



# **HOT NEWS**

**04, 2026**



# HOT NEWS

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**Editor: Pengfei DU**

**Assistant Editor: Songdi YANG**

## In Remembrance of Dr. Samran Sombatpanit, Former President of WASWAC



It is with profound sadness to announce the news of the passing of Dr. Samran Sombatpanit.

As the former President of WASWAC, Dr. Sombatpanit made immense and vital contributions to the knowledge promotion of the association and the elevation of its global influence. He was a true pioneer, whose vision helped shape our organization into a globally recognized platform.

Beyond his remarkable professional achieve-

ments, he was a man of remarkably gentle and peaceful character, yet he always possessed an incredibly energetic and vibrant spirit. He built profound emotional bonds with everyone, and his presence always brought us warmth.

His passing is a great loss to our community. Though he is gone, his legacy will remain, in his work, in the lives he touched, and in the inspiration he gave so freely. In that sense, he will always be with us.

## ISWCR Series IV Webinar: Nature-based Solutions and Modelling Innovations under Climate Extremes



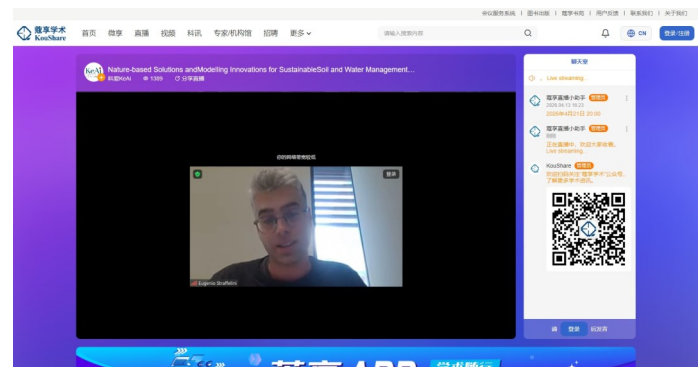
On April 21, the fourth session of the webinar series presented by the official journal of WASWAC, *International Soil and Water Conservation Research* (ISWCR), was held online. The event received extensive attention, with a total of 17,941 views across platforms including the Koushare live stream and Research Cloud on Bilibili, Weibo and Youdao, in addition to 51 online participants via Zoom.

In cooperation with Dr. Wendi Wang, Editorial Board Member of ISWCR and the University of Padova, Italy, this global academic event was jointly chaired by Prof. Michael Maerker, Editor-in-Chief of ISWCR, affiliated with the Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research, Germany, University of Pavia, Italy, and Prof. Eugenio Straffelini from the University of Padova. Centering on Nature-based Solutions and Modelling Innovations for Sustainable Soil and Water Management under Climate Extremes, the webinar presented recent

ISWCR publications by Italian research teams and was co-organized by team from the University of Padova. It brought together contributors with high-impact work published in the journal. Participants exchanged insights on advances in sediment dynamics modelling and nature-based solutions for soil and water conservation, and discussed prevailing challenges and forward-looking scenarios amid climate extremes, with an aim to promote resilient watershed management across the globe.



