

The value of soil science



The primary objective of soil science is to better understand how soils work so that society can derive optimum value from the land both now and sustainably into the future. Soil science is relevant to many areas of land management including: food, fibre, fuel and timber production, biodiversity conservation, recreation, water and climate management and land allocation under competing demands for space from our society. Soil science is also key to the restoration of soils that have been subject to harmful industrial intervention, addressing issues such as the re-instatement of contaminated land and mineral extraction sites.

Much attention has been given in recent years to the value and wellbeing that society derives from the natural environment. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has been responsible for bringing the concepts of ecosystem services and natural value into common parlance. Society increasingly appreciates the value of soils in human wellbeing and survival, not simply for food and fibre production, but also in regulating the global climate, in water quality and availability, and in sustaining biodiversity above- and below-ground.

Many ecosystem services are founded wholly or partially on processes that take place in the Earth's surface layer, the soil. It is easy to think that most life is above-ground, but there is more life, both in terms of mass and diversity, in the ground beneath our feet than is visible above it. Healthy, functioning soil is an essential component of our planet's life support system.

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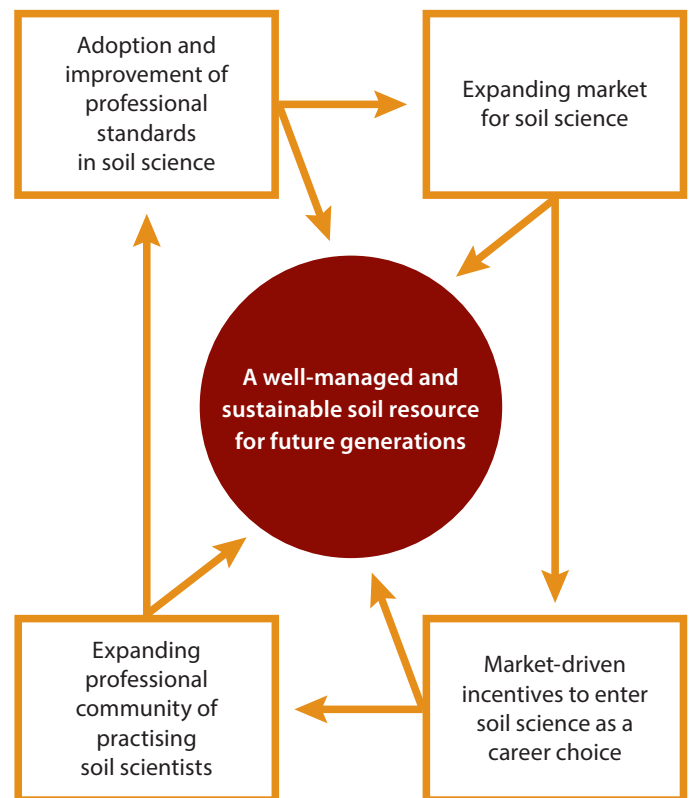
Future aims – a sustainable soil science profession

The British Society of Soil Science (BSSS) is an incorporated charity whose mission is “to advance soil science and to promote a better understanding of soil, nationally and internationally”. The promotion of professional standards and competency in soil science contributes to the achievement of our mission. Our aim is for society to view soil science as an important profession and to expect high standards of expertise, knowledge, and professionalism from those practising this valuable branch of science.

In the longer term, BSSS aims to achieve the following three key objectives:

- an active, sustainable, professional community with good levels of recruitment for high-quality early career scientists and engineers
- a larger marketplace for professional skills in soil science
- greater recognition of the value of soil science as a profession and career within industry and society as a whole

Success in achieving these aims will help deliver a well-managed and sustainable soil resource to support current and future generations.



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