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### **Conserving Soil Resources: Perspectives on multifunction-multiuse approaches**

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#### **Abstract**

The concept of soil conservation in its wider sense has undergone important changes through history. From almost religious perceptions of soil as a crucial base of life in ancient cultures, the concept evolved to a more pragmatic vision with close connection to food production for survival. During the Age of Enlightenment soil was considered in a wider perspective as a vital part of environment with strong connections to landscape as was the Humboldtian approach. Later, soil conservation was strongly connected to schemes of socio economic development, territorial colonization and agricultural production. The Dust-Bowl syndrome in the USA and the European post war period after the Second World War exemplifies this approach.

In the last three decades we are slowly coming back to a more holistic perspective (with some roots in the XVIII century) recognising the fundamental role of soil conservation in connection with sustainable agriculture but also in connection with environmental implications. Today there are increasing social demands under the perspective of soil protection schemes that are considering new aspects such as soil diversity, soil functions, soil as a crucial environmental link, soil threats and new soil uses besides the traditional role of soil for biomass production (agriculture, pasture and forest). The ongoing EU Strategy on Soil Protection includes some of these elements. Soil conservation frameworks of today should expand to include new perspectives and interlinkages into the global functioning of terrestrial ecosystems but maintain vital aspects from previous schemes as keeping soil fertility or favouring water-soil interactions.

In this paper it is proposed a conceptual scheme on soil conservation including aspects of soils as a multifunctional medium, soil quality for different uses, and considerations to include soil protection on a wider soil sustainable management framework.