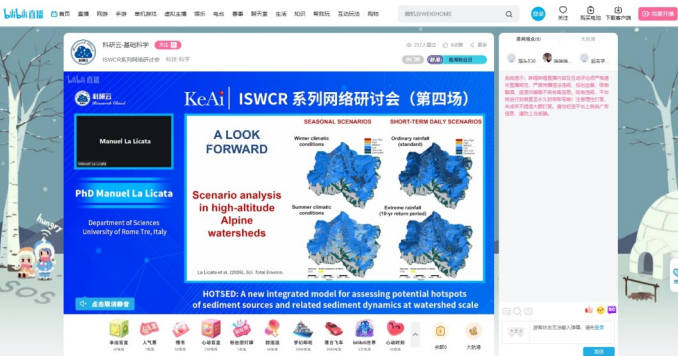
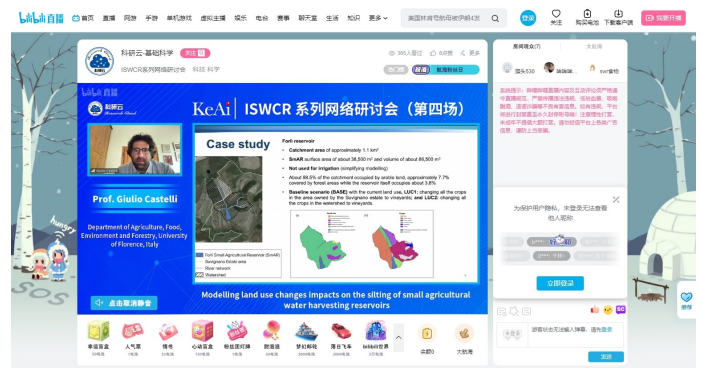
Prof. Michael Maerker host the webinar



Prof. Eugenio Straffelini co-host the webinar

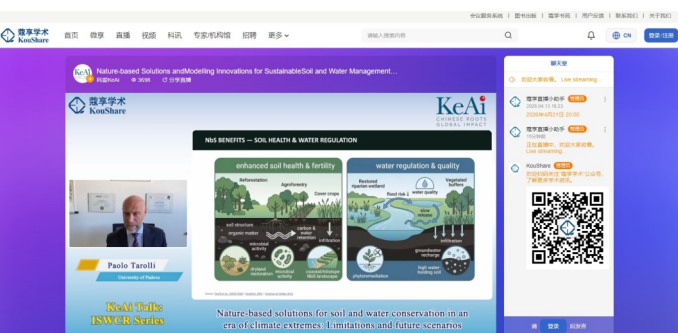
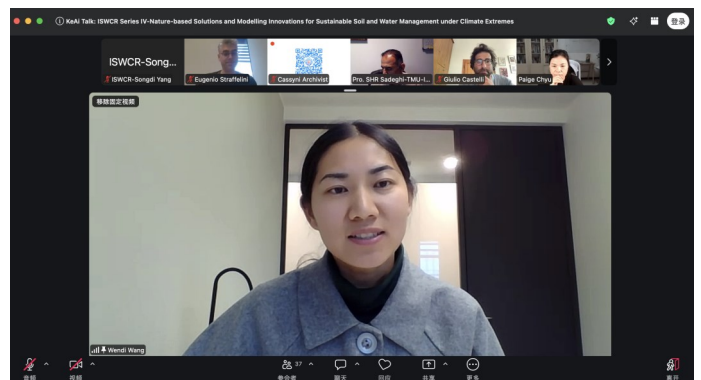
Dr. Manuel La Licata from the Department of Sciences, University of Rome Tre, Italy, delivered a presentation entitled HOTSED: A new integrated model for assessing potential hotspots of sediment sources and related sediment dynamics at watershed scale.

on the silting of small agricultural water harvesting reservoirs.



Prof. Paolo Tarolli, Department of Land, Environment, Agriculture and Forestry, University of Padova, Italy, explored Nature-based solutions for soil and water conservation in an era of climate extremes: Limitations and future scenarios.

Closing remarks were given by Dr. Wendi Wang. She reviewed the fruitful academic exchanges throughout the session, extended sincere gratitude to all speakers for their in-depth presentations, and acknowledged the active participation of every attendee.

