**Session Proposal**

# Session Title

Soil literacy for all: transforming global awareness into engagement and impact through collective action

# Session Organizers

**Organizers**: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its Global Soil Partnership

**Contact persons**:

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# Session Description

Established in 2012, the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) under the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has played a central role in promoting soils on the global agenda and advocating for sustainable soil management. Recognizing that soil degradation is often rooted in limited public understanding and appreciation, the GSP has focused on transforming technical soil knowledge into compelling, accessible, and action-oriented content for all.

This session will explore the evolution from awareness-raising to building soil knowledge and literacy, drawing from over a century of scientific and advocacy work by the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) and more than a decade of coordinated and complimentary efforts by FAO and its GSP. While milestones like World Soil Day and international prizes such as the King Bhumibol and Glinka Awards have helped to mobilize global attention, the broader impact lies in sustained collaboration. Over the last 12 years, the GSP has developed a wide range of creative and multilingual campaigns, educational materials, and citizen engagement initiatives that have brought soils into classrooms, media, community dialogues, and policy agendas. Working closely with IUSS and many other partners, these efforts have significantly contributed to making soil knowledge more accessible, actionable, and relevant across all levels of society.

Despite this progress, soils remain underrepresented, particularly when compared to issues like water or air. The session will reflect on the growing body of global efforts that prioritize public engagement and education as key tools to drive soil protection and conservation.

Through keynote interventions, panel dialogue, and interactive discussion, participants will share lessons learned, showcase successful initiatives, and explore a forward-looking roadmap to enhance soil knowledge and citizen participation worldwide. This session is a timely opportunity to inspire cross-sector collaboration and elevate soil literacy as a critical foundation for sustainability and climate resilience.

# Format

The session will feature a dynamic and interactive structure:

* 5 minutes – Welcome and session overview (Moderator)
* 30 minutes – Keynote presentations (4 speakers, 7–8 minutes each)
* 25 minutes – Moderated panel discussion (4 speakers + Q&A)
* 15 minutes – Audience engagement and wrap-up

# Proposed Speakers

**Isabelle Verbeke** – FAO, Land and Water Officer, Global Soil Partnership Secretariat (will provide an overview of FAO's and GSP’s work on soil literacy and public engagement, drawing from over a decade of initiatives and global campaigns).

**Nengchang Chen** – Professor, Guangdong Institute of Eco-environmental and Soil Sciences, China (will share insights on integrating soil literacy into environmental education and outreach in China, highlighting national regional innovations and challenges).

**Prapa Taranet** – Research and Development of the Land Development Department (LDD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand (will present Thailand’s national strategies for promoting soil awareness, including public campaigns and education aligned with the legacy of King Bhumibol).

**Arwyn Jones / Marialuisa Dal Poz** – European Commission (Joint Research Centre or DG AGRI, Soil Mission Secretariat) (will showcase the EU’s Mission Soil and its communication and citizen engagement efforts, linking policy frameworks with grassroots awareness).

**IUSS Representative** (Edoardo Costantini / Irene Fabbri / Laura Berta Reyes Sánchez) – International Union of Soil Sciences (will provide historical context and international perspectives on the evolution of soil science communication and public education).

**Giulia Campodonico** – European Network of Living Labs (will introduce co-creation and citizen science approaches in soil literacy, emphasizing the soil living labs as a tool for community involvement).

**Alireza Esmaili Falak** – Ministry of Agriculture-Jahad, Iran, Head of International Affairs, Deputy of Water & Soil. (will highlight Iran’s programs for farmer engagement and public awareness as part of regional soil conservation strategies).

**Claire Chenu** – Soil Scientist, INRAE, France (will present national efforts to increase public soil awareness, particularly through data sharing platforms).

**Victor O. Chude** – Nigeria Institute of Soil Science, former Chair of the African Soil Partnership (will discuss regional approaches in Africa to improve soil literacy, with a focus on institutional collaboration and capacity-building).

**Honourable Penelope Wensley** – Former Australian National Soil Advocate; IUSS Distinguished Service Medal recipient (will provide strategic reflections on advocacy and policy engagement, drawing from her experience in elevating soils in national and international discourse).

**Axel Cerón González** – UNAM (Mexico), Young and Early Career Scientists Working Group (will represent youth and early-career perspectives, sharing innovative ways to engage the next generation in soil science and communication).