



## Africa Soil Information Service (AfSIS) Project

### Purpose of the AfSIS Inception Meeting

The purpose of the Phase II of the African Soil Information Service (AfSIS) is to build a scalable and sustainable product and service enterprise that will rapidly expand the effective use of the scientific information to ensure that Africa's soil and landscape resources are described, understood and used effectively to help raise agricultural productivity, and in so doing increase the prosperity of rural communities and nations in perpetuity.

AfSIS was conceived and implemented as a development-oriented research project and was funded in 2008 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). The first phase of the project focused on the creation of scientific workflows and algorithms for soil and landscape mapping and monitoring of Africa's diverse soils and landscapes. Some of the research work begun in Phase I will continue during Phase II, but the project will shift its focus to the development and delivery of practical products and services that will enable users to strengthen their knowledge about soils and landscapes at several scales: continental, national, regional, and community levels.

The planning work proposed here will be done in close consultation with a range of stakeholders, and will include such vital transitional elements as an effective management and governance infrastructure, detailed partnership and country action plans, and a dynamic and sustainable business model for the future.

There are four main operational objectives and work streams covered under this Planning Grant proposal. The first three have to do with maintaining the momentum of R&D work begun under AfSIS Phase I, and the fourth is focused on planning for the transition of AfSIS from a research initiative to a service provider:

1. Continued development of soil and landscape information systems in order to make legacy, recently updated, and near real-time data and information widely available and useful to partners and clients: African governments; national research, development and extension organizations; civil society; industry; and the general public.
2. Continued development of decision analysis and ICT applications that can guide agricultural management decision-making at the national, and farm and/or household scales, so as to reduce the financial and environmental downside risks associated with implementation.
3. Continued strengthening and institutionalization of national soil information systems in order to inform policy decision-making, reduce risks, and improve soil and landscape management decisions by basing them on scientific evidence and emerging technological capabilities.
4. Strengthening and refining AfSIS management and governance structures, as well as business plan development, partnership and country-specific action plans, and other such building blocks needed for longer term success and sustainability of AfSIS during and beyond its second phase.

Over the course of Phase II of AfSIS, staff will focus on the pressing need for better information about soils and ecosystems in Africa, and on the more effective use of this information to improve both agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability. This work will eventually result in at least four highly interconnected information products/services:

1. Africa-wide soil and landscape information services – Soil and landscape data, as well as data processing, analysis, storage, and information distribution services of, for example, ground – and remote-sensing data and digital soil maps, will continue to be developed in internationally agreed formats and standards.
2. National soil and land-use change policy and risk assessment service – national-level soil and landscape information needs will be met by assisting MoAs in setting up and operating their soil spectral laboratory networks, data and data analysis infrastructures, and soil information service “franchises”.
3. Agricultural landscape monitoring and risk assessment advisory services – with the use of new, low-cost technologies, we will be able to gain unprecedented insights into the functioning and failures of agricultural landscapes in Africa. Tools and open source software will be developed to allow clients to rapidly map and monitor such variables as: land cover and areas under different crops; crop conditions; field sizes; the location of water sources and other infrastructure; household locations; terrain attributes; woody vegetation cover; eroded and bare areas; and soil conditions.
4. Field level soil management advisory services – Databases and statistical optimization software will be produced that can be used by community knowledge workers and extension agents to provide rapid soil management advice to farmers via smart phones, web services, and as stand-alone computer software.

The specific objectives of inception meeting are to;

- a. Review achievements of AfSIS I.
- b. Review AfSIS 18 month planning grant and develop detailed work plans by work stream and partner institutions. Budgets and deliverables.
- c. Discuss AfSIS Governance and partnership model.
- d. Discuss an outline of an AfSIS data management policy.
- e. Discuss process to develop AfSIS Phase 2 proposal in 2014.



## Africa Soil Information Service (AfSIS) Inception Workshop

17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Nairobi, Kenya

### Programme

#### Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2013

8:30	Registration	
9:00 -10:00	Welcome and Setting the Scene	
10:00-10:30	Where we come from – where we go: a statement of vision for AfSIS	
10:30-11:00	Coffee/Tea break	
11:00 – 11:30	AfSIS achievements	
11:30 - 12:00	The transition phase	
12:00 – 13:00	Vision of phase II: pres on: from science to products Group work: Implications for the transition phase	
13:00 – 14:00	LUNCH BREAK	
14:00 – 15:00	Data sharing: Developing a Data Management Policy Group work: implications for mgmt. and governance	
15:00 – 16:30	Review AfSIS planning goals (each workstream presents and inputs from the plenary)	
16:30 – 18:00	Working groups to develop detailed work plans and deliverables	
18:00 – 19:00	Reception	

#### Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2013

8:30 – 10:00	Presentation of work plans and way forward	
10:00 – 10:30	Tea/Coffee Break	
10:30 – 13:00	Governance and partnership model	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch	
13:30 – 15:00	Process of developing Phase II proposal	
15:00 – 16:00	Summary of workshop	
16:00	Concluding remarks	