
NEWS & FEATURES

Prioritizing Soil Health: Foundation for Sustainable Development

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Iringa, Tanzania, December 3-4, 2024.

Agricultural stakeholders have urged prioritising soil health as a cornerstone for sustainable development. During a two-day workshop on December 3-4, 2024, participants explored the broader land health management concept, including water management and resilience. SAGCOT Centre convened and facilitated the workshop.

The event introduced stakeholders and members of the soil health partnership to strategies to safeguard and enhance land health. Key recommendations included improving irrigation infrastructure, promoting agricultural lime usage, initiating tree-planting campaigns, and addressing challenges posed by climate change and land degradation. These efforts are designed to ensure sustainable environmental and agricultural practices for future generations.

The workshop culminated in a partnership agreement (compact) among the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the government, and private-sector stakeholders. This compact promotes land health by tackling soil fertility depletion, deforestation, and improper land-use practices.

Action for Land Health

“This agreement is a crucial step toward achieving sustainable development goals,” said Anthony Mhagama, an IUCN representative, during the workshop. “We need collective efforts to safeguard land health for the benefit of future generations.”

Mhagama highlighted that healthy land is essential for productive agriculture and socio-economic growth. However, he cautioned that Tanzania faces significant challenges, including deforestation, pesticide misuse, and the impacts of climate change, which threaten land health and resilience.

Government Efforts and Challenges

Agricultural Engineer Godwin Makole from the Ministry of Agriculture noted government initiatives to address land health issues, particularly soil acidity and fertility depletion, by distributing soil-testing kits to local authorities.

“We plan to ensure every ward has a soil-testing kit to improve agricultural

productivity,” Makole said.

However, Iringa farmer Oroda Msuva highlighted the challenge of insufficient soil-testing kits for farmers.

“We need more kits to ensure all farmers can easily access these services,” Msuva urged.

The Role of Agricultural Lime

Moses Numbi from Dodoma Cement emphasized the role of agricultural lime in managing soil acidity. Although the company can produce over 20,000 tons of lime annually, Numbi noted that low farmer awareness has limited production to between 3,000 and 5,000 tons.

“We need to invest in farmer education to increase lime adoption,” said Numbi.

IUCN representative Anthony Mhagama

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