

Ferralsols

(from Latin *ferrum*, iron, and *aluminium*)

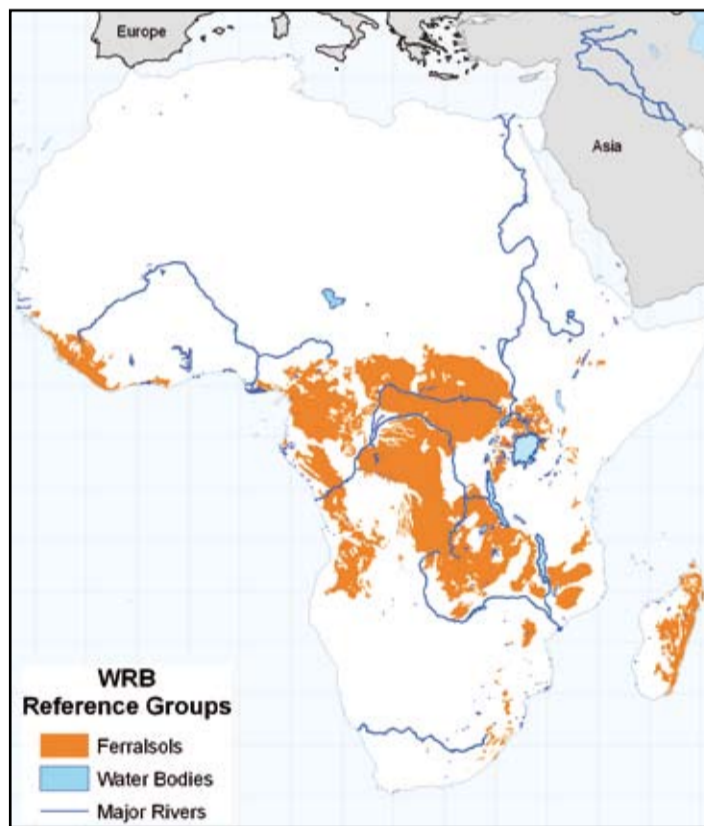


Ferralsols are deep, intensely weathered soils with diffuse or gradual horizon boundaries which are according to some, at least partly attributed to termites. The “ferralic” subsurface horizon, reddish or yellowish in colour and without conspicuous mottles, has typically weak macro-structure and strong micro-aggregated soil structure (“pseudo-silt” and “pseudo-sand”), and friable consistence. This profile from Ghana shows a clear plough layer up to a depth of 30 cm. The large cavities in the plough layer are termite chambers. The mottled horizon below 120 cm is plinthite, a material that hardens irreversibly upon repeated exposure to air and sunlight. Ferralsols in Africa occur almost exclusively in the humid central part of the continental shield, in regions not affected by intensive folding or glacial action during recent geological periods.

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Termites colonize soils in the tropics by building up large hills and excavating deep burrows to fetch water and clay. The above photograph shows termites in action.



Ferralsols are relatively common in Africa and are often associated with Acrisols. They cover around 16% of the continent.

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

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