An accessible digital archive of soil maps

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INTRODUCTION

Preservation of older data (in this case maps) are vital as they are building blocks of most current soil information. But in many countries, soil maps are being lost because of a lack of proper attention to storage and retrieval, often compounded by a loss of institutions that have been responsible for the acquisition and maintenance of soil and land resources data.

In Africa, though not only in Africa, this type of information is rapidly being lost; much is already lost. The digitization of the African maps will enable such countries to recover and re-use their soil information.

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

Realizing the need to conserve the information on existing maps, which underpin the fast-developing thematic mapping strategies to support soil protection, the Institute of Environment and Sustainability (IES) in the European Commission (Italy) and ISRIC – World Soil Information initiated the European Digital Archive of Soil Maps (EuDASM).

The immediate objective is to transfer soil information into a digital format with the maximum resolution possible and to preserve the information of paper maps that are vulnerable to deterioration.

The number of maps in the archive for various continents are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent</th>
<th>Number of Maps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFRICA</td>
<td>2036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIA</td>
<td>965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUROPE</td>
<td>1525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LATIN AMERICA</td>
<td>1084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA &amp; CANADA</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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SOIL MAPS OF AFRICA

About 2000 soil maps in digital format from African countries at different scale and coverage levels were appended to the raster catalog.

SOIL MAPS OF ASIA

The archive also contains maps of North America (United States of America & Canada). At present, about 65 and 240 maps, for Canada and the USA respectively, are available in the soil map archive catalog.

SOIL MAPS OF EUROPE

Soil maps and the quality of information Despite effective procedures for storage and maintenance, most organizations involved in archiving struggle to arrest the deterioration of they contain. Deterioration occurs for various reasons that include handling, transport, exposure to light, moisture and atmospheric pollution.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

Beyond data rescue, the archive is expected to develop into a common platform for storing soil maps from around the world and making the information readily accessible.

Organizations that maintain soil map archives in paper form, and wishing to conserve this information by transferring it into digital form, are invited to join the EuDASM programme.