

The First Joint Meeting on **Soil and Plant System Sciences (SPSS 2019)**, organized by the Italian Society of Agricultural Chemistry (SICA), the Italian Society of Pedology (SIPe) and the Italian Society of Soil Science (SISS), in collaboration with the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute (CIHEAM) and the Italian Chapter of the International Humic Substances Society (IHSS), held on **23-26 September 2019** at the CIHEAM Campus in Valenzano (Bari, Italy).

The title of this meeting “*Natural and Human-induced Impacts on the Critical Zone and Food Production*” set up the ambitious goal of integrating scientific backgrounds and topics, all focused on the “critical zone” (where soil and living organisms interact) but starting from differing theoretical perspectives and applied approaches.

The scientific program consisted of 5 sessions (**Natural and agricultural soil systems, Soil pollution and food safety, Organic amendments and soil quality, Plant responses to natural and human-induced drivers, Frontiers in plant and soil sciences**), distributed during 4 days which also included a scientific and cultural excursion and social events.

Each session was opened by an invited speaker, namely: **Takashi Kosaki**, President of the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS); **Fabio Terribile**, University of Naples Federico II, Italy, President of the Soil Morphology and Micromorphology Commission, IUSS; **José María García-Mina Freire**, University of Navarra, Spain, Vice President of the International Humic Substances Society (IHSS); **Philip J. White**, Programme Leader, The James Hutton Institute, Scotland; **Yiannis Deligiannakis**, University of Ioannina, Greece, President of the IHSS.

The field trip on Tuesday 24th September consisted of a pedological excursion with morphological description of four soil profiles organised by Fabio Terribile and Pandi Zdruli, and a cultural visit to Matera, European Capital of Culture for 2019 and UNESCO World Heritage site.

The SPSS 2019 meeting gathered thoughts and findings of scientists coming from several scientific societies and institutions involved in research approaches to the critical zone. **More than 160** among scientists, professionals and individuals from different Countries (including Italy, Spain, Greece, Russia, UK, Germany, Nigeria and Trinidad & Tobago) attended the meeting; **35 oral presentations and 90 posters** contributed to create a permanent forum of stimulating scientific debates, especially for young scientists and students (almost **50% of the total attendees**).

The best oral and poster presentations on both plant- and soil-related topics were awarded to four young scientists with a free-of-charge publication voucher on *Plants* (ISSN 2223-7747;

www.mdpi.com/journal/plants) and Soil Systems (ISSN 2571-8789; www.mdpi.com/journal/soilsystems), respectively.

The Book of Abstracts, as PDF file, along with more info can be found at <https://spss2019.azuleon.org/>.

Last, but not least, a very special Social dinner was organized on Wednesday 25th at Masseria Mangiato (Martina Franca), accompanied by Salento's pizzica and tarantella music by the Terraròss group, with Dominique Antonacci playing the drums.

At the end of the meeting, all participants were kindly gifted with a 'pedon' made by the artist Antonio Vestita and conceived in collaboration with Teodoro Miano, Chair of the SPSS 2019 meeting.