

Report dishes the dirt on world soil health

December 10 2015



A report by the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils says 33 per cent of land is moderately to highly degraded.

Massey University has contributed to a report issued by the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, stating that the world's soils are at best only in fair condition and in some areas are very poor.

Associate Professor Marta Camps Arbestain, from the Institute of Agriculture and Environment, was the representative of the South West Pacific Region, along with Dr Neil McKenzie from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in Australia.

According to the report, 33 per cent of land is being moderately to highly degraded due to erosion, salinisation, pollution, compaction or acidification. The current rate of [soil](#) degradation threatens the capacity to meet the needs of future generations.

The report also offers evidence that the loss of soil resources and function can be avoided. Sustainable soil management, using scientific and local knowledge and evidence-based approaches and technologies, can increase nutritious food supply. It can also provide a valuable lever for climate regulation and safeguard for ecosystem services.

Associate Professor Camps Arbestain says in the South West Pacific Region, the situation is mixed.

"The threats to soil function combined with other pressures caused by increasing population and climate change are especially challenging in southwest Western Australia and on the atoll islands of the Pacific.

"The intensification of land use in New Zealand – and to a lesser extent Australia – provides an indication of the soil management challenges that will dominate in coming years as countries attempt to substantially increase food production within a resource-constrained world.

"Poor land management practices, and especially uncontrolled logging in the low-income countries of the region, are a significant challenge to national prosperity."

The document highlights the example of soil monitoring in New Zealand

and how this demonstrates the capability to track and respond to changes.

The Status of the World's Soil Resources report was released last Saturday and coincides with World's Soils Day and the International Year of Soils.

More information: The full report can be viewed here:
www.fao.org/3/a-i5199e.pdf

Provided by Massey University

Citation: Report dishes the dirt on world soil health (2015, December 10) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-12-dishes-dirt-world-soil-health.html>

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