

Global soil governance: Status and future perspectives

Wednesday 25th August 2021 (11:30 - 13:00 CEST)

Virtual format (Zoom)

Soils are essential to life on Earth. It is a key provider of ecosystem services, such as regulating climate change and water flows, providing clean water, food, feed, and fuel, supporting human infrastructure, and buffering and filtering contaminants. Their protection and sustainable management is of the utmost importance to ensure the future of food systems and sustainable development. However, due to the crosscutting nature of soil resources and the different stakeholders that benefit from them, soil governance is generally addressed in a dispersed manner in current national and international legal frameworks, ranging from agricultural legislation to regulations on mining, urban development and environmental protection.

Soil has commonly been considered in a scattered way across the European and international legislation, as a tool to achieve secondary goals in related environmental policies. Currently, EU and international Environmental Law are still apprehending soil and related environmental concerns in a sectoral and compartmentalized manner rather than a set of interconnected problems. As a result, both international and European environmental governance are still lacking a soil specific instrument along with soil specific policies incorporated within the existing and relevant legislation, while soils play a central role in achieving the many set environmental goals.

Approximately, ten years ago soils were not in the global agenda as soils were usually taken by granted. Today, however, after advocacy and awareness raising efforts from different initiatives (Global Soil Partnership, EU Soil Thematic Strategy, Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative, Global Soil Week, etc.) soils are in the decision making agenda.

There have been efforts to establish a binding mechanism on soils to ensure commitment towards sustainable soil management. The three UN Conventions addresses soil indirectly due its crosscutting nature. The Global Soil Partnership is a hybrid mechanism (voluntary but under the FAO governance and membership) working with countries and other stakeholders to promote sustainable soil management. Lately, the European Union has launched the EU Green Deal very much rooted on soils and established the EU Soil Observatory. The EU Parliament suggested EU members to consider establishing a UN Soil Convention.

Ensuring good soil governance is essential because it shapes the way soils are managed at global scale. Ultimately, substantial and effective changes needed in agri-food systems would require the development



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of a comprehensive performance-based system along with a set of coherent and well-coordinated environmental policies directly addressing soil-related issues.

While the Covid-19 crisis has reshuffled priorities, there is more than ever a need to ensure soil stays high on the political agenda.

This event aims to review the status and future perspectives for global soil governance that can ensure healthy soils for all.

Draft Agenda

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| 11:30 – 11:35 | Opening by Mr Lifeng Li, Director Land and Water Division, FAO |
| 11:35 – 11:45 | Soil governance: status and challenges, Ms Rosa Poch, Chair of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils |
| 11:45 – 11:55 | Soil protection in scope of the Alpine Convention, Mr Christian Steiner, Alpine Convention |
| 11:55 – 12:45 | Interactive panel: what are the perspectives for global soil governance? <ul style="list-style-type: none">- H.E. Thanawat Tiensin, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Thailand to FAO and Chair of the Committee on World Food Security- Ms Carla Pascale, Ministry of Agriculture of Argentina- Mr Luca Montanarella, Joint Research Center, European Commission- Mr Alexander Mueller, ThinkTankforSustainability- Ms Elena Havlicek, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland (tbc)- Ms Natalia Rodriguez, Global Soil Partnership, FAO |
| 12:45 – 12:55 | Open session for questions and answers |
| 12:55 – 13:00 | Conclusions and closure |

Moderator: Mr Ronald Vargas, Secretary Global Soil Partnership, FAO