

Cross-Institute Programme for Sustainable Soil Function



SoilCIP

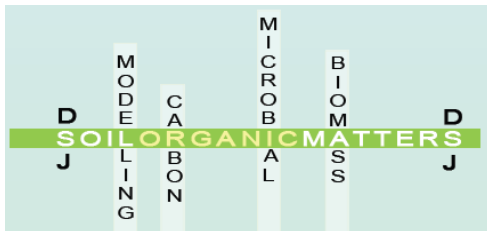
Newsletter for May 2009

Fangjie Zhao – IMP, Band G

Congratulations to Fangjie Zhao who has been awarded Individual Merit Promotion to Band G (3). It's a great credit to the SoilCIP that we have a very good number of Merit Promotion Band H staff. Well done Fangjie!

Prize

Carolin Cordova, one of our PhD students, won a prize for the best 3rd Year poster at the University of Reading student's conference. The poster was entitled: 'Can soil organic matter explain the spatial variability of N mineralisation at the field scale?' Well done Carolin.



Soil Organic Matters

Tuesday 23rd – Thursday 25th June 2009 at Rothamsted Research, Harpenden, UK.

The meeting has two main aims: (1) To acknowledge the great contribution to soil science made by Professor David Jenkinson FRS over many decades; (2) To bring together scientists actively involved in research in the areas in which David Jenkinson laid foundations in order to review current challenges and trends. Some of the invited speakers have worked with David Jenkinson at Rothamsted Research - others have conducted research in the areas for which he is well known.

The topics covered will be: Soil organic matter dynamics; The global carbon cycle and climate change; Soil microbial ecology; Soil nitrogen dynamics including efficiency of use of N fertilizer by crops and the global N cycle. Registration for attendance is still open. For further information and the

programme of invited and offered speakers see:
<http://www.rothamsted.bbsrc.ac.uk/Research/SoilOrganicMatters/>

Plans are all in place and over 100 participants are now registered, including some BSSS sponsored students. We could still accommodate more participants.

UK Biochar Research Centre launched

The UK Biochar Research Centre at Edinburgh University was launched on 1st April. The proceedings of the launch workshop are now available as a PDF, as the first in a UKBRC Working Paper series on the website:

<http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/sccs/biochar/documents/Biochar-WorkingPaper1.pdf>

New Biochar experiment at Woburn Farm

Biochar was applied to the field plots at Woburn farm on Friday 1st May and maize drilled shortly afterwards. The first soil sampling was at the end of May. Saran Sohi writes: "The specific purpose of the experiment is to assess whether (1) biochar increases rate of carbon accumulation in soil (it is added here to a soil that is very low in organic matter, having been bare for several decades, and the fate of the carbon exuding from maize roots is readily traceable due to its distinct isotopic composition), (2) biochar enhances the loss of recalcitrant soil carbon (by the same token the pool of labile carbon is absent in the plots, so any loss in the non-planted plots can be attributed to biochar or recalcitrant native soil carbon). We have controlled for the liming and mineral fertiliser value of biochar in these by liming all plots, and leaching the mineral nutrients out of the biochar prior to addition. We applied biochar at a moisture content of 50%, to stop it drawing moisture from the bulk soil prior to sowing."



Thanks to Stephen Goward and colleagues at the farm, and Andy Macdonald for helping with the FFEC specification.

New BBSRC report detailing strategically important agricultural research facilities

This BBSRC report includes the Rothamsted Classical Experiments, National Willows Collection and Insect Survey, and the North Wyke Research Platform. The press release says:

An independent report has been published today (12 May) which details the public sector facilities vital to the future of UK agricultural and land-based research.

The report, by consultants A D Little, was commissioned by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on behalf of UK public stakeholders. In addition to cataloguing the UK's facilities it details 24 strategically important resources, across 15 UK institutions, that were identified as being crucial to the delivery of land-based research.

The report – the BBSRC Study of Land-Based Facilities and Resources – can be downloaded http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/organisation/policies/reviews/operational/0905_landbased_facilities_report.html from:

The report notes that the UK has world-class agricultural research facilities and resources which are underpinning research into meeting key future challenges, such as food security, tackling endemic and emerging animal diseases, and developing sustainable bioenergy. However, it also warns of risks to these facilities. The nature of land-based facilities means that they are fixed and dependent on particular agricultural land and associated science infrastructure. The report highlights the threat to such facilities if they are dependent on single funders and subject to short term priorities.

The skills and expertise associated with the facilities is also a key resource and it is important for UK funders to maintain the skills base in this sector. The importance of the role of these facilities in training the next generation of researchers is also highlighted in the report.

Included in the identified 24 resources are 10 different facilities across Rothamsted Research and the Institute for Animal Health, both institutes of BBSRC. These include the 'classical' long-term field experiments at Rothamsted and the high-level containment facilities at IAH Pirbright.

Professor Douglas Kell, BBSRC Chief Executive, said: "This report demonstrates the very great importance of a relatively small number of strategic resources that the UK needs to deliver land-based research. The very nature of land-based research facilities means they cannot be set up and shut down at short notice and BBSRC will be working with all relevant stakeholders to inform long-term funding strategies.

“I am pleased to see that the importance of the land-based, plant science and animal health facilities at BBSRC’s Institutes or former Institutes is recognised in the report. These institutes host over half of the UK’s strategically important facilities.”

In order to minimise the workload on the agricultural and land-use stakeholder community, data gathering for this report was shared with Defra. The Department has used the data collected as part of a separate, wider study of the research capabilities needed to inform its future evidence requirements.

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19th World Congress of Soil Science

Soil solutions for a changing world

BRISBANE AUSTRALIA 1 – 6 August 2010

19th World Congress of Soil Science

[Call for papers - now open!](#)

The *19th World Congress of Soil Science* will be held in Australia, 1-6 August 2010 at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The conference theme “*Soil Solutions for a Changing World*” provides a tremendous opportunity for a broad range of presentations – we urge you to share your research, experiences and knowledge in Brisbane.

The “[Call for Papers](#)” has now opened - papers must be submitted by 31 October 2009 to be considered.

Registration for the *19th World Congress of Soil Science* will open in August 2009.

www.19wcsc.org.au

I shall be attending the Congress as BSSS President. Anyone else going?

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IUSS Alert – 49 (May 2009)

Information for and from the global soil science community

Soil science enthusiasm on video



Declining number of soil science students is a concern in many universities. We can sit down and grumble, or we can do something about it. One of the remedies is to show the great variety of soil science jobs. Melissa Peart from Australia tells her story in this [video](#). Melissa enjoyed science at school and originally wanted to study history and be an archaeologist. But when she heard about a degree in land and water science at Sydney University, she turned her attention to the environment. The course covered natural resources and sustainability, specifically looking at agriculture, soil, hydrology, geology and geographical information systems. It also offered plenty of field trips. After finishing her honours in soil salinity, Melissa was headhunted by a consultancy group where she worked for three years. Great Bits: "I find there's a good balance in my job. It doesn't involve me just sitting in front of a computer. I get to travel and go out into the field to do soil and groundwater testing. It's an awesome job and I'd love to keep doing this for a very long time."

Keith Goulding, 2nd June 2009