Conclusions and Recommendations

Land quality is regarded as an integrated measure of different aspects of land ecosystem services. This observation is widely recognized by recent scientific and policy developments and is also reflected by numerous international environmental agreements. Indicators of land quality are important tools for exchange between stakeholders and for planners to support decision-making. Although land is an indispensable economic resource and an essential element in the ecological system, there is no comprehensive information on land quality in Europe. However, the efficiency of agricultural and rural development policies as well as land-related environmental programs can be enhanced considerably if decisions are based on the analysis of land quality.

An international conference on 'Land Quality and Land Use Information in the European Union' was organised in association with the Hungarian EU presidency in Keszthely (Hungary) in May 2011. The conference was organized by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, University of Pannonia and the European Commission (Eurostat, DG ENV, JRC), under the auspices of the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development. The conference was supported by the International Union of Soil Sciences. The symposium facilitated the exchange of information and views among stakeholders involved in land use policy planning, land management and land resources research.

A comprehensive global outlook was presented on the conference

a) Demonstrating the need for a broader scope in land quality assessment than only local, by signifying the interlinkages between local land use and global ecological and socioeconomic changes; and

b) Demonstrating the need for land quality and land use indicators and the importance of harmonized data to support sustainable development.

The conference discussed the options to cope with these issues and concluded with five main recommendations addressing future horizons:

1. A need for an International Panel on Soil and Land Use in the framework of the Global Soil Partnership proposed by the FAO
   - In this Panel stakeholders can work together to set frames for sustainable utilization of land resources worldwide.

2. The conference welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to set up a monitoring system to combine soil data with land use data within the Land Use/Land Cover Area Frame Survey (LUCAS).
   - This monitoring system needs integration with activities in Member States to achieve harmonization of the gathered information.
3. **Need for a European inventory of land qualities.**
   - To identify the lands with different qualities and to locate those land areas with different qualities.
   - With harmonization of methods and data using common criteria for evaluating soil functions and land qualities.

4. **Need for advanced integrated assessment** to evaluate
   - The impact of climate change on land quality;
   - Land and water interactions;
   - The relationship between biodiversity, ecosystem health, carbon and nitrogen cycles and land quality;
   - The effect of land use, soil management and fertilizers on land quality and sustainability.

5. **Need for risk assessment of degradation**
   - Impact on ecosystem services supplemented by economic impact assessment.

Compiled by the Advisory Board of the conference
27.05.2011 Keszthely, Hungary