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Rome, Italy, 03–05 June 2024

**REPORT OF THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE GLOBAL SOIL
PARTNERSHIP PLENARY ASSEMBLY**

Rome, 03–05 June 2024

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The twelfth session of the Plenary Assembly of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was conducted as a hybrid event. It was held from 3 to 5 June 2024. The agenda and list of participants is attached in Annex I and II.

The three-day event was chaired by Mr Elh Moudi Moustapha Abdourahaman, from the National Institute of Agronomic Research of Niger and Chair of the Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN). Mr Bob Turnock, from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, acted as Vice-chair. Mr Lui Peioneti, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forests and Fisheries of Tonga, acted as the Rapporteur.

Opening session

Moderated by Mr Lifeng Li, Director of the Land and Water Division (NSL), FAO, the FAO Director-General, Dr Qu Dongyu, welcomed the participants to the Plenary Assembly and acknowledged the commitment and the role of GSP and its partners in putting soil at the top of the international agenda. Dr Qu Dongyu emphasized the role of the GSP and its partners in ensuring healthier soils that are able to provide the ecosystem services - fundamental to ensuring a more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agri-food system, with the aim of leaving no one behind and renewed his gratitude to the resource partners, without whom the GSP would not have achieved important results. Dr Qu's speech is available [here](#).

The Honourable Minister Reuben Phiri Mtolo, Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Zambia, offered welcoming remarks. He expressed gratitude for the invitation and underscored the technical and financial assistance extended to the Republic of Zambia. Thereafter, he expressed his gratitude to the State Department of the United States of America for partnering with FAO under the SoilFER project to use fertilizers more efficiently and boost soil health and in this way facilitate the optimization of agrifood systems, ensuring their efficiency, sustainability, and resilience. The Hon. Minister Mtolo then emphasized the significance of sustainable soil management for the future and reiterated Zambia's dedication to this objective.

His Excellency Mohammed Sadiki, Minister of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development and Water and Forests of Morocco, expressed gratitude to the GSP and FAO for organising this Plenary Assembly and for continuing to work towards international collaboration in the area of soil health and recalled the support provided by Morocco to the Partnership since its inception in 2012. Furthermore, he highlighted soil health as a potential solution to the global challenge of producing more food with less soil and water. Subsequently, H.E. Sadiki underscored the pivotal role of the GSP in fostering awareness about the rational utilisation of soil resources and in developing instruments to inform policies and legislation for enhanced soil management. Finally, he reaffirmed his commitment to continue supporting the GSP in its mission.

His Excellency Maynor Estuardo Estrada Rosales, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food of the Republic of Guatemala, expressed gratitude to the GSP for its contributions to the international debate on soil health and unwavering assistance to the Republic of Guatemala over the years. He proceeded to emphasise the work of the GSP in the field of soil governance, underscoring the significance of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGGSSM) and the International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers. Thereafter, he expressed his gratitude to the State Department of the United States of America for partnering with FAO under the SoilFER

project for soil mapping activities, emphasizing how Guatemala can benefit from such a project having one more tool to make informed decisions about soil management.

Mr Artthakorn Sirilatthayakorn, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand, underlined the importance of soil in food production, emphasizing the crucial role it plays in ensuring that all individuals have access to nutritious and healthy food. He then thanked the GSP for the implementation of the Global Soil Doctor Programme following Thailand's example and stressed Thailand's continued support for the GSP since 2012.

His Excellency Ambassador Jeffrey Prescott, U.S. Representative to the United Nations for Food and Agriculture, recalled the threat posed by climate change to global food security and stressed the importance of soil in this context. He reaffirmed the unwavering support of the United States of America to the GSP and highlighted the numerous initiatives currently underway to address this issue. Furthermore, he referred to the forthcoming SoilFER programme, emphasising the practical commitment of the United States of America to pay attention to soil health and work to improve it.

Ms Kristi Stinson, Director of the National Soil Policy Section of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry of Australia, commenced her opening speech by recalling the significance and potential of smart agriculture in enhancing global food security and emphasized that sustainable soil management is a fundamental principle of the Australian agricultural system, which is also fundamental to addressing and adapting to climate change. She then reiterated the importance of the soil science community and the challenges it will face in the future. She also recalled the importance of a global and lasting peace to minimise international agri-food insecurity.

Mr Michael Niejahr, Acting Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission, European Union, stressed that soil plays a crucial role in food production, yet its protection is often underestimated. Mr Niejahr recalled that the European Union has always supported the GSP and highlighted the contribution of the European Union and its experts to the development of the Soil Atlas of Asia and other activities of the GSP. Finally, he mentioned the recent significant progress in protecting and improving soil health monitoring in the European Union, pointing to the EU Soil Monitoring and Restoration Law, which is in the process of being adopted, as a major achievement.

Mr Lifeng Li expressed his gratitude to the considerable number of attendees, both in person and online, and extended his appreciation to the preceding speakers for their contributions. He then closed the opening ceremony and passed the baton to the Chairperson of the 12th Plenary Assembly.

Item 1. Adoption of the agenda (GSPPA: XII/2024/1)

The agenda was adopted as outlined as no Members suggested any modifications.

Item 2. Status on the implementation of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) Action Framework (GSPPA: XII/2024/2)

Mr Yusuf Yigini (GSP Secretariat), presented the progress on the implementation of the GSP Action Framework, adopted by the 10th GSP Plenary Assembly and endorsed by the 28th Session of the

Committee on Agriculture (COAG) to be monitored by SoilSTAT. He reported on the GSP Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Soil Health Indicators and Soil Health Index and the dashboard being developed by the GSP Action Framework Indicator System (ISAF) working group. He explained that the working group has taken a pragmatic approach and decided to establish a Global Soil Health Indicator System based on degradation processes given the complexity of developing a single global soil health index that is relevant to all soil types under various land uses. This approach is similar to that adopted by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and its European Soil Observatory (EUSO). To date, the ISAF working group has identified and agreed on 15 key performance indicators for GSP and 6 areas (sustainable soil management, soil governance, knowledge and literacy, awareness raising, soil information and data, and technical cooperation). Mr Yigini then explained the SoilSTAT reporting methodology, describing its functions and component elements. Mr Yigini invited members to formally endorse the final document that will be presented at the 13th Plenary Assembly. Presentation on item 2 is available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly acknowledged the progress made in the definition of the indicator system of the GSP Action Framework 2022-2030 and the Global Soil Health Indicator System.

