep the relations with CESRA's financial support partners and the Thai government;
- advise and guide the work of the steering committee;
- officially represent CESRA at meetings and public events; and
- inform interested third parties on CESRA and CESRA's activities.

The director counts on the support and advice of the directors of the DSIT and DSRD departments, and on that of the CESRA's steering committee.

Director of department

The directors of the DSIT and the DSRD departments are responsible for ensuring the implementation of activities in their department, coordinate interdepartmental actions and assist CESRA's director in mobilizing financial resources.

The heads report to CESRA's director and, if required, to the steering committee.

CESRA's technical committee

CESRA's technical committee is composed of a maximum of nine top experts on soil in the region, and are tasked to:

- review CESRA's proposals and concept notes;
- review technical documents, reports and training material prior to their publication on the CESRA's website to ensure their technical quality;
- technically support the implementation of projects as needed, noting that travel to experimental fields and study areas within and outside Thailand might be required;
- assess the scientific relevance of countries' best practices on soil before their inclusion in the Asian's best practices on soil database; and
- advise and support CESRA on any technical matter as needed.

The members of the technical committee are selected by the CESRA's steering committee through a competitive process every three years. In case a member resigns, or is not able to continue performing in the position, the CESRA's steering committee will work on its replacement.

The CESRA's secretariat supports the CESRA's steering committee in establishing the CESRA's technical committee by organizing the call for experts, prescreening the CV of the candidates and by informing candidates on the outcomes of their application.

The work of the members of the CESRA's technical committee is volunteer. However, they can receive some ad-hoc financial support from CESRA if financial resources are available and in case they engage in activities requiring travelling to experimental fields and study areas.

CESRA's Secretariat

The CESRA's Secretariat is hosted at the Department of Administration and Collaboration (DAC). It is tasked to:

- coordinate the delivery of official communications to CESRA's members, including the preparation and dissemination of the CESRA's newsletter;
- manage the registration of new CESRA's members;
- keep the CESRA's website updated;
- administratively and logistically organize CESRA's meetings and events, including those of the steering committee;
- administratively support the work of DSRD, DSIT, the steering committee and the technical committee; and
- provide administrative support as needed.

Annex IV. Terms of reference of the Asian Soil Partnership

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Positions of Chair, Vice-Chair, secretariat, governance group and working groups for the GSP's six Areas of Action

CHAIR

The Chair of the Asian Soil Partnership (ASP) is chosen among the national focal points to the GSP to perform the following tasks:

- facilitate the functioning of the ASP;
- maintain the communication with the members of the ASP, the chairs of the other Regional Soil Partnerships and the GSP Secretariat;
- encourage the implementation of the Asian Action Framework on Soil Health;
- participate in the GSP Plenary Assembly and present the ASP report;
- represent the ASP in official meetings, conferences and other national, regional and global events as requested by the GSP Secretariat or as invited by other bodies; and
- support the organization and chair the ASP meetings and workshops.

The mandate for this position is three years. Upon completion of the mandate and in case they are not re-elected or do not run for a second mandate, the Chair will join the ASP governance group.

VICE-CHAIR

The Vice-Chair of the Asian Soil Partnership is chosen among the national focal points to the GSP to perform the following tasks:

- assist the Chair in complying with their functions and duties as needed; and
- take the role of Chair in case of unavailability of the elected Chair by a forced cause.

The mandate for this position is three years. Upon completion of the mandate and in case the ASP Chair is not re-elected or does not run for a second mandate, the Vice-Chair will take the ASP Chair position.

SECRETARIAT

Note: the Secretariat of the ASP should be a governmental entity or institution – either national or international – with the task of providing a modicum of secretariat support services to the Regional Soil Partnership. Partners participating in the ASP may agree on an eventual rotation formula for such functions, with well-defined timeframes. The chosen partner would need to designate an official who could devote sufficient time to deal with ASP matters in coordination with the GSP Secretariat.

If ASP members are not able to host the ASP Secretariat for any reason, the GSP Secretariat or the ASP coordinator at the GSP will act as ASP Secretariat.

The Secretariat of the Asian Soil Partnership has the following tasks:

- facilitate the organization of the ASP meetings and workshops;
- maintain the communication with partners and the GSP Secretariat;
- broaden the participation of potential GSP Partners in the RSP;
- monitor the outcomes and effectiveness of the activities in the implementation plans;
- prepare progress reports to the general organs of the GSP;
- prepare financial reports and annual work plans; and
- engage with the ITPS on knowledge management, as appropriate.

ASP GOVERNANCE GROUP

The ASP governance group is composed of the ASP Chair, the ASP Vice-Chair, the ASP Secretariat, the GSP Secretariat, the FAO Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAORAP), the Chair of the Centre of Excellence for Soil Research in Asia (CESRA) and the Chair of each working group on the GSP Action Areas. Additionally, the former ASP Chair is a member of the ASP governance group for a period of two to three years, depending on the mandate of the ASP Chair and Vice-Chair.

Participation to the ASP governance group meetings can be extended to the Asian members of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils and to others as needed.

The ASP governance group meets every four months and as necessary to discuss:

- the development and implementation of the Asian Action Framework on Soil Health;
- the development and implementation of National Action Frameworks on Soil Health as requested by countries;
- the implementation of GSP specific activities;
- the coordination of efforts between the ASP and other regional bodies like CESRA;
- the participation and contribution of the partnership to regional and global events; and
- the preparation and finalization of regional reports.

WORKING GROUPS ON THE GSP's ACTION AREAS

Note: Working groups refer to the GSP's six Action Areas:

1. Manage soils sustainably and restore soils for the provision of ecosystem services.
2. Strengthen soil governance.
3. Promote knowledge and literacy on soils.
4. Promote awareness raising and advocacy on soil health.
5. Assess, map and monitor soil health in a harmonized way.
6. Foster technical cooperation (including gender and youth).

All countries are encouraged to establish national working groups to:

- discuss and agree on the implementation of activities in the GSP Action Framework 2022–2030;
- prioritize activities to implement according to the national financial and human resources available, and national technical capacities; and
- exchange information and discuss collaboration opportunities on independent activities falling under the same Action Area.

Regional meetings with the representatives of the national working groups can be organized on request and based on the need to facilitate the exchange of information on the implementation of specific activities under the same Action Area. Additionally, the regional meetings can serve to discuss the launch of regional activities, initiatives, methodologies and campaigns, including the development of regional policy frameworks.