Ecosystem Health and Its Relationship to the Health of the Soil Subsystem: A Conceptual and Management Perspective

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12-1 INTRODUCTION

Soil degradation is increasingly recognized as an urgent environmental issue with ramifications at the local, regional, and global scales. The 1995 announcement for the 9th Conference of the International Soil Conservation Organization (ISCO) emphasized that “...continuous soil degradation destroys the basis of life of future generations. This constitutes an environmental threat comparable to global climate change and therefore demands the same attention.” This realization is not new—the 1984 report: “Soil at Risk: Canada's Eroding Future” (Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry, 1984), prefaced their discussions with a quote by Lester Brown (World Watch Institute) that “civilization as we know it cannot survive the continuing loss of topsoil at current rates.” These two declarations, more than a decade apart, capture the fact...