

**COMMUNIQUE OF THE 41ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOIL
SCIENCE SOCIETY OF NIGERIA HELD AT ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA
UNIVERSITY BAUCHI, BAUCHI STATE FROM 13TH TO 16TH MARCH 2017**

Preamble

The 41st Annual Conference of the Soil Science Society of Nigeria was held at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi State from 13th to 16th March 2017. The theme of the Conference was **Land Degradation, Sustainable Soil Management, Food and Nutrition Security**.

The welcome address was presented by the Chief Host and Vice-Chancellor, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Professor Ibrahim Saminu Abdulrahman, who warmly welcomed all members of the Soil Science Society of Nigeria to Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi State. The Vice-Chancellor further expressed his delight that the University was chosen to host the annual conference. The President of the Soil Science Society of Nigeria, Prof. V.O Chude, in his address stated that this year's conference would attempt to evaluate the progress made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 1, 2, 13 and 15. He emphasized the importance of the Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) of the Federal Government. The keynote address was presented by Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, the Honorable Minister of State for Agriculture. He stated that the Ministry had taken up the challenge of boosting local production of food to reduce over-dependence on food import, boost fertilizer consumption, revive rural economy and expand export earnings. Goodwill messages were given by Dr Y. Y. Mahmud, Commissioner of Science and Technology, Bauchi State; Engr. Sunday Edibo, Director of Lands and Climate Change, FMARD; Dr. Dan Azumi Mohammed, DG, NOTAP; Dr. Iliyasu Gital, Programme Manager, Bauchi State ADP; Dr. Balbir Singh representing MD, Indorama Eleme Fertilizers and Chemicals Ltd. The first Lead paper was presented by Prof. A.O. Ogunkunle on "Sustainable Soil Management: An imperative for food security", in which he emphasized that sustainable soil management is "a MUST" if Nigeria hopes to attain food security. He further

suggested that food security should be treated as human life security so that it may be accorded the importance it deserves. This was followed by Professors Effiom Oku and Damian Asawalam's presentation titled "Enhancing capacity of Soil Scientists in linking research to policy making: A critical role for Nigeria Institute of Soil Science", while Prof. A.M Kundiri's paper was on "Soil Degradation in Sudan and Sahel Savanna zones of Nigeria: Causes, Consequences and Remedies".

About three hundred (300) participants were in attendance, they included Soil Scientists in Universities, Research Institutes and eminent agriculturists in the private sector as well as other equally notable stakeholders in the various value chain crops, extension services, ADPs and valued farmers groups. Over 250 papers were presented in the areas of Soil Survey Classification and Evaluation, Soil Fertility and Fertilizer Management, Soil Conservation and Land Use Management, Soil Chemistry, Microbiology and Biotechnology as well as Soil Physics, Soil and Water Resources Management, Climate Change, and Biochar Technology.

Observations

Following the deliberations on the keynote address, lead papers as well as the plenary presentations and technical sessions, the Society notes with delight:

1. The passage by the National Assembly and signing into law by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Bill for an Act establishing the Nigerian Institute of Soil Science (NISS). The approval of the Institute will engender the enabling environment to holistically address the problems associated with the management of soil and land resources in the country.
2. The effort by government to improve fertilizer availability and access by farmers through the Presidential Fertilizer Initiative (PFI), especially the steps being taken by sub-national governments to revive fertilizer blending plants.
3. The well-intended Agricultural Diversification Policy of Government and associated programmes have increased agricultural intensification, especially

irrigation activities, and these could lead to unintended consequences of land degradation by erosion and salinization.

However, the Society observed with grave concern:

4. That soil and land degradation remains widespread in the country with other harmful practices which predispose soil to degradation such as bush burning, overgrazing and deforestation which have continued unabatedly.
5. That blanket application of NPK fertilizers still continues despite available scientific guidelines and the evidence for the need to include some secondary and micronutrients in fertilizer blends.
6. The net loss of extension officers and the gradual breakdown of the Extension System which could pose a great risk to the success of Government Agricultural Policy thrusts.
7. That public awareness on the importance of soil resources in the Nigerian national development is still limited in spite of the declaration of the International Decade of Soils.

Resolutions

In view of the importance of soil in agricultural production and considering the central role of soil in environmental and socio-economic life of man, the Soil Science Society of Nigeria hereby resolves as follows:

1. That the Society thanks Mr. President for signing into law the NISS Bill and remains grateful to the National Assembly in timely expediting the passage of the bill.
2. That the National Executive Committee of the Soil Science Society of Nigeria should continue to pursue the final gazetting of the Act establishing **NISS**
3. Appeals to Federal Government to expedite the gazetting of the NISS Act and facilitate the putting up of necessary structure for the take-off of the Institute
4. That there is need for re-afforestation programme intensification in Arid and Savanna zones of Nigeria.

5. That the NUC, National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) should work with the Society to review the existing basic Soil Science curriculum to reflect latest advancement in soil science and modern soil use challenges and encourage subscription into the study of Soil Science.
6. That there is the need for Nigeria to establish a National Soil Policy, working with NISS to regulate the use, conservation and management of the nation's soil resources, as acknowledged by Senator Heineken Lokpobiri (OFR), the Honorable minister of State for Agriculture.
7. That as a means of checking accelerated soil/land degradation, Soil Scientists should be actively involved in the design and construction of all soil/land based projects to ensure that appropriate measures are adopted to avoid catastrophic land degradation.
8. That there is increasing need to conserve the nation's soils and reclaim those that have been degraded physically, chemically and biologically through the adoption of suitable technologies tailored towards sustainable soil/land conservation and management, and climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as biodiversity.
9. Nigeria Metrological Agency (NIMET) should upscale grass-root campaign on climate change and its consequences, preparatory to the adoption of mitigation measures.
10. The three tiers of government should support all forms of gender main-streaming in climate change and extension as well as in the generation of sex disintegrated data on access to agricultural lands and input. There is also the need to enact policies that will protect small-holder farmers who are predominantly women.
11. That the benefits from agricultural sector interventions can be enhanced if vulnerable areas such as coastal zones and the arid northern areas are considered for targeting of specific activities.
12. Government should ensure prompt delivery and availability of fertilizers to farmers early enough in the season. The Federal government should continue to

provide the necessary support for the state governments that are yet to resuscitate or establish fertilizer blending plants.

13. That fertilizer blends should be site/region specific and should include Sulphur and zinc nutrient elements.

14. Federal and state governments should involve soil scientists in the implementation of the government diversification programme especially governments intent to engage the River Basin Development Authorities to expand irrigation facilities and water activities.

Appreciation

The Society hereby appreciates the warm reception accorded to participants at the conference by the Government of Bauchi State and the management of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University which made the 41st Annual Conference of the Society successful.

Prof. V. O. Chude FSSSN (President)

Prof. J. A. Adediran FSSSN (Secretary)

Dated this 15th day of March, 2017

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