

Dear colleagues:

Through this note I will try to describe the "Manos al Suelo" ("Hands on Soil) event that we had on December 5 in celebration of World Soil Day. We carried out 4 simultaneous activities in one of the emblematic parks of our capital San José, the La Sabana Metropolitan Park, located 2.5 km from the central axis of the capital and which constitutes an urban "lung" of 65 ha.

First, a group of close to 400 people among children, youths and adults, and in which a group of 5 inmates was included (who during that time could meet their families), divided into 26 groups with two guides "teens" that analyzed with the attendees the importance and functions of the soil resource in their lives, applied 13 tons of compost among 3,000 trees belonging to a Program that has been dedicated in the last 6 years to recover the landscape. The park in previous times was the international airport of the city and in the 80s it was planted with eucalyptus, which for the Costa Rica conditions constitutes an exotic species. Starting in 2011, a group financed by Scotiabank and in conjunction with ICODER, which is in charge of keeping and maintaining this park, took on the task of replacing all eucalyptus with native species that were perfectly adapted to the conditions. With the wood generated, furniture has been built for schools, tables for the park itself and just before the event, a series of garbage batteries were installed to separate the recycling products throughout the park.

In map 1 (Photo 1) you can see the 26 areas in which it was placed and applied 0.5 t of the compost in each section.

With this activity we wanted to emphasize the important role of the soil in the recycling or transformation of waste as occurs during the manufacture of compost, and also demonstrate how, a simple practice as it is, available to all, can make us part of a plan as ambitious as the country has globally, as is the decarbonization of our economy. The following was what we said to each of our participants: "by applying organic fertilizer to the trees, we are encouraging our urban soils to capture the carbon that is in the atmosphere and conserve it, and therefore we will be contributing to the decarbonization of our city". (Photos 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, groups applying compost). The compost that was distributed came from the donations made by 17 companies (Photo 7).

The idea was also to transmit that we can all be part of the solution to pollution and encourage the soil to continue fulfilling its recycling function.

The second activity was the exhibition of 15 stations, divided into 3 routes and located on the only hill that exists in the park. The idea here was to show how fragile the resource is, because in a relatively small area of the park, in which a small hill with moderate slopes is present, it is feasible to find the different types of soil degradation, such as surface erosion, pedestals that they indicate deeper erosion, and even gullies. These situations were used to show the conservation practices that could be done in each case as indicated in Map 2 (Photo 8).

The third activity was what we call the Soil Fair, and in which along some of the park boulevards, as indicated in Map 1 (Photo 1), 50 entities including public and private institutions, companies and micro-enterprises, have installed their own stands or awnings in which they showed in some way how they carried out some type of management on the soil resource. Among them were almost all compost-donating companies, each one showing the way in which they elaborated their product, with or without the help of earthworms, indicating the raw materials they use (coffee beans, cane bagasse, cow dung, chicken manure, etc.).); some showed the simple equipment that they use to produce compost with household

waste in their own homes and its diffusion in a municipal program and it was even exposed the way in which the butterflies, upon completing their life cycle, during the pupal stage, are some processors of the natural compost . There was also another series of stands that exhibited options for home gardening, establishment of small-scale plants, biodegradable pots and equipment for the production of useful chips in coverage. Others referred to soil functions, such as the one showing a water filtration system, that dealt with the issue of recycling and pollution. In this regard, one organization showed plastic pollution on the beaches and another referred to the non-use of plastic for single use. Accompanying the entire stand area were the 18 posters produced by FAO, 9 with threats and 9 with different ways to contaminate soils. There was also an awning to paint with floors, another awning to mold with floors, and several with crafts made with materials left from the ground, even the furniture used for the main act was an example of the reuse of wood remains for manufacturing artistic furniture. Several state, non-governmental, and academic entities showed the activities that each of them does in relation to the Soil resource. Also a series of posters showed alternatives that farmers use to manage the soil sustainably.

With all these three activities the objective was to raise awareness to the visitors ; however, the activity with which we believe that it will be achieved to give substantial importance to the positioning of the SOIL resource in the country was the Official Act of Constitution of the National Alliance for Soils and Lands of Costa Rica, which was carried out in the middle of the other 3 activities, outdoors, in the shadow of a large awning installed on the ground itself, among representatives of more than 40 public entities and private. As a result of a previous process of contact and individualized adhesion that was carried out by the Governance Committee (Pillar 1) of the ACCS, that day was reached with a very clear determination of the need to ally entities of both sectors, the public and the private, at the national level, as a way to advance synergistically in the conservation of the soil resource. Within the entities that were present were at least 4 ministries, Environment, Agriculture, Housing, Public Works and Transportation, and another series of government institutions related directly and indirectly to the resource. Non-state public entities, academic entities, international organizations besides FAO, such as UNDP, IICA and GIZ, NGOs of various kinds, and another large group that includes Professional Associations, Movements (Organic, Union of Small Agricultural Producers) also participated as well as Financial Institutions and financing companies of the event. Each representative signed a symbolic act using soil as paint medium, and the intervention of the Minister of Environment and Energy, Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, closed the event with the greatest boost that the resource has received in years in our country: "There is no doubt that this day December 5, 2018 marked a before and after on the national agenda in relation to the resource SOIL" (Photos 9, 10, 11, Constitutive Act of the Alliance).

Finally, as a reminder of this celebration of World Soil Day 2018, all the participants who wore the white shirt, formed a symbolic design to be seen from above with the use of a drone and means "Manos al Suelo" (Hands on Soil) in La Sabana! (Photo 12).



