The Assembly urged the ISAF working group and the GSP Secretariat to finalize the indicator system of the GSP Action Framework 2022-2030 and the Global Soil Health Indicator System.

The Plenary Assembly requested that the proposal be first shared with the focal points for validation and presented to the 13th GSP Plenary Assembly for approval.

Item 3. Implications of the establishment of a subcommittee on soils under FAO's Committee on Agriculture (COAG) and maintaining the GSP in its current structure (GSPPA: XII/2024/3)

Ms Natalia Rodríguez Eugenio (GSP Secretariat) presented the background to the institutionalization of the GSP and provided an overview of the financial and governance implications of the establishment of an eventual Sub-committee on Soils under the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG) and maintaining the GSP in its current structure. Then Ms Rodríguez Eugenio shared the pros and cons of the possible institutionalization. She highlighted that this body could strengthen FAO's actions and relevance on soils by moving from a voluntary partnership to a stronger institutional framework. Presentation on item 3 is available [here](#).

Several Members expressed concern about the proposal and suggested strengthening the GSP and providing more resources to ensure its responsiveness. Other Members stressed the importance of giving greater visibility to soils in FAO's work.

The Plenary Assembly recognized the work of the Secretariat in preparing the analysis of the mandate, governance, and financial implications of an eventual establishment of a Sub-Committee on Soils while maintaining the GSP in its current structure.

The Plenary Assembly did not reach a consensus on this point and suggested establishing a working group, including Regional Soil Partnerships (RSPs), focal points, and the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS), to prepare a detailed proposal of the possible terms of reference and mandate

of a Sub-Committee on Soils under COAG and how the Sub-Committee would complement the GSP without duplication.

The Plenary Assembly requested the GSP Secretariat to work more closely with COAG Secretariat to ensure that soils are adequately addressed in COAG and in FAO's overall work and priorities.

Item 4. Work of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) (GSPPA: XII/2024/4)

Professor Rosa Poch, Chair of the ITPS, summarized the achievements of the ITPS in 2023–2024. She reported on the publication of the ITPS Soil Letters and the scientific paper on the Status of the World's Soils published in the Annual Review of Environment and Resources, the support provided in the preparation of the Global Status of Salt affected Soils report, and the progress done in the preparation of the second edition of Status of the World's Soil Resources (SWSR). She also mentioned the ITPS support in the production of the Global Soil Nutrient and Nutrient Budget Maps (GSNmap) as well as participation in numerous scientific conferences. Prof Poch also explained the work plan for 2024–2025. Presentation on item 4 is available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly appreciated the work done by the ITPS and the wide range of activities undertaken over the last 11 months, stressing the need to ensure a high level of participation of experts from all over the world in ITPS activities, in particular in the SWSR report.

The Plenary Assembly endorsed the ITPS work plan for the next year and invited donors and partners to support this work by providing financial and in-kind resources.

The Plenary Assembly encouraged ITPS members to continue actively contributing to the preparation of the SWSR report by involving a wide range of experts from all the regions and invited Members and partners to encourage their experts to participate in the different activities led by the ITPS, particularly for the preparation of the second edition of the SWSR report.

Item 5. Report on the financial status of the GSP (GSPPA: XII/2024/5)

Ms Vanja Maslovarik (FAO) presented the financial situation of the GSP and explained that over the twelve years that the GSP had been running successfully, with increasing funding year by year. She provided details on the source of funding with government donors being the most prominent. Ms Maslovarik highlighted that several donors have renovated their support to the GSP while new donors have approached the GSP Secretariat for funding ongoing activities, showing confidence in the work being done by the GSP. Special mention was made of the funding provided by Australia, the European Union, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation including the Phosagro company, Switzerland, and the United States of America, who are currently funding GSP activities. Presentation on item 5 is available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly appreciated the progress made by the GSP Secretariat in securing additional resources for the implementation of the GSP Action Framework 2022-2030.

The Plenary Assembly commended resource partners who have contributed to the advancement of

the GSP, and renewed its call to all partners, especially resource partners, to support the implementation of the GSP Action Framework 2022-2030 by contributing to the Healthy Soils Facility Trust Fund and by providing sufficient financial and in-kind contributions to specific activities.

Item 6. Report on normative tools and actions on sustainable soil management (GSPPA: XII/2024/6)

Ms Carolina Olivera (GSP Secretariat) presented the progress in the dissemination and implementation of the GSP's normative documents, focusing on to the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM) and the new user manual and updated edition of the Protocol for the assessment of sustainable soil management (SSM Protocol), which provides a detailed step-by-step implementation guide and will be launched later in 2024. She also detailed progress in the implementation of the Global Soil Doctors Programme in 21 countries and provided concrete examples of the implementation in Burkina Faso, Chile, and Mexico. She also presented the main results of the RECSOIL pilot projects in Costa Rica, Ghana, Mexico, and Togo, and briefed the audience on the new pilot projects under preparation in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Morocco, and Uzbekistan. Subsequently, she informed the Plenary Assembly of two major projects in which a comprehensive set of GSP tools are being applied: "Soil mapping for resilient agrifood systems in Central America and sub-Saharan Africa (SoilFER)" project and the "Caribbean Soil Management for Restored Watersheds and Sustainable food systems Project – SOILCARE". Presentation on item 6 is available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly expressed appreciation for the efforts made in the implementation of the GSP normative documents and invited Members and partners to adopt and adapt locally the VGSSM and to use the SSM Protocol.

The Plenary Assembly acknowledged the efforts made in raising public awareness on soil governance, especially through the SoILEX platform and encouraged Members to contribute to its update in the future and requested the GSP to work on the interpretation of the legal instruments.

The Plenary Assembly also acknowledged the progress made in the development and expansion of the RECSOIL initiative and the implementation of the Global Soil Doctors Programme worldwide, as well as the positive impact at national level of the SoilFER and SOILCARE projects.

The Plenary Assembly acknowledged the financial and in-kind contributions of Members and GSP partners to the implementation of all these initiatives and projects and invited resource partners to provide co-funding to advance SSM projects involving local practitioners on the ground.

Item 7. Status about Global Symposia: for information and decision (GSPPA: XII/2024/7)

Ms Isabel Luotto (GSP Secretariat), presented an overview of the global symposia organized to date as well as the proposal for the upcoming symposia and the progress in implementing the recommendations derived from each one to address each of the ten soil health threats except for the 2024 Global Symposium, which will be focusing on soil information and data, as it was endorsed at the 11th GSP Plenary Assembly. Presentation on item 7 is available [here](#).

