Science Societies

Rattan Lal, past president of SSSA, named World Food Prize Laureate

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Member News

Dr. Rattan Lal, Distinguished University Professor of Soil Science at The Ohio State University, was named the World Food Prize Laureate on 11 June 2020.



Rattan Lal

Awarded to individuals who have improved the quality, quantity, and availability of food across the globe, this honor is often called the "Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture."

"Rattan Lal is one of the pioneers and biggest proponents of conservation tillage worldwide," says Ole Wendroth, the current SSSA President. "His work in soil health and productivity fits exactly with the goals of the Ag Innovation Agenda—that is, to increase agricultural production while decreasing our environmental footprint."

A 53-year member of ASA and SSSA, Dr. Lal was named Fellow of both in 1985 and 1986, respectively.

From 2006–2007, he served as the President of SSSA, during which time he spearheaded the "Soils Resolution" that was unanimously adopted by the U.S. Senate in 2008.

The resolution highlighted the importance of soil as a means for growing healthful, abundant food, and the critical role that soil scientists play in furthering soil health. It was the first soil-health-oriented governmental resolution of its kind in any country.

Over the course of his career, Lal's research has helped farmers restore soil health in nearly 100 countries across the globe, from his native India, to Africa, Asia, and across the Americas. The hallmark of his studies is an emphasis on restoration of degraded soils using soil physical measures and recycling nutrients, rather than replacing them through fertilizer application.

His work has especially impacted smallholder farms in tropical regions with degraded soil, helping them regain their capacity for efficient crop production with small amounts of land.

Lal's accomplishments are innumerable. His contributions to the Societies and worldwide, through his careful, innovative research and outreach, are beyond worthy of the World Food Prize.

"As soil scientists, we should take Rattan Lal's legacy as an inspiration," Wendroth says. "His work emphasizes that soil is an essential conservable resource in agriculture, and we should take that on as the next step in sustainable intensification."

For more information on the World Food Prize, including past and current laureates, see **www.worldfoodprize.org**.

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