World's Soils in Sharp Decline; Global Food Shortage to Follow
by David Gutierrez

(NaturalNews) The world’s soils continue to be degraded at an unprecedented rate that will only exacerbate the current food crisis, scientists are warning.

The current surge in food prices has been blamed on factors such as the diversion of food crops into biofuel production, coupled with poor harvests caused by droughts, floods and pests. But the situation was a long time coming, experts say, with unexpectedly poor harvests stressing an already weakened food production system.

According to a report by the World Resources Institute, world agricultural production has fallen by one-sixth, and one-fifth of the world's cropland is now considered degraded. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, almost one million square miles are in "consistent significant decline," according to another report by a worldwide agricultural consortium.

This suggests that fixes focused on producing stronger seeds or planting more land are missing the point.

"The first thing to do is to have good soil," said Hans Herren, winner of the World Food Prize. "Even the best seeds can't do anything in sand and gravel."

According to Roger Leakey of Australia's James Cooke University, it is theoretically possible to grow 9,000 pounds of corn per acre in Africa. But yields are closer to 500 pounds per acre "because over the years, their soils have become very infertile and they can't afford to purchase fertilizers."

But Herren noted that even fertilizers are only a short-term solution in a situation where poor farming practice destroying soil - and not just in Africa.

Pedro Sanchez of Columbia University said that degraded soil is only a symptom of a more fundamental problem with the world's agricultural system. The techniques to feed the world already exist, he said, but are simply not employed.

"It's very frustrating, especially when you see children dying," he said.
A recent report by the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said that to solve the agricultural crisis, a need to more local agriculture based on natural techniques is needed.

Sources for this story include: apnews.myway.com.