Membership

Know Your Community

Agronomic Solutions for Smallholders Community to Focus on Organic Input Management in Tampa

by Elizabeth Trybula

Smallholder production systems are increasingly diverse. Traditionally characterized by subsistence production on intergenerational lands, smallholder systems have shifted to include a wide variety of farmers with an increasing range of goals, experiences, and expertise for the land they farm due to factors including climate change, population growth, political upheaval, global information technology, and emerging markets. Agronomic management recommendations in this context depend on regional conditions with respect to climate, soils, cultural norms, government policies, and access to inputs and markets. In many countries, demand for decision support often exceeds available knowledge infrastructure, such as public extension or private consulting services.

Agronomic Solutions for Smallholders is an ASA Community within the Global Agronomy Section created to enhance scientific contributions that advance culturally relevant agroecosystem management resources for smallholders. Interdisciplinary agronomic research with attention to intercultural awareness and indigenous expertise can improve production via knowledge transfer that is adaptable to local conditions across diverse systems.

In prior years, Community members identified several goals to expand technical discourse within the Societies and improve smallholder access to knowledge resources, including: establishing topic-relevant discussions across the Community throughout the year, producing technical sessions at the International Annual Meeting, and exploring publication potential for field guides relevant to smallholder interests. At the 2016 Annual Meetings in Phoenix, the Community coordinated a symposium focusing on technologies that enhance resilience to climate change and information technologies for smallholders. The symposium facilitated cross-cultural exchange of relevant technical information and direct experiences on the ground (recorded presentations available at http://bit.ly/2eUanTY).

This year, the Community has planned a special session (http://bit.ly/2xY7EQJ) and symposium (http://bit.ly/2vSMToZ) for Wednesday, 25 October at the Annual Meeting in Tampa to explore “Soil Organic Matter Management Alternatives for Smallholders.” Coordinated in cooperation with the Agronomy in Africa Community and the Soil and Water Conservation and Management Division of SSSA, the sessions are designed to comprehensively address the topic across the diverse range of interest. Starting with keynote perspectives on the underlying principles, opportunities, and challenges surrounding organic input management in the smallholder context, an interactive panel discussion will be followed by a technical symposium that highlights current research on the topic.

Drs. Pedro Sanchez, Generose Nziguheba, and Cheryl Palm will join us as keynote speakers and panelists in the Special Session to provide their insights on the broader topic. This includes conceptual frameworks of organic input management across tropical and temperate soils, an adoption-driven approach to integrated soil fertility management, and interdisciplinary evaluation of driving factors that influence management trade-offs and subsequent biophysical outcomes.

Symposium presentations following the special session will focus on soil organic matter response in smallholder systems, including soil organic carbon variation, interactions with soil water, influences of conservation agriculture, cover crop timing, manure fertilization, and mechanization improvements. Study locations range from the U.S. to the Caribbean and across Africa. Anyone interested in the special session and symposium is invited to attend.

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