



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations



## ***Afrisoils: Boosting soil productivity for a food and nutrition secure Africa***

**GSP Plenary Assembly Side Event**

**Wednesday 13 June**

**13:00 – 14:30**

**Sheikh Zayed Centre, FAO Headquarters, Rome**

### **Background**

Africa is continuously called upon to increase its agricultural production and do so sustainably without increasing the area of land under cultivation. Agriculture is the backbone of the African economy accounting for approximately 20% of the region's Gross Domestic Product, more than 60% of its labour force and 20% of its total exports. In addition, it is the main source of income for the region's rural population. Several regional programs and declarations have been developed in recognition of the key role of agriculture in ending hunger and malnutrition, and eradicating poverty on this continent, including the:

- 2006 Abuja Declaration on Fertilizer for the African Green Revolution to increase fertilizer use from 8.0 kg/ha at the time to 50 kg/ha by 2015.
- Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), which calls for an average annual agricultural growth rate of 6%.
- 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, which reaffirmed that agriculture should remain high on the development agenda of the continent.

However, despite progress made on policy and investment to improve African agriculture, Africa as a whole remains largely food insecure. To achieve the agricultural growth and hunger and poverty eradication targets set under the Abuja Declaration, CAADP framework and Malabo Declaration, it is necessary to significantly improve the productivity of Africa's soils, which are currently severely degraded.

Globally the call for sustainable agricultural growth is increasingly linked to soil and its sustainable management. The need to promote sustainable soil management has been identified as a pre-requisite for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with four of the SDG goals containing targets related to soils. During the 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) the Koronivia joint work on agriculture was launched, suggesting work to improve soil carbon, soil health and soil fertility under grassland and cropland, as well as integrated systems. Healthy soil is the foundation of the food system by supporting healthy crops that in turn nourish people. Soil organic matter is one of two natural sources of plant nutrients (the other being minerals). In addition to providing nutrients and habitat to organisms living in soil, organic matter also binds soil particles into aggregates and improve the water holding capacity of soils. As such, soil organic matter plays an additional role in increasing the resilience of soil to extreme climatic events. On top of that, due to its high organic carbon content, soil organic matter forms an important part of the carbon cycle. As such, managing and improving soil organic matter is one of the key strategies to achieve the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil

Management (VGSSM), endorsed by FAO in 2016, provide a set of principles and guidelines for the implementation of sustainable soil management and its implementation is considered of key importance to support sustainable food production in Africa.

Ultimately, sustainable food production systems need healthy soils to produce not only sufficient amounts of food, but also ensuring that the quality of food produced is adequate to address shortfalls and challenges associated with nutrition. Soils play a critical role as they provide nutrients to plants, which in turn provide the necessary macro and micronutrients when consumed. Recognizing the critical importance of soil as the main resource base for many people in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially the rural population, the African Soil Partnership (AfSP) developed a Regional Implementation Plan in 2016 to provide a road map to achieve sustainable soil management over the longer term in the region. Since the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) is a voluntary initiative, it calls for the strong support of national governments, as well as national and regional entities involved in natural resource management to contribute to achieving the common goal of improved and sustainable soil management.

In order to support the implementation of sustainable soil management (SSM) in Africa, a dedicated soil programme will be established and launched under the GSP for Africa called *Afrisoils: Boosting soil productivity for a food and nutrition secure Africa*.

### **Objective of the side event**

This side event aims to present the AfriSoils program and obtain feedback from different stakeholders on how it could be implemented.

### **Agenda**

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| 13:00 - 13:10 | Opening remarks by: Mr. Rene Castro, Assistant Director-General Coordinator Natural Resources, FAO and H.E. Ambassador Florêncio Mariano da Conceição e Almeida, Permanent Representative of Angola to FAO  |
| 13:10 - 13:25 | The state of soils in Africa and priorities for sustainable soil management, Mr Victor Chude, Chair African Soil Partnership  |
| 13:25 - 13:40 | Overview of the AfriSoils program, Ms. Liesl Wiese, GSP Secretariat   |
| 13:40 - 14:20 | Panel Discussion: perspectives to be considered in the Afrisoils program to ensure success<br>H.E. Joséphine Ouedraogo, Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to FAO<br>H.E. Godfrey C. Magwenzi, Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to FAO<br>Ms. Josiane Masson, European Commission<br>Ms. Grace Kamala, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda |
| 14:20 - 14:30 | Closure and the way forward   |
| Moderator:    | Mr Eduardo Mansur, Director Land and Water Division, FAO  |
- Light lunch will be served at 12:30.