



March Kick-off meeting

Thirty-one participants, from academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and industry came together on March 31 and April 1 in Zurich to kick off the Global TraPs project. Co-leaders Roland Scholz, ETH Zurich, and Amit Roy, IFDC, guided the group through discussions about expectations and the guiding question for the project, the role of transdisciplinary (Td) methodology in sustainable P management, and also communication protocols and knowledge integration goals. Participants met in nodal work groups to discuss key actors, knowledge gaps, critical issues, and guiding questions that are specific to the nodes of the P supply chain. A full report about the Kick-off will soon be posted on the [Global TraPs website](#). For questions about involvement in Global TraPs, please contact a project representative (list at the end of the newsletter).

During the Kick-off workshop, much progress was made in understanding the transdisciplinary (Td) process, in generating consensus on important issues surrounding the project, and in conceptualization of the work to be conducted during the project, including in the nodes. The main conclusions of the workshop are as follows:

On the project status, focus, and general approach

- Global TraPs project is on track, with the next months being crucial to ensure progress on the themes and issues identified by the project participants.
- The Td methodology which initiates mutual learning among diverse stakeholders on important environmental issues is well-tested in both local and national settings. This project focusing on phosphorus will generate additional lessons on Td, taking the methodology forward by focusing on issues of global importance.



Altogether 31 participants came on March 31–April 1 to kick off the Global TraPs project in Zurich and to participate in discussions on fundamental issues related to the project.

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March Kick-off meeting – Participants' Feedback

At the close of the Kick-off meeting, participants were invited to complete an evaluation survey for the event. Of the 31 Kick-off Meeting participants, 16 responded. All but two of the respondents come from research organizations. The respondents work in almost all world regions; one-third are based in Europe.

Overall, the respondents offered positive comments about the Kick-off Meeting. The majority of Kick-off participants considered the project design effective and valued the supply chain design and the diversity of the participant group, as well as transdisciplinarity, knowledge integration, interdisciplinary work, and sharing between academic and non-academic experts. Respondents were also fairly satisfied with the process and product of the working groups.

Concerns expressed included wanting more time to discuss important topics with other participants and feeling unclear about the project. The topic most discussed was the effectiveness of the supply-chain design. Respondents described their concern as a desire to obtain a cohesive, systems perspective on the problems and solutions around P cycling, as well as on ways to better link supply chain nodes, address systemic issues, and make information and meetings more accessible for practitioners. It is clear that linkages and cross-cutting issues need to be smartly integrated in the project. Debate about the supply chain approach for the Global TraPs project suggests that it can be compatible with the life cycle concept and a systems approach; participants can continue this discussion in node meetings and at the August Global TraPs Node meeting.

In the working group efforts, respondents were concerned about the balance between theory-practice and North-South participants. Other concerns expressed included the ability of the participants, particularly for those from developing countries and practice, to find funding and time for the project. Some respondents were not clear how Td works. A related concern expressed was the consequences of certain participants or nodes receiving more support and funding than others.

Respondent suggestions for the August meeting were to focus on nodes, on linking nodes, on case studies, on business perspectives, and on perspectives from the South. Several participants suggested to discuss node issues in advance of the meeting and in the meeting, organize a joint session about ways to link nodes, and to ask participants to bring their favorite case study ideas to the meeting.

Global TraPs team member Rebecca Cors coordinated survey development and analyzed survey results independently from the Global TraPs management team.

- Although some of the discussions on peak phosphorus have not been scientifically sound, basic concepts of phosphorus as a key resource for humankind and the need to wisely use it are sound – therefore the focus of this project.
- The proposed project guiding question is in general on the right track. Modifications were proposed to it by the participants. After the meeting, the project management worked further on the guiding question, based on the participant comments. The proposed final guiding question is as follows: “What new knowledge, technologies and policy options are needed to ensure that future phosphorus use is sustainable, improves food security and environmental quality, and provides benefits for the poor?”
- The participant base for the project needs to be broadened, in particular to include more participants and node leaders from ‘practice’, as well as participants from developing countries, especially Africa and Latin America. Fertilizer industry will be a key participant, and the project was delighted to welcome two industry-related participants, from the International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA) and the International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI). A one-page description on the project will be written to spark private sector interest in the project.

On the project themes and issues

- While various geopolitical issues are linked to the issues of phosphorus, this project will stay outside the politi-

cal realm and will refrain from communications on such topics.

