

September 2008 International Biochar Initiative News

Welcome to IBI's September newsletter. The 2008 Conference in Newcastle is less than 1 week away. The response to the upcoming conference has far surpassed expectations--we have over 230 pre-registrants and have added a third full conference day to cover all the information and issues. Registration is still open. If you wish to register, to see the finalized conference agenda, or have travel and lodging questions, please go to:

<http://www.biochar-international.org/ibi2008conference.html>



Additionally, IBI announces its application for organizations wishing to host future conferences (see story below).

IBI is also pleased to propose a draft policy on standardized reference biochar (see story below). This information and the draft guidelines will be discussed next week at the conference in Newcastle. If you are unable to attend the conference, or have additional comments, please email info@biochar-international.org.

Information for Organizations Interested in Hosting Future IBI Conferences

IBI has received numerous offers and inquiries from organizations eager to host future international conferences of the IBI. We are delighted at the level of interest, and propose that we implement, beginning at the 2008 Newcastle meeting, a forum for weighing various proposals, and for choosing future sites. Along those lines, we have now posted on the IBI Website a form to allow any interested parties to propose to host future IBI conferences. While we will consider expressions of interest for conferences up to 2 years into the future (ie., from the current conference), we will decide on only the next conference at the Newcastle meeting. If you wish to propose to host a future meeting of the IBI, please submit the interest form located on the IBI website no later than Monday, September 8, 2008 to the following email address: debbie@biochar-international.org.

The form can be found at:

<http://www.biochar-international.org/ibi2008conference/futureconferencehosting.html>

We will choose the future IBI Conference site during the final session of the IBI Newcastle meeting on Wednesday, September 10, 2008

National Geographic Article "Our Good Earth" includes Discussion of Terra Preta/Char



Photo Courtesy of National Geographic Society

The current issue of National Geographic Magazine includes a lengthy article on soils; focusing on how to improve degraded soils throughout the world. One of the highlights of the article is the historical use of terra preta and charcoal and how this could be a potential solution for present day soil. To read the full article, go to:

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/09/soil/mann-text>.

There is also a Soils quiz which can be found at:

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/09/soil/quiz-interactive>

IBI Announces a Draft IBI Policy on Standardized Reference Biochar for Use in IBI Assisted or Supported Demonstration and Field Trials

The International Biochar Initiative (IBI) proposes to establish a network of IBI assisted demonstration field trials utilizing biochar as an agronomic soil amendment. The purpose of the network will be to promote, support, and coordinate field trials and the sharing of their results in a manner that builds the research record and allows comparisons of the data in projects across diverse geographic areas, climate, soil, crops, and management practices. It is anticipated that the IBI demonstration project network will help speed the research and demonstration horizon for biochar utilization and commercialization in varied settings. These draft guidelines will be discussed at the Newcastle Conference Wednesday September 10 in session C (Biochar Science and Research Priorities; 9 - 10:30 am) and in session F (Biochar Education and Extension; 1 - 2:30 pm).

Standardized Reference Biochar

As part of this network, IBI proposes to make available, through its many participants, standardized reference biochar (SRB) for voluntary utilization in these demonstration trials. The materials will be made available to project developers who wish to include these SRB materials as part of their project protocols, but their use will not be a condition for participation in IBI supported or assisted trials.

The draft guidelines can be found at:

<http://www.biochar-international.org/projectsandprograms.html>

Six Country Project Concept Note for Discussion at Newcastle

(This will be discussed Wednesday, September 10 from 1 - 2:30pm in Session E)

Growing interest in biochar has spawned design and construction of biochar units in developing and develop countries. However, only limited data are available on the performance, the quality of the char, and the impact of adding the produced biochars to different soils. This means that research and testing that has taken place lacks comparability on a number of key parameters, including quality of char, crop yields, emissions from kilns and stoves, emissions from soil, carbon turnover rates, changes in soil micro-organisms and soil properties are limited. Data that are produced are rarely able to support accurate assessments of the impact of biochar on the local soils. They are also of limited utility in determining the environmental, social, financial and economic costs and benefits of producing and utilizing biochar.

IBI is seeking to address these gaps by undertaking a biochar production and utilization project for up to six countries. The aim of the project is to answer the following questions:

- Can biochar production sustainably benefit some of the world's poorest rural populations by improving soil health, food quality and security, and reducing eye and lung disease and reducing GHG emissions through the supply of clean energy to households and rural industry?
- Can biochar help mitigate the impacts of climate change by sequestering large quantities of carbon in the soil for a period in excess of 1000 years?
- Can an industry be established that produces small-scale devices that produce biochar and clean energy?

Please go to the following link for the document and more information: <http://www.biochar-international.org/projectsandprograms.html>

Coming Up in Next Month's Newsletter

Highlights from the 2008 Conference in Newcastle

Information on sharing projects with IBI and the first practitioner's profile

News, articles, and more