



The soil education technical commission of the Brazilian Soil Science Society: achievements and challenges

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The Soil Education and public awareness technical commission of the Brazilian Soil Science Society was created in 1987 as Soil Science teaching commission at that time. In the 90's of the last century the commission was very active and realized three national symposia in the years 1994 to 1996: in Viçosa, Minas Gerais; Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul and Pato Branco, Paraná. The following symposium scheduled to happen in Brasilia, 1997 could not be realized and was followed by a weakening and reduction of the involved group. Those three symposia were focused on the aspects of soil science taught at the university educational level, mainly in agrarian sciences. The concern about what was going on at basic education and perception by society was not much present. The commission was revitalized in 2005 and in 2007 realized its first meeting at the Brazilian Congress of Soil Science in Gramado, Rio Grande do Sul. At that meeting it was already an urge to assume the approach of soil education instead of soil science teaching, within a major concern how society consider soils. It was accepted and adequate under the structural reorganization undergone by the national society following the IUSS main lines. The commission was renamed and got two new mates at the newly created Division IV, Soils, Environment and Society, of the Brazilian Soil Science Society: Soils and Food Safety and History, Epistemology and Sociology of Soil Science. The national symposia were relaunched to happen biannually. An inventory of the soil education experiences around the country started and the geographic distribution of the future symposia intended to rescue and bring together experiences in different parts of the country that would not be known by other means. Three symposia were already realized: Piracicaba, São Paulo, 2008 (southeast); Curitiba, Paraná, 2010 (south) and Sobral, Ceará, 2012 (northeast). The next is planned to happen in Recife, Pernambuco in April 2014. The scope of the last three symposia was dramatically changed compared to the former ones, considering both participants and papers: basic school teachers, science mediators instead of university docents and a prevalence of papers on soil education in basic schools and non-formal education. The main challenge for soil scientists remains in how to spread the knowledge about the importance of soil and its care among individuals and society in general. Diversified experiences, strategies and instruments are on the move, still soils are overlooked in the present environmental issues. Within the commission the challenge remains with the popularity of the subject in the academic world: it is marginal, it is an interface between knowledge areas and it is commonly the second subject of researchers, easily abandoned when work pressure grows.