



## *GlobalSoilMap.net* End User Engagement Strategy

### **Background**

This document is intended to stimulate a discussion, and follow-up actions, about how the *GlobalSoilMap.net* project can most effectively engage and interact with potential end-users of its planned products.

The principal assumption underlying the *GlobalSoilMap.net* project is that production and provision of a global map of soil properties at a grid resolution of 90 m will be of use and benefit to a wide range of potential end-users. This assumption has not been evaluated objectively by identifying and interacting with specific, important, end users to verify whether the proposed output products from the *GlobalSoilMap.net* project will meet their requirements and satisfy their needs for input data about soils.

It is critical to the ultimate success of the *GlobalSoilMap.net* project that all major potential users of *GlobalSoilMap.net* products be explicitly identified, and interacted with, in order to establish what their needs are for soil information and whether the information products that the project is committed to producing can meet these needs.

This is a significant effort that demands capacity (people, skills, funds) that is not presently available within the central *GlobalSoilMap.net* personnel at ISRIC. Consequently, we were hoping that we might be able to identify a volunteer to assist in defining and coordinating a strategy for end-user engagement. This volunteer could come from amongst the numerous individuals and institutions that have demonstrated an interest in the project to date. It would have to be a voluntary contribution, at least initially, but hopefully the project would be able to find funding in the future that would provide some measure of support and compensation for activities undertaken in support of this need.

It is my responsibility, as Science Coordinator, to identify the key technical issues that need to be addressed to ensure that the *GlobalSoilMap.net* project is successful. Principal among these is the need to clearly demonstrate that the information we plan to produce is relevant and useful to the audience we propose to produce it for. In order to do this, we need to be able to specifically identify all major potential end users and we need to establish what their needs are for soil information and whether our proposed products, as originally designed, meet those needs, or whether some redesign is required. We need a process to do that.



## Proposed Actions and Plans to Engage with End Users

- Identify and recruit an individual, or a small team of co-operators, who can help to plan and implement a process of engagement with the main end users of the project.
  - Work with this individual or team to identify (list) the main potential end users of soil information the *GlobalSoilMap.net* project will generate
  - Identify specific individuals or agencies with lead roles in each major end use activity area and establish personal contacts with them.
  - Identify the key models or algorithms that are currently used, or will be used, in each end use area and determine the specific needs for soil information of those models.
  - Test and evaluate the degree to which the *GlobalSoilMap.net* data products meet (or do not meet) the needs of these main models or application areas.
- Post data produced for “proof of concept” study areas on a web-accessible site and invite end-users to access it and attempt to use it in their models (Idea suggested by Thomas Mayr).
  - Provide an interactive discussion forum on the web site where users can comment on the utility and appropriateness of the example *GlobalSoilMap.net* data products and identify needs that are not adequately met and suggest what would be required to meet them.
  - Collate all inputs and feedback from end users.
- Produce a report and a journal paper that contain the following content:
  - Identifies key application areas where *GlobalSoilMap.net* outputs have been shown to be likely to be used,
  - Identifies specific models or decision support algorithms that will use the data that are proposed to be produced by the *GlobalSoilMap.net* project.
  - Illustrates how the *GlobalSoilMap.net* data can and will be used as input for these specific models or applications.
  - Identifies and suggests ways in which the initial *GlobalSoilMap.net* data products can be extended, modified or improved to better meet user needs.

This is a discussion document. It is intended to stimulate input and discussion about how we can systematically test our assumptions about how the *GlobalSoilMap.net* data will likely be used. It will allow us to determine whether our assumptions are correct or whether we need to somehow add to or modify our original product specifications. It will allow us to develop a higher level of confidence that the products that we will have to offer, once the mapping is finished, will meet the needs of the main anticipated users in the best possible manner.

We actively solicit criticism of this document and suggestions for ways in which this basic requirement to assess user needs can be met. In particular, we are actively soliciting a volunteer or volunteers to participate in this activity and to lead it if possible.