7.1 Report on the Global Symposium on Soils and Water 2023

The Global Symposium on Soils and Water (GSOWA) was held in a hybrid format from 2 to 5 October 2023 and took place at FAO Headquarters. The GSOWA was attended by 1 194 in-person and online participants connecting from around the world and 2 877 people registered.

Numerous stakeholders participated in this event including academia, industry, farmer's associations, IGOs, NGOs, and global initiatives. GSOWA was organised around four themes for which more than 20 technical presentations and four interactive round tables were organised. An artistic exposition combining art and science was organized in the Atrium. The main recommendations that emerged from this event were: 1) Develop a training programme on soil moisture assessment and monitoring in line with the Global Soil Information System (GloSIS); 2) Include soil moisture management and integrated soil and water management within the Global Soil Doctor Programme; 3) Coordinate actions among GSP technical networks to prevent soil degradation and loss of water quality in rainfed and irrigated agriculture; 4) Assist FAO Members to develop and strengthen legal frameworks and institutions to ensure integrated and sustainable soil and water management; 5) Coordinate actions with other FAO tools, initiatives, and projects to support integrated and sustainable soil and water management.

7.2 Preparations for the Global Symposium on Soil Data and Information 2024

Ms Luotto also presented the upcoming Global Symposium on Soil Data and Information (GSID) to be held in hybrid format from 25 to 28 September 2024 in Nanjing, China. It will be co-organized by the FAO's GSP and the Institute of Soil Science, Chinese Academy of Sciences (ISSCAS). For the first time, a GSP global symposium will be held outside the FAO premises under the auspices of a GSP partner. The GSID will be structured over four main themes and several sub-themes:

- a) **Theme 1:** Mainstreaming soil data: innovations in analysis, standardization, harmonization and communication.
 - i) *Sub-theme 1.1:* Laboratory Techniques and Standard Procedures for Soil Analysis
 - ii) *Sub-theme 1.2:* Soil data standardization and harmonization
 - iii) *Sub-theme 1.3:* Evaluating, interpreting and communicating soil data and its uncertainty
 - iv) *Sub-theme 1.4:* The Emergence of Proximal Sensing Solutions for Soil Analysis.
- b) **Theme 2:** Advances in soil mapping and monitoring.
 - i) *Sub-theme 2.1:* Soil Survey and Monitoring Strategies
 - ii) *Sub-theme 2.2:* Digital Soil Mapping Techniques and Applications
 - iii) *Sub-theme 2.3:* Unlocking the potential of soil legacy data
- c) **Theme 3:** Soil data for policy and decision-making.
 - i) *Sub-theme 3.1:* The Role of Soil Data in Achieving and Measuring the Progress on Global Development Agendas
 - ii) *Sub-theme 3.2:* Soil Data for Improved Food Security and Resource Management
- d) **Theme 4:** Soil Data as a Common Good
 - i) *Sub-theme 4.1:* Ethical Considerations and Data Ownership
 - ii) *Sub-theme 4.2:* Fostering Open Data, Soil Information Systems and Collaborative

Platforms

iii) *Sub-theme 4.3: Capacity Building for Effective Data Sharing and Collaboration*

Ms Luotto explained that the call for abstracts had been opened and that a Scientific Committee composed of members of ITPS and relevant GSP technical networks had been set up to assess their quality and relevance and to define the agenda of the symposium.

7.3 Preparations for the Global Symposium on Soil Sealing and Urban Soils in 2025

Finally, Ms Luotto presented some initial ideas proposed by ITPS for the Global Symposium on Soil Sealing and Urban Soils to be organized in 2025 and encouraged partners to host the symposium following the example of GSID. She closed her intervention by asking the Plenary Assembly to consider new proposals for symposia in the coming years, as proposals were only agreed until 2027.

The Plenary Assembly expressed appreciation for the efforts made in organizing global symposia thus far and in the implementation of the recommendations as outlined in the related outcome documents.

The Plenary Assembly encouraged FAO Members and other partners to join efforts of the ITPS, the GSP Secretariat and co-organizers to implement the actions indicated in the outcome documents of all symposia.

The Plenary Assembly commended the resource partners who have financially supported the organization of these symposia and encouraged new resource partners to fund the forthcoming ones.

The Plenary Assembly encouraged relevant national institutions and stakeholders to actively participate in the upcoming GSID'24.

The Plenary Assembly proposed to the ITPS to consider changing the theme and slogan of the 2025 symposium on soil sealing and urban soils to “*Global Symposium on Soil Sealing and Land Take*” and to use the slogan “*Living soils for lively cities*”.

Regarding the future of the global symposia, the Plenary Assembly proposed to the ITPS to consider "managed forest soils" as an additional theme to be addressed in 2028 and to consider revisiting all soil threats in the same order to review scientific and implementation progress a decade after they were initially addressed by the GSP, allowing the topics to be varied according to scientific priorities.

Item 8. Report on Regional Soil Partnerships (GSPPA: XII/2024/8)

The representatives of the seven Regional Soil Partnerships (RSPs) presented the progress made in the implementation of the GSP Action Framework 2022-2030 and highlighted the efforts made in mobilising resources and implementing awareness raising, education and soil monitoring activities. Ms Anne Muriuki, Chair of the African Soil Partnership, Ms Gina Nilo, Chair of the Asian Soil Partnership Chair, Mr Rainer Baritz, Chair of the European Soil Partnership, Mr Rachid Moussadek, Chair of the NENA Soil Partnership, Ms Sol Ortiz, Chair of the Latin American and Caribbean Soil Partnership, Dr Charles Kome, from the North America Soil Partnership, and Dr Rohit Lal, from the Pacific Soil Partnership presented the activities and initiatives done by the RSPs. Presentations on item 8 are available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly welcomed the progress made by the RSPs in the implementation of activities in

line with the GSP Action Framework 2022-2030 and called on all GSP partners, both FAO Members and non-state stakeholders, to be fully involved in the RSPs activities and to establish strong supportive networks of experts in each region.

The Plenary Assembly requested the Secretariat to consult as appropriate on the GSP Terms of Reference and the need to amend them to reflect the structure introduced by the GSP Action Framework 2022-2030 and to clarify, strengthen, and support the role of the RSPs in ongoing regional projects and new action areas. The Plenary Assembly also requested the Secretariat to resume the RSP Chairs' meetings as a mechanism for coordination, cooperative learning, and a platform for sharing experiences and funding opportunities.

