World Soils Book Series

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The Soils of Chile

Springer

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Aims and Scope

The *World Soils Book Series* brings together soil information and soil knowledge of a particular country in a concise and reader-friendly way. The books include sections on soil research history, geomorphology, major soil types, soil maps, soil properties, soil classification, soil fertility, land use and vegetation, soil management, and soils and humans.

International Union of Soil Sciences

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Preface

Imagine the narrowest and longest country in the world, where high snow-covered mountains can be seen from the ocean and huge rivers sculpt the landscape, where frequent volcano eruptions cover the land with ash, where earthquakes shake the earth and tsunamis overwhelm the coastline, where enormous glaciers are retreating, and finally imagine a place where it never rains…. then you are seeing the majesty and magnificence of Chile.

It should be noted that within Chilean territory you can find almost all the soil types observed in the world, but unfortunately these represent a scarce and fragile natural heritage. Natural resources are one of more important economic assets in Chile, but to avoid over-exploitation of those considered nonrenewable, a transition toward sustainable development should be a priority.

The vision of local soil scientists about the problems that afflict Chilean soils has been extended to a broader concept than erosion, namely soil degradation. Such problems were unsuspected a few decades ago, but nowadays soils are studied in light of a wide range of complex and interconnected problems, which cast a long shadow over the future of fertile Chilean land and await the light of wisdom.

In response to increasing concerns about soil degradation and the sustainability of agricultural production potentials in almost all regions of Chile, many researchers and institutions have developed diverse and valuable initiatives. These efforts include resource inventories, the design and development of low-cost technological options, the development of ecologically sound cropping systems, and options designed to conserve and manage the agrobiodiversity and forest resources that exist in the country.

However, because the use and management of soils depends on many different actors, only limited progress is possible unless all are involved in planning and implementing programs to conserve this vital natural resource. In this regard, involvement takes on a very wide connotation, from having a deep knowledge of soil dynamics to planning management within an ethical context of this true *work of art by nature*.

Acknowledgments

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