



An Overview of Soils and Human Health – Research Trends and Future Needs

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Soils have significant impact on human health, whether those influences are positive or negative, direct or indirect. Soils are a significant source of nutrients in our food supply and medications such as antibiotics. However, nutrient imbalances and the presence of human pathogens in the soil biological community can cause negative impacts on health. There are also many locations where various elements or chemical compounds are found in soils at toxic levels, due to either natural conditions or anthropogenic activities. The soils of urban environments have received increased attention in the last few years, and they too pose a number of human health questions and challenges. Concepts such as soil security may provide a framework within which soils and human health issues can be investigated using interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, as it will take the contributions of experts in a number of different scientific, medical, and social science fields to fully address soils and human health issues. While much progress was made in understanding links between soils and human health over the last century, there is still much we do not know and the interactions between soils and human health are extremely complex. Therefore, there is still significant need for research in this important area.