

The Invitation

2 days Meeting on Living soils

The venue: Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development, 14-A, Vishnu Digamber Marg, Near ITO, New Delhi – 110 002.

The Dates: 23rd & 24th of September 2013

The soils – soil as a critical component of the natural system and are a vital contributor to the human wellbeing through its contribution to food, water and energy security and role in mitigating biodiversity loss and climate change.

Soil provides the physical base to support plant growth and the cycling of biological resources; it is the source of nutrients and water for agriculture and forestry systems; it provides a habitat for teeming biodiversity; and it fulfils a complex buffering role against environmental variability, ranging from dampening diurnal and seasonal change in temperature and water supply to the storage and binding of a range of chemical and biological agents.

Managing nutrient supply for enhancing crop production is where some of the major differences among farming systems occurs. These differences frequently are described as biological vs. chemical methods of maintaining soil fertility. Biological materials like manure are major nutrientsources on many “conventional” farms, as well as organic farms, while inorganic minerals chemicalmaterials) like rock phosphate and lime are acceptable fertility amendments for certified organic production. This debate is not entirely based on scientific fact as plants absorb nutrients in chemical inorganic form and not in the organic form. Specific nutrient deficiencies cannot be entirely sorted out by organic means alone and there remains a role for critical application of inorganic nutrients.

Having said this, there is increasing realisation that managing soils for maximising production is not the correct way to handle the issue. The imbalance in the soils is created by such wrong notions as this type of production and its related systems only look at limited aspects of the issue. There is a need to seriously look at the soil health parameters and focus on biomass production. This requires a totally different outlook from what is now being conventionally practised. The need to cover the soil to improve its infiltration capacity and the need for insitu decomposition of biomass to enhance the production of microorganisms in the soil (moving towards living soils), is emerging as a way forward in taking a holistic view of the issues related to soil health. The factor productivity of labour, limited availability of biomass and the alternative use for this biomass for fodder makes a resolution of this issue a complex one in Indian conditions. However is there an easy way out? With the increase in fertilizer use, soil health is also at stake. (Soil is not just a growing medium; rather it is a living, dynamic and ever-so-subtly changing environment.) In the areas where the irrigation facilities were provided and comparatively cajole areas was targeted, the fields are showing the stagnation in the production, the hardening of the soils has already begun. With some of the most serious pollution problems linked directly to injudicious use of nutrients for crop and animal production and the trend is expected to continue seeing India’s economic potency and its booming population.(The food security bill has just passed in the parliament). The increasing prices of fertilizers are also beheld carefully.

There is a need to develop a phase wise plan by taking up pilot action research programmes in selected agroecological regions which also cover a wide range of situation specific Ecological issues as well like – Soil erosion, desertification & salinization (The manifestation of dryland salinity is largely a problem of groundwater – however the accumulation of salt within the soil and at the surface due to proximity to or saturation by saline groundwater causes changes to the soil's chemistry, structure and stability, and the plant life that it supports). The role of soil is also essential in the Hydrologic, Carbon, and Nutrient Cycles.

Recharge potential for proper rain fall utilization also depends upon soil's permeability and porosity, their texture and profile is very important. With that, the role of soil in the recharging of ground water also makes it very important. In this the role of pesticides application also becomes significant.

In recognition of the importance of an all sided dialogue combining the general and specific SPWD invites you to participate in a workshop on “Soil health, living soils the key to sustainability” on 23rd&24th September 2013.

The key words for considerations: Soil organic matter, Agro-ecology, sustainable development, Sustainable agricultural systems, Soil fertility and organic matter, multiple cropping systems, ecological soil management, Soil Health, Nutrient cycle,.....

Please book your dates for this brain-storming meeting and also confirm your participation.

Regards

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