



Food and Agriculture
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CONCEPT NOTE OF THE 1ST MEETING OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORK ON SALT-AFFECTED SOILS (INSAS)

April 14-15, 2021

from 13:30 to 15:30 (CEST)

Online meeting – Zoom platform





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Why a network?

Soil salinization and sodification are major threats to global food security and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as identified in the Status of the World Soil Resources report (FAO and ITPS, 2015).

In the last decade, there have been several global fora on salt-affected soils: SPUSH meeting, Global Forum on Salinization and Climate Change, Valencia, Spain 2010; International Conference on Soil Classification and Reclamation of Degraded Lands in Arid Environments, Abu Dhabi, UAE 2010; the Third International Salinity Forum, Riverside, USA 2014; Saline Futures, Leeuwarden, the Netherlands 2019. They highlighted the importance of working towards an integrated approach to the management of salt-affected soils that converges soil, water and plant knowledge with practical solutions through joint actions of scientists, international organizations, research institutions, farmer associations, policy makers, and governments.

To address this need, members of the Global Soil Partnership as per recommendation of its Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) have endorsed the establishment of the International Network of Salt-Affected Soils (INSAS) during its Plenary Assembly on 5-7 June 2019, in Rome. The launch of INSAS took place during the Global Forum on Innovations for Marginal Environments on 20-21 November 2019, in Dubai.

The main goal of INSAS is to facilitate the sustainable and productive management of salt-affected soils for current and future generations.

The establishment of this network has the following objectives:

1. Promote the sustainable management of salt-affected soils;
2. Develop a harmonized approach and indicators for the assessment, mapping and monitoring of salt-affected soils;
3. Develop guidelines and manuals on good practices for the sustainable management of salt-affected soils;
4. Provide a platform for countries with salt-affected soils to discuss common issues related to the most suitable methods for protection from deterioration and the sustainable management and reclamation of salt-affected soils, as well as establish a network of experts on salt-affected soils to share and develop further knowledge on the issue;
5. Foster collaboration among INSAS member countries towards promoting the sustainable use and management of salt-affected soils, identify relevant knowledge and research gaps and promote regional and global joint research and development programs;
6. Enhance the collaboration between scientists, practitioners and policy-makers aimed at the sustainable management of salt-affected soils;



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7. Serve as a platform for capacity development, knowledge sharing and technical cooperation on salt-affected soils monitoring and management;
8. Advocate towards the halt and reversal of the negative trends in expansion of salt-affected soils through different instruments.

Raising awareness on salt-affected soils

The Global Soil Partnership was established in December 2012 as a mechanism to promote sustainable soil management. In 2013, the 5th December was declared by the United Nations General Assembly as World Soil Day (WSD). WSD is held annually as a platform to raise awareness on the importance of healthy soils and to advocate for their sustainable management.

World Soil Day 2021 will be devoted to salt-affected soils with the motto “*Halt soil salinization, boost soil productivity.*” In preparation to WSD21, various activities are planned by the Global Soil Partnership. Among them are the finalization and the launch of the Global map of salt-affected soils, the preparation of the Global assessment of the status of salt-affected soils and the Global symposium on salt-affected soils. The implementation of these ambitious plans will mostly rely on the active participation and guidance of the INSAS members.

How to join the network?

Any organization can become a member of INSAS. National institutions, academia, NGOs, civil society, farmer associations, and other stakeholders interested to participate in the joint action to achieve the sustainable and productive management of salt-affected soils are welcome to join this network.

To join the network, the registration form available on the website of INSAS must be filled in (<http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/insas>).

About the first INSAS meeting

The first meeting of INSAS will take place in Zoom, on April 14-15, 2021, and will consist of 3 main parts:

- (i) overview of the FAO Global Soil Partnership tools and activities related to salt-affected soils;
- (ii) technical speeches covering the main areas of work related to salt-affected soils; and
- (iii) interactive session to agree on the INSAS work plan and governance.

The detailed work plan will be modified according to proposals of INSAS members both during and after the meeting.

The meeting will be recorded and the meeting report will be posted online after the meeting, including the main points discussed and the conclusions.

Tentatively, INSAS will work on four main thematic areas, for which working groups formed by relevant INSAS members will be established:



- **SAS&Assessment:** Mapping, assessing and monitoring of salt-affected soils
- **SAS&SSM:** Sustainable management of salt-affected soils (practices, policy)
- **SAS&Crops:** Halophyte agriculture and salt-tolerant crops
- **SAS&Water:** Integrated soil and water management under saline/sodic conditions

The preliminary activity for each working group is given in [Annex 1](#).

