NICOLE & COMMON FORUM Joint Spring Workshop 2024

13 March 2024

BEL Brussels
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The Spring Workshop 2024, jointly organized by NICOLE and COMMON FORUM, brings together industry experts, researchers, regulators and environmental practitioners for an in-depth exploration of essential soil management topics. Set in Brussels on Wednesday the 13th of March at BEL Brussels, this event will thoroughly explore pivotal issues within the overarching theme:

THE FUTURE OF MANAGING SOIL CONTAMINATION.
Impacts of European Developments Regarding Soil Health and the Challenges of Emerging Contaminants.

Participants will have the opportunity to co-create new ideas through focused breakout sessions covering the following topics:

- Handling of Emerging Contaminants
- Exploring Soil Health on Industrial and Urban Land
- Soil Care vs. Soil Cure
- Leveraging Digital Environmental Data
- Risk Assessment
- Impact on Human Health

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Workshop Program

9:00–9:30	**Registration**
9:30–9:35	**Welcome by Moderators** Johan De Fraye and Jörg Frauenstein
9:35–11:00	**Keynote Speakers** Sytze Keuning (Bioclear Earth B.V.): *Soil health, emerging contaminants and competing values.* Christian Andersen (Danish Regions): *Upcoming challenges to contaminated sites management and possible policy responses.* Dennis Lemke (Evonik): *Requirements of European Industry on developments of soil health law – how to keep industry running and soils clean?*
11:00–11:30	**Coffee Break**
11:30–12:30	**Panel Discussion** Sytze Keuning (Bioclear Earth B.V.) Christian Andersen (Danish Regions) Dietmar Müller-Grabherr (Common Forum) Elise Noël (Shell) Horst Herzog (Infraserv)
12:30–13:30	**Lunch**
13:30–13:40	**Introduction Break-out Sessions**
13:45–14:35	**Break-Out Sessions Round 1** *Please see the next page for more information about the break-out sessions.*
14:35–15:05	**Coffee Break**
15:05–15:55	**Break-Out Sessions Round 2**
16:00–16:45	**Conclusions & Closing of the Workshop**

Break-Out Sessions

1. Handling of Emerging Contaminants

Emerging contaminants are causing growing concerns, both in the public perception and in the strategies employed by authorities and stakeholders. The breakout session will explore:

- Approaches for evaluating new substances, their significance in toxicology, risk assessment, and hazard evaluation.
- Strategies for predicting potential emerging contaminants and addressing knowledge gaps and uncertainties.
- Ideas for ensuring approval security and reliability for industry, along with appropriate measures (including stakeholder management) when dealing with emerging contaminations.

2. What Does Soil Health Mean on Industrial and Urban Land?

The concept of soil health encompasses multifunctional soil processes and their associated ecosystem services. This poses a challenge to current land use and management practices, particularly in industrial and urban contexts. Should soil health be assessed differently based on its use? Are there varying expectations for playgrounds, recreation areas, or sites occupied by heavy industry?

- Defining soil health comprehensively, taking into account various aspects such as human health, soil quality, water storage and retention, rainwater/stormwater retention, and climate change.
- Examining varying levels of acceptance based on land use.
- Assessing the financial impact, including the cost/benefit analysis, of soil health on industrial soils.

3. Soil Care vs. Soil Cure

This breakout session will explore the integration of soil care into soil cure, influencing the evaluation and selection of remediation techniques. The focus will extend beyond contamination removal to encompass the restoration of a healthy soil. Discussion topics will include:

- Defining soil care and soil cure.
- Assessing the importance of life cycle assessments and carbon footprint in decision-making.
- Exploring the effects of choosing soil cure or soil care on human health, land use, and neighboring environments.
- Examining the potential extension of future risk assessments for soil contamination to include aspects related to healthy soils and their surroundings.

4. Benefits of Digitalization of Environmental Data

Frequently, a substantial amount of environmental data exists at the local level, ensuring effective management of contamination. The question arises whether a comprehensive overview or big data approaches at the European level could yield advantages.
This breakout session will explore and discuss these considerations.

- What costs and benefits can be anticipated for industry, regulators, and citizens with increased digitalization of environmental data?
- What is the current status of EU Member States?
- What are the interests and limitations for industry and site-owners?
- How can citizen science contribute?
- Lastly, how will the interested public, not being experts, react to and utilize extensive information?

5. Risk Evaluation

Many risk assessment approaches and tools for evaluating the impact of soil and groundwater contamination were developed over 10 to 20 years ago. In light of recent scientific advancements, growing data accessibility, and emerging policy concepts (e.g., ecosystem services), the necessity to revise or adjust these methodologies will be explored and discussed.

- Are current risk assessment approaches and tools still fit for purpose, or are there any shortcomings or new aspects that have not been considered thus far?
- Are there additional criteria for risk evaluation, such as soil compaction, water storage and retention capabilities, or any indicators for "performance efficiency" that should be taken into account?
- Regarding the timescales of risk evaluation, is more than one generation affected? If so, should we consider additional criteria in our assessment?

6. Impact on Human Health

The acceptance of threshold values or results of risk assessments often relies on the acknowledgment of exposure and potential negligible health effects by neighbouring communities. Topics to be addressed in this breakout group include:

- What are the connections between threshold values and human health risk research? Do we need better communication of the risk-based approach, with a particular focus on human health aspects?
- Should the scope of "human health" be broadened to include other living organisms?
- Is there a need for increased interaction between different fields of expertise in this context?

Organizing Committee Members

Dario Hamesse - Brussels Environment
Dietmar Müller-Grabherr - Environment Agency Austria
Esther Goidts – Public administration Wallonia
Horst Herzog – Infraserv
Jérôme Schoonejans - Brussels Environment
Johan Ceenaeme – OVAM
Pietro Fragapane – Brussels Environment
Saïd el Fadili - Brussels Environment
Wouter Gevaerts – Arcadis

NICOLE Secretariat

Please complete the conference registration form.
NICOLE members can register through the NICOLE Portal.
Members of COMMON FORUM please use the following registration link.
Non-members, please contact Chayenne van Dijk.

Deadline for registration is the 1st of March 2024.

Registration Fees

For further information on NICOLE membership, workshop programs, registration & fees, or any other practical issue regarding the conference, please contact:
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