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UNCCD News

A bi-monthly update on the work of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Issue 5.2

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

What's the value of land?

From an ecological perspective, land plays an important role in stabilising soils, conserving biodiversity, storing water, retaining nutrients, and so on. The value of these services is universal and well understood. But what about the economic and social value of land? This is far more difficult to grasp as it largely depends on local conditions. Yet a full appreciation of the direct and indirect value of land is essential to motivate people to become effective stewards of this vital natural resource and safeguard it for present and future generations.

Failing to act on desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) has heavy economic and social costs. The direct economic costs of land degradation at country level may vary but are significant. An estimated 4-12 per cent of Africa's agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) is lost through environmental degradation. The social costs are also alarming. Nearly 870 million people globally suffer from chronic hunger.

Once degraded, land loses its immediate value for agriculture and grazing, putting the food, energy and water security of millions of people at risk. Poverty, social tensions, unemployment and environmentally induced migration are just some of the social impacts of DLDD.

The UNCCD's 2nd Scientific Conference, which focused on "Economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas", called for an accurate understanding and evaluation of the economic and social costs associated with DLDD and the benefits of sustainable land management in order to develop effective mitigation strategies. UNCCD is committed to promoting and supporting research that analyses these two facets. It is essential for decisive action on effective global land stewardship, according to the Conference.

An accurate understanding of the costs associated with DLDD and the benefits of sustainable land management is needed.

This was a landmark event in support of global efforts to combat DLDD. It was a unique opportunity to sharpen our understanding of the real value of land, especially the drylands, and the ecosystem services that land provides. It helped us put a value on the costs of inaction and the potential economic benefits of our action. It helped us bridge some of the gaps between science and practice, and provided us with scientific evidence to strengthen our call for the smart investment in land that is so urgently needed – in order to secure the health and productivity of our land now and in future.

Smart investments secure the health and productivity of our land now and in future.

This issue of UNCCD News highlights the outcomes of the Scientific Conference and features two examples of remarkable action. We present the contributions of nuclear technologies to combating land degradation as I have recently signed an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to collaborate closely in order to strengthen the assessment of soil erosion and monitor improvement over time. In addition, we turn our attention to this year's winners of the Land for Life Award.

I sincerely hope that these stories will inspire you in your personal or professional pursuit of healthy land.

Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary

POLICY

UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference: Pricing land degradation and sustainable land management

Too many people are still ignoring the negative effects of desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) on economic and social development. This has prompted UNCCD stakeholders and their partners to bring strong economic arguments into play, putting a price on the benefits of sustainable land management and highlighting the costs of DLDD. The UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference held in Bonn, Germany, in April 2013 therefore focused on the economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience. It's a very promising approach.

Putting a price on environmental damage helps us to understand its severity and the urgent need for action. If policy-makers and users of environmental services can refer to clearly identified monetary costs and benefits, they are more likely to use natural resources in a sustainable manner. This was the rationale for the economic analyses of the Stern and TEEB reports on climate change and biodiversity respectively. Now, an increasing number of research initiatives aim to do the same for DLDD.

Action towards more resilience to DLDD is urgently needed, according to Luc Gnacadja, UNCCD Executive Secretary. "Land degradation, in all regions of the world, is very often driven by inappropriate policy and misplaced investment ... Smarter decisions and smarter choices need to be made," he said at the opening of the 2nd Scientific Conference. The economics of DLDD offers promising guidance for these smarter choices. At the Conference, around 450 participants discussed the latest developments in science and examples of best practice from this relatively new field.

The economics of DLDD offers promising guidance for smarter choices.

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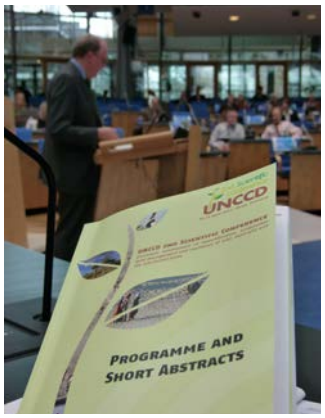


Where to attach the price tag?

