

ICELAND SOILS CONFERENCE JUNE 2012: SOIL CONSERVATION – HOW DO YOU CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT?

THE NEED FOR NEW DIRECTIONS AND INNOVATIONS – A NEW PARADIGM ROGER CROFTS 20 minutes

Is there a problem and are there any solutions? Yes and yes: misguided attitudes and behaviours and outmoded policies & approaches so we need to start again and learn from our mistakes and adopt the good practices

Indicators of the problem

- Soil erosion & land degradation globally continues: FAO stats degradation 20% cultivated land/30% forests/10% grasslands mostly 78% in humid regions
- Degradation affects directly 1.5bn people
- Damage costs ~\$400bn pa
- Soil loss > replenishment rate by 10% in USA, 30-40% in Indian & China
- Land productivity only increases with fertilisers
- Downstream effects on ecosystem functionality & quality water & flooding
- Pests only controlled through chemical treatments with side effects
- Widespread revulsion against GMOs although crop strains developed for years

What's wrong with the present set up?

1. **Protectionist and negative attitudes of key stakeholders: the farmers** and other land holders and managers “we are food producers” implying to hell with resource stewardship, aided by ‘farmers protection mafia’ unions, farmers ministers and ministries
2. **Outmoded policies and instruments** hidden subsidies for production support despite strictures of WTO and GATT (worse perpetrators: EU and Cairns Group), quotas do not work exceptionality deals, market mechanisms are worse than the market itself, money for doing what should be doing as land managers, and failure to recognise environmental stewardship
3. **Single issue approach is a failure by definition and practice:** over focus on food security: the returning mantra - driver post WWII, now back under guise of global climate change, growing pop and dietary changes, but also ludicrous demands of consumers in post industrialised nations for all year produce

Let's start again: that's the new paradigm

Bottom up and top down and making sure policies and practices share common aims and do meet in the middle!

1. **New contract between society and farmers** – engage farmers in developing solutions, use the performance leaders as the exemplars (over the fence view), develop contracts based on farmers as natural resource managers and food producers

as basis for using the land and any financial support for their activities – the public good argument

2. **Implementing the multi-objective approach** – agreeing nationally and regionally that land use is a multi-objective activity embracing ecosystem management and delivering environmental services, disaster prevention, poverty alleviation and producing food and is fundamental objective in local, national, regional and global approaches
3. **Developing capacity and building confidence** – national accounts should include land degradation and soil stewardship as **key indicators** of nation's health to influence policies and resource allocations, improved procedures for measuring, reporting and verifying environmental changes are required, need greater understanding of **current behaviours** of the key stakeholders and what is need to move them to fit broader societal objectives, **engaging widest range of stakeholders as developer and peer review mechanism (why such a narrow group of interests here?)**: farmers, children & youth, indigenous communities, scientists & technologists, business & industry) and mechanisms for **knowledge exchange** should be relevant and accessible to target groups, not internationally peer reviewed journals or scientific speak, provided by skilled and knowledgeable communicators and modern communication modes and recognising indigenous knowledge
4. **Improving the global policy context** recognise the need to break down the silos of the great environmental Conventions (FCCC, CBD, CCD) and the need to get integrated thinking and action viz Rio+20 (SD core greening economy & poverty eradication + institutional framework & multi stakeholder inputs) & MDGs (even single indicators better than nothing but looking at the goals as whole is essential) and development of effective governance mechanisms
5. **Providing appropriate financial instruments** lots instruments much confusion REDD+ CDM voluntary markets, cross compliance need client focussed approach to reduce confusion and increase effectiveness
6. **Adopting an ethical approach** *A Soils and Society Charter* 'Soils for the sustainable health of our World'

No priority order as all necessary.

Adopting such a six-fold approach should go some towards creating an enabling environment which will meet societal needs and improve environmental stewardship