

## PHILATELIC CONCERNS FOR SOIL PROTECTION: 2015, INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SOILS

Cioruța Bogdan-Vasile<sup>1#</sup>\*, Coman Mirela<sup>\*\*</sup> Pop Alexandru Leonard<sup>\*\*</sup>

\*University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, 3-5 Calea Mănăştur, 400372,  
Cluj-Napoca, Romania, e-mail: [bogdan-vasile.cioruta@usamvcluj.ro](mailto:bogdan-vasile.cioruta@usamvcluj.ro)

\*\*Technical University of Cluj-Napoca - North University Centre of Baia Mare, 62A V. Babeş street,  
430083, Baia Mare, Romania, e-mail: [mirela.coman@irmmm.utcluj.ro](mailto:mirela.coman@irmmm.utcluj.ro)

### Abstract

*The concerns about soil protection have existed for a long time, but until 2015 they did not materialize visibly internationally. In 2015, the United Nations decided that it must take a stand in this regard, so 2015 was designated the International Year of Soils. This initiative has grown, so that even some of the postal administrations have decided to participate actively, issuing a series of philatelic effects following United Nations policy. The present study proposes an analysis of the respective parts, in an attempt to illustrate another perspective on soil protection. The indexing, processing, analysis, description, and dissemination of philatelic material were done through the prism of the postal administration sites, and through the sites with dedicated philatelic content (such as Colnect®, Delcampe®, PicClick®, StampWorld®, etc.). The results obtained as a philographic summum show that there were special concerns aimed at promoting soil protection and the International Year of Soils. Moreover, these concerns have materialized both as stamps and FDCs, and as circulations, with thematic philately supporting the humanitarian cause of soil protection, in particular, and sustainable agriculture in general.*

**Key words:** soil protection timeline, International Year of Soils, philately, sustainable agriculture.

### INTRODUCTION

The 68<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations, by the resolution adopted on December 20, 2013, announced and proclaimed the year 2015 to be the International Year of Light and Light-based Technologies, as well as the International Year of Soils - IYS 2015 (UN, 2013).

As a sequel to the Decade on Biodiversity (2011-2020) and the Post-2015 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the last thematic concern has been initiated to alert humans to the direct relationship between soil fertility, food security, essential ecosystem functions and prosperous societies (UN, 2015; FAO, 2015).

In this sense, the many initiatives organised within the scope of these celebrations aim to help raise society's awareness to the need for sustainable land management, as a key factor for producing food and obtaining fuels, natural fibres and clean water, as well as ensuring essential ecosystem functions and helping present and future generations to adapt to climate change. In this context, the Food and Agriculture Organization has been

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<sup>1#</sup>, Corresponding author

nominated to implement the IYS 2015, within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership and in collaboration with Governments (FAO, 2015).

In addition, some of the postal administrations also contributed to the promotion of the event, which began to gain momentum internationally. Adopting the policy of international entities (such as UNEP, FAO, etc.), they decided to actively participate in promoting the International Year of Soils, achieving and issuing a series of philatelic effects.

In this sense, the present study proposes an analysis of the respective pieces, in an attempt to illustrate another perspective on soil protection, namely that of thematic philately. Thus, from the indexing of the pieces to the analysis, description, and dissemination of philatelic material, we have constantly tried to emphasize the concerns for soil protection.

These concerns have known the most diverse forms of representation, which have either gone along the path of presenting the soil as a living organism (able in turn to support life forms) or have tried to achieve other functions of the soil. In this sense, the soil is seen both as a resource-support of the community, in parallel with the importance of light (in some cases the date of issuance of parts for the International Year of Soils overlaps with the issue of parts specific to the International Year of Light), but also as a fragile organism that deserves, more than ever, all our care and attention.

