

MEDIA RELEASE



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Soil security to safeguard Australia's greatest natural asset

Soil security—considering all aspects of soil management—is a priority issue which should be on the national agenda as Australia grapples with protracted drought, climate change and new development encroaching on former agricultural land.

“Australia’s greatest natural asset is its soil with an estimated value of \$3,860 billion,” said Soil Science Australia President, Associate Professor John McLean Bennett CPSS. “This comes as a surprise to many people as it’s easy to take for granted what lies beneath your feet. The old adage, no soil; no life, is true.”

A position paper on soil security released today in Soil Science Australia’s new publication, **Profile: Soil Policy Journal**, will be discussed next week at the **National Soils Conference 2018** in Canberra.

“Soil security asks the question: ‘what can this soil do?’ It’s driven by the need to secure food and fibre production, preserve our biodiversity and contribute to our water and climate sustainability,” said Associate Professor Bennett. “It’s a framework that will offer a new and empowering market-based approach to soil resource management in our country.

“Such a framework would be a first, cementing Australia as a global leader in land management,” he said.

Practical application of soil science will also feature at the conference with workshops and field trips exploring PFAS in soils, soil and plant analysis, Australian soil classification and the new National Acid Sulfate Soil Guidance. Around 400 delegates from academia, government, industry and community members are expected to attend.

“Landholders, large and small, can always improve their soil and land literacy. In a sense, they act as custodians for much of our productive soil resource,” said Associate Professor Bennett.

Yet there remains a strong disconnect between the non-agricultural community and farmers, and in turn the soil from which food comes: “For many consumers, food is still produced anonymously,” he said. “However, the demand for information on how and where food is grown is steadily increasing, as is the interest in the soils that sustain that production.

“The National Soils Conference will bring quality science and first-hand experiences from land management together to help tackle some of these issues and raise the profile of our most precious but often underappreciated, natural resource.”

Soil Science Australia is the peak non-government body for soils and soil scientists. The Association supports students and early career researchers and practitioners through a range of initiatives including financial support to attend key conferences such as the World Congress for Soil Science.

The [National Soils Conference](#) runs from 18 to 23 November in Canberra.

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