Soil Improvement: Impact of Management Practices on Soil Function and Quality

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INTRODUCTION

The management of soil ecosystem is vital for the maintenance of agricultural productivity. The application of soil nutrient and management techniques is crucial to maintain soil functions, long-term productivity and the ecosystem services provided by soils. These techniques include tillage, crop diversity, crop management, cover crops and the use of organic amendments. The effectiveness of soil management practices will vary with soil type, farming systems and agro-climatic zones. Management practices should be practical and economically viable to encourage uptake by farmers. Equally, important is the development of land use policies to secure the wider societal benefits provided by soils.

This year the Government published its 25-year Environment plan, which sets out priorities for using and managing land sustainably; soil management practices and improved understanding of soil health are recognised as playing a crucial role. It is important for researchers to work with farmers and growers in order to help develop evidence based soil management strategies, which are sustainable, help maintain productivity and are practical to implement.

This conference gives the opportunity to explore some recent findings from research investigating soil management strategies to improve soil functioning. Research will cover impacts on: soil biological, chemical and physical quality, crop productivity, economic and practical implications and also approaches for measuring and monitoring soil improvement.

Kairsty Topp, Kate Smith & Felicity Crotty
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