The Plenary Assembly reiterated the need to lend strong support to the RSPs through resource mobilization and facilitation of prominent regional and interregional activities, including those of the technical networks and soil information systems; and encouraged resource partners to continue supporting the activities and functioning of the RSPs.

Item 9. Progress of the GSP Technical Networks (GSPPA: XII/2024/9)

The Plenary Assembly was informed of the objectives, composition and main activities of the GSP Technical Networks, details of which are given in the following paragraphs.

The Plenary Assembly welcomed the efforts made by the GSP technical networks, the Secretariat and the ITPS to advance the implementation of their work plans and invited FAO Members and GSP partners to nominate experts to contribute to the development of activities and products promoted by the GSP networks in response to the decisions of this Plenary Assembly and their work plans, as well as to contribute to the dissemination of information on the networks in their respective countries.

The Plenary Assembly requested the Secretariat to facilitate participation from all regions in the Technical Networks and to improve communication between the technical networks, the RSPs, and the national focal points to ensure proper reporting and coordination at all levels.

The Plenary assembly invited resource partners to support the activities of the networks and to carry out field activities through specific projects on the various themes.

The Plenary Assembly took note of the suggestion to create a Technical Network on Soil and Water Conservation and requested the Secretariat to prepare a concept note following a participatory and transparent process to ensure that existing efforts are not duplicated.

9.1 International Network of Soil Information Institutions (INSII)

Mr Luis Rodríguez Lado (GSP Secretariat) presented the main activities carried out by the International Network of Soil Information Institutions (INSII) on behalf of its Chair, Mr Luca Montanarella. The Plenary Assembly was updated regarding the network's activities on global data products, global and national soil information system development, capacity development, and publications. He also presented the progress in the Global Soil Information System (GLOSIS) and the Global Soil Nutrient Map (GSNmap) and its two-phased initiative. Mr Lado also briefed the participants on the resumption of activities for the preparation of the Global Soil Erosion Map (GSERmap). Presentation on item 9.1 is available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly invited FAO Members to establish national soil information systems in accordance with INSII guidelines and with the support of the GSP Secretariat.

The Plenary Assembly invited INSII members to nominate national experts for the development of the GSNmap and GSERmap and welcomed the progress of the capacity development programme aimed at empowering countries in digital soil mapping and soil data management.

9.2 Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN) and its initiative on soil spectroscopy

Ms Hanane Aroui Boukbida, Vice-Chair of the Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN), presented the main activities as well as the structure of the network. GLOSOLAN operates at three different levels: at the global level, at the regional level, and at the national level. Ms Aroui Boukbida updated the partners on the progress in the harmonisation of standard operating procedures (SOPs), training on the implementation of GLOSOLAN SOPs and training on health and safety; the implementation of external quality control and training on the implementation of internal quality control; and trainings provided in several languages on the maintenance and use of equipment and its procurement, establishment of a donation and barter system and activities related to the management of laboratories and data management. Ms Aroui Boukbida also presented the activities carried out by the regional soil laboratory networks and a proposal to develop a certification system. Presentation on item 9.2 is available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly requested the Secretariat to verify whether the certification of soil laboratories is feasible within FAO rules and procedures and, if so, to establish a clear pathway for its implementation, with benchmarks and milestones.

The Plenary Assembly called upon Members to facilitate the implementation of the Resolution on the international exchange of soil samples for research purposes under GLOSOLAN, which was endorsed at the 27th Session of COAG and promote the organization of national and international proficiency tests.

9.3 International Network of Black Soils (INBS)

Dr Miguel Angel Taboada, Chair of the International Network of Black Soils (INBS), updated the Assembly on the activities carried out by the network, highlighting the organisation of several webinars showcasing success stories in the sustainable management of black soils. He also presented the INBS work plan for 2024/2025. Presentation on item 9.3 is available [here](#).

Some interventions, especially from online participants, for an immediate halt to the impact of war on soils around the world, especially those most important for food security such as black soils. The GSP Secretariat commented that support is already being provided to a number of countries to assess the impact of military activities on soil health and pledged to continue to provide support to countries and territories in need to restore war-affected soils.

The Plenary Assembly requested INBS to review the definition of black soils in search of a broader concept and the Secretariat to strengthen cooperation with the Global Peatlands Initiative.

9.4 International Network of Salt-affected Soils (INSAS)

Professor Jorge Batlle-Sales, Chair of the International Network of Salt Affected Soils (INSAS),

presented the activities and the main achievements of the network which is composed of 827 members from 125 countries. The Plenary Assembly was updated on the finalization of the *Global report on the status of salt-affected soils*, the SOPs for salt-affected soils developed in cooperation with GLOSOLAN, the webinars covering the topics of measurement, sampling, modeling, management, and governance of salt-affected soils, and on the development of a harmonized protocol for soil salinity and sodicity sampling, mapping, and assessment. Presentation on item 9.4 is available [here](#).

9.5 International Network on Soil Fertility and Fertilizers (INSOILFER) including the International Network on Fertilizer Analysis (INFA) and the implementation of the International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers

Dr Georges Ndzana, Chair of the International Network on Soil Fertility and Fertilizers (INSOILFER), presented this newly created network to the Plenary Assembly. The network was established in 2023 to support the implementation of the International Code of Conduct for Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers (Fertilizer Code). INSOILFER consists of 670 members and 186 laboratories from 85 countries. The International Network on Fertilizer Analysis (INFA), which was part of GLOSOLAN, has now been integrated into INSOILFER as its working group 3, maintaining its membership and focus. Dr Ndzana presented the objectives of INSOILFER and the three working groups in which the network has been structured. He then presented the governance apparatus of the working groups as well as the ongoing activities. He concluded by inviting and encouraging more experts to join the network. Presentation on item 9.5 is available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly requested INSOILFER to address nano fertilizers and other developments that can help to improve nutrient use efficiency and reduce pollution.

