Soil Fertility Decline in Sub-Saharan Africa Prompts Climate Adaptation Project

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An empirical assessment of Sub-Saharan Africa's soil fertility confirms that the region faces a significant decline in soil fertility, which could worsen food security if no appropriate action is taken.

This has been the focus of discussions at a two-day regional workshop in Nairobi, Kenya. The workshop, organized by the United Nations University Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and of Resources (UNU-FLORES), in partnership with the United Nations University Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA), World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and Technische Universitat Dresden, Germany, is on the theme "Advancing Integrated Soil and Water Management for Climate-Adapted Land Use in Low-Fertility Areas of Sub-Saharan Africa". Its aim is to discuss and develop a joint research project across the Sub-Saharan African region to help mitigate the impact of climate change on soil fertility.

In order to facilitate the discussions at the workshop, an initial mapping study was conducted to review the current status of soil and land-use management in different African countries including Botswana, Ethiopia, Namibia, Nigeria, Mozambique, Tanzania and Kenya.

Commenting on the assessment reports, Dr Effiom Oku, Senior Research Fellow of UNU-INRA, who is also one of the Regional Focal Points for the project confirmed that, decline in soil fertility and erosion, water scarcity, and inappropriate farming practices are part of the main challenges confronting food production in the region. He noted that "results from the mapping assessment serve as a testimony that majority of countries in Africa need an extensive monitoring program to determine the impact of climate change on soil fertility, soil moisture and land degradation".

Dr Oku also added that, in a region like Sub-Saharan Africa where over 80% of the population depends on agriculture, which contributes about 60% of the total employment figures in the region, a decline in soil fertility and degradation of land needed for farming activities would have a significant repercussion on food security.

UNU-INRA, whose mandate is centered on enhancing the capacity of African researchers and institutions in natural resources management, is optimistic that the final outcome from the joint regional research project would produce substantial climate adaptive measures that can mitigate the effect of climate change on soil fertility in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Among other key organizations at the workshop are Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations Environment Program, University of Botswana, University of Namibia, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania, Bayero University in Nigeria, Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, Mekelle University, Ethiopia, and International Water Management Institute (IWMI).

EDITOR’S NOTE

About UNU-INRA

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Source: UNU-INRA
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