

WHAT IS WORLD SOIL DAY

December 5 is World Soil Day (WSD), the United Nations day that celebrates healthy soils for healthy life. Celebrated by an ever-growing community, WSD has gained impressive momentum in recent years. For the 2021 campaign, more than 800 WSD celebrations were held and billions of people were reached through both print and social media.

The objectives of WSD are to:

- Inform, educate, and engage both followers and the general public on the importance of soils;
- Raise awareness on how we all rely on healthy soils;
- Show how sustainable soil management practices are crucial for the health of ecosystems and human well-being; and,
- Call on governments, the private sector, and the public to safeguard soils.

Since 2015, World Soil Day acts as a global celebration consisting of activities such as photography exhibitions, film festivals, lectures, panel discussions, food bazaars, tree planting, fashion shows, concerts, sports competitions, quizzes, drawing contests, seminars, workshops, speeches, public awareness campaigns, poetry recitals and more. Yet, WSD is not just a day but an ongoing strategy which constitute a yearly call to act, trigger international attention and build new working relationships with strategic partners and donors.

THE THEME OVER THE YEARS

WSD has adopted a different theme each year to highlight areas needed for action – threats to soil resources - and provide a common focus to the communication campaign. Themes have ranged from ‘Healthy soils for a healthy life’ (2015), ‘Soil and pulses, symbiosis for life’ (2016), ‘Caring for the soils starts from the ground’ (2017), ‘Be the solution to soil pollution’ (2018), ‘Stop soil erosion, Save our future’ (2019), ‘Keep soil alive, Protect soil biodiversity’ (2020), ‘Halt salt-affected soils, Boost soil productivity’ (2021) and ‘Soils, Where food begins’ (2022).

THE ROLE OF FAO AND THE GLOBAL SOIL PARTNERSHIP

FAO’s Global Soil Partnership has contributed to the adoption of two awareness-raising platforms at the UN level: an International Year of Soils and the turn of the IUSS-World Soil Day into a UN observed day. Recognizing that soils constitute the foundation for agricultural development, essential ecosystem services and food security and nutrition, the 68th UN General Assembly after nearly 3 years of intensive consultations, declared 2015 the International Year of Soils and designated the 5th of December as World Soil Day. World Soil Day, celebrated annually on December 5, coincides with the birthday of the late King Bhumibol, in recognition of his tremendous efforts and vital contribution to food security, sustainable development and soil advocacy.

WSD 2022 | KEY MESSAGES

- 18 naturally occurring chemical elements are essential to plants. Soils supply 15.
- About 33% of global soils are degraded.
- Soil nutrient imbalance is one of the leading causes for degradation.
- By 2050, agricultural production must increase by 60% globally to meet food demand alone.
- Sustainable soil management could produce up to 58% more food.

- Up to half of our household waste could be composted to nurture our soil.
- Despite all our technological advancements humanity still relies on a few centimeters of soil to survive.
- Farmers produce almost 95% of our food in our soils.
- Like us, soils need a balanced and varied supply of nutrients in appropriate amounts to be healthy.
- When soils are degraded and nutrients are not replenished after a harvest... they lose their capacity to nurture life
- Over the last 70 years, the level of vitamins and nutrients in food has drastically decreased. OR Since 1950, the level of nutrients in food has drastically decreased.
- It is estimated that 2 billion people worldwide suffer from lack of micronutrients, known as hidden hunger because it is difficult to detect.
- The loss of soil fertility leads to low crop yield and crop failure, which can lead to hunger, malnutrition and poverty.
- When nutrients are in excess, they leak into the environment... polluting water and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.
- Polluted soils put our food chain and the health of the planet at risk.
- What can we do?
 - Adopt long-term sustainable soil management practices... to enable farmers to restore soil health
 - The use of pulses, crop diversification and rotation should be promoted.
 - When we support farmers in bringing back life to soil we are ensuring the future of our food and the planet.

Healthy soils for healthy planet, food and people