9.6 International Network on Soil Biodiversity (NETSOB)

Professor Peter de Ruiter, former Chair of the International Network on Soil Biodiversity (NETSOB), presented the activities carried out during the last 11 months, including the preparation of several scientific papers. NETSOB is currently composed by 1 032 members from over 100 countries. He paid a heartfelt tribute to Dr Diana Wall who passed away recently but was the cornerstone for NETSOB's activities and the development and awareness of soil biodiversity worldwide. Prof de Ruiter also updated the Assembly on the progress in the design of the Global Soil Biodiversity Observatory (GLOSOB) and its tiered approach including different soil biodiversity indicators according to the capacities and data available in different countries. Presentation on item 9.6 is available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly approved the GLOSOB concept note and encouraged FAO Members and resource partners to join and support the development of GLOSOB for measuring and monitoring soil biodiversity and soil health.

9.7 International Network on Soil Pollution (INSOP)

Professor Ravi Naidu, Chair of the International Network on Soil Pollution (INSOP), presented INSOP's activities and achievements. The network is composed of 1 100 members from 130 countries, including scientist, practitioners, consulting companies, and land users. The Assembly was updated on the six areas of work of the network, its governance, its objectives, the work plan 2023-2025, and the

projects for which the network has received requests for technical support, especially in countries affected by military activities and war, as well as by other human activities causing soil pollution in agricultural lands. Prof Naidu called on resource partners to continue to support these activities as the demand for such a specialised network has proven to be very high. Presentation on item 9.7 is available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly encouraged INSOP members to focus on enhancing the capacity of Members and partners to assess, monitor, and remediate environmental pollution.

Item 10. World Soil Day (theme for 2025), awareness raising on soils and Prizes: for information and decision (GSPPA: XII/2024/10)

Ms Isabelle Verbeke (GSP Secretariat) presented the outcomes of the celebration of World Soil Day (WSD) 2023 as well as the preparation for the World Soil Day 2024. The presentation outlined the evolution of WSD over the past decade, showcasing its expansion from eight events in 2013 to over 10 000 in 2023. She also mentioned the winners of the Glinka World Soil Prize 2023 and the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award 2023. Presentation on item 10 is available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly appreciated the successful official WSD celebration held in December 2023 as well as all the satellite events organized by partners and welcomed the programme foreseen for WSD 2024 under the theme *Caring for soils: measure, manage, monitor*. It encouraged Members, other partners and stakeholders to organize WSD celebrations under the 2024 theme.

The Plenary Assembly also appreciated the successful organization of the Glinka World Soil Prize in 2023, invited partners to disseminate the call for nominations for the Glinka World Soil Prize 2024, ensuring a fully inclusive process through submissions from all regions, and called on resource partners to contribute financially to the prize beyond 2024.

The Plenary Assembly welcomed the successful organization of the King Bhumibol WSD Award in 2023, invited partners to disseminate the call for nominations for the 2024 Award, and called on resource partners to contribute financially to the prize beyond 2024.

The Plenary Assembly supported the theme for WSD 2025 "*Healthy soils for healthy cities*", but asked the Secretariat to consider using "*Living soils for lively cities*" as an alternative if the translation of the former into other languages does not work.

Item 11. Proposal to establish the United Nations Decade on Soil Health (GSPPA: XII/2024/11)

Mr Lifeng Li, Director of the Land and Water Division (NSL) of FAO, presented the background paper prepared by the GSP Secretariat on Thailand's proposal to establish the UN Decade on Soil Health and opened the floor for discussion. Presentation on item 11 is available [here](#).

The Plenary Assembly welcomed the proposal of Thailand and the background information set out in the document for establishing a UN Decade on Soil Health and supported the establishment of a UN Decade on Soil Health for the period 2031-2040.

The Plenary Assembly requested the Secretariat, in coordination with other FAO bodies and relevant stakeholders, to start preparing a detailed proposal including lessons learned from other UN decades, concrete actions beyond awareness raising, timetable and budget for consideration by the 13th GSP Plenary Assembly. After endorsement by the Plenary Assembly, the proposal should be widely disseminated by the champion country or countries advocating for this proposal, who should submit the proposal for consideration by COAG and the FAO Director-General.

Item 12. Report on efforts towards sustainable soil management by partners

Due to time constraints and the fact that many partners reported progress on the various agenda items or during the Soil Partners' Day on 4 June, it was not possible to address this agenda item.

Item 13. Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, and appointment of the Rapporteur for the next period

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the GSP and the principle of rotation, the Plenary Assembly called on the following Regional Groups to nominate the Chair, Vice-chair, and Rapporteur for the 13th GSP Plenary Assembly as follows:

- Chair nominated by the North America Regional Group;
- Vice-chair nominated by the Southwest Pacific Regional Group; and
- Rapporteur nominated by the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Group.

Mr Lifeng Li, Director of the Land and Water Division (NSL) of FAO suggested the Regional Groups to start consultations promptly to ensure timely appointments and further clarified that the Chairperson, Vice-chair and Rapporteur can be representatives of FAO member nations of the regional group, either from permanent missions/representatives or from capital, or non-state actors/partners.

Mr Lifeng Li thanked the participants before closing the session.

Item 14. Date and venue of the next Plenary session

The Plenary Assembly agreed that the 13th GSP Plenary Assembly will take place from 3 to 5 June 2025, upon the clearance by FAO management.

Annex I: Agenda

Twelfth session of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly

Hybrid

FAO headquarters and virtual, 03 - 05 June 2024

Opening of the session

- Remarks by Dr QU Dongyu, FAO Director-General

1. Adoption of the agenda: *for decision* (GSPPA: XII/2024/1)
2. Status on the Implementation of the GSP Action Framework: *for decision* (GSPPA: XII/2024/2)
3. Implications of the establishment of a Sub-committee on soils under COAG and maintaining the GSP in its current structure: *for decision* (GSPPA: XII/2024/3)
4. Work of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel of Soils (ITPS): *for information and decision* (GSPPA: XII/2024/4)
 - 4.1. *Report by the chairperson on main activities and outcomes of the work programme 2023-2024*
 - 4.2. *ITPS work programme 2024-2025*
 - 4.3. *Preparation and launch of the Second edition of the Status of the World's Soil Resources Report*
5. Report on the financial status of the GSP: *for information* (GSPPA: XII/2024/5)
6. Report on normative tools and actions on sustainable soil management: *for information and decision* (GSPPA: XII/2024/6)
 - 6.1. *Status of soil governance and SoILEX update, including implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management and the SSM Protocol.*
 - 6.2. *Implementation of the RECSOIL: recarbonization of agricultural soils*
 - 6.3. *Implementation of the Global Soil Doctors Programme*
7. Status about Global Symposia: *for information and decision* (GSPPA: XII/2024/7)
 - 7.1. *Report on the Global Symposium on Soils and Water 2023*
 - 7.2. *Preparations for the Global Symposium on Soil Data and Information 2024*
 - 7.3. *Preparations for the Global Symposium on Soil Sealing and Urban Soils 2025*
8. Report on Regional Soil Partnerships: *for information and decision* (GSPPA: XII/2024/8)
9. Progress of the GSP Technical Networks: *for information and decision* (GSPPA: XII/2024/9)
 - 9.1. *International Network of Soil Information institutions (INSII)*
 - 9.2. *Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN) and its initiative on soil spectroscopy (GLOSOLAN-Spec)*
 - 9.3. *International Network of Black Soils (INBS)*
 - 9.4. *International Network of Salt Affected Soils (INSAS)*