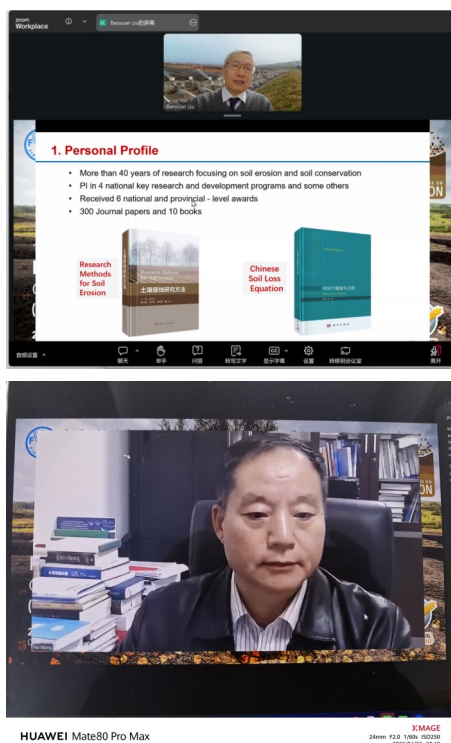


Prof. Giulio Castelli from the Department of Agriculture, Food, Environment and Forestry, University of Florence, Italy, shared his findings on Modelling land use changes impacts

Prof. Paige Chyu, Executive-editor of ISWCR announced the next webinar, which will focus on gully erosion. This upcoming event will be co-hosted with Prof. Chunmei Wang and supported by Northwest University, China, with an expected holding date in May 2026.



## INSER Holds Its First Working Meeting



Prof. Baoyuan Liu and Prof. Fei Wang delivered reports

On 21 April, the first working meeting of the International Network on Soil Erosion (INSER), under the framework of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), was held online. Prof. Baoyuan Liu and Prof. Fei Wang, the deputy Presidents of WASWAC, were elected as the Chair of the first and the third Technical Working Group of INSER. They will lead global efforts in the fields of measuring, modelling and mapping, economic valuation, legislation and policy.

In their candidacy presentation, they systemat-

ically outlined work proposals, which received wide recognition from all participants.

Hosted by the FAO Land and Water Division, the meeting gathered representatives across seven global regions: Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East and North Africa, and the Pacific region.

On 15 September 2025, GSP officially launched the INSER during the 6th WASWAC World Conference in Rabat, Morocco. INSER was established in response to the 2019 Global Symposium on Soil Erosion, which called for a coordinated global platform to improve assessment, mitigation, and policy integration related to soil erosion, one of the most urgent but often under-addressed environmental threats. The decision to establish the INSER network was endorsed by the GSP Plenary Assembly in June 2025.

By joining scientists, policymakers, and institutions, INSER strengthens the GSP's network, expanding it from seven to eight technical networks, and contributes directly to Sustainable Development Goal 15.3 on land degradation neutrality.

## Rangelands in Focus as Kenya Prepares for Desertification and Drought Day

Kenya will host this year's Desertification and Drought Day two months from now, on 17 June, as droughts and land degradation intensify worldwide, increasing pressure on rangelands and communities that depend on them. Held under the theme "Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore," Desertification and Drought Day 2026 will focus on the role of rangelands in sustaining livelihoods, strengthening resilience to drought and supporting food systems.

Activities will unfold across Kenya in the week leading up to 17 June, culminating at Vipingo Central Primary School in Kilifi County. The day will see participation from high-level officials, community leaders, youth, pastoralists and partners, beginning with a ceremonial tree planting and a tour of exhibitions showcasing land restoration initiatives, followed by cultural performances led by local schools and community groups.

As host, Kenya is placing a spotlight on both the realities facing dryland communities and the solutions already taking shape on the ground. Rangelands cover around 80 per cent of the country and sustain millions of people, supporting livelihoods largely through pasto-

ralism and livestock. Their productivity is increasingly affected by climate variability and land degradation.

Rangelands cover more than half of the Earth's land surface and support around two billion people worldwide. They also provide almost 70 per cent of livestock feed globally, making them critical to food systems.

This year's Desertification and Drought Day puts rangelands at the centre of efforts to strengthen resilience and sustain livelihoods, highlighting their role in scaling solutions on the ground.

### News Source

<https://www.unccd.int/news-stories/press-releases/rangelands-focus-kenya-prepares-desertification-and-drought-day>

## China Makes Major Strides in Fight Against Desertification, Shares Lessons with World



Along the southeastern edge of China's Tengger Desert, workers were pressing bundles of straw rope into the sand in a grid pattern, like a giant checkerboard holding the dunes in place.