"Any economic valuation requires measurement," said Lene Poulsen, an independent consultant at Karl International Development, Denmark, during the second plenary session. In other words, we first have to measure DLDD itself. Only when it is clear what to evaluate can costs and benefits be determined. However, putting a price on desertification and land degradation is a complex issue. It is essential to consider direct economic costs such as reduced yields, indirect costs incurred through off-site impacts like climate change, and social costs, such as an increase in poverty.

In their study on the economics of land degradation, Ephraim Nkonya, Nicolas Gerber, Joachim von Braun and Alex De Pinto point to the example of land degradation in Niger: "The country loses about 8 per cent of its GDP due to overgrazing, salinity in irrigated rice, and soil nutrient depletion of sorghum and millet. In Niger, the cost of preventing salinity in irrigated rice is only about 10 percent of the cost of not preventing it per hectare, and the cost of preventing overgrazing is just 20 per cent of the cost of allowing overgrazing to continue." And in Peru, the authors put the cost of establishing terraces to reduce the effects of erosion at USD 364 per hectare. The net present value of plots with terraces is about USD 984 per hectare.

Concerted efforts

But scientific knowledge is only half the story. It is vital to develop methods for managing land in a sustainable manner as well. Policy-makers and land users have to translate scientific findings into action. However, making this science-policy interface work is not easy. The Conference addressed this challenge too, with scientists and practitioners exchanging ideas, experiences and expectations.

The economic valuation of DLDD is a joint, transdisciplinary effort. Stefan Schmitz, Head of the Rural Development, Agriculture and Food Security Division at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), summed up the need for a joint systemic approach: "A whole range of disciplines has to contribute: development research, applied economics, social sciences, earth sciences, life sciences and environmental disciplines – to name just a few."

A joint systemic approach is needed to include a whole range of disciplines.

On the right track

Although more efforts have been made over recent years to determine the economic costs of DLDD, the Conference showed that many questions remain unanswered and that more research is required.

Indeed, the lack of data is a serious challenge for many researchers, said Cesar Morales Estupiñán, an agronomist engineer from the University of Chile, in his conference speech. Jonathan Davies, Chair of the Conference's Scientific Advisory Committee and coordinator of the Global Drylands Initiative at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), agreed: "The economics of land degradation is still a relatively weak field," he said. But he also drew

attention to "some excellent research coming forward". Examples are the findings of the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative (ELD) and the OSLO Consortium.

Policy-makers rely on scientific data as the basis for smarter decision-making, creating an enabling legal framework and promoting education and training on DLDD in order to share information and knowledge with land users. For these stakeholders and decision-makers, it would be extremely helpful to have a clearer picture of the different options available to them, ideally collected in a toolbox, Luc Gnacadja suggested.

A toolbox with the different available options would be ideal.

Towards Zero Net Land Degradation

The UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference offered valuable insights into research findings, examples of best practice and new ideas for cost-effective policies and strategies. Despite the shortcomings in global data availability, the Conference concluded that the costs of inaction are greater then the costs of action, based on case study findings. A thorough understanding and an evaluation of the economic and social costs of DLDD are urgently needed, as well as integrated measurement tools to assess DLDD. Ultimately, these efforts will contribute to the global aim of achieving a land-degradation neutral world agreed at the Rio+20 Conference last June.

For the UNCCD stakeholders, the Scientific Conference was a crucial step towards making the UNCCD the world's leading scientific and technical authority on desertification, land degradation and drought.

The UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference in 2014 will focus on "Combating DLDD for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices". It will be organised by the Scientific & Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Development (STK4SD) consortium with guidance from the Bureau of the CST. Agropolis International from France will act as the lead organisation.

