



## *From the Patron*

### SIGNIFICANCE OF “MASS AWARENESS” TO ENHANCE SUSTAINABLE USE OF SOIL RESOURCES

**S**OIL, a finite natural resource, plays a crucial role in ensuring the food and nutritional security of the growing world population. Soil degradation is a serious concern throughout the world. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that one-third of world soils are already degraded. Realizing the importance of soils, FAO initiated World Soil Day (WSD) on 5<sup>th</sup> December to care and preserve soil resources for posterity. From its first official celebration in the year, 2014 WSD campaigns acted as a global platform to create awareness among people about the necessity of protecting soils for their sustainable use to ensure human well-being in the long run.

India faces serious land degradation issues with 121 million hectares of degraded land due to one or other form. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has been putting consolidated efforts in creating mass awareness among farming and the non-farming population of the country about practices that lead to conservation and sustainable use of soils through its institutions. The ICAR-Indian Institute of Soil Science, Bhopal, launched mass awareness programmes during WSD celebrations to enlighten the farming community and citizens about our soils and protect them for our future generations. In line with the national efforts to make more people aware of soil's importance, ICAR-IISS organized "Soil Health Awareness Week" in the first week of December 2019. Some of the programme organised were farmer-scientist interaction, road-show/march-past, quiz competition, seminar on soil health awareness, study tours for school and college students, display



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of soil health related slogans in posters and banners etc. Due to these mass awareness programmes by ICAR and particularly by ICAR-IISS (Bhopal), FAO conferred the prestigious King Bhumibol World Soil Day– 2020 award.

Like every year, despite the COVID-19 protocol restrictions, the institute made a significant achievement in reaching a large mass of the population during 2020 by mass awareness programme through social and print media campaign. Soil performs many ecosystem functions and services to humanity; let us care, preserve and respect 'Our Mother Earth' for prosperity and posterity of our nation.

**Ashok K Patra**