"We are reinforcing the windbreak and sand-blocking belt with a newly developed grass grid barrier. It is less labor-intensive than the traditional version, faster to install, and lasts longer, five to six years," said Tang Ximing, a forestry engineer in Zhongwei, a city in Ningxia Hui autonomous region.

Ningxia lies deep in northwestern China, hemmed in by deserts on three sides, with Zhongwei guarding the corridor where the

Tengger Desert historically pushed southeast. In the 1950s, the city pioneered the straw checkerboard technique to protect the Baotou-Lanzhou Railway, China's first rail line through a desert, from being buried by dunes. Decades of continuous efforts followed, and Ningxia eventually became the first provincial-level region in China to reverse desertification.

China's battle against desertification has unfolded on an even larger scale across the country.

As one of the countries most severely affected by desertification globally, China has its desertified areas mainly concentrated in the

northwest, north and northeast, which are dubbed the "three-north."

In 1978, China launched its landmark ecological project, the Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program, which has become the world's largest afforestation endeavor.

After decades of sustained efforts, China has brought 53 percent of its treatable degraded land under effective management, and has contributed roughly 25 percent of the world's new green coverage in recent years.

China has also turned its fight against desertification into a driver of economic development and improved livelihoods.

At a factory in North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region, woody waste from pruning windbreak trees was being sorted, shredded and compressed into biomass pellets, which could match coal in calorific value, cost less to produce and emit far less carbon.

"We process more than 36 tonnes of raw material a day into over 30 tonnes of biomass pellets," said the workshop production manager, adding that the products sell well across multiple regions and new jobs have been created for nearby farmers and herders.

Similar success stories are emerging across China. In Ningxia, desert tourism and solar

energy have turned barren dunes into sources of income. In Northwest China's Gansu province, farmers along the desert fringe grow Cistanche and desert onions, with more than 100 sand industry enterprises and production bases.

Beyond its borders, China is increasingly sharing its desertification control experience with the world. As one of the earliest signatories to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), it has been exporting its concepts, technologies and expertise worldwide.

Each year, China trains nearly 100 desertification control specialists from developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America through such programs.

#### News Source

[https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202604/23/WS69e98738a310d6866eb45159\\_4.html](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202604/23/WS69e98738a310d6866eb45159_4.html)

## Beneath Our Feet: Why Soil Biodiversity Is Key to Europe's Future

More than 60% of soils in the European Union are considered unhealthy, degraded by intensive land use, erosion, compaction, pollution and the accelerating pressures of climate change. Despite its central role in sustaining life, soil biodiversity remains largely invisible in policy and public debate.

Over the past four years, the EU-funded SOIL-GUARD project has sought to change that. Bringing together 25 organisations, researchers analysed soil biodiversity in agricultural and forest ecosystems across more than 200 sites in eleven countries on four continents. IUCN Med played an active role in the partnership, gathering robust data on soil biodiversity across more than 200 sites in 11 countries on four continents. Its findings highlight the strong variability in soil biodiversity influenced by climate, soil properties, land use, and local conditions, showing that management practices must be tailored to each context. The results offer one of the most comprehensive pictures to date of how soil life responds to climate, land use and management. “Healthy soils are not uniform,” explains Alberto Martín, biodiversity and agriculture expert at IUCN Med. “What works in

a Mediterranean cropland may not work in a temperate forest. Our research shows that soil conservation must be adapted to local ecological realities if we want it to be effective.”

The project also provides encouraging news. Both conventional and organic farming systems show potential to improve soil biodiversity, ecosystem multifunctionality and productivity when appropriate management practices are applied. Soil life, it seems, can recover when given the right conditions.

