



2015 Declared International Year of Soils

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has declared 2015 the [International Year of Soils](#), paying tribute to the life-giving ground beneath our feet. "We need healthy soils to achieve our food security and nutrition goals, to fight climate change and to ensure overall sustainable development," says José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General. Soils host at least one quarter of the world's biodiversity, are key in the carbon cycle, and play a role in water management and resilience to floods and droughts. Soils are the foundation of family farming, which in turn is the foundation for not just feeding, but for nourishing, the world. The sustainable practices of small farmers prevent soil loss that occurs through erosion and leaching of nutrients and are critical in curbing climate disruption: according to Vandana Shiva, "by focusing almost exclusively on the energy industry and ignoring the role industrial agriculture plays in global warming, we have been suffering from a 'monoculture of the mind.'" In short, how we grow food has everything to do with human health and the health of the planet. [Fred Kirschenmann of the Leopold Center](#) talks about soil and a sustainable food supply during a Catholic Rural Life symposium.