

# DATA VERSIFY

S. Carolina Córdova

## Researcher Background:

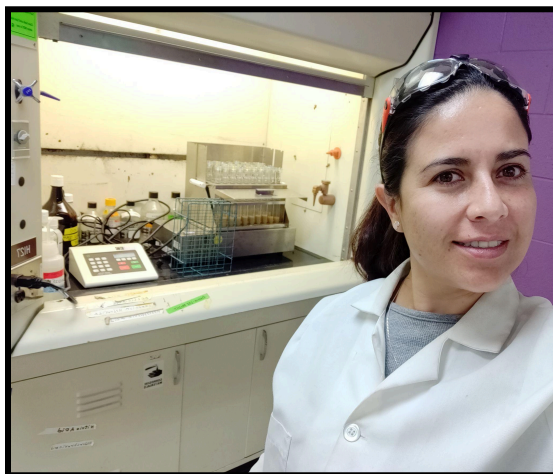
Caro Córdova is a soil scientist and trained agroecologist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research emphasizes carbon sequestration, nitrogen fixation, and long-term resilience in diverse cropping systems, contributing to advancing regenerative agriculture globally.

## Q: Why did you become a biologist?

A: The passion I have for soils comes from my dad, a civil engineer. Since I was a child, I've been involved in lab analyses and field studies, learning how to work with soil. Over time, my interest shifted from the engineering side of soil to its role in science and environmental protection. Now, my focus is on using soil science to safeguard the environment and support communities by building and maintaining healthy soils.

## Q: What is your favorite part about your job?

A: My favorite part of my job is working with multidisciplinary teams, where experts from different fields come together to solve big, complex problems. I learn so much from collaborating with these teams, and together we can tackle challenges that no single discipline could address alone. Another aspect I deeply enjoy is sharing my passion for soil science with future generations through mentoring, advising, and teaching. Helping students discover the importance of soil and inspiring them to pursue careers in science is incredibly rewarding.



**Q: Do you have any aspects of your identity that you feel are underrepresented, marginalized, or minoritized in STEM or society?**

A: Yes, as a female soil scientist from South America working in the US, I do feel that both my gender and cultural background are underrepresented in STEM. Sometimes, my perspective and experiences aren't fully visible or valued. However, I believe these aspects of my identity allow me to bring unique insights to my work and highlight the importance of greater diversity in science.

**Q: What obstacles have you overcome to get where you are?**

A: As a graduate student, I took a crop physiology class despite knowing the professor had a reputation for racist behavior, though he was highly regarded in the field. During a lecture near Easter, he made an offensive comment stereotyping Hispanic students as lazy, suggesting we might take naps and ask for deadline extensions like "Spanish people." I found this deeply insulting. This isolated event impacted the way I managed situations like this. It has also impacted my career by strengthening my resilience and reinforcing my commitment to fostering inclusivity in science. Confronting discrimination early in my academic journey taught me the importance of advocating for myself and others, even in challenging situations.

**Q: What are hobbies and/or interests that you have outside of your research?**

A: I love to kayak and ride my bike with my husband and friends.

**Q: What is your favorite thing about kayaking?**

A: Kayaking is an incredible activity that challenges you to rely on your arms, core, and balance instead of your legs while also teaching you to pay attention to the wind and water conditions. When I kayak, it feels like I'm gliding or flying just above the water—it's such a peaceful and relaxing experience that helps me connect with nature and clear my mind.

**Q: Why is it important for scientists to have hobbies?**

A: Hobbies are essential not only for scientists but for everyone because they keep our inner child engaged and help clear our minds.

**Q: What advice do you have for aspiring biologists?**

A: Never give up, and surround yourself with a great support community. When things are not clear or is a new path, identify your mentor from a senior level who wants to see you grow.

