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FAO: Almost a Third of the Earth's Soils are Degraded

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FAO has noted today that nearly a third of the world's soils are degraded in a world where more than 815 million people are suffering from hunger and malnutrition.

Improving soil health is essential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including Zero Hunger and the fight against climate change and its consequences, said FAO Director-General Jose Graziano da Silva.

Land degradation affects food production, causes hunger and malnutrition, increases food price volatility and forces land abandonment and involuntary migration, he said in a video message to the 21st World Soil Science Congress, which runs until August 17 in Brazil.

Graziano da Silva stressed the importance of sustainable soil management and remarked that it is a resource which acts as a filter for contaminants, preventing them from entering the food chain and reaching water bodies such as rivers, lakes, seas and oceans.

'Let us transform soils into a vehicle of prosperity and peace, and demonstrate their contribution to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,' he underlined.

The FAO report *The State of the World's Soil Resources* identified ten major threats to soil functions, including erosion, nutrient imbalance, carbon and biodiversity loss, acidification, pollution, salinisation and compaction.