

Editorial

The economic, social and environmental aspects for healthy soils: Assessment for Sustainable Development

During recent years, the renewed recognition of the central role of soil and its ecosystem services, including food and biomass production, retention, recycling and renewal of nutrient and water, and carbon sequestration, have triggered numerous regional and international activities.

Promoting sustainable management of soil resources for soil protection, conservation and sustainable productivity is now an essential aim. In fact, over the last 50 years, the amount of arable land per capita in Europe has halved, and many of the remaining areas were affected by severe soil degradation and environmental impacts.

Agricultural soils are threatened by diverse processes such as erosion, which led to soil and organic matter losses, soil contamination, crusting, soil compaction, salinization and other negative impacts due to intensification, marginalization, and resource degradation, that are likely to intensify as a result of climate change and population growth.

This increasing negative trend and the extent of soil degradation processes, due to mismanagement and land use changes, are threatening this resource and urgent action is needed to reverse this trend.

Sustainable soil management and responsible land governance have a great potential for achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Specifically, sustainable land management contributes in achieving several of SDGs, such as land degradation neutrality, an ambitious climate policy and the biodiversity agenda, as highlighted by FAO's Global Soil Partnership (GSP), which is already implementing actions in all regions to promote the sustainable management of our global soils.

To investigate all dimensions of a modern soil management, it is necessary an interdisciplinary approach including biologists, chemists, geologists, physicists but also engineers, economists, anthropologists, sociologists among others. This approach needs to answer questions about a wide array of issues as biodiversity, climate change, ecosystem services, food security, human health, water security, each acting as a big challenge for future generations.

In this issue have been hosted two works on these aspects. The first paper "Saline soils in Italy: distribution, ecological processes and socioeconomic issues" by Loredana Canfora, Luca Salvati, Anna Benedetti, Carmelo Dazzi, Giuseppe Lo Papa provides specific information on saline soils in Italy, stress-

ing mainly their distribution, the ecological processes and the socioeconomic issues. The second one “Drivers of on-farm diversification in peri-urban agriculture in Italy” by Roberto Henke and Francesco Vanni analyzes the pivotal role of peri-urban farms played in a sustainable land use. The paper underlines how, in the post productivistic paradigm of multifunctional agriculture, the entrepreneurs’ behaviour could provides a broad variety of social and economic services to the urban population.

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