



## **Reclaiming Soil Knowledge: Why a Regional Blueprint for Soil Museums Matters Now**

**Dubai, UAE, 2 July 2025:**

Soil is often treated as an invisible layer beneath our feet, overlooked in public conversations, yet essential to every form of life on Earth. It is the foundation of food systems, biodiversity, water management, and climate resilience. In the world's most fragile environments, the need to protect and understand soil has never been more urgent.

On 21 May 2025, the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) signed a strategic agreement to co-develop the first regional blueprint manual for soil museums in the Middle East and North Africa. The announcement was made during the fourth edition of "Make it in the Emirates," reinforcing the UAE's role as a global hub for innovation, sustainability, and science-based policy. As an initiative that began in the UAE and is now set to serve the wider region, the blueprint embodies a vision that extends from the UAE to the world. This strategic partnership reflects a shared vision to reshape how communities, schools, and institutions engage with environmental education, by placing soil at the heart of climate action, food security and cultural heritage.

### **From Museum to Model**

The blueprint builds on the success of the Emirates Soil Museum, established by ICBA in 2016 with financial support from ADFD. The museum has emerged as a unique facility in the Gulf Region, providing valuable insights into the dynamic and vital world of soil. Since its inauguration, it has engaged over 15,000 beneficiaries — including students, farmers, scientists, and policymakers from around the world through hands-on learning experiences that highlight the importance of soils in agriculture, ecosystems and daily life.

Now, ICBA is working to translate this experience into a scalable, adaptable model for other countries and institutions. The blueprint will provide practical, science-based guidance to help



governments, universities, and local communities design and launch their own soil museums, spaces that connect people to land, science, and sustainability.

### **A turning point for soil literacy**

Soil museums are not merely exhibition spaces, they are living classrooms, policy incubators, and community engagement hubs that bridge the gap between scientific research and public understanding, making the soil related information simple at the same time comprehensive. The blueprint initiative marks a pivotal moment in institutionalizing soil literacy. It offers a flexible yet robust framework for designing, implementing, and sustaining soil museums that maintain the region's diverse soil - environmental conditions, cultural heritage, and educational needs.

### **From Awareness to Action**

The blueprint is more than a technical guide and serves as a practical tool that embodies the shared commitment of ADFD and ICBA to transforming awareness into meaningful, lasting action. It will serve as the foundation for a regional training and capacity-building program, equipping educators and stakeholders with the tools to promote sustainable land management, environmental literacy, and soil conservation practices.

By embedding biodiversity education into community institutions, ICBA aims to foster a new generation that values soils not just as a natural resource, but as a living system central to food security and climate resilience.

### **Grounded in Long-Term Commitment**

ICBA has long been at the forefront of advancing soil science, particularly in the context of effective soil health assessment, saline soil management, , and sustainable land practices in arid and challenging environments. Its efforts have supported the development of climate-smart solutions and contributed to a deeper understanding of the soil's role in building resilient agri-food systems.

The soil museum blueprint builds on this strong foundation, translating scientific knowledge into accessible, educational and usable experiences. It reflects a long-term commitment to



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fostering soil awareness, empowering communities, and promoting responsible stewardship of this vital resource.

### **A Partnership Rooted in Purpose**

At its core, this blueprint reflects a shared belief between ICBA and ADFD: that meaningful sustainability starts with knowledge — and knowledge must be shared. By bringing science into schools, communities, and public institutions, ICBA and its partners are making -soil literacy accessible, relevant, and actionable.

### **Looking ahead: a movement, not a manual**

The soil museum blueprint is more than a planning document. It is the foundation of a movement to reconnect people with the soil beneath their feet. It equips institutions across the region to amplify soil stories, cultivate stewardship, and invest in the long-term health of our valuable landscapes. By restoring our connection to soil knowledge, we lay the foundation for a future rooted in care, science, and sustainability. Now is the time to establish these spaces of learning and restoration, before more land is degraded.

From the UAE to the world, this initiative is a step toward reclaiming soil knowledge and restoring harmony between people and the planet.

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