

Report on the World Congress of Soil Science 2022

The 22nd World Congress of Soil Science took place in Glasgow from the 31st of July to the 05th of August, 2022. The focal point of this year's congress was "crossing boundaries, changing society" and thus involved a variety of social, educational, philosophical, and historical talks alongside the more expected microbial, biochemical, physical, and agronomical aspects. With around 1600 participants from a myriad of backgrounds, there were many opportunities to not only network but learn about issues and solutions from different disciplines. Throughout the Congress, the vitality of teaching the general public of the importance of soil was continuously highlighted. This was further reinforced as one of the panel members, Karen Vancampenhout, during the second plenary session, mentioned that "death to the big brown blob" in educational spheres was necessary if people were ever going to see soil as anything other than a passive substrate that they walk on.

In relation to the PhD that is being undertaken at Cranfield University: determining the mode of action of surfactants in the soil, there were many talks, posters and interactions that proved to be very useful. While there were no presentations or similar on surfactants themselves, project development took place via topics on hydrophobic soils, water movement in the soil, rhizosheath or mucilage interactions with the soil, and some computational models. This helped generate a variety of project developments, in particular the connection with a team that created a model for measuring the dehydration of mucilage in a variety of conditions. They expressed an interest in collaborating as their next point of interest was to observe the rehydration process of mucilage and would indeed be interested to add surfactant data to their variables.

If not for the scientific knowledge, it was worthwhile to visit this Congress due to the exhibitions of Scottish soils, a variety of very unique wild clay ceramics, educational soil projects for children and adults alike, the "Soil and Soul" podcast, yoga and running sessions, and the many talks not generally found at a soil science conference. In addition, due to personal interests and social engagements, I participated in the IUSS Gender Equality discussion. This session provided an insight into gender equality within soil science and gave an opportunity for emerging scientists to voice their opinions. The outcome of the session emphasised the importance of linking gender equality to all other biases (i.e. ethnicity, disabilities, travel disadvantages) as gender itself was not seen as the biggest disadvantage to young scientists anymore, fortunately. I was honoured to be one of the first people to hear the announcement of the newly signed equality policy of the IUSS and am looking forward to future involvements.

This was a truly unique experience and I would deeply like to thank the Douglas Bomford Trust for their financial support and assistance towards my interpersonal growth.

