

Soil Atlas of Africa

To raise awareness of the general public, policy makers and other scientists of the global perspective and importance of soil in Africa, particularly, in the context of the sustainable use of natural resources, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (located in Ispra, Italy) has collaborated with soil scientists from Africa and Europe to produce the first ever SOIL ATLAS OF AFRICA. The atlas links the theme of soil with rural development and, at the same time, supports the goals of the EU Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection in conserving a threatened natural resource that is vital to human existence.

The atlas illustrates the diversity of soil from the humid tropics to

the arid deserts through a series of maps supported by explanatory texts, high quality photographs and descriptive graphics. The atlas illustrates the variation of soil in Africa and from an African perspective. Supporting texts describe the major soil types, together with their principal characteristics and the main soil forming processes; special attention is given to the relationship between land use and soil condition.

For more details and how to obtain a copy, please see

http://eusoiils.jrc.it/library/maps/africa_atlas/index.html

Distribution of major soil types in Africa.

The map shows the dominant Reference Soil Groups according to the WRB classification and correlation system for Africa. The map is the updated output of the African part of the Digital Soil Map of the World produced by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

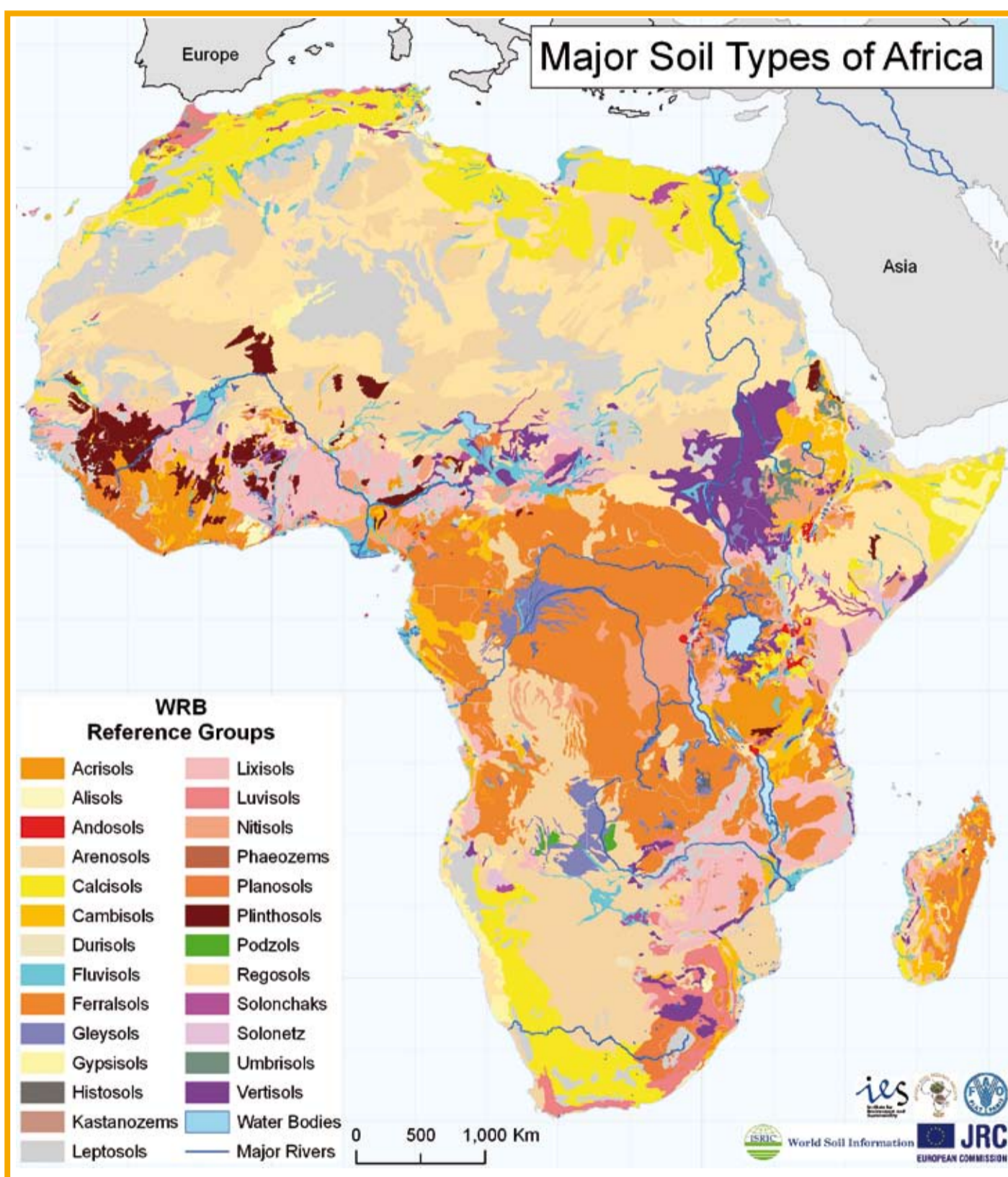
The map clearly shows the zonal arrangement of soils in Africa. The central, wetter part is dominated by Ferralsols, depicted in brown-orange. They are associated with Acrisols (orange-brown). Towards drier parts, Lixisols start to appear (pale pink). In West Africa large areas of Plinthosols occur (dark brown), mainly as hardened surface layers or cuirasses. The desert regions in the north and the south are dominated by Calcisols (bright yellow), Leptosols (shallow soils depicted in grey), Regosols (pale rose), Arenosols (brownish yellow) and Gypsisols (pale yellow). Very locally, especially in southern Africa, Durisols (pinkish grey) occur.

The dark purple colour on the map, mainly in Sudan and Ethiopia, indicate Vertisols whereas the bright red colours depict the dominance of Andosols, mostly associated with the African Rift valley. This is also where most of Africa's Nitisols are found (dark rose). In the Mediterranean region pale brown and brown colours indicate areas of, respectively, Kastanozems and Phaeozems.

Gleysols (dark blue) and Fluvisols (bright blue) are found throughout the map, the latter associated with Africa's river systems and deltas. Solonchaks (purple) and Solonetz (light purple) are mainly associated with coastal plains.

Alisols (very pale yellow), Cambisols (orange), Histosols (dark grey), Luvisols (dark pink), Planosols (dark orange), Podzols (green) and Umbrisols (dark green) are scattered over the map and can be locally important.

In urbanized areas and near large mines, Technosols (highly disturbed soils) may occur. However, most of these areas will be too small to be visible on the map.



Map based on WRB2006 interpretation of the FAO Digital Soil Map of the World (FAO, 1985)

Soil is our life-support system. It delivers food and fresh water; recycles wastes, etc. Decision makers need good baseline information about soils – for planning, reducing land degradation, investment and management. The African Soil Science Society (ASSS) is a network of national societies that aims to consolidate and promote knowledge on African soils by strengthening the capacity of expertise of African soil scientists (training process), lobbying towards political institutions in Africa (Africa Union) for a better consideration of soil aspects by decision makers, and ensuring widespread diffusion of soil-related information to both specialists and the general public (awareness raising) through the ASSS website and ASSS regular activities.