## **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

The identification, indexing, analysis, and description of the particularities of the exhibited philatelic pieces were made through the information provided by the postal administration sites, and through the sites with dedicated philatelic content (Colnect®, Delcampe®, PicClick®, StampWorld®, etc.). An important step in the description of the philatelic material was made by *in situ* analysis (if we can call it that) of the philatelic pieces, ie directly at their source of issuance (postal administrations around the world). In this way, official information was obtained, which certifies the real implications of the postal administrations in Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Kyrgyzstan, Iceland, Portugal, Tunisia, Uruguay, Russia, etc.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The first philatelic issue dedicated to the International Year of Soils appeared in Moldova, on February 21, 2015, being indexed MP #0922, Mi MD#895 and Sg MD#877 (Moldova P.O., 2015a, b). The commemorative issue is based on a single multicolored postage stamp made by offset lithography, with a face value of 1.75 L (Moldovan lei), in 34 x 34 mm format, issued in 200,000 copies.

In Fig. 1 are exposed a series of philatelic materials related to the issue; we find the postage stamp described above (Fig. 1a), an unencrypted sheet of 8 postage stamps (Fig. 1b) and the First Day Cover - FDC (Fig. 1c).

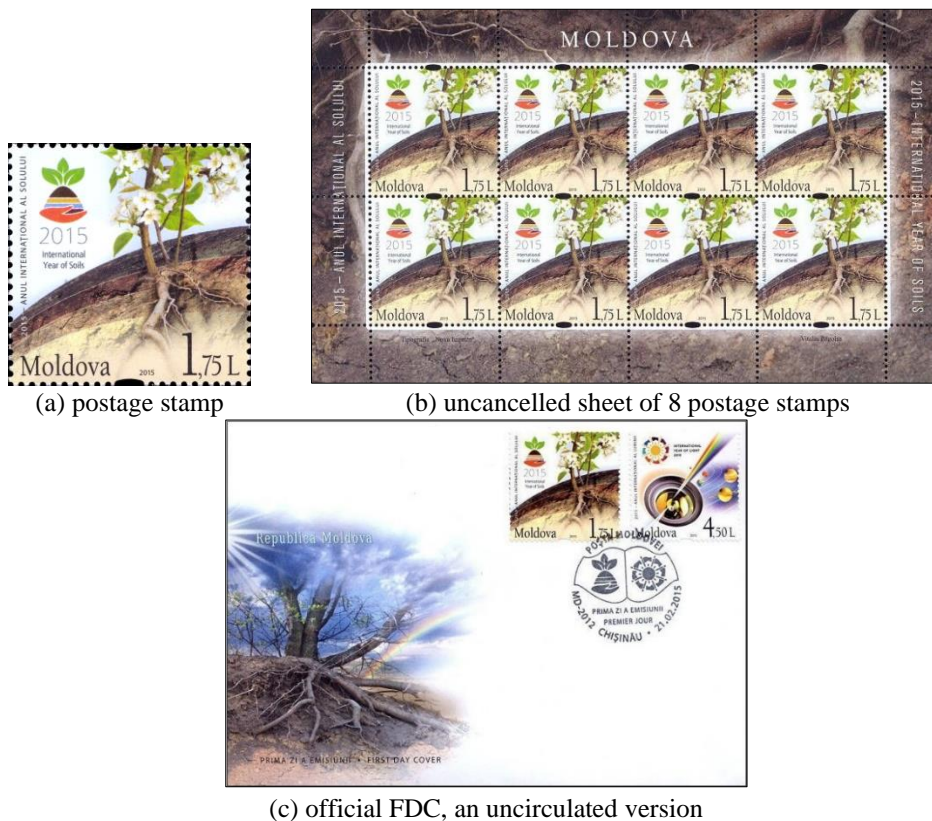


Fig. 1. Various philatelic pieces - "International Year of Soils", 21.02.2015, Moldova

The presented pieces were made after a model by Vitaliu Pogolşa, and printed by Nova Imprim, Chişinău. Of the circulated parts that we managed to identify and analyze (see Fig. 2), we expose only two, which are in fact locally circulated FDCs (Moldova P.O., 2015c, d).