Quotes and tweets

"We need to enhance our understanding of how land users take decisions. Understanding the economics of land degradation is just one component."
(Lindsay Stringer, Director, Sustainability Research Institute and Reader in Environment and Development, University of Leeds, UK)

"The gap between hard science (know-why) and local knowledge (know-how) must be bridged."
(Richard Thomas, Assistant Director, United Nations University, Institute for Water, Environment and Health, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada)

"We need better evidence for better policies."
(Anneke Trux, Team Leader, Convention Project to Combat Desertification, Environment and Climate Change Division, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)

"Understanding the value of systems is what drives people to be effective stewards of land."
(Noel Maxwell Oettle, Rural Programme Manager, Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG))

"We are cutting off the branch we are sitting on! We need to move from thoughts to action now! This Conference is an important step."
(Walter Ammann, President, GRF Davos)

"The value of land can no longer be calculated just in terms of the products we use for food, fibre and shelter. The value of land needs to go beyond provisioning services and look at the value of the regulating, cultural and supporting services on which we all rely."
(Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary, UNCCD)

Links

White Paper I: Economic and social impacts of desertification, land degradation and drought

White Paper II: Costs and Benefits of Policies and Practices Addressing Land Degradation and Drought in the Drylands

Preliminary Conference Report: The Synthesis and Recommendations

Presentations and webcast

Committee on Science and Technology (CST): More data and refining indicators expected

The 2nd UNCCD Scientific Conference took up most of the agenda of the third special session of the UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology (CST S-3). Yet there were also other crucial issues to be discussed, such as the review of the scientific information submitted by country Parties affected by DLDD in 2012. Only 71 affected countries (ACPs), which represent 42 per cent of all ACPs, submitted information, but the data lacked quantitative details, comparability or a minimum degree of the quality required. This meant that the CST Bureau could not present statistically significant conclusions. The Committee established a contact group, chaired by Amjad Tahir Virk from Pakistan, to reflect on these results.

CST S-3 also considered the progress made by the ad hoc Advisory Group of Technical Experts (AGTE) in refining the impact indicators of strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of the UNCCD 10-year strategy, which are to improve the living conditions of affected populations and the condition of affected ecosystems and to generate global benefits The advisory group re-commended refining several details of the indicators. For example, it suggested pursuing harmonisation rather than standardisation of methodologies and complementing the global set of common indicators with regionally, nationally and/or locally relevant information.

Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC): Taking stock

We are mid-way through the UNCCD's 10-year strategy for 2008 to 2018, a good occasion for the UNCCD country Parties and the Secretariat to examine the progress made so far. For this purpose and to review the achievements of 2012 and 2013, the 11th session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 11) met after the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference in Bonn, Germany. Parties and observers discussed and learned from each other about what works and what needs more work, said Mary Rowen, Chair of CRIC 11.

"I see great progress in making our efforts sustainable economically, ecologically and socially."
(CRIC 11 Chair Mary Rowen)

The reports from country Parties to CRIC 11 reveal that 168 countries consider themselves to be affected by desertification.

168 countries consider themselves to be affected by desertification.

Parties have made good progress on awareness raising and the establishment of financing strategies, Luc Gnacadja said after the meetings. However, countries still have to increase their efforts to translate awareness into national policies.

The other objectives of the UNCCD 10-year strategy reviewed by CRIC 11 were the alignment of national policy frameworks with the 10-year strategy, the promotion of science, technology and knowledge, and capacity building.

Country Parties and the Secretariat are obliged to report on their achievements every two years using qualitative and quantitative data. In order to assess the impact of their activities on affected populations and ecosystems, they use poverty and land cover as indicators.

"As someone who has been involved with this Convention since 1998, I see great progress in making our efforts sustainable economically, ecologically and socially," CRIC 11 Chair Mary Rowen concluded.

Land and the post-2015 agenda

Tarja Halonen was President of the Republic of Finland from 2000 to 2012 and headed several Finnish ministries from 1987 to 2000. On the international level, she has co-chaired the Panel of Eminent Persons of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) since 2011 and the Council of Women World Leaders since 2009.