Researchers from the project identified four key indicators that together explain more than 70% of the variation in soil biodiversity: soil fungal biomass, prokaryote richness, mite abundance and total microbial biomass. Measured in a standardized way, these indicators can form the backbone of a consistent, science-based soil monitoring system across Europe, while allowing flexibility to account for regional differences.

### News Source

<https://iucn.org/story/202604/beneath-our-feet-why-soil-biodiversity-key-europes-future>

## Monitoring Farmers' Tillage Patterns From Space



Conservation tillage practices, such as no-till and reduced till, are critical for sustainable agriculture, and they are gradually becoming popular with farmers across the Midwest. Monitoring tillage usage can provide insights into soil health, water levels, and nutrient loss, as well as guide management and policy decisions.

A University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign research team has developed a dynamic framework that uses satellite imagery and machine learning to detect tillage practices over large areas and long time periods. The team discusses their methodology and

findings in a new paper.

“Conservation tillage helps reduce soil erosion, and it affects soil nutrients and moisture retention. Mapping tillage practices across large areas is also important to quantify soil carbon change. But current data are mainly obtained from farmer surveys, which lack timely and detailed spatial information,” said lead author Xiaocui Wu, a research scientist affiliated with the Agroecosystem Sustainability Center.

Other studies have applied remote sensing with hyperspectral or multispectral imagery to monitor tillage practices by estimat-

ing crop residue. But these approaches are typically limited to smaller regions, and the images are sensitive to soil and weather variations, which can lead to inaccuracies.

To address these challenges, the researchers developed a new framework that combines crop residue indices from remote sensing data with environmental factors and machine learning to create a dynamic model. They used the approach to estimate tillage percentage across the U.S. Midwest from 2000 to 2022.

Overall, the researchers found that conservation tillage increased gradually across the Midwest for both corn and soybean from 2000 to 2022. The maps also revealed clear differences by crop and region: soybean fields generally showed higher no-till adoption, while corn fields relied more on reduced-till practices, and adoption trends varied substantially across the northern and eastern Midwest.

No-till adoption is more common in drier regions such as the Great Plains, where leaving crop residues on the soil surface helps conserve soil moisture. It is also more prevalent in warmer regions, where slower soil warming under residue cover does not strongly constrain planting, the researchers found.

Tillage is one of the clearest signals of how a farm treats its soil. Intensive plowing can degrade structure, release carbon, and increase erosion. Conservation practices—no-till, cover cropping, minimal disturbance—do the opposite. They build soil, retain water, and support biodiversity. But until now, measuring these practices at scale has been slow, expensive, and often self-reported.

The findings are also important for researchers, who implement tillage practice effects in their modeling of soil, water, nutrients, and environmental impacts.

#### News Source

<https://www.greenprophet.com/2026/04/monitoring-farmers-tillage-patterns-from-space/>

## Agroseismology and the Impact of Farming Practices on Soil Hydrodynamics

The impacts of farming practices on soil hydrodynamics are central to understanding agricultural landscapes covering almost half of the world's habitable land. Combining observations from distributed acoustic sensing with physics-based hydromechanical modeling, we tracked minute-resolution and meter-scale seismic and hydrological changes across agricultural fields with controlled histories of tillage and compaction. We show that dynamic capillary effects in soil govern transient stiffness and moisture redistribution in disturbed soils, producing sharp post-rain velocity drops from near-surface saturation and large hysteretic velocity rebounds driven by evapotranspiration. Our seismically inverted estimates of saturation reveal how disturbance alters flux partitioning and storage, establishing agroseismology and distributed acoustic sensing as scalable, noninvasive probes of soil hydromechanics with the potential to improve Earth system models, land management, and hazard resilience.

