Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

International Soil and Water Forum 2024
9-11 December 2024, Bangkok, Thailand

Ministerial Declaration on managing water scarcity and reversing soil degradation for sustainable and resilient agrifood systems

We, the Ministers and Representatives of 27 countries and more than 500 participants from 65 countries, attending the International Soil and Water Forum 2024, co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Royal Thai Government in Bangkok, the Kingdom of Thailand from 9 to 11 December 2024,

1. Reaffirmed our commitments to the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) and Stocktaking Moments, the Declaration of the International Year of Soils 2015, the International Decade for Action: "Water for Sustainable Development" (2018-2028), the UN Water Conference (2023), the Observance of World Soil Day (WSD) on 5 December, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Paris Agreement,

   Recognizing the interconnectedness of the aforementioned commitments to managing land, soil, and water, with a focus on agricultural land restoration and addressing water scarcity, in the context of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, as we strive to transform toward more efficient, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient agrifood system,

2. Acknowledged with deep concerns that, as we approach the deadline to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is evident that the goals and targets set for 2030, particularly to end hunger and poverty, will not be attained unless bold and accelerated collective actions are taken to improve the management of agricultural land, soil and water resources, and safeguard biodiversity,

3. Noted that globally, more than 2.33 billion people faced food insecurity in 2023 and approximately 2.3 billion people currently live in water-stressed countries, these challenges continue to escalate as demand for food and water is projected to grow significantly,

4. Further took note of the fact that soils have not got due attention in the global development agenda, 33 percent of global soils already degraded and over 60 percent of human-induced land degradation occurring on agriculture lands[1],

5. Acknowledged that agriculture is the largest sectoral water user and produces 95 percent of our food, with productivity fundamentally rooted on soil health, therefore, will be most affected by ineffective land, soil and water resources management,

6. Recognized that agri-food systems are responsible for over 30 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions and that food and agriculture must be a priority in UNFCCC negotiations,

7. Reaffirmed that crises and conflicts have significant impacts on land, soil and water and can lead to decreases in agricultural production and food insecurity,

8. Emphasized that transforming agrifood systems is essential to tackling the interconnected challenges of land and soil degradation, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, pollution, and the urgent climate threats to food security and nutrition,

9. Highlighted the critical need to understand essential trade-offs and capitalize the opportunities within the water-energy-food-environment nexus for optimal use of the scarce soil and water resources, balancing national, regional, and global demands for food, water, energy, and ancillary services amid population growth and climate change,

10. Welcomed the innovative solutions to land, soil and water management presented at the International Soil and Water Forum 2024, such as sustainable land and water governance, land and soil restoration and recarbonization, saline agriculture, water

[1] FAO and ITPS. 2015. Status of the World's Soil Resources (SWSR) – Technical Summary. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, Rome, Italy;
FAO.2024. Restoration of degraded agricultural lands. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy.

accounting and integrated land use planning, water-energy-food-environment nexus approach, which demonstrate the multiple benefits of and the need to invest in integrated management of these critical resources,

11. These solutions recognize the importance of agroecological principles in maintaining healthy and productive food systems under climate change, protecting soil and water resources while reducing the use of hazardous agricultural chemical products,

12. Collectively committed to the following urgent actions to accelerate the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems in the near future:

    a. **Strengthen cross-sectoral coordination, cooperation mechanisms and the consistency** of policies, planning, investment and implementation across land, soil, water, agriculture, climate change, biodiversity, environment, and energy,
    b. **Reinforce the inclusion** of sustainable soil and water management along with integrated land use planning in national development strategies, action plans and investment, in line with national priorities,
    c. Involve and empower marginalized groups, particularly the youth, women, Indigenous Peoples and small-scale farmers in decision-making processes, by enhancing their access to natural resources, educational and capacity building opportunities, information, technologies, services and finance,
    d. **Promote conducive socio-economic and political environment** that enable sustainable and integrated land, soil and water management practices that enhance the resilience of agrifood systems while contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation, including the development of national and regional policies and incentives for investments, especially by the private sector, in the modernization of agrifood systems, promoting innovative financial mechanisms including incentives for ecosystem services and carbon market and enhancing return on government investments,
    e. **Seek further investment in the production and use of accurate and harmonized soil, water, biodiversity and climate data and information systems** at the farm, landscape, national, regional and global levels to

support evidence-based decision-making. This requires increased investment in research and development, the widespread use of innovations and technologies (such as remote sensing), awareness raising, capacity building, and knowledge and data exchange, supported by national soil and water governance and legislative frameworks.

f. **Strengthen efforts to develop and implement programmes to enhance farmers' capacity** to use data and information, to access technologies, market, finance and other required resources to adopt green technologies to manage land, soil and water resources and build resilience to climate change, market fluctuations, conflicts and other crises, contributing to economic stability, social welfare and sustainable development,
g. **Develop public–private partnerships and mobilize resources** for large-scale agri-food system transformation, including directing climate finance for decisive actions,
h. **Develop and implement innovative solutions** in integrated land, soil and water management tailored to the national context,
i. **Promote ecosystem-based solutions** as an integral part of sustainable land, soil, and water management strategies, recognizing their potential to enhance agricultural productivity, mitigate climate change, and restore degraded ecosystems,
j. **Encourage international and regional cooperation**, with collaborative platforms and frameworks, to tackle the challenges of land and soil degradation, water scarcity and biodiversity loss that threaten agriculture and food and water security,
k. **Support the proposal of establishing the United Nations Decade on Soil Health,** endorsed by the 29th session of the FAO's Committee on Agriculture (COAG), to place soil at the center of the global development agenda, **and expedite endorsement of the UN Decade on Soil Health** by the United Nations General Assembly.