

The contribution of Japanese Soil Science Societies to scientific knowledge, education and sustainability: Good practices in the International Year of Soils 2015 towards the International Decade of Soils.

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The soil science community in Japan includes ca. 15,000 individuals from a variety of sectors, i.e. research, education, extension, business, national and local government, practitioners, non-governmental or non-profit organizations, etc., who have mostly (multi-)membership(s) in some of the academic societies. Among those societies, the Japanese Society of Soil Science and Plant Nutrition, the Japanese Society of Soil Microbiology and the Japanese Society of Pedology played a leading role in the promotion of the International Year of Soils 2015. The activities, many of which were jointly organized and executed by the above three, can be summarized as follows;

1. Scientific symposiums/workshops not only within the societies but together with other disciplines such as geosciences, quaternary research, biogeochemistry, ecology, biosciences, geotechnology, etc. in national as well as international gatherings,
2. Symposiums, (mobile) exhibitions, photo contests, science cafes, talk shows, field days, agricultural fairs, edutainment programs for school children, etc. for promoting the public awareness of soil and soil science,
3. Publication of the books and booklets on the topics of soils, soil science, soil and environment (and/or food, life, human security, etc.), targeting the moderately educated public,
4. Articles in selected newspapers,
5. Distribution or sale of the novelty/memorial goods and items, e.g. soil globe, logo stickers, specially brewed Sake wines, etc.
6. Translation of “Vienna Soil Declaration” of the IUSS into Japanese language and its distribution to the public, and
7. Scientific and action proposal and its international dispatch of “The need to reinforce soil science research and the information basis to respond to both gradual and sudden changes in our environment” together with the Science Council of Japan.

Scientific forums and gatherings as symposiums and workshops with other disciplines were successful and satisfied by most of the participants. Those for the general public were, however, not very much well known or widely accepted and thus were attended only by one to two hundred participants. Mobile exhibitions were well attended by the public and the educational programs out-of-doors for school children (with their parents) co-organized by a private (and environment conservation-oriented) company were very successful in terms of the promotion of the public awareness as well as CSR activities of a business firm. The TV stations paid a very little attention in broadcasting special and/or educational programs on soil and soil science. Based on the above experiences and evaluation, the societies are now planning next activities and actions aiming at the goals of the International Decade of Soils 2015-2024 and the UN SDGs till 2030.