- 9.5. *International Network on Soil Fertility and Fertilizers (INSOILFER) including the International Network on Fertilizer Analysis (INFA) and the implementation of the International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers*
- 9.6. *International Network on Soil Biodiversity (NETSOB)*
- 9.7. *International Network on Soil Pollution (INSOP)*
- 10. World Soil Day (theme for 2025), awareness raising on soils and Prizes: *for information and decision* (GSPPA: XII/2024/10)
- 11. Proposal to establish the United Nations Decade on Soil Health (GSPPA: XII/2024/11)
- 12. Report on efforts towards sustainable soil management by partners: *for information*
- 13. Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, and appointment of the Rapporteur for the next period: *for decision*
- 14. Date and venue of the next Plenary session
- 15. Any other matters

Annex II: List of participants

Delegations of FAO Members

Country	Participants
Argentina	Jorge Gambale
Argentina	Cecilia Vespasiano
Argentina	Mariano Laffaye
Argentina	Guillermo Adolfo Spika
Argentina	Carolina Hernandez
Argentina	Carlos Bernardo Cherniak
Armenia	Marine Navasardyan
Australia	Kristi Stinson
Australia	Emma Hatcher
Australia	Ruth Mallett
Austria	Günter Walkner
Brazil	Carla Barroso Carneiro
Brazil	Fabio Meira De Oliveira Dias
Brazil	Fernanda Vanessa Mascarenhas Magalhaes
Brazil	Arnaldo De Baena Fernandes
Cabo Verde	Elsa Simoes
Canada	Bob Turnock
Canada	Julie Emond
Chile	Rodrigo Patricio Osorio Hermosilla
China	Xiaoqi Yuan

China	Yi Ren
China	Yan Hu
China	Junda Zhang
China	Yang Gao
China	Shengping Li
Congo	Ongouala Paul Raphaël
Congo	Ntsouanva Bienvenu
Congo	Ngangoue Glaspie Benedie
Costa Rica	Gabriela Carmona Araya
Costa Rica	Federico Zamora Cordero
Costa Rica	Jorge Aguilar Castillo
Costa Rica	Carla Sierra Zuniga
Côte D'Ivoire	Seydou Cisse
Côte D'Ivoire	Koffi Adjoumani
Côte D'Ivoire	Yapo Guillaume Dagou
Côte D'Ivoire	Lalet Larissa Houenenou Nee Soukou
Cuba	Dagoberto Rodriguez
Cuba	Claudia Gonzalez Toledo
Cuba	Gabriela Gamez
Czechia	Kare IJacko
Czechia	Roman Diatka
Czechia	Radim Vacha
Czechia	Josef Kozak

Dominican Republic	Mario Arvelo
Dominican Republic	Joseline Pujol
Dominican Republic	Julia Vicioso
Dominican Republic	Berioska Morrison
Dominican Republic	Larissa Veloz
Dominican Republic	Patricia Rodríguez
Dominican Republic	Maira Vargas
Egypt	Mohamed Mohsen Elkholy
Egypt	Mohamed Abdel Hamid
Estonia	Eike Lepmets
Estonia	Madli Linder
Estonia	Elsa Putku
Estonia	Aire Rihe
European Union	Mirco Barbero
European Union	Annette Schneegans
European Union	Ioulia Drossinou
European Union	Beata-Dorota Golenska
European Union	Blaga Popova
European Union	Alexandra Valkenburg
European Union	Ludovica Cutuli
European Union	Pierre Terlinden-Ruhl
European Union	Oda-Marie Stey
European Union	Matthijs Van Huijgevoort

European Union	Henk Jan Ormel
European Union	Paolo De Castro
European Union	Jan Huitema
European Union	Tom Vandenkendelaere
European Union	Marijn Verhees
European Union	Michael Niejahr
European Union	Barthelemy Lanos
France	Michel Leveque
France	Elise Le Bihan
France	Céline Jurgensen
France	Raoul Mille
France	Hanane Aroui Boukbida
France	Esther Delrieu
France	Sylvain Fournel
France	Christian Hartmann
Germany	Joachim Bleicker
Germany	Nicole Wellbrock
Germany	Oliver Mellenthin
Germany	JonasEloo
Germany	Moritz Vogt-Hohenlinde
Guatemala	Olga Maria Perez Tuna
Guatemala	Cecilia Beatriz Cáceres Valdez
Guatemala	Fausto Ernesto Aragón Polanco

Haiti	Jean Bony Alexandre
Haiti	Rose Stéphanie Boisrond
India	Balaji Jujjavarapu
Indonesia	Nugraha Purna Cita
Indonesia	Erma Rheindrayani
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Safdar Niazi Shahraki
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Ali Reza Esmaeily Falak
Israel	Alon Maor
Jordan	Mashhour Alsgour
Kenya	Gikandi Anthony Muriithi
Kenya	Richard Munyao Kanui
Kuwait	Manar.s.m. Al-sabah
Kuwait	Naieff Sh Jm Aldousari
Libya	Ali Amin A.a. Kafu
Malaysia	Khazana Ibrahim
Malaysia	Abdul Rahman Abdul Wahab
Mali	Aly Coulibaly
Mexico	Miguel Garcia Winder
Mexico	Jose Luis Delgado Crespo
Morocco	Rachid Moussadek
Morocco	Youssef Balla
Morocco	Abdellah Larhmaid
Morocco	Yahya Bouzid

