

Cross-Institute Programme for Sustainable Soil Function

SoilCIP

Newsletter for July/August 2006



I hope that you have had, are having, or will have a good holiday. I enjoyed two very pleasant weeks in Lyme Regis and was pleased not to have been travelling overseas during the recent security crisis. I hope that none of you missed flights/holidays or were otherwise affected.

New grants

When Steve Jarvis, Andy Whitmore and I first put the CIP together we thought that it would comprise only BBSRC funded research. However, it was quickly made it clear to us that the CIP should draw in other funding. Our first significant offer came in late June when Defra asked us, together with Warwick-HRI, to lead the revision of the UK Fertiliser Recommendations. This is not likely to require any experimental work, but it is very high-profile applied research/KT. It offers us the chance to apply SoilCIP expertise to a critical aspect of farming, gaining plenty of goodwill and good publicity, provided we get it right. The many stakeholders already contacted - Levy Boards, private companies such as the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC, ex-FMA), Yara and The Arable Group (TAG) - are very pleased that SoilCIP has been given the job and are eager to collaborate.

Doctoral Training Grant (DTG)

We have some good applicants for the PhD studentship funded by the Doctoral Training Grant (note the name change from a DT Award) and will be interviewing three on 12th September to begin as soon as possible. We were late in advertising this year, so the process for selecting next year's project and student will begin this autumn. Please prepare your projects and academic partners for next year's bids. Projects that did not succeed this year are not barred from re-submission, but it would be wise to think them through in case techniques and ideas have moved on. ***Proposals to me please by 27th October.***

Proposals will be reviewed by the CIP Management Board as for this year and then advertised in January alongside Rothamsted's other DTG studentships and by IGER on our websites and on 'Find a PhD'. As for this year, however, setting up a project with the university supervisor and identifying prospective students is likely to deliver better candidates than a 'cold' advertisement.

Rothamsted Open Days

Rothamsted will be opening its doors to the public over the weekend of 30th September to 1st October, with Friday 29th September being a special Schools Day. It's too late in the season for field tours, so the exhibits focus on the laboratories and include items of more general interest such as cream teas at Rothamsted Manor (but I doubt that they will have real clotted cream). Lots of SoilCIP research will be on display, together with the special SoilCIP poster that BBSRC prepared. North Wyke CIPers are welcome. Details at:

<http://www.rothamsted.ac.uk/forthepublic/OW2006.html>

BSSS Leeds

I shall be speaking at the annual meeting of the British Society of Soil Science, being held at Bodington Halls, Leeds University, from 13th – 15th September. The theme this year is 'Soil, vegetation and climate change'. I hope I'll see some of you there. Incidentally, I've been asked to stand for the post of Junior Vice President of the society. If elected, I become from 2008-2010, i.e. the two years leading up to the next IAE.

Collaborations

I will be visiting CEH Edinburgh next week with a visiting Chinese Scientist, Dr Liu Xuejun. Liu has been studying nitrogen deposition and its impacts (see the May '06 newsletter); he has just completed an ¹⁵N labeling experiment with Andy Macdonald, measuring gross N cycling rates on the Park Grass Experiment. He will be moving up to CEH in a month or so to work with Neil Cape and others on national and regional scale models for nitrogen deposition, and then will work with Jo Smith at Aberdeen University on the SUNDIAL nitrogen cycle model.

Director's briefing

Phil Haygarth and I will be briefing the Directors and Les Firbank on SoilCIP progress on 7th September.

Royal Society meeting

On 13th and 14th November, the Royal Society is hosting a meeting on 'Trace gas biogeochemistry and global change'. Looking at the programme the main focus seems to be atmospheric chemistry, but David Fowler is speaking on 'Biospheric production of nitrogenous compounds'. Details at:

<http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/event.asp?id=3083&month=8>

Keith Goulding, 31st August 2006