

African Soils: The root of the problem



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- Africa's soils are among the poorest in the world.
- Fifty-five percent of the land in Africa is unsuitable for any kind of cultivated agriculture except nomadic grazing.¹
- About 30% of the population (or about 250 million) live in or depend on deserts (including salt flats, dunes and rock lands as well as steep to very steep lands) for survival.²
- It is estimated that the continent loses the equivalent of over \$4 billion worth of soil nutrients each year, severely limiting its ability to feed itself.³

- Across the continent, farmers face a variety of constraints, including low productivity, limited access to new agricultural technologies and weak markets.
- Without adequate inputs, farmers often cannot meet the food needs of their own families, much less those of a rapidly growing population.
- To feed themselves and their countries, farmers will need to shift from low-yielding, extensive land-use practices to more intensive, higher yielding practices, with increased use of improved seeds, fertilizers and irrigation.



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- Currently, a majority of smallholder farmers in Africa neither have access to nor can afford the fertilizers or other inputs needed to add life to their soils.
- In Africa, use of fertilizer averages only eight kilograms per hectare, which is just 10% of the world average per hectare.⁴
- No region of the world has been able to expand agricultural growth rates, and thus tackle hunger, without increasing fertilizer use.

^{1,2} "African Soils: their productivity and profitability of fertilizer use." Background paper presented for African Fertilizer Summit 9-13th June 2006, Abuja, Nigeria. Bationo Andre, Hartemink Alfred, Lungu Obed, Naimi Mustapha, Okoth Peter, Smaling Eric and Thiombiano Lamourdia. Ibid.

^{3,4} "Abuja Declaration On Fertilizer For African Green Revolution." Presented 13 June, 2006. Agreed upon by the African Union Ministers of Agriculture.