



FROM THE DESK OF RATTAN LAL
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The Glamour of Soil Science

Fellow Soil Scientists,

Pedospheric processes, significant to global issues and basic to the wellbeing of the humanity and functioning of nature, are increasingly being addressed by ecologists, geographers, engineers, chemists, physicists, plant physiologists, physicians, economists, landscape architects, sociologists, and those neither directly affiliated with the soil science nor belonging to a credited faculty of “Soil Science.” This trend may either be due to the attraction of the glamour of soil science or the perception that soil scientists do not have the technical or logistical capacity to address these complex issues. The latter hypothesis may be supported by the continuous decline of enrollment in undergraduate and graduate soil science classes. While the inter-disciplinary approach to an issue of global significance is highly desirable, a thorough understanding of the complex properties and processes of soil science is also essential for an effective program. Being an inherently complex natural body, with ever changing and highly dynamic properties and processes, science of soil must be practiced and professed by those who not only are professionally trained but are also intellectually stimulated and perpetually intrigued by the soil and its impacts on other ecospheres (e.g., hydro, bio, litho, eco, anthro and atmosphere). The low and declining enrollment in soil-oriented classes is a double-edged sword because revenue generated from the tuition fee is also a strong determinant of the allocations of resources to a soil-related program. Thus, ever dwindling soil science faculty are gripped by the vicious cycle of being always in search of the financial support for their projects. Further, the educated population of even the technologically advanced nations is increasingly disconnected from soil, an entity which is the essence of all terrestrial life. Thus, the glamour of soil science must be strong enough to attract the best and the brightest in this profession to address not only the on-going concerns (i.e., accelerated soil erosion, food security) but also the emerging issues (i.e., climate change, water quality and renewability, biodiversity, space exploration, urban soils, human health, hydromorphic soils, anthrosols). The awareness about the importance of soil science must be enhanced for the most basic resource and essential to all life in the terrestrial biosphere. **A new thinking and an innovative strategy are needed to enhancing the glamour of soil science profession so that humanity may exist in harmony with nature. Rabindranath Tagore, an Indian poet and a philosopher (1861-1941), stated that “emancipation from the bondage of the soil is no freedom for a tree”.**

Sincerely,

Rattan Lal,
President, International Union of Soil Sciences

