

## THE SOIL PROTECTION WORKING GROUP OF THE DANUBE COUNTRIES

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In the framework of the Danube Countries Working Community activities, the independent Soil Protection Working Group was established in 1993. Its primary task is to elaborate principles and common soil protection concepts in given countries, accepted on the level of governments and related authorities, and also to develop solutions for problems on regional levels. The final objective is to implement a soil protection policy, which is able to maintain soil quality and productivity potential for future generations. Based on four years of activities, the significant Working Group findings are as follows:

Soil pollution and soil degradation, particularly in most post-Communist countries, have been attaining a high degree, and in many locations also the threshold of ecological bearability. As the reclamation and revitalisation of the degraded and polluted soils require a long time and considerable financial means, it is not only a moral question. It is economically more effective to prevent harm than to subsequently reclaim land.

The main objective of the correct soil protection policy should be high quality conservation for future generations. To this is joined also the protection of soil non-production functions, particularly filtration, transformational and buffering capability, and its role and significance as land and environment. In reality, soil protection objectives are not only laws and prohibition approvals, but also the active harmonisation of relationships between the main requirements of soil productivity potential, in order for land resources to be used by future generations.

Based on the aforementioned realities and relationships, the Soil Protection Working Group is an active premium for the elaboration of uniform soil concepts for governments and responsible organisations, that, in final consequence, should guarantee the solution with substantiation and efficiency. The international significance of the Working Group is also the fact that it is a guarantee for high professionalism, objectivity, rationality, and finally, for a wider European view.

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Dr. **Michal Dzatko**, Member of the Slovak Academy of Agricultural Sciences since 1990, and Minister of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic from 1990-1991, holds a biology degree from the Faculty of Natural Science of Comenius University, Bratislava. Since 1961, Dr. Dzatko has been with the Soil Fertility Research Institute, in Bratislava, and was Director from 1991-1995. At present, he is Senior Researcher at the Institute and an active member of many national and international societies and working groups. His research interests include soil science, ecology, and especially plant-soil relationships, land productivity evaluation, landscape ecology, land use modelling and the ethics of sustainable development. Author of more than 200 papers and publications, he has participated extensively in many international conferences and seminars.