In 2000, Mrs Halonen co-chaired the Millennium Summit, which defined the Millennium Development Goals. As a co-chair of the High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, she helped prepare the Rio+20 Conference report "Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing" which introduced the Sustainable Development Goals to the Rio process. She recently gave the keynote speech at the 2nd UNCCD Scientific Conference. In this interview with UNCCD News, Mrs Halonen shares her thoughts about the post-2015 challenges.

You have been involved in all the major summits dealing with sustainable development. How has the awareness grown over the years that combating land degradation is key for sustainable development?

We noticed some 30 years ago, with the establishment of the Brundtland Commission, that sustainable development was a serious issue that we needed to address. With the first Rio Summit 1992 and the Millennium Summit in 2000, the international community made its first global commitment to sustainable development. We reaffirmed this commitment at the Rio+20 Summit last year.

However, striving towards a more sustainable world often seems to be an insurmountable task. But let's not forget that in the 1980s, we could not imagine the end of the Cold War. Today, this is a reality.

Originally, the main focus of the sustainability debate was on energy, food and water. But over time, we realised that this was not enough. We needed to consider land and soil as well, because they are also finite resources and the essential bases of all food production. Although we were moving in the right direction, we had to go further.

Over the past few years, I have witnessed the debate on land and soil moving forward, and that has been very positive. However, it is still lagging behind the climate and biodiversity processes, so we have to give it an extra push for the run-up to the discussions on the post-2015 agenda.

How does land relate to the overarching goal of poverty eradication?

Land is often the only asset available to the poor. It provides them with food, work and income, so it is key to their economic wellbeing and food security. That is why the poor need secure tenure of their land, as well as knowledge of sustainable land management techniques, in order to achieve economic and food security now and in future.

Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto opened my eyes to the key role of land ownership rights for poverty eradication. Unless people have legal ownership of the land they cultivate, it is difficult for them to become attached to the land and care about its health. What's more, without these rights, they can also be displaced from their land very easily. These problems particularly affect countries with weakened social structures. So we need to focus on smallholder farmers'

rights. In my view, there is scope for many types of ownership, whether individual or cooperative, as long as they are fair. Secure access to land is also a gender issue: around 80 per cent of Africa's food and 60 per cent of food in Asia is produced by women!

At present, 1.5 billion people depend on degraded land, and most of these people are poor. With increasing demand from a growing world population for the services that land provides, this situation could become critical. That's why sustainable land management is essential. By maintaining the soil in good condition, the poor can produce better quality food and improve their nutritional status. People who are well-fed are better able to exploit economic opportunities. Healthy soil means healthy people and better livelihoods! Sustainable land management is one of the most effective tools for poverty eradication. It's about empowering marginalised groups, especially the poor, women and young people, and harnessing their under-utilised human capital.

What role do you see for a land-degradation neutral world in the Sustainable Development Goals envisaged for the post-2015 era?

Poverty eradication is still the primary goal for the international community. The trinity of green growth, social justice and global environmental boundaries should guide the work on the Sustainable Development Goals for the post-2015 period.

Land is one of the key issues together with water and energy. It is a vital resource that we have to protect for future generations. I think it is very promising that in many sectors of sustainable development, people say that a sustainability approach is the right way to go. There are already many sustainable land management success stories to be told, and that's very important: people need to know what to do and not only what not to do. We need more pilot projects from the international community, so that there are more of these success stories that can be replicated in other parts of the world.

"People say that a sustainability approach is the right way to go." (Tarja Halonen)

What role do you see for the scientific community on the road to a land-degradation neutral world?

Scientists have a vital role to play. They provide scientific assessments on the current status of our soils, climate and biodiversity. They have done very important work already on climate change, by giving us the facts and figures that show how human action is warming up the world we live in. They have also encouraged us to question our use of GDP as the sole yardstick of development and to look at other social and environmental metrics to measure human wellbeing. So I encourage scientists to continue to voice their opinions and concerns. It's time to release the science! Policy-makers must listen to the scientists. After all, politicians in democratic systems are accountable to their electorates and should therefore be receptive to scientists' advice and concerns, especially on issues that are crucial for the future of humankind. That applies especially to desertification, land degradation and drought.

