



05.12.2015 - The multiple roles of soils often go unnoticed. Soils don't have a voice, and few people speak out for them. They are our silent allies in food production. The UN highlights the importance of soil by celebrating December 5th, World Soil Day and 2015, the International Year of Soils, while the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continuously works to support family farmers in the sustainable use and preservation of soils.

30th November – 4th December was the launch of the 'Soils Week' featuring several events to raise awareness, organized by the FAO and MEP Czeslaw Siekierski, Chair of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee of the EU Parliament.

The exhibition at the European Parliament, "We depend on soils – It is time to work on it", was not only a traditional photo exhibition, but an art installation with real soil and real fruits and vegetables teaching the importance of soils in our daily life.

Did you know, for example, that 95% of everything we eat comes – directly or indirectly – from soils?

Or that 33% of our soils are already degraded? The FAO Director of the Brussels Liaison Office Dr. Mustafa Sinaceur reminded us that if the current trend continues;

- The global amount of arable and productive land per person in 2050 will be a quarter of what it was in 1960
- The world will have over 9 billion people in 2050, 2 billion more than today while food production will have to grow by 60 percent to feed a larger population that will also be eating better.

Certainly, the pressure on natural resources is bound to increase, whereas soils are not something we can simply fix if it breaks: it can take up to one thousand years to form one centimeter of topsoil.

That same topsoil can be quickly washed away by erosion. Soil is made up of about one-third water, one-third minerals and one-third organic materials. But this mixture would not turn into soil by itself: soil is a living organism.

Considering this, we must work soils sustainably. One of the many ways to achieve this is crop diversification which is used by most of the world's small local farmers.

We now have adequate platforms to raise awareness on the importance of healthy soils and to advocate for sustainable soil management. We need healthy soils to achieve our food security and nutrition goals, to fight climate change and to ensure overall sustainable development. These are key elements to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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