

SOIL'S YEAR IN THE SUN

They say everyone gets their 15 minutes of fame ...their moment in the sun. This year, 2015, has been declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations as the International Year of Soils, a credit that seems long overdue.

A year seems hardly enough time to celebrate the fundamental contribution of soil, which is a resource so essential to the development and support of life on this planet of ours. For society at large, we are of course, where we are today because of the quality of our soils. Soils have fostered life, fed billions, and they have protected our environments. How we manage our soils has been an integral part of our great successes...and failures. We've depended on farmers and their daily relationship with soil for thousands of years.

So it has taken a few thousand of years for us to organize ourselves to the point where we can dedicate an entire year to celebrating soils. Yes, it's about time, but perhaps the timing is perfect. We have a great opportunity to promote our science of agronomy to those who might be examining for the first time with fresh, inquiring eyes, how agricultural production is accomplished today. In fact, this is one of the primary goals of the UN declaration, to "raise awareness among society and decision makers about the profound importance of soil for human life."

Activities related to the International Year of Soils are going to keep the contribution of soils in the forefront of our minds this year. Our experience in the field provides us with lots of good stories to highlight from across the globe, which can demonstrate the effectiveness of the many regionally-adapted techniques farmers use to manage and improve their soils.

So when 2015 is over and soil's time in this limelight is done, what should you do next as a manager of soil? Lets try to keep the ball rolling and maintain these new connections we've gained through this international effort. Lets keep them tuned-in on what is happening now, or is about to happen, down on the farm.



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