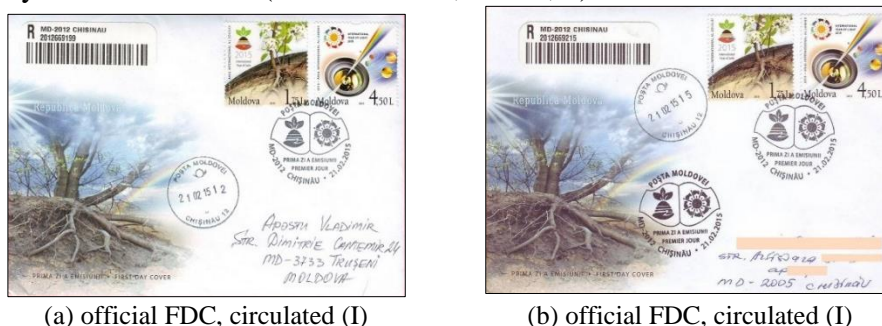
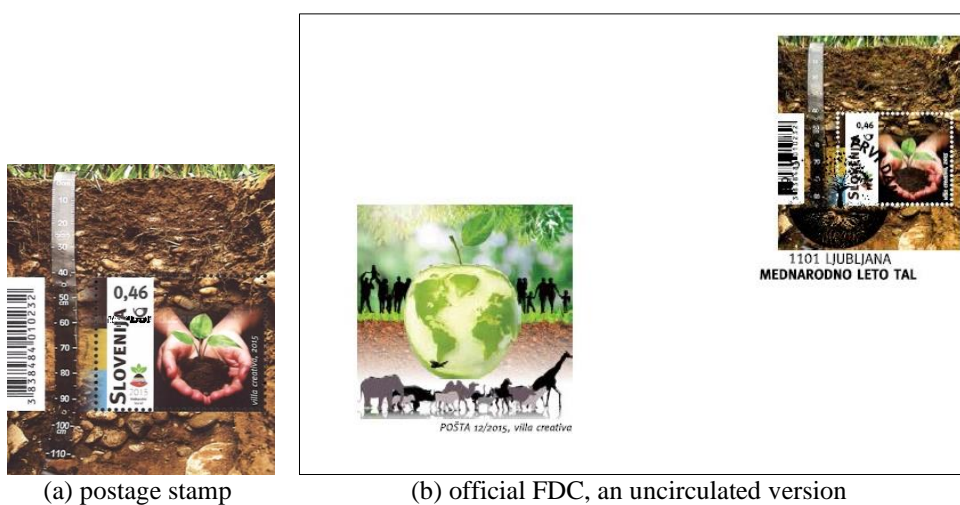


Fig. 2. Circulated philatelic pieces - "International Year of Soils", 21.02.2015, Moldova

With the opening of a soil profile in the background, the multicolored stamp illustrating two hands holding a seedling plant (see Fig. 3a), issued by the Slovenian postal administration on May 29, 2015, harmoniously complements the commemorative souvenir package and the FDC (Fig. 3b).

Indexed by Mi SL#BL81, Yt SL#BF80, and Sg SL#MS1196, the package includes the postage stamp in 60 x 70 mm format, laced 13¼ (Slovenia P.O., 2015a, b). The stamp with a face value of 0.46 Euro was printed using the offset lithography technique in a small print run (50,000 pieces), after a model bearing the Villa Creativa imprint. As can be seen, the entire package is part of the FDC franking (Slovenia P.O., 2015c).



(a) postage stamp (b) official FDC, an uncirculated version  
Fig. 3. Various philatelic pieces - "International Year of Soils", May 29, 2015, Slovenia

To commemorate and promote the "International Year of Soils", the Spanish postal administration issued a special stamp illustrating petunia seeds that can be planted, along with the slogan "Renew the soil - Plant me". The image on the postage stamp shows the contrast of the fertile soil with the food produced from it, and a forest, along with the cracked and barren soil resulting from the deterioration of the ecosystem (Spain P.O., 2015a, b).

To show that healthy soils play a major role in preventing droughts, the mosaic postage stamp (see Fig. 4a) published on June 26, 2015, in 35 x 24.5 mm format, laced 13¼ x 13, extends both as a four-piece block (see Fig. 4b), as well as FDC (see Fig. 4c) (Spain PO, 2015c).

Indexed by Mi ES#4986, Yt ES#4691, Sg ES#4967, Edi ES#4976, and WAD ES#056.15 (Spain PO, 2015a), the stamp with a face value of 0.90 Euro, was printed by offset lithography in 250,000 copies.



