

International Yearbook of Soil Law and Policy

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The *International Yearbook of Soil Law and Policy* is a book series that discusses the central questions of law and policy with regard to the protection and sustainable management of soil and land. The Yearbook series analyzes developments in international law and new approaches at the regional level as well as in a wide range of national jurisdictions. In addition, it addresses cross-disciplinary issues concerning the protection and sustainable management of soil, including tenure rights, compliance, food security, human rights, poverty eradication and migration. Each volume contains articles and studies based on specific overarching topics and combines perspectives from both lawyers and natural scientists to ensure an interdisciplinary discourse.

The *International Yearbook of Soil Law and Policy* offers a valuable resource for lawyers, legislators, scholars and policymakers dealing with soil and land issues from a regulatory perspective. Further, it provides an essential platform for the discussion of new conceptual approaches at the international, national and regional level.

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/15378>

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Foreword

Soils have been the neglected environmental media for a long time. However, several food crises at the beginning of this century have brought a change in perspective of late. Since then, the indispensable value of soils for humans and for the conservation of the environment as a whole has been increasingly understood and gained much momentum too. Also the language around “soils” has changed: Whereas in previous times, soils were predominantly perceived as “dust and dirt”, we have more recently experienced a shift in the public perception where emphatic formulations, like the “earth’s fragile skin” or “soils for life”, started to reflect the increasingly accepted importance of soils for all life on earth and as keystone element for sustainable development.

It is no wonder that soils have been much more prominently featured in the outcome document of the Rio + 20 Conference “The Future We Want” in 2012 and ultimately in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in 2015. In addition, the UN General Assembly declared the year 2015 as the first “International Year of Soils” and has decided that December 5 every year shall be known as “World Soil Day”.

An effective conservation of soils particularly by sustainably managing them requires reliable data, scientific knowledge, appropriate management concepts, public engagement, sufficient financial resources, effective legal instruments and good governance.

In this regard, it has been our intention to establish a platform for discussion among legislators, lawyers and policymakers regarding regulatory concepts and approaches on the international, regional and national level. The new *International Yearbook of Soil Law and Policy* aims to bring together the global legal fraternity, academics, judges and local legal practitioners to continue the discourse on soils in the attempt to improve the legal promotion and protection of soils by inter alia enhancing existing governance solutions.

This first volume of the *International Yearbook of Soil Law and Policy* focuses on contents and implementation of the objective of a “land degradation neutral world”, which is also prominently addressed in SDG Target 15.3. The Yearbook is divided into four parts. We are particularly pleased that this first volume was

prominently blessed with words of welcome by internationally renowned academics and visionary politicians from every continent. This introductory part with specific regional perspectives is followed by one of the recent international (law) developments. This part includes an analysis of the content and structure of the SDGs with regard to soil and land, a discussion of scientific methods relevant for their implementation and reports relevant international (legal) regimes. Latest developments include the decisions made at the 12th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP21 Paris Agreement. The next part deals with cross-disciplinary issues relevant to the implementation of the SDG like the right to food, land tenure, migration and the “Economics of Land Degradation Initiative”. The final part reports on developments in national legislation from various domestic jurisdictions and supranational entities, including Brazil, China, the European Union, Mongolia, Namibia and the United States.

It is our intention that the book series *International Yearbook of Soil Law and Policy* will be perceived as a useful tool for academics, legislators and policy-makers working in this field. To this end, also the subsequent volumes shall address emerging questions of law and politics with regard to the protection and sustainable management of soil and land—at the international, national and regional level such as urban sprawl, sustainable agriculture, effectiveness of regional agreements or land as a privately owned good.

We would like to emphasize our sincere gratitude to Springer Publishing House for publishing the new *International Yearbook of Soil Law and Policy* as part of its “legal portfolio”, making it thus globally accessible.

Dessau, Germany
Kleinmachnow, Germany
Wuhan, China
Stellenbosch, South Africa
Brussels, Belgium

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