

## Cross-Institute Programme for Sustainable Soil Function

### SoilCIP

Newsletter for January 2009



#### Promotion

Congratulations to Trish Butler on promotion from Band C to Band D.

#### Cross-Institute links and visits

Claudia Maia has arrived from the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation, Embrapa Forestry, Colombo, Brazil, where she is Executive Assistant to the Research & Development Manager. She will study the impact of biochar on (a) native and (b) root-derived organic matter with Saran Sohi. They are planning a field experiment at our Woburn Farm; 2 tonnes of biochar have been imported from Brazil for the experiment.

I shall be in New Zealand, speaking at a conference on 'Nutrient management in a rapidly changing world' at Massey University in early February. Details at: <http://flrc.massey.ac.nz/>

#### UK Biochar Research Centre

As many of you know, Saran Sohi has left us to join the EPSRC-funded 'UK Biochar Research Centre' at the University of Edinburgh:

<http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/sccs/biochar/UKBCRC.html>

I hope that we will be able to agree a formal collaboration agreement with the Centre so that Saran can retain his involvement in the Highfield Experiment and develop other collaborative research. He will remain as a supervisor for Carolin Cordova and Darren McCabe. I have just today agreed with the Director that he can be replaced.

#### New Administrator for BSSS and IPSS

I'm very pleased to be able to announce that Dr Kathryn Allton will be taking up the post of BSSS/IPSS Administrator and Policy Officer from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009. As I said in the December Newsletter, Kathryn was the unanimous choice of the selection panel. She will be based at Cranfield, where she studied for her PhD and worked with Jane Rickman, Karl Ritz and Jim Harris. She will be

developing the policy and educational side and, I hope, will be visiting UK centres of soil science to talk to soil scientists about how best to do this. If you have any ideas then please contact Kathryn, but please wait until she's in post and we have her Cranfield e-mail address.

### **Nobel Prize certificates**

I thought that most of you were aware of this award but Penny Hirsch spotted my certificate last week and said that she had not heard about it. The item below appeared in BBSRC News for July 2008 and explains everything. You need to view at about 150% to read the text.



### **EU COST Action ES0806: Stable Isotopes in Biosphere- Atmosphere- Earth System Research (SIBAE)**

I'm pleased to say that the EU has formally approved this Cost Action and that Roland Bol has been nominated to serve on the Management Committee as UK representative. In brief: 'Predicting impacts of global change on the Earth system requires a detailed understanding of interacting processes and organisms in various environments and management. Stable isotopes can provide highly relevant information about such processes beyond classical methodologies. An integrative, coordinated European framework will foster joint research and bring disciplines together. Reaching out from a small, already established network of European scientists, this Action will address three topics: (1) Stable isotopes as quantitative tools in experiments on C, N and water cycles within the Biosphere-Atmosphere-Earth System, (2) Stable isotope applications to improve modeling of the soil, and (3) Innovative cutting-edge technologies for stable isotope analyses. It will provide various mechanisms to promote stable isotope applications, identify gaps, develop new research and technologies, improve models and thus promote European research as being at the forefront of knowledge in this field.'

More information can be found in the COST Action booklet, which can be downloaded from (it's 3.39Mb and so downloading will take a few seconds): [http://www.fnr.lu/SIML\\_FNR/Event.nsf/0/136df3d4870188f7c12575130038fa1b/\\$FILE/46228012.pdf/172nd\\_CS0\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.fnr.lu/SIML_FNR/Event.nsf/0/136df3d4870188f7c12575130038fa1b/$FILE/46228012.pdf/172nd_CS0_booklet.pdf) on page 18.

## **European Geosciences Union General Assembly 2009**

Kit Macleod is a co-convenor for the session '*Monitoring and Modelling for Transfer Processes in the Soil-Plant-Atmosphere Continuum*' at the General Assembly of the European Geosciences Union (EGU) in Vienna on 19 - 24 April 2009 <http://meetingorganizer.copernicus.org/EGU2009/session/457>

## **Media matters**

### ***World Service programme on soils***

David Powlson appeared on a BBC World Service 'One Planet' programme that focused on soil erosion. The introduction on the website says 'The world's agricultural land depends on a thin layer of topsoil which is being used up faster than we can replace it. And degradation of soil also fuels short-term crises, such as outbreaks of famine in Africa. For One Planet, Richard Hollingham investigates what can be done to fix the world's topsoil and asks if there is the political will to tackle the problem.' The programme was broadcast at 20.32 on 29<sup>th</sup> January and can be listened to or downloaded at:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmes/one\\_planet.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmes/one_planet.shtml)

### ***Science Media Centre at North Wyke***

Fiona Fox of the Science Media Centre visited North Wyke on the 7<sup>th</sup> November and heard about the buffers project from Jennie Dungait.

## **IUSS Alert – 45 (January 2009)**

Includes new soil science flyers, new issue of 'Pedometron' (edited by our own Murray Lark), an online directory of soil science groups and new books. Available online at <http://www.iuss.org/>

I shall be in New Zealand from 2-13 February, and then in Kenya with Unilever from 16 – 20 February, so I will not produce a February Newsletter. Anyone else want to volunteer to write it? If you do, please coordinate with Phil Murray so that we don't have competing Newsletters!

Keith Goulding, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2009