Fig. 4. Various philatelic pieces - "International Year of Soils", 26.06.2015, Spain

On September 2, 2015, Kyrgyz Express Post issues a series of multicolored stamps dedicated to UN promotion events. Therefore, the series includes two miniature postcards - as a setter (see Fig. 5a), one for the International Year of Light and one for the International Year of Soils.

The latter is a flowering cotton plant. In the background of the postage stamp - reproduced both as a mini-sheet (Fig. 5b, c) and as a franking of the FDC (Fig. 5d), is represented a typical mountain landscape of Kyrgyzstan, while in the upper left corner of the postage stamp the official logo of the International Year of Soils (Kyrgyzstan PO, 2015a-c) is presented.



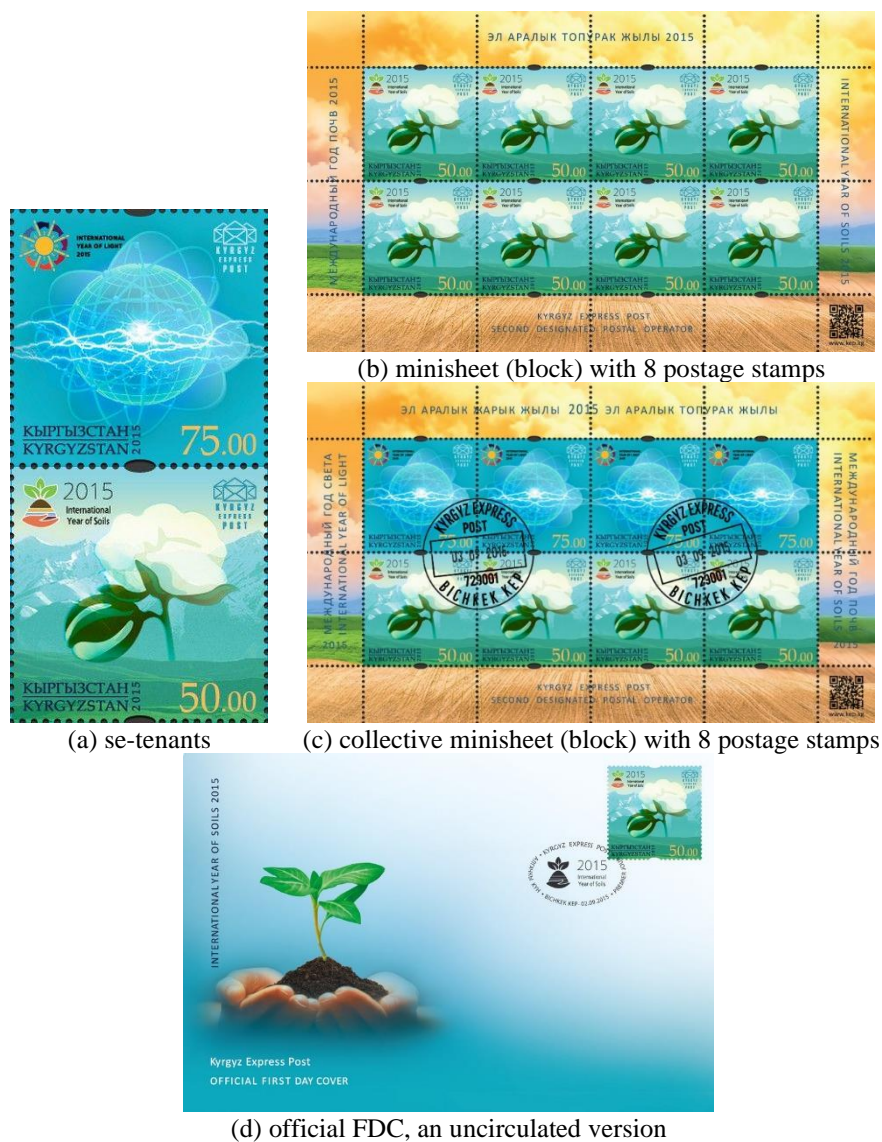


Fig. 5. Various philatelic pieces - "International Year of Soils", 02.09.2015, Kyrgyzstan

The postage stamp bears the signature of the artists Oleg and Aliona Cojocari, while the printing on gummed paper ( $105 \text{ g/m}^2$ ) of the reduced circulation (10,000 copies) is the work of the Nova Imprim institution (Kyrgyzstan P.O., 2015d).

