

Status of the World's Soil Resources 2026 Report

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Environment

Why in News?

The Status of the World's Soil Resources 2026 report highlights that global soil degradation is worsening, while sustainable soil-management practices are not being adopted.

- **Released by** - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- The report was released during UNCCD COP17's Food Systems and Soil Health Day.

Key Findings

- 95% of the food consumed by humans comes from soil, highlighting the direct link between soil health and food security.
- 58% of regional assessments reported that soil conditions have worsened since 2015.
 - Only around 10% reported improvement.
- More than half of the assessments recorded low or very low adoption of sustainable soil-management practices.
- **Soil Erosion** — It emerged as the single biggest soil problem.
- 81% of assessments rated erosion management as poor or very poor and 65% reported that erosion conditions were deteriorating.
- **India-Specific Findings** -
 - India accounts for the largest share of land degradation in South Asia.
 - Around 30-37% of India's land area is estimated to be degraded.
 - About 11% (83 million hectares) is affected specifically by water erosion.
 - India loses around 4.8-5.3 billion tonnes of soil annually through erosion.
 - This carries away approximately 8 million tonnes of plant nutrients every year.
 - Around 29% of eroded soil is estimated to be permanently lost to the sea.
- **Fertiliser Use and Soil Health** -
 - India, Bangladesh and Pakistan are classified as having unsustainably high nitrogen surpluses.
 - In India, only 30-45% of applied nitrogen is taken up by crops.
 - This compares with a global average of 59%.
 - Excessive reliance on nitrogenous urea is linked partly to fertiliser subsidy structures, encouraging an imbalanced nutrient application.
- **Policy Concern** -
 - Agricultural subsidies often incentivise higher production rather than healthier soils.
 - The report calls for better coordination among agriculture, land, climate, biodiversity

and nutrition policies.

- The report also highlights the disconnect between soil health and human nutrition, particularly regarding micronutrient availability and malnutrition.



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POLICY CONCERN



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The report calls for better coordination among **agriculture, land, climate, biodiversity** and **nutrition** policies.



The report also highlights the **disconnect between soil health and human nutrition**, particularly regarding micronutrient availability and malnutrition.



BOTTOM LINE: Healthy soils are the foundation of food security, nutrition, and resilient ecosystems. Sustainable soil management and integrated policies are essential to reverse degradation.



About Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

- **FAO** - It is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international initiatives to eliminate hunger and enhance nutrition and food security.
- **Members** - 195 members, including 194 countries and the European Union.
- **Other Key reports**
 - FAO food price index
 - The State of the World's Forests (SOFO)
 - The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA)
 - The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets (SOCO)
 - The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI).

Reference

[Down To Earth| Status of the World's Soil Resources 2026 Report](#)