- In terms of human rights issues, the project concern is on P as a human right, given its importance in ensuring sustainable food supply to populations. Use of P by smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the developing world is particularly low compared with the world average.
- Whereas processing and consumption of food, including its waste during these processes, will be important issues to include in the project, Global TraPs is not a food systems project.
- Integration of issues throughout the supply chain needs serious consideration. Cross-cutting issues need to be defined and addressed.
- Some terms, such as “sustainability and “sustainability of P use” need to be defined.
- Efficiency of P mining, processing, use and recycling is a key issue needing attention, to ensure wise resource utilization. Next generation of P fertilizer products needs to address needs of soils and crops today. Improving P extraction after mining is another important issue.

On the case studies

- Regions and countries differ greatly in issues spanning the entire supply chain, from mining/processing to use (over/underuse) and recycling. Case study selection needs to reflect this.

- Within the project framework, several case studies have to be conducted that tie all nodes together.
- The Use Node may have to be divided into two, use of fertilizer, and use of other phosphorus containing products.

On possible conflicts and on communication

- Conflicts are likely among some stakeholder groups; this is a normal part of the Td process, and methods and media are needed to process those.
- Communication about the project – its objectives, approaches, methods, and outcomes – needs to be done with caution and within an agreed upon framework. Within nodes, procedures for publishing have to be developed.

The next Global TraPs meeting will be held in Zurich on August 28–29, 2011

From Global TraPs Headquarters

Global TraPs managers Andrea Ulrich and Marjatta Eilittä are preparing several new Global TraPs project planning documents which will soon be posted on the member server.

- Project brief for practice/industry and science
- Project brochure
- Financing of TraPs
- Roles, responsibilities and commitments of members
- Membership contract



The discussion on the project's guiding question, led by Roland Scholz, was lively, generating many ideas for improvement.

August 29–30 Node Meeting, Zurich

The primary focus of the August 29–30 Global TraPs meeting will be to activate the nodal working groups. Planning for the August meeting will be based on ideas and suggestions gleaned from the March Kick-off Meeting and its evaluation, with a great deal of additional preparatory effort on the nodes done before August via the online platform (BSCW server) and teleconferences. Invitations to the nodes and the August meeting will be sent out by June.

Tracking Global TraPs

In the news: The [United Nations University website](#) focusing on environmental issues has now published an article on the project which originally appeared in [ETH Life Magazine](#).

Phosphorus in the News

On April 26, 2011, a 45-minute Bonn television program, “Gefährliches Trinkwasser (Dangerous Drinking Water),” discussed how uranium makes its way into drinking water in Germany. A possible source of this uranium is P fertilizer. Professor Ewald Schnug from the Julius-Kuhn Institute in Braunschweig estimates that at least 25 percent of all groundwater sources in Northern Germany are contaminated with uranium from mineral P fertilizers through infiltration and runoff.

And recently, in the [2011 UNEP Year Book](#), Executive Director for the UN Environmental Programme Achim Steiner named P availability and pollution as one of three emerging issues for sustainable development: “The ... wider impacts of phosphorus use in food production, pointing to concerns over the future availability of phosphorus supplies – in contrast with the millions of tonnes of fertilizer washed from the land into the seas triggering algal blooms and damage to fish stocks and tourism-based industries.”

Global TraPs – Timeline

Here is a summary of Global TraPs events to date. All events will be posted on the [Global TraPs website](#).

2010

- June 24. Presentation by Roland Scholz and Andrea Ulrich: Transdisciplinary processes for coping with global threats – How may this look like? The case of phosphorous scarcity. Session IV: Global sustainability governance, International Conference on Sustainability Science, Rome.

- November 5–6. ITdNet Vienna, 8th Annual Meeting of the ITdNet, Vienna. For more about the ITdNet click [here](#).
- December 12–15. International Workshop, Protecting water bodies from negative impacts of agriculture: Higher P utilisation for reduced P loads. Goslar, Germany.

2011

- February 5. Global TraPs Workshop, Sustainable P Summit, Arizona State University.
- March 31, April 1. 2011: Global TraPs Kick-off, Zurich.
- April 12. North-South Forum, Phosphorus - A bottleneck of nature, jointly organised by the North-South Centre and the NCCR North-South and held at the ETH Zurich.
- August 29–30. Global TraPs Node Meeting. Partially overlaps with the [EAAE 2011 Congress Change and Uncertainty](#), August 30 – September 3. Both events will take place in Zurich.

2012

Keep an eye out for more details about a Global TraPs conference in January/ February and node meetings in August/ September.

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For updates about the Global TraPs effort, visit our website:

»» <http://www.uns.ethz.ch/gt>