Current approaches of measuring soil hydrological response and properties include both ground-based methods using point measurements with in situ sensors (pressure transduc-

ers, tensiometers, time-domain reflectometry, capacitance, impedance sensors, thermal probes) and noninvasive sensing (cosmic ray neutron sensing, global navigation satellite systems reflectometry, gamma ray monitoring, ground-penetrating radar). However, spatial heterogeneity complicates the scaling of ground-based measurements across large areas. Satellite and airborne sensing provide coarse (tens of kilometers) regional and global coverage, whereas higher-resolution products from synthetic aperture radar carry subkilometer spatial resolution but suffer from low temporal resolution and are sensitive to vegetation, surface roughness, and atmospheric noise, limiting their ability to resolve fine-scale and short-term soil moisture dynamics. Each approach trades spatial coverage for temporal resolution.

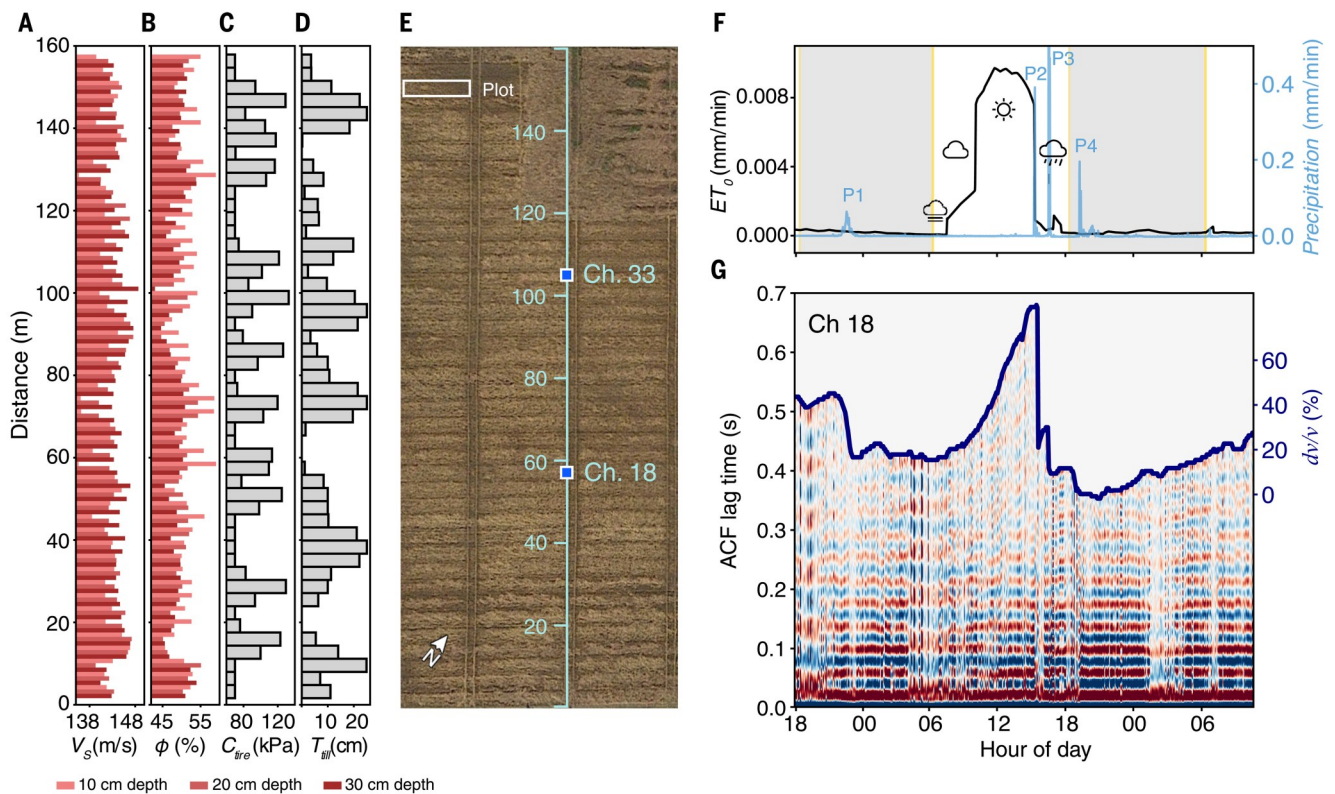
As structural changes in soils substantially influence stiffness and seismic wave speeds, seismological methods have recently emerged as a powerful tool for continuous, spatially distributed monitoring of subsurface hydromechanical properties from changes in seismic velocities ( $dv / v$ ) that have been shown to vary with groundwater and soil moisture lev-

els. Modeled as responses to pore pressure changes driven by rainfall diffusion under the assumption of nonlinear elasticity in saturated media, such correlations have enabled empirical assessments of droughts. Yet, to date, the approach remains site-specific and requires local tuning to explain observations.

