

Partner Event Report

Partner Event Number, Date and Time:

Session Name: A Soils Initiative for Africa

Date: Monday, September 7, 2020

Time: 17:00 – 18:30

Partner Event Title and Organizers:

“A Soils Initiative for Africa”

- CAADP ex-Pillar 4 Institutions (FARA, AFAAS, ASARECA, RUFORUM, CCARDESA & CORAF)
- Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org)
- Colorado State University (www.colostate.edu)
- The Chicago Council on Global Affairs (www.thechicagocouncil.org)
- USAID (www.usaid.gov)

Key speakers/presenters:

- **Dr. Ephraim Nkonya**, Economic Research Service, IFPRI
- **Dr. Gene Kelly**, Colorado State University
- **Dr. Liesl Wiese**, University of Stellenbosch
- **Dr. Geoffrey Heinrich**, Catholic Relief Service
- **Dr. Jerry Glover**, USAID
- **Dr. Yemi Akinbamijo**, FARA
- **Dr. Jean Jacques M. Muhinda**, ASARECA
- **Dr. David Nielson**, Colorado State University
- **Dr. Simplicie Nouala Fonkou**, DREA, AUC
- **Dr. Anthony Egeru**, RUFORUM

Main themes/issues discussed (Max 200 words)

- i) Africa’s soil health has suffered steady decline for decades. This situation urgently requires a trend’s reversal
- ii) The economic costs of soils degradation in Africa
- iii) Environmental issues linked to the degraded state of Africa’s soils
- iv) Important building blocks exist to reverse the decline in soil health; i.e. scientific knowledge and information, successful experiences at local levels, and institutional structures and partnerships – yet success has been elusive
- v) Moving from local successes to scale
- vi) Building on existing initiatives and taking advantage of legacy information
- vii) Institutions and institutional arrangement required for an African-led initiative
- viii) Building a strong community of practice to embrace the Soils Initiative for Africa
- ix) Support required from Africa’s development partners for scaling existing efforts.
- x) An initiative to improve soil health across the Continent would have very high returns – development of a coordinated plan to achieve this is possible and is a very high priority.



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Summary of key points *(Max 200 words)*

- Africa's soil health is in a dire state and urgently requires a trend's reversal. Soil health is at the center of food and water security, rural livelihoods and environmental sustainability.
- The economic cost of land degradation is estimated at US\$65 billion per year. Societal consequences of soil degradation exceed the direct productivity costs by a factor of ten- the most affected are rural households and communities.
- There is an urgent need to map soils to understand the state of degradation across Africa, understand the type and depth of current interventions, the types and approaches to the delivery of advisory services and political economy.
- Soil restoration has no one-size-fits-all solution. To scale, solutions must be co-created through participatory engagement of diverse stakeholders (government, private sector, research/training institutions, NGOs, development partners and farmers).
- Reversing soil degradation requires building the value of people— the capacity of soil sciences professionals and people's perception of being valued and empowered.
- Coordination and alignment are urgently needed to better organize and deploy resources efficiently through existing institutions and networks.
- Innovative approaches for taking to scale could include pilot "scaling laboratories" where stakeholders define collaborative management structures and processes to enable the co-creation of solutions with the community.

Call to Action Key Points *(Max 200 words)*

- Sustainably and inclusively increasing agricultural productivity is central to improving performance of the agriculture sector and the CAADP/Malabo Declaration vision for agricultural-led transformation and development
- Africa needs a much expanded, more coordinated effort to address Africa's soils problem at scale. This requires leadership, planning, collaboration and resources. It will need to build upon the institutional landscape already in place. Such institutional innovation will need to guide a coalition of Africa's institutions (i.e. private sector, civil society organizations, farmer-based organizations, Regional Economic Communities, AUC-DREA), with help from external development partners
- A consultative process across the spectrum of stakeholders with support of diverse stakeholders including AUC-DREA, is needed
- Institutionalization of Soil health intervention through appropriate policy instruments in Africa is key
- Recognized Africa's potential and expertise in responding and dealing with the challenges in the continent
- An African led initiative, replicable at country-level and directed by those closest to the challenge is most likely to succeed
- Chart a roadmap to action that prioritizes co-creation of solutions that are practical and can be easily adopted
- Raise the issue of Soil Health to the level of Heads of State at AUC level through the Ministers of Agriculture.