Morocco	Redouane Arrach
Myanmar	Aung Naing Soe
Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	Simkje Kruiderink
New Zealand	Jenny Louise Reid
Niger	Elh Moudi Moustapha Abdourahaman
Nigeria	Yaya Olaitan Olaniran
Philippines	Nathaniel G. Imperial
Philippines	Nina P. Cainglet
Philippines	Josyline C. Javelosa
Philippines	Gina P. Nilo
Philippines	Denise A. Solano
Philippines	Jovette T. Almeda
Philippines	Bertolio P. Arellano
Philippines	Maribel R. Jalalon
Philippines	Eduardo V. Alberto
Philippines	Dante E. Margate
Philippines	Karen S. Bautista
Philippines	Diosdado M. Manalus
Philippines	Oscar O. Carpio
Philippines	Joven P. Espineli
Philippines	Henry A. Apolinales
Philippines	Wennie A. Berganio
Philippines	Jacqueline D. Nicolas

Portugal	Cláudia Sá
Portugal	Maria Centeno
Russian Federation	Victoria Bocharova
Senegal	Madiagne Tall
Senegal	Marie Gnana Bassene
Senegal	Ngor Ndiaye
Slovakia	Hudec Matej
Slovakia	Sobocká Jaroslava
Slovakia	Houskova Beata
South Africa	Nosipho Nausca Jean Jezile
South Africa	Barend Jacobus Lombard
Sudan	Sadia Daak
Sudan	Altayeb Ahmed Sayed
Sudan	Eiman Fadul
Switzerland	Elena Havlicek
Thailand	Pathumwadee Imtour
Thailand	Ratchanok Sangpenchan
Thailand	Supajit Sriariyawat
Thailand	Federica Veschi
Thailand	Pattaneeporn Naruemitapa
Thailand	Kreeyaporn Devahastin
Thailand	Prapa Taranet
Thailand	Pornuma Harabutra

Thailand	Wichedpong Paokla
Thailand	Wiwat Salyakamthorn
Thailand	Piboon Awasdaruharote
Thailand	Varakiet Sujiwarodom
Thailand	Somsak Somchit
Thailand	Wipa Pinyochotiwong
Thailand	Witthaya Panpunyakorakul
Thailand	Torvong Puipanthavong
Thailand	Varakiet Sujiwarodom
Thailand	On-uma Leelanoi
Thailand	Aeumporn Loypradit
Thailand	Pannarai Phaholyotin
Thailand	Rojanee Lelakul
Thailand	Nongnuch Sripun
Thailand	Arthit Sukhkasem
Thailand	Nopmanee Suvannang
Thailand	Alessandra Avegnano
Thailand	Kundhinee Aksornwong
Thailand	Nattaporn Puchai
Thailand	Waranya Puchai
Thailand	Sasivimon Iamsaard
Thailand	Kraiwit Jaksan
Thailand	Amnart Iamsaard

Thailand	Meteechai Kaewnin
Thailand	Pichaya Jaksan
Thailand	Siriporn Surapaitoon
Thailand	Anussana Duangleka
Thailand	Puttaporn Ewtoksan
Thailand	Napaput Kaewnin
Thailand	Sasiprapa Kaewnin
Thailand	Supapron Tabphueng
Thailand	Saowalak Wangthaphan
Thailand	Chirakan Pornsopit
Thailand	Suchada Kongsuk
Thailand	Chanoknart Kongsuk
Türkiye	Ayhan Baran
United States of America	Jeffrey Prescott
United States of America	Ellen Luger
United States of America	Sean Cox
United States of America	Charles Kome
United States of America	Jonathan Maynard
United States of America	Jeffrey Herrick
Uzbekistan	Abat Fayzullaev
Uzbekistan	Nuriddin Kushnazarov

Other Participants

Country	Affiliation	Participant name
Australia	Soil Science Australia; Cooperative Research Centre for High Performance Soils (Soil CRC)	Penelope Wensley
Australia	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Rowena Yates
Azerbaijan	Ministry of Agriculture	Mahmud Abdullayev
Bangladesh	Soil Resource Development Institute (SRDI)	Taiabur Rahman
Belarus	RUE "Institute of Soil Science and Agrochemistry"	Viktar Tsyrybka
Belgium	European Commission	Maria Jose Amaral
Belgium	European Commission - DG AGRI	Luis Sanchez Alvarez
Benin	INRAB	Attanda Mouinou Igue
Brazil	UFRRJ	Lucia Anjos
Brazil	Federal University of Mato Grosso	Milton Ferreira De Moraes
Brazil	Embrapa	Maria De Lourdes Mendonça Santos Brefin
Brazil	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock	Kleber Souza Dos Santos
Canada	Global Affairs Canada	Nikita Eriksen-Hamel
Canada	University of Manitoba	David Lobb
China	Tsinghua University	Deyi Hou
China	Cultivated Land Quality Monitoring and Protection Center, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs	Yan Hu
China	Department of Farmland Enhancement, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs	Shengping Li
China	Department of Farmland Enhancement, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs	Jinbang Peng
China	Cultivated Land Quality Monitoring and Protection Center, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs	Yi Ren
China		Jing Song
China	Department of Farmland Enhancement, Ministry of	Xiaoqi Yuan

	Agriculture and Rural Affairs	
China	Cultivated Land Quality Monitoring and Protection center, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs	Junda Zhang
Colombia	Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia UNAD	Gerardo Ojeda
Costa Rica	Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería	Gabriela Carmona
Cuba	Ministerio Agricultura	Yamila Vigo Cuza
Denmark	European Environment Agency	Rainer Baritz
Ecuador	INIAP	Manuel Carrillo
Egypt	Soils, Water and Environment Research Institute	Mohamed Elsayed
El Salvador	Centa	Ana Valencia
Ethiopia	Hawassa University	Sheleme Beyene Jiru
Finland	Natural Resources Institute Finland	Aleksi Lehtonen
Finland	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Jaakko Nippala
France		Lucas Blanchard Sultan
France	CIRAD	Julien Demenois
France	SGAE	Euriel Godebert
France	International Fertilizer Association	Yvonne Harz-Pitre
France	The French National Research Agency	Inès Soltani
France	Ministry of Agriculture	Patricia Laville
French Polynesia	Direction de l'Agriculture	Laurent Maunas
Gabon	Ministère de l'Agriculture	Raphaël Ngadi Litadi
Georgia	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia	Ekaterine Sanadze
Germany	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture	Barbara Heinrich
Guatemala	Alianza Guatemalteca para el Manejo de los Suelos	Andrés Búcaro
Guatemala	Embassy of Guatemala in Rome	Cecilia Cáceres
Guatemala	Dirección de Información Geográfica, Estadística y Gestión de Riesgos - Ministerio de Agricultura Ganadería y Alimentación	Rubén Darío García Solares
Guatemala	Ministerio de Agricultura	Sergio Rafael Lopez Salazar

