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Soil governance a constrain to soil security in Africa: A case study in Ghana

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Abstract

Soil governance refers to the policies, legislations and actors (institutions) that consolidate enforce and safeguard the use and management of soil resources for sustainable production and ecosystem services. A secured and sustainable food production system in Africa demands securing the soil; a basic underpinning resource of food and water security, climate, socioeconomic and human health. Despite soil's essentiality, the soils of Africa are threatened by soil governance. These threats have downscaled nearly half of the productive potential of African soils and consequently led to food insufficiency and socio-economic instability. With the prevalence of climate variability, food shortages, pandemics and conflict, it has become crucial to address the constraints and put the governing ways of soil security in the governing systems of Ghana. This paper examined the role of the Lands Commission and Environmental Protection Agency of Ghana which are legislatively vested to undertake land (soil) entitlement registration and protection respectively. The governing mechanisms of laws, regulations, policies, and policy reforms are however inclined towards entitlement and other environmental services with very little focus on soils. The only existing law governing soil was established in 1953 (No. 32) and amended in 1957 (No 35). The law ensures effective and efficient utilisation and sustainable management of soil and provides the power to enforce regulations and policies to safeguard soils. The barriers and constraints to the governing soil laws were that the application of the law was established under the Ministry of Agriculture with no legislated protective mandate and the power of regulations was vested in the president. The law has not seen any reform or amendment since the last amendment in 1957 and has not been effectively applied and enforced. The laxity in legislation, policy and actors of soil governance in Ghana leads off to soil security threats.

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