

## [Data farming provides new insights on soil fertility](#)

Scientists from the British Geological Survey and NRM Laboratories have found a novel way of using soil data to assess soil fertility. Maps show that the pattern of more acidic soils – which can reduce soil fertility – increasingly reflect geology and typical rainfall patterns across England and Wales. In recent years, less agricultural lime has been added to farmers' fields to neutralise soil acidity.

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## [News story: MMO support second round of EMFF England FLAG launch events](#)

Cornwall FLAG will hold their launch event at Looe on 10 March 2017, closely followed by Dorset and East Devon on 13 March 2017 at Weymouth. North of Tyne will then launch at North Shields on 16 March 2017 and finally on 17 March 2017 North Thames will hold their event in Leigh on Sea.

The launches mark a significant step in the progression of the FLAG community led local development strategies after six FLAGs were awarded £800,000 under the EMFF scheme, and the four FLAGs follow [Holderness and Hastings FLAGs](#) who launched in January.

Commenting on the FLAG launches Michelle Willis (MMO Director of Finance and EU) said:

“Senior MMO staff will attend all of the FLAG launches to show our support for the critical work of the FLAGs. The strategies being pursued by all of the FLAGs will make a significant contribution to fisheries, industry and the wider community.

I personally find it very rewarding to follow the progress of the FLAGs and to see the difference EMFF funding is making to individuals and business. Both the journey of the FLAGs and a focus on projects funded by EMFF is available on our [Marine Developments Blog](#).”

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## Clean heating system to cover 700 villages in Beijing

Electric devices are replacing coal stoves as the major heating source among Beijing's rural families.

This year, about 700 villages in Beijing are going to be installed with electric heating systems, which can eradicate the pollution caused by the burning of charcoal.

"We had to carry coal home several times throughout the winter in the past and the courtyard was usually spotted with clusters of cinder," said Liu Yuming, a rural villager who recently received the service to upgrade the family heating system with electric facilities.

According to the Beijing Municipal Agricultural Commission, the electric heating devices come in diversified designs for the different decorations of each household. By using the Internet of Things, the families installed with the new instruments can check the quantity of water flow and the internal and external temperatures on the platform of WeChat.

According to Liu, after being revamped with electric heating devices, the entire house looks much cleaner.

For those whose families have not been equipped with the electric heating system, the municipality is providing a number of processed clean coals.

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## Turkey: UN report details serious rights violations since July 2015 in country's southeast

10 March 2017 – The UN human rights office today published a report detailing allegations of massive destruction, killings and numerous other serious human rights violations committed between July 2015 and December 2016 in southeast Turkey.

"I am particularly concerned by reports that no credible investigation has been conducted into hundreds of alleged unlawful killings, including women and children over a period of 13 months between late July 2015 and the end of August of 2016," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a news release published by his Office (OHCHR).

It appears that not a single suspect was apprehended and not a single individual was prosecuted, he added.

During that period, Government security operations affected more than 30 towns and neighbourhoods and displaced between 335,000 and half a million people, mostly of Kurdish origin.

Mr. Zeid acknowledged the complex challenges Turkey has faced in addressing the attempted coup of July 2016 and in responding to a series of terror attacks. However, he said the apparent significant deterioration of the human rights situation in the country is cause for alarm and would only serve to deepen tensions and foster instability.

The news release said that measures taken under the state of emergency following the attempted coup of July 2016, including the dismissal of more than 100,000 people from public or private sector jobs during the reporting period, have also deeply affected the human rights situation in the southeast.

Some 10,000 teachers were reportedly dismissed on suspicion of having links with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which the Government considers a terrorist organization, without due process.

The use of counter-terrorism legislation to remove democratically elected officials of Kurdish origin, the severe harassment of independent journalists, the closure of independent and Kurdish language media and citizen's associations and the mass suspension of judges and prosecutors have also severely weakened checks and balances and human rights protections.

The Government of Turkey has failed to grant us access, but has contested the veracity of the very serious allegations made in this report. But the gravity of the allegations, the scale of the destruction and the displacement of more than 355,000 people mean that an independent investigation is both urgent and essential, Mr. Zeid said.

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## **With fighting near industrial sites, UN expert warns Ukrainians of chemical disaster risk**

10 March 2017 – Unless the fighting in eastern Ukraine is stopped and precautions are taken to secure industrial facilities in the area, the armed conflict could lead to a catastrophic chemical disaster, an independent United Nations human rights expert today warned.

Battles are now being fought in cities, close to industrial centres,

with factories increasingly becoming at risk of being hit: the consequences for anyone living close-by would be severe,&#8221 said Baskut Tuncak, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and hazardous substances and wastes.

Most of Ukraine's industrial facilities are located in the eastern part of the country. These include heavy industrial infrastructures operating in the mining, metallurgical, chemical and power sectors.

&#8220The presence of a range of explosive and toxic substances at these sites is a source of serious concern,&#8221 according to the press release from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

As an example, on 24 February, a shell hit a building housing more than 7,000 kg of chlorine gas. While no damage was reported damage to just one fraction of the containers would have killed anyone within 200 meters and severely impact the health of anyone within 2.4 km, according to experts cited by OHCHR.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has also voiced concern about potential impact to the health of residents. According to information cited in the press release, OCHA and humanitarian partners have called for demilitarizing the areas adjacent to civilian infrastructure and for essential safety equipment to be stored at facilities out of the reach of the government.

UN human rights experts are part of what it is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, the general name of the independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. The experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work.