I would like to see much closer cooperation between the scientists associated with the three Rio Conventions so that scientists send a strong message to the international community and policy-makers about the need for sustainable land management. Scientists are developing alternative agricultural methods for drylands, as well as techniques to support the rehabilitation of degraded land. They are pioneering the action that is so important to maintain healthy soils. But we still need to bridge the gap between science and practice. Part of this is about making the scientists' findings accessible to farmers all over the world. But it also means ensuring that scientific knowledge reaches the people who are currently working on the Sustainable Development Goals.

So I have a clear message for the scientific community: let policy-makers know what you know! We need scientists to provide us with firm data and clear targets. This scientific evidence is essential to help decision-makers take positive and sustainable action on DLDD. We face major challenges, but scientists can change the world – they have done so in the past, and I hope they will do so again.

You mentioned GDP – is this still an appropriate indicator for development?

We have to stop the tyranny of GDP! Too many people still see GDP as the most important measure of development. But that's a short-sighted approach. GDP is only an acceptable measure if we take it into consideration in the context of a green economy. We need to broaden our perspective to include social and environmental aspects as well. There is now a growing recognition that economic growth doesn't bring welfare.

Nonetheless, the economic dimension is important, and we can utilise economic arguments to achieve the positive outcomes that we want. I have worked in many different areas, such as human rights and women's empowerment, and I have noticed that decision-makers always listen to economic arguments. Anything that can be measured becomes more meaningful for them. So I think that the UNCCD and other initiatives are on the right track when they focus their attention on the economic aspects of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience. But GDP alone is not the right way forward, and I welcome the shift in perspective here.

Interestingly, scientists also have a role to play in this context. They know that investing in SLM is essential for the future of humankind and they can supply the strong arguments to show that it is also extremely profitable. Doing nothing is far more expensive than taking action on DLDD, and SLM is a smart investment.

Decision-makers always listen to economic arguments.

How can women contribute to combating desertification, land degradation and drought?

There is a strong gender dimension to DLDD. Women play an essential role in food production and land management: the majority of small farmers are women, especially in Africa, so land degradation impacts particularly on these women and their families. Often, their nutritional status is very poor, and this is worsened by DLDD. Women and children are always the last to leave degraded land.

Women and girls are also the main providers of water for their families. As the land dries out, they have to travel longer distances to find water, leaving little time for education or other productive work. I am very committed to the empowerment of women, because if women have greater equality and access to land and education, positive results are achieved very quickly. Educating women and girls, also about sustainable land management, creates a win-win situation. It empowers women and girls, improves human capital for present and future generations, and helps to maintain and restore soil health.

Mrs Halonen, thank you for talking to UNCCD News.

Unusual and effective: nuclear technology to combat land degradation

The severe effects of soil erosion and land degradation are very worrying for farmers in Tajikistan, a country where only 7 per cent of the land is suitable for agriculture. But in the past decade, some promising initiatives have come from a rather surprising source. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has introduced nuclear technologies to improve land and soil management in the country.

The IAEA took soil samples, set up a laboratory and interpreted data, while national experts determined soil erosion quantities. The aim was to assess the extent and rates of soil erosion in Tajikistan under various conditions. The causes of soil erosion and consequent land degradation were soon identified – farmers' agricultural practices and irrigation techniques were inappropriate for local conditions.

But how did the nuclear scientists do it? It's all about fallout radionuclides and isotopes. To put it as simply as possible, fallout radionuclides can reveal erosion processes, because their concentration in undisturbed soil differs in relation to its distance to the surface. For instance, the concentration of Caesium-137 is 50 per cent less between 30 and 50mm below the surface compared to its surface concentration. So this concentration reveals whether soil has been washed away.

