



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## ***Soil Renaissance plan a framework to advance soil health***

**June 24, 2014:** Goals and strategies for advancing soil health were announced today with the release of the [Soil Renaissance Strategic Plan](#). The plan was released today at the World Congress of Conservation Agriculture in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Developed with input from thought leaders working in production agriculture, agribusiness, the academic community, NGOs and government agencies, the Soil Renaissance Strategic Plan outlines goals and strategies in four key areas: Measurement, Economics, Research and Education.



“This [Strategic Plan](#) is a starting point that will evolve and expand as work is completed, new challenges are identified and more individuals and groups join the Soil Renaissance,” said Neil Conklin, President of Farm Foundation, NFP. Farm Foundation and the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation are leading the Soil Renaissance but collaboration among diverse stakeholders will be key to its success.

“For the Soil Renaissance to meet its full potential, it will require multiple individuals and organizations,” says Noble Foundation President and CEO Bill Buckner. “Many groups already are working in specific areas of soil health. The Soil Renaissance is a central hub through which people can learn what’s now being done, gaps to be filled and ways they can help.”

The Soil Renaissance seeks to reawaken the public to the importance of soil health in vibrant, profitable and sustainable natural resource systems. It seeks to make maintenance and improvement of soil health the cornerstone of land use management decisions. Without healthy soils, the task of feeding the world’s people becomes even more challenging. The Initiative evolved from discussions by 25 leaders representing conventional and organic agriculture, science and research, land managers and policymakers about the best tools to advance soil health. Other stakeholders were then enlisted to help develop the Strategic Plan.

The first task of the Soil Renaissance team was to agree on a definition of soil health. After lengthy discussion, the team adopted the definition used by USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): *The continued capacity of the soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans.*

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[www.farmfoundation.org](http://www.farmfoundation.org) [www.facebook.com/thefarmfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/thefarmfoundation) [www.agchallenge2050.org](http://www.agchallenge2050.org)

The Strategic Planning Team has identified goals in each of the four key work areas:

- Measurement: To incorporate soil health measures into standardized soil testing that is readily available, affordable and commercial viable.
- Economics: To quantify the effects of soil health on economic risks and returns.
- Education: To reawaken the public to the importance of soil health.
- Research: To convene the research community to advance soil health.

Objectives and strategies have been outlined in each area. Details of the Strategic Plan are available now at the [Farm Foundation website](#). The Soil Renaissance website, [www.SoilRenaissance.org](http://www.SoilRenaissance.org), will be live in early July, offering updates on Soil Renaissance work, as well as collaborator projects. Anyone interested in contributing expertise or time to the work teams should contact Soil Health Project Coordinator [Brook Gaskamp](#).

“Soil health is not a new concept or topic. But it has been taken for granted, even though it is fundamental to any agricultural production system—whether convention or organic, large or small,” Conklin said.

“The Soil Renaissance provides a connection for the vast community of soil health stakeholders,” Buckner added. “It is critical that producers—the people working directly with the land—be in close communication with researchers and policymakers to ensure that their challenges are recognized and our soils are protected and sustained for future generations.”

Advocates of healthy soils can join the Soil Renaissance by sharing information on work being done in their area or by local organizations, subscribing to a Soil Renaissance newsletter, or providing financial support. For more information, visit the website, or contact Brook Gaskamp, Soil Health Project Coordinator, (580) 223-5810, [blgaskamp@noble.org](mailto:blgaskamp@noble.org)

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*Farm Foundation, NFP serves as a catalyst for sound public policy by providing objective information to foster a deeper understanding of issues shaping the future for agriculture, food systems and rural regions. The Foundation does not lobby or advocate. Our 81-year reputation for objectivity allows us to bring together diverse stakeholders for discussions on economic and public policy issues. The issue of soil health became prominent in discussions of A Dialogue on Food and Agriculture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a Farm Foundation initiative to promote discussions on the challenges to be addressed if agriculture is to feed 9 billion people in 2050 while protecting and maintaining natural resources.*

*The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation has focused on soil health since it was created by Lloyd Noble in 1945 to help protect the soil and safeguard the land for use by future generations by working directly with agricultural producers to effect change in regional soil health. An independent, nonprofit institute headquartered in Ardmore, Okla., the Noble Foundation conducts direct operations, including assisting farmers and ranchers, and conducting plant science research and agricultural programs to enhance agricultural productivity regionally, nationally and internationally.*