Published on September 10, 2015, the commemorative philatelic issue in Iceland is presented in the form of a multicolored package that includes both postage stamps issued (Fig. 6a). They are in  $28 \times 33 \text{ mm}$  format,  $13\frac{3}{4}$  lace, being printed in a small circulation (30,000 copies) by the offset lithography technique, according to the models made by the designer Örn Smári Gíslason (Iceland P.O., 2015a, b).

The nominal values of the pieces are identical - 500 Gr. (Gram), these being indexed by Mi IS#1474, Sn IS#1386a and AFA IS#1448 (Iceland P.O. 2015a). As for the FDC of the issue, it is crossed with the entire souvenir package (see Fig. 6b) and has in the semi-illustration a leaf arrangement that roughly outlines the profile of the country's borders (Iceland P.O. 2015c).



(a) postage stamp  
(b) official FDC, an uncirculated version  
Fig. 6. Various philatelic pieces - "International Year of Soils", 10.09.2015, Iceland

As in the case of the pieces issued by the postal administration of Moldova and in the package above we find the official logo dedicated to the International Year of Soils, which is positioned in the lower-left corner.

Two other interesting philatelic pieces in terms of design, which complement each other harmoniously in the form of an hourglass (as shown in Fig. 7a,b), saw the light of day in Portugal, starting October 14, 2015.

Indexed by Mi PT#4094, Sn PT#3758a, Yt PT#4073, Un PT#4073, AFA PT#4118, and Afi PT#4637, the two multicolored postage stamps in 32 x 40 mm format, lacy 13, were printed by offset lithography after a model made by Pedro Ferreira (Portugal PO, 2015a,b). They also have a single face value - 0.45 Euro.

The FDC of the issue (as presented in Fig. 7c), identified only as a circulating piece, is also completed with the other two postage stamps targeting the International Year of Light, which have a similar face value (Portugal P.O., 2015c).



Fig. 7. Various philatelic pieces - "International Year of Soils", 14.10.2015, Portugal

A piece highlighting the soil profile, along with a hand holding a plant tightly (see Fig. 8a), was issued by the Tunisian postal administration on October 16, 2015.

The multicolored postage stamp with a face value of 250 LSd (Tunisian millims), indexed by Mi TN#1864, Yv TN#1770, and Sg TN#1841, is presented in 37 x 52 mm format, laced 13 (see Fig. 8a and 8b). It was printed by offset lithography, after a model made by Souhir Charfi, in a generous circulation - 500,000 pieces (Tunisia P.O., 2015a, b).

