

INFORM POLICY

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First the group agreed a clear void exists in policy surrounding soil biodiversity. While there is an avenue for soil biodiversity goals in the FAO led soil biodiversity initiative, the group expressed the need for a policy component to GSBI. Initially the group had concerns over the pre-existing FAO soil biodiversity initiative, but these were negated because the FAO initiative focuses primarily on agriculture and the GSBI would focus on all global soils. The group agreed it imperative that GSBI be represented in policy; however there was no clear consensus on specifically how to accomplish this and to what extent.

The group discussed several options and opportunities for political involvement. The CBD was identified as an obvious home for GSBI. The aim could be to face directly into CBD and work towards addressing the Aichi Targets, which address all land, uses and issues. The targets do not specifically mention soils and this is a major gap, and so perhaps this is also an opportunity. However we need to have a better understanding of whether GSBI would be considered within the approaches. The group discussed opportunities for dialog with the CBD.

The group also discussed linking up with Diversitas to establish GSBI with official mandate/ recognition under this organization. This would give GSBI international recognition and a real platform, but there may be consequences such as loss of independence. Ultimately the group as a whole needs to decide what kind of policy involvement is desired by GSBI.

The group identified Rio+20 as a critical opportunity for GSBI to raise awareness and establish official recognition by the international community through a side event. There is a real potential for involvement of Brazilian scientists at this event, and the group thought it critical that GSBI be represented there. However the group did not come to a conclusion on whether GSBI should represent itself independently or team up with other international organizations in side event activities.

Finally the group decided it would be necessary to outline what GSBI can immediately deliver with respect to policy needs, and what would be the scientific strategy to deliver these and subsequently to address the evidence gaps. The group identified the need for measurable metrics that could be used by policy makers for assessing soil biodiversity and more general soil health. Initial thoughts examined the potential of using soil biodiversity indicators, such as PFLA, and linking them to key ecosystem functions. Ultimately, in order to meet policy needs, specific ecosystem functions and associated metrics need to be identified globally.

¹ Abbreviations CBD = convention on biodiversity; PFLA = Phospholipid Fatty Acid Analysis;