Distributed acoustic sensing (DAS) transforms standard fiber-optic cables into dense seismic arrays with meter-scale spatial resolution, subminute temporal resolution, and broad frequency sensitivity, allowing detection of shear wave velocity changes linked to near-surface moisture variability and soil stiffness. The use of fiber-optic cables enables continuous monitoring of soil hydrodynamics over kilometers at the meter-scale resolution, addressing the scale gap between traditional point sensors and remote sensing. We leveraged DAS and hydromechanical modeling to characterize the seismic signature of soil in an experimental farm where long-term tillage and compaction treatments have consistently altered soil structure. This experimental farm provides a rare opportunity to test how controlled disturbance regimes affect soil hydromechanics. By integrating DAS with physically grounded models, we unravel how dynamic soil proper-

ties mediate the coupling between water fluxes and mechanical stability, with fundamental implications for agriculture, land surface modeling, and geotechnical risk analysis.

From 17 to 19 March 2023, we conducted a DAS experiment at Harper Adams University, UK (52.782°N, 2.428°W), across 27 plots (each ~4 m wide), each receiving consistent combinations of tillage and compaction since 2011. Tillage had been applied at three depths commonly used in farming—no tillage, 10 cm, and 25 cm—while compaction had been imposed using two tire pressure levels—70 kPa for both front and rear tires, and 120 kPa and 150 kPa for front and rear tires, respectively. Soil porosity measurements confirmed considerable spatial variability across the plots. We deployed a fiber-optic cable perpendicular to plot boundaries in a finger-wide trench, directly into the bare soil at ~2 cm depth to ensure good soil coupling. Using a Sintela Onyx 1.0 DAS interrogator, we recorded 40 hours of continuous ambient seismic data at 2 kHz sampling and 3.19 m channel spacing. Spectral analysis revealed one or two peaks: typically, a fundamental mode around 15 to 25 Hz and an overtone near 25 to 50 Hz, consistent with resonance from soft topsoil overlying stiff sub-



soil. These peak frequencies depend on topsoil thickness and depth-integrated shear wave velocity ( $v_s$ ). Episodes of broadband seismic energy, including signals above 80 Hz, corresponded with rainfall and were consistent with precipitation rate as the dominant control at these frequencies, with additional influences from raindrop velocity and droplet size. Simultaneously, we collected meteorological data from a weather station ~500 m from the farm, including air temperature, humidity, and hourly precipitation. Using the precipitation record, we calibrated DAS power spectral density in the 80 to 140 Hz band as a 1-min resolution proxy rain gauge. Additional varia-

bles (cloud cover and wind speed) were obtained from another station ~700 m from the farm. Overall, daily rainfall ranged from 5 to 10 mm, temperature from 5 to 15°C, humidity from 60 to 95%, and wind speed (10 m height) from 1 to 10 m/s.

### Article Source

<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aec0970>

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### **Numerical simulation of bacteria and virus transport in mobile bed channels**

Kun Qi, Jennifer G. Duan, Chuck Gerba, Kelly Bright

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**Spatiotemporally varied contributions of primary bank-derived materials from ungaged areas to the Three Gorges Reservoir: Insight from decadal continuous sediment archives (2012–2022)**

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**Quantifying sediment yield and discharge fluctuations using the GeoWEPP in response to soil and water conservation practices**

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boun

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(Names are arranged in alphabetical order)



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