To ensure that the first INSAS meeting is productive, **the expected actions of INSAS members are to:**

- 1) Send your **comments and proposals on thematic areas and activities** to the coordinator of INSAS maria.konyushkova@fao.org. It can be done both before, during and after the 1st meeting of INSAS (**by April 18, 2021**). The INSAS members shall agree on the thematic areas of work by the end of this meeting. The final concrete activity within thematic areas will be agreed by the INSAS governing body based on comments and proposals of INSAS members.
- 2) During the interactive session (April 15, 14:30 – 15:15), **you are invited to intervene with your proposals** (each speaker 2-3 min max) on the “first come first serve” basis. Please introduce yourself in the beginning. Please note that INSAS activity will be focused on the development of tools, guidelines, and manuals for facilitating and promoting the sustainable management of salt-affected soils among farmers, NGOs, ministries and other practice-oriented organization, hence the proposals focused on this are encouraged.
- 3) **Chair and vice-chair.** Those members, who are willing to take a lead over the INSAS (Chair and Vice-Chair), please send your CV and a cover letter to maria.konyushkova@fao.org for further distribution through the member list of INSAS. The Terms of Reference describing the functions of the chair and vice-chair are given in [Annex 2](#). The chair and vice-chair will be elected by the INSAS members by anonymous voting at the end of the meeting.
- 4) All members are invited to **join the working groups** which covers the area of his/her interests. A questionnaire will be sent after the meeting upon the approval of thematic areas. The interactive meetings of the working groups are planned to be held on a continuous basis.



Annex 1

THE TENTATIVE WORK PLAN OF INSAS*

#	Activity	Working group
1	Standard Operating Procedures for salinity / sodicity / alkalinity measurements	SAS&Assessment (jointly with GLOSOLAN)
2	Harmonization of the criteria on the assessment of salt-affected soils	SAS&Assessment (jointly with GLOSOLAN)
3	Review and refinement of methodology for mapping salt-affected soils	SAS&Assessment (jointly with INSII)
4	Development of indicators and methodology for monitoring salt-affected soils	SAS&Assessment, SAS&Water (jointly with INSII)
5	Development of indicators of soil salinity for soil health, food security and desertification/aridization	SAS&Assessment
6	Inventory on sustainable management practices for saline and sodic soils	SAS&SSM
7	Development of the manual on sustainable management of salt-affected soils*	SAS&SSM
8	Support the Global Soil Doctors program and complement the soil kit with salinity meters/field methods	SAS&SSM
9	Develop an inventory of halophytic plants suitable for saline agriculture and salt-tolerant crops	SAS&Crops
10	Development of the manual on saline agriculture*	SAS&Crops
11	Development of water quality criteria for sustainable management of soils to avoid its salinization and sodification	SAS&Water
12	Development of the manual on sustainable water management in saline/sodic environments*	SAS&Water

*It can be one comprehensive manual in the end that covers sustainable agricultural practices, water and soil management, and crop selection under saline/sodic conditions.



Annex 2

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF INSAS

The governance over the activity of INSAS is performed by its Chair, Vice-Chair and representatives of ITPS.

The **Chairperson** is responsible for:

- i. Supporting and ensuring the timely implementation of the INSAS work plan;
- ii. Reporting on INSAS activities at the annual INSAS meeting;
- iii. Representing INSAS at any other GSP meetings or international events;
- iv. Reporting (jointly with the GSP Secretariat and ITPS Chair) to the GSP Plenary Assembly about the INSAS progress;
- v. Supporting the INSAS Coordinator in capacity-building and financial-resources mobilization activities;
- vi. Ensuring that the activities of the working groups are implemented according to the principles of INSAS, including transparency, inclusivity, and respect; and
- vii. Coordinating cooperation with projects and initiatives that contribute to the aims of the INSAS, including research, service, and capacity development.

The term for the Chairperson is two years after election, extendable via INSAS decision to a second term. The appointment of the Chair of the INSAS takes place during the annual meeting of INSAS.

The Chair is, whenever possible, supported by a **vice-Chair** in all its activities and tasks.

At least one member of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) should be part of the INSAS. The duties of the representatives of ITPS to INSAS are:

- i. Supporting the development and implementation of the INSAS work plan;
- ii. Representing ITPS at the annual INSAS meetings;
- iii. Reporting to ITPS about the INSAS activity.

The documents produced by INSAS that may have political implications or need a consensus between countries shall go through the procedure of approval by ITPS before publication.

The INSAS governance (Chair, Vice-Chair, ITPS representatives) should ensure to the best of their ability that the INSAS as a whole and its working groups have an appropriate geographical balance and representation of members.

All INSAS members receive regular updates on the work of the network.