



# Editorial

The economic turmoil attracts an enormous of media attention – it is a global thing that may affect many of us personally (count your savings and stocks) or professionally (government budget cuts). In my most optimistic moods I think it could make the world more realistic and focus on matters that really matter and are real, and as such it may do some good for our discipline. The media emphasis on stocks, hedge funds or CEO bonuses were never things that could be exploited by the soil science community to justify the need for good soil science and the understanding of our most important natural resource: the soil.

Something else is going as well. There is re-appreciation of agriculture following global issues around food production, animal feed, biofuels, water scarcity and a range of others. Soil science has always had strong with agriculture and if it reacts promptly, the discipline will greatly benefit from that re-appreciation. In many parts of the world it already does and some sort of soil science renaissance is taking place. Years ago soils and soil degradation were seen as the problem hindering development – now soils are part of the solution and not the problem, as Alex McBratney recently put it. Let us hope that the economic turmoil will sooner or later result in the widespread realisation that good soils and good soil information is needed to resolve many of the global issues.

This IUSS Bulletin reflects here and there on these aspects. First a poem on mother earth inspired by the International Year of Planet Earth celebrations. The Year has sparked activities and resulted in media attention in many countries across the globe. This is followed by an extensive report of the IUSS Council Meeting in Brisbane, Australia by Stephen Nortcliff. Various voices in the IUSS emphasise the need for change in the IUSS to keep pace with the rapid change globally. Such change is imperative if the IUSS wishes to remain effective and linked to real world issues. Niek de Wit and Rattan Lal discuss about soil legislation in the EU and the USA – important areas of change that show that soils are on the policy agenda. Raphael Viscarra Rossel from CSIRO in Australia reports on proposal to establish a

global spectral library – new stuff that will appeal to many soil scientists across the world. I think this uniting call falls under soil science *crowdsourcing* and it is something that will enhance our efficiency and global impact. The well-known Five Questions to a Soil Scientist are answered by: Yuji Niino (Thailand), Stalin Torres (Venezuela), Eddy de Pauw (Syria) and Selim Kapur (Turkey). Johan Bouma discusses his three favourite soil science books followed by the recent awards and honours to Dan Yaalon (Israel), Noorallah G. Juma (Canada), Amy Brock, Adrienne Ryan, and Donald Sparks (USA).

This is the first IUSS Bulletin since the early 1970s with no New Publications section. Our colleague and good friend Hans van Baren who has written thousands of short reviews on new soil science publications is seriously ill, and was not able to contribute. I'll include some new books in each IUSS Alert whilst we are looking for a more permanent solution because the New Publications section is often the best read section of the IUSS Bulletin. If you wish to send Hans an e-mail or write him a letter, please send to: Drs. J. Hans V. van Baren, ISRIC – World Soil Information, P.O. Box 353, 6700 AJ Wageningen, The Netherlands, E-mail: [hans.vanbaren@wur.nl](mailto:hans.vanbaren@wur.nl)

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