

## Philippines marks 'World Soil Day' emphasizing on Healthy soils for urban sustainability

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Philippines' Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Soils and Water Management (DA-BSWM), together with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), led the Philippine celebration of **World Soil Day**, joining the global community under the theme, "Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities."

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. emphasized the need to place soil at the center of development, highlighting that stewardship of this vital resource is essential to the promise of a Bagong Pilipinas.

"Let us nurture on agriculture that restores fertility instead of exhausting it, a form of growth that measures abundance through balance and foresight. Let every plan for housing, infrastructure, and enterprise begin with a reckoning of what the soil can bear, for no economy can flourish where the earth is tired," he said.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr., represented by Assistant Secretary U-Nichols Manalo, stressed that soil is not only the foundation of agriculture but also critical to the health and sustainability of urban environments. Let us remember that soil is a living system. It is the very ground that sustains life. Its protection is our duty for the health of our people and for the future of our nation. Together, let us continue to build healthy soils for healthy cities and a sustainable Philippines for generations to come."

Globally, FAO Director General Qu Dongyu warned that soil sealing, pollution, and unplanned urban expansion threaten food production and ecosystem services. He added healthy soils are critical for agrifood systems transformation, for sustainable

development, and for the four “betters”: better production, better nutrition, better environment, and better life.

FAO Representative in the Philippines Lionel Dabbadie reinforced the urgency of integrating soil health into city planning and climate policies, describing urban soils as “hidden infrastructures” that keep cities livable and resilient. He noted that healthy soils can help address persistent challenges such as flooding and heat stress, urging bold action to restore urban soils, invest in green infrastructure, integrate soil health into planning frameworks, and engage communities.

DA-BSWM Director Gina Parde-Nilo, PhD. reported that the agency continues to strengthen soil protection and improvement through the **National Soil Health Program**, which expands **soil analysis** and **diagnosis** nationwide.

“We made soil testing available and accessible through our Mobile Soils Laboratory (MSL), providing accurate solutions to soil health. While this is meant to reach the remotest of our farms, the MSL also reaches every city, delivering the message on the importance of soil health and how to care for our soils and restore its fertility,” she said.

She further urged stakeholders to **integrate agriculture** into urban greening initiatives, embed sustainable land management into local government land use plans, and make science-based decisions for resilient agriculture and sustainable development.