Guyana	PISLM	Calvin James
Iceland	Land and Forest Iceland	Anna Maria Agustsdottir
India	ICAR-ATARI, Kolkata	Pradip Dey
India	Association for Promoting Sustainability in Campuses and Communities	Nandhivarman Muthu
India	Grow Indigo Pvt Ltd	Basavaraddi Radder
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Ministry of Agriculture - Jihad	Alireza Esmaili Falak
Ireland	Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine	Niall Ryan
Italy	IUSS	Edoardo Costantini
Italy	CREA	Maria Fantappie
Italy		Kamar Kh
Italy		Dan Leskien
Italy	University of Naples Federico II - Department of Agricultural Sciences	Nunzio Romano
Japan	Ministry of agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	Hitomi Banura
Jordan	Ministry of Agriculture	Emad Alqudah
Kenya	Independent Consultant	Anthony Esilaba
Kenya	Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation	Anne Muriuki
Kuwait		Manar Al Sabah
Latvia	Ministry of Agriculture	Dace Guste
Lesotho	Ministry of Environment and Forestry	Maseeiso Hlongwane
Lesotho	Government of Lesotho	Selebaleng Mofolo
Lesotho	Department of Agricultural Research	Selebalo Ramakhanna
Libya	Agricultural Research Center	Jalal Elgadi
Malaysia	Department of Agriculture	Nur Azarina Abu Bakar
Malaysia	Department of Agriculture	Sumathy Rajendran
Malaysia	Juta Mewangi Enterprise	Bella Anis
Mexico	Tecnologico Nacional de Mexico	Lenin Medina

Mexico	UNAM & IUSS	Laura Bertha Reyes Sánchez
Morocco	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development and Water and Forests	Fatima Zahra Nassik
Morocco	OCP Group	Kenza Farkouch
Morocco	OCP SA	Zineb Jabri
Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	ISRIC-World Soil Information	Hendrik Van Den Bosch
Oman	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources	Hamood Al-Hashmi
Pakistan	The Seed Place	Syed Ali Abbas
Pakistan	PARC	Raza Khan
Palestine	Ministry of Agriculture	Imad Ghanma
Paraguay	Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganaderia	Ken Moriya
Peru	DGAAA - Ministerio de Desarrollo Agrario y Riego	Rafael Balta
Philippines	Bureau of Soils and Water Management	Karen Bautista
Philippines	Philippine Permanent Representation	Wennie Berganio
Philippines	DA-BSWM	Gina Nilo
Philippines	BUREAU OF SOILS AND WATER MANAGEMENT	Denise Solano
Philippines	Bureau of Soils and Water Management	Bertolio Arellano
Portugal		Anabela Cachada
Portugal	Portuguese Soil Science Society	Antonio Perdigao
Russian Federation	National Movement for Conservation Agriculture	Zakharova Elena
Russian Federation	National Movement for Conservation Agriculture	Galina Knurova
Russian Federation	National Movement for Conservation Agriculture	Liudmila Orlova
Rwanda	International Union for Conservation of Nature	Jules Rutebuka
Serbia	Ministry of Environmental Protection	Marija Dragovic
Spain	Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación	Elena Boyano Gago
Spain	UdL-ITPS	Rosa M Poch
Sweden	SLU	Erik Karlton
Switzerland		Isabelle Fragnière

Syrian Arab Republic	GCSAR	Manhal Alzoubi
Syrian Arab Republic		Dareen Delaa
Syrian Arab Republic	GCSAR	Alaa Khallouf
Trinidad and Tobago	Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries	Gabrielle De Souza
Trinidad and Tobago	The University of the West Indies	Gaius Eudoxie
Tunisia		Abdourahman Maki
Tunisia	Ministry of Agriculture	Attia Rafla
Türkiye	Ankara University	Oguz Can Turgay
Türkiye	MoAF, GD of Agricultural Research and Policies (TAGEM)	Sevinc Madenoglu
Ukraine	National Scientific Center «Institute for Soil Science and Agrochemistry Research named after O.N. Sokolovsky» (NSC ISSAR)	Sviatoslav Baliuk
Ukraine	National Scientific Center «Institute for Soil Science and Agrochemistry Research named after O.N. Sokolovsky» (NSC ISSAR)	Arkadiy Levin
United States of America	Hawaii State Department of Health	Roger Brewer
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	University of East Anglia & Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research	Lewis Peake
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	UKCEH	David Robinson
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	MPPEW	Fabiola Mendoza
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Agricultura Productiva y Tierras	Venezuela Osorio José

Wallis Et Futuna Islands	Direction des Services de l'Agriculture de la Forêt et de la Pêche de Wallis et Futuna	Savelio Telai
Zambia	Ministry of Agriculture	Reuben Phiri Mtolo
Zambia	Zambia Agriculture Research Institute	Dickson Ng'Uni
FAO		Abdelghani Alioui
FAO		Anita Tibasaaga
FAO		Ariella Glinni
FAO		Aurelie Bres
FAO		Dalel Ouerchefani
FAO		Ece Aksoy
FAO		Fouzia Chkar
FAO		Ibrahim Farmo
FAO		Ravi Dissanayake
FAO		Souleymane Traore
FAO		Johan Valero
FAO		Reyes Verde Luis Geronimo
FAO		Vera Boerger
FAO		Yacine Allaoui
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Arturo Varela
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Bellington Mudyawabikwa
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Bofei Li
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Carolina Olivera Sanchez
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Filippo Bendetti
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Giacomo Rocchegiani
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Giusy Emiliano
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Imane Slimani
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Isabel Luotto
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Isabelle Verbeke

FAO	GSP Secretariat	Janet Nabwami
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Kirill Antyukhin
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Lifeng Li
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Luis Rodriguez
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Marcos Angelini
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Margherita Furenti
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Maria Chiara Humura
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Maria Cruz Ferro
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Maria Konyushkova
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Matteo Sala
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Michaela Brown
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Natalia Rodríguez Eugenio
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Newton Nyapwere
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Sergejus Ustinov
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Vinisa Santillan Saynes
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Yi Peng
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Yusuf Yigini
FAO	GSP Secretariat	Yuxin Tong