

COMMUNIQUE OF THE 43rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOIL SCIENCE SOCIETY OF NIGERIA HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE, MAKURDI BENUE STATE FROM 15TH TO 19TH JULY, 2019

Preamble

The 43rd Annual Conference of the Soil Science Society of Nigeria was held at the University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State, from 15 – 19 July 2019. The theme of the Conference was “*Understanding Nigerian Soils for Sustainable food and Nutrition Security and Healthy Environment*”. The opening ceremony was chaired by the Vice Chancellor, University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Professor Anande Richard Kimbir. The keynote address at the opening ceremony was given by the Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Environment, Mrs. Ibukun Odusote who was ably represented by the Director, Special Duties, Mr. Muhammed Isiaka Yakubu.



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The Executive Governor, His Excellency, Dr. Samuel Ortom was ably represented by the Deputy Governor, Engr. Benson Abounu who made some remarks on behalf of the Governor and subsequently declared the Conference open.

Other dignitaries that attended the Conference included the President, Nigeria Institute of Soil Science, Prof. Ayo Ogunkunle; the Vice-Chancellor of Federal University, Wukari, Prof. Abubakar Kundiri; the Registrar, Nigeria

Institute of Soil Science, Prof. V. O. Chude; the Provost, College of Education, Minna, Prof. Muhammed Yakubu and the President. Goodwill messages were received from Mr. Cyril Bikom, who represented the Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and rural Development, Dr. Abubakar Umar;



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The president of NISS, Prof. Ayo. Ogunkunle; the Vice-Chancellor, Federal University of Technology, Minna Prof. Abdullahi Bala who was ably represented by Prof. A. O. Osunde, the Vice-Chancellor of Federal University, Wukari Prof. Abubakar Kundiri; Fmr. Vice-Chancellor of ATBU, Prof. Saminu Ibrahim; Dr. Donald Madukwe of OCP Africa Fertilizers Nigerian Limited and a representative of Indorama Eleme Fertilizer Limited.

The opening ceremony featured a welcome remark by the Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee, Dr. Bemgba Anjembe, a welcome address by the Vice Chancellor of University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Professor Anande Richard Kimbir, an address by the President of SSSN, Prof. B. A. Raji, Conferment of Honorary Fellow Award on the Executive Governor of Benue State, Dr. Samuel Ortom, as well as the launching of the book “Soil Science Society of Nigeria @ 50” and the proceeding of 2018 conference. The Lead paper at the conference was presented by Prof. C. L. A. Asadu.



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Over three hundred and fifty soil scientists, farmers, policy makers, environmentalists and students attended the Conference. Participants brainstormed on current challenges of Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security vis – a – vis promoting a healthy environment. Over 230 papers in the areas of Pedology, land evaluation and land use planning; soil fertility, chemistry and microbiology; soil physics, land degradation, soil and water resources management were presented. There was also a demonstration of the mobile Soil laboratory by OCP Africa Fertilizer Nigeria Limited.



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Observations

Arising from the deliberations at the plenary and technical sessions of the conference, the following observations were made:

1. Sustainable food and nutrition security is facing a serious threat in Nigeria because of rising insecurity, kidnapping and increasing herdsmen and farmers clashes.
2. The frequent and increasing clashes between crop farmers and herdsmen is partly linked to poor land management, climate change phenomenon and desert encroachment.
3. Soil and environmental health are central to nutrition security. The Soil Science Society of Nigeria is worried about the misuse and abuse of agrochemicals in food production and storage in the nation which is capable of undermining the health of citizens.
4. The Soil Science Society of Nigeria notes with great concern, the large scale devastation of Agricultural lands due to oil spillage in the oil producing areas of Niger Delta region and the slow pace of remediation process.
5. The soil resources of Nigeria are currently under severe stress being continuously cultivated without adequate conservation and nutrient replacement measures, resulting in soil physical, chemical and biological degradation.



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Resolutions

The Soil Science Society of Nigeria, at its 43rd annual conference resolves as follows:

1. Urgent action is needed to arrest the rising insecurity and increasing cases of clashes between herdsmen and crop farmers. There exists, Soil and land management technologies capable of enhancing the productivity of crops even on badly degraded lands and hostile physical environment. Soil Science Society of Nigeria is willing to partner with States and Federal Governments to revitalize the soil resources of the nation, improve their capacity to sustainably produce food and forage crops and thus stem the increasing conflicts between crop farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria.
2. Government should take advantage of existing expert Soil Scientists and on-shelf technologies to facilitate the Green-world initiative of government with the view to combating desertification and restore the vegetation in the northern fringes.
3. Government should discourage the use of un-graded and un-branded agrochemicals (insecticides, herbicides and fertilizers) and ascent to the fertilizer bill already passed

by the National Assembly to protect the farmers from exploitation and abuse and also to save our soils, crops and citizens from health risks and hazards.

4. The Federal Government should accelerate the cleanup of the polluted sites and the Soil Science Society of Nigeria is willing to provide expertise and proven technologies.
5. Government should as a matter of urgency develop a soil policy that include soil testing, best management practices and site specific fertilizer recommendations.

Appreciation

The Society immensely appreciates the support of the Government of Benue State, University of Agriculture, Makurdi, other Institutions, and Private Organizations for their contributions towards the successful hosting of the 43rd Annual Conference of Soil Science Society of Nigeria.

Dated this 17th day of July, 2019.

Professor B. A. Raji, FSSSN
(President)

Professor P. I. Ogban
(Secretary)