

Report on the First IUSS Conference on Sodic Soil Reclamation

During two days, July 31 and August 1, two connected meetings were organized in Changchun, China, the First IUSS Conference on Sodic Soil Reclamation and the annual meeting of the Salt-affected Soil Commission of the Soil Science Society of China. In Northeastern China, inside the Songnen Plain, there are areas with extreme levels of sodicity and alkalinity, but on the other hand in some areas irrigation is spreading, therefore a varied picture of salt-affected lands is present there, and that motivated the organizers to have the meeting in the Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology, where long experience has been accumulated on the Songnen Plain.



Colleagues present at the conference venue, © Salt-affected Commission of the Soil Science Society of China.

The conference was originally scheduled to take place between Sept. 17 and 19 in 2020, but due to the world lockdown following COVID19 pandemic outbreak, it was postponed to May 10-12, 2021. Due to still ongoing strict restrictions it was at last re-postponed to July 31 - Aug. 1, 2021, the fixed date of the conference. Pandemic is not yet over, international and domestic travel is still complicated with COVID19 tests and quarantines, therefore the conference was organized in a hybrid manner, some participants were physically present, others online abroad or sitting in quarantine. Additionally several presentations were prerecorded. To facilitate online international participation the registration was free. Conference registration was available at <http://ssr.csp.escience.cn>, but the Abstract Book is downloadable at <https://tibortothsoil.members.iif.hu/abstr/1stIUSSSodicReclamation2021.pdf>. More than thirty presentations were held each day in front of some two hundred domestic participants in a Conference Hall in downtown Changchun, plus several posters were presented. In the

online space some thirty participants contributed to the event from more than ten countries, but with the domination of Chinese reports. The combination of offline, online, prerecorded talks was a challenge not only for the organizers, but also for the strength of the internet system.

The quality of the talks was high and both days best representatives of the theory and practice of sodic soil reclamation gave presentations. Selecting only three milestones from the conference, these can be i) the proven adequacy of the index “Cation Ratio of Structural Stability” over earlier “Sodium Adsorption Ratio”, ii) the large number of parallel running complex projects on salt-affected soils all over China, iii) the complexity of such projects to result in a final commercial product through developing varieties/machinery/industrial technologies in such areas.

The conference was jointly organized by Commission 3.6 Salt-affected Soils of the International Union of Soil Sciences, the Salt-affected Commission of the Soil Science Society of China, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the People’s Government of Jilin Province, China. It was hosted by the Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology, Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Although the conference is over, the newest travel restrictions oblige some participants to stay in Changchun until fresh COVID test results will authorize them to use airplane to travel back to their hometown. Nevertheless we think that was a lucky moment to organize these meetings in a relatively quiet period and wish fast recovery from the pandemic with general vaccination and to have face-to-face meetings as soon as possible.

Tibor Tóth and Zhichun Wang, organizers.