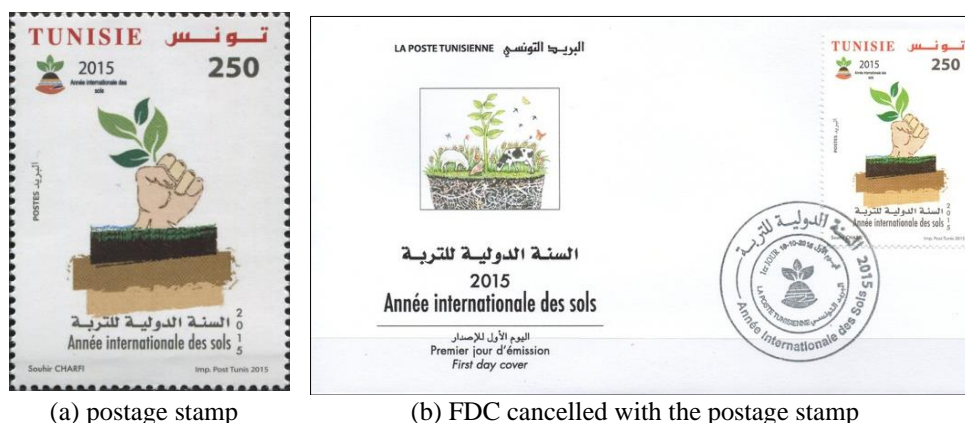
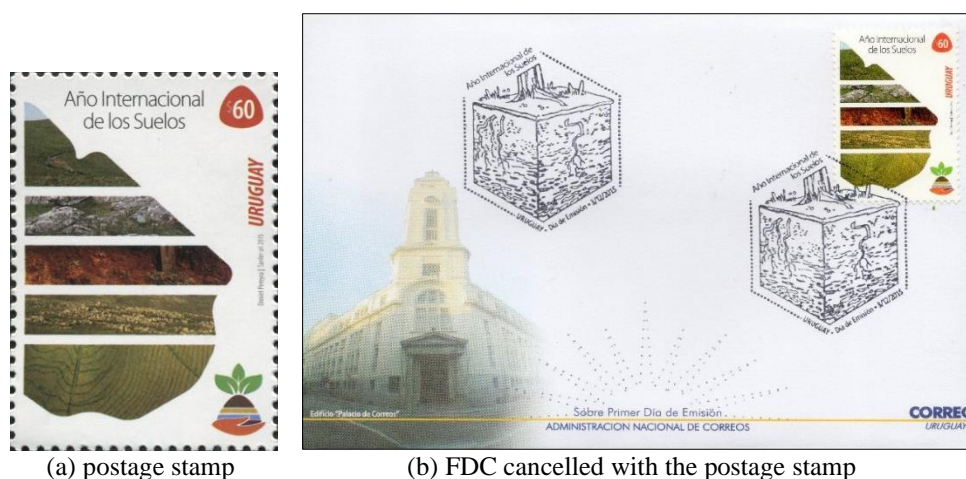


Fig. 8. Various philatelic pieces - "International Year of Soils", 16.10.2015, Tunisia



Another surprising piece by the illustration he proposes is the one indexed by Mi UY#3460, Sn UY#2534, and Yt UY#2767 (see Fig. 9a), issued on December 3, 2015, by the postal administration of Uruguay. The multicolored postage stamp, which is in 42 x 30 mm format, with 12 comb lace, was printed by offset lithography by Sanfer Srl after a model made by Daniel Pereyra. The nominal value of the limited edition (15,000 pieces) is 60 Uruguayan pesos (Uruguay P.O., 2015a, b).

The peculiarity and beauty of this piece also affect the FDC (Fig. 9b), which is obliterated with the special stamp illustrating a cuboid soil profile (Uruguay P.O., 2015c).



(a) postage stamp (b) FDC cancelled with the postage stamp  
Fig. 9. Various philatelic pieces - "International Year of Soils", 03.12.2015, Uruguay

An interesting piece to study is the one shown in Fig. 10, illustrating an entire cover (envelope) with a fixed mark, zone A, code 106/29.07.2015 (Russia P.O., 2015). Along with the official logo of the International Year of Soils, there is also a cultivated field, as a sign of appreciation of the fruits that the soil offers, seen as a living organism from the perspective of the pedological school.



Fig. 10. Another philatelic piece - "International Year of Soils", July 29, 2015, Russia

This last material concludes the series of philatelic pieces with reference to the International Year of Soils, which we have managed to review so far. This is also the end of our approach, which has managed to capture the concerns of soil protection in the postal administrations of Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Kyrgyzstan, Iceland, Portugal, Tunisia, Uruguay and Russia.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study started from a series of questions, which arise from each other, of which we mention a part - Were there philatelic concerns regarding the International Year of Soils?, In which postal administrations were these concerns visible?, What philatelic materials were made in this regard? and so on.

As the official websites of postal administrations around the world were consulted, about the various philatelic materials identified in piles (mixed), sometimes chaotically indexed, on Colnect®, Delcampe®, PicClick®, StampWorld® platforms, etc., the study gained outline.

As such, the results obtained in the form of a philographic summum show that there were special concerns aimed at promoting soil protection and implicitly the International Year of Soils. These concerns have materialized both as stamps and FDCs, and in terms of circulation, with thematic philately supporting the noble cause of soil protection, in particular, and sustainable agriculture in general.

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