Based on the nuclear scientists' findings in Tajikistan, soil conservation measures were identified, and after introducing new land use strategies, erosion was reduced by a factor of ten. "The amount of soil lost through erosion dropped from 150 tonnes per hectare to less than 15 tonnes per hectare. Using new irrigation methods, the soil could also retain more nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus, sulphur and potassium, increasing its fertility," the IAEA reports.

IAEA Soil Scientist Lee Kheng Heng experience with IAEA Fellows from Afghanistan, Africa and the Middle East.

But nuclear technologies have more to offer sustainable land management than merely assessing soil erosion. For example, the IAEA also uses nuclear techniques to help countries develop drought-resilient crops for improved agricultural productivity and calculate the precise amount of water and fertiliser required for optimum harvests.

Nuclear techniques help develop drought-resilient crops for improved agricultural productivity.

The project's activities in Tajikistan were part of a United Nations-led initiative on sustainable land management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains (PALM) funded by the Global Environment Facility. It aimed to promote sustainable land management practices in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in various socio-cultural, economic and technological areas. The data on soil erosion rates will be used to prepare a soil erosion map for central Tajikistan.

Using nuclear technologies for sustainable land management is a highly sophisticated process which requires skilled and trained personnel and adequate laboratory facilities – and that makes it an expensive undertaking. The costs of equipment to analyse fallout radionuclides and measure soil erosion amount to USD 100,000, according to Minh-Long Nguyen, Section Head of Soil and Water Management and Crop Nutrition in the IAEA Department of Nuclear Applications.

Nonetheless, UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja has high hopes of these nuclear technologies, which may prove crucial in strengthening the scientific basis of the Convention. He said: "With the help of IAEA and these nuclear techniques, we can improve our understanding of and access to high quality data on land and soil dynamics. Parties to the Convention will gain access to technical support on the application of isotopic and nuclear techniques to assess the soil and water status and identify hot spots of land degradation."

UNCCD joins forces with International Atomic Energy Agency

During the 11th session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the UNCCD in Bonn, Germany, in April 2013, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the UNCCD signed an agreement to cooperate on the use of nuclear technologies in efforts to combat DLDD. The Practical Arrangement aims to build country capacities to use radionuclide and stable isotopic techniques to study soil erosion and land degradation problems as a basis for soil conservation, land use planning and decision-making.

The Practical Arrangement encourages UNCCD parties to apply nuclear science in efforts to improve land productivity and minimise the impacts of drought. In order to implement the agreement, the IAEA has launched a technical cooperation programme to apply nuclear, and particularly isotopic, techniques to address desertification, prevent the loss of productive farmland and enhance soil fertility and productivity.

The IAEA recently selected 16 national and several regional technical cooperation projects which could contribute to the goal of the UNCCD and the Parties' National Action Programmes. In future, the IAEA will concentrate its cooperation with UNCCD national focal points on two or three projects per region.

Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of UNCCD, and Ana Claudia Raffo-Caiado, Director of the IAEA's Division of Technical Cooperation Programme Support and Coordination, signed the Practical Arrangement.

2013 Land for Life Award: Leadership that makes the difference

On World Day to Combat Desertification on 17 June 2013, UNCCD announced the winners of the second Land for Life Award. The Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), a non-governmental organisation in India, won first prize for its work improving land management of rural common land. Two second prizes went to Consejo Civil Mexicano para la Silvicultura Sostenible (CCMSS) from Mexico for its work in the Amanalco Valle Bravo Basin in central Mexico and World Vision Australia for popularising the concept of Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration in the Sahel region in Africa.

"These three winners exemplify the type of leadership and initiatives that make the difference at the grassroots level", said UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja, congratulating the three organisations. "They improve livelihoods while fostering good land stewardship. Much of what they offer is simple, but transformational," he said.

A Special Mention went to the Rehabilitation of Arid Environments Trust in Kenya in recognition of its commitment to regenerating degraded land in the drylands area of Baringo County.

The Land for Life Award was launched in 2012 with a total prize fund of USD 100,000. In 2013, more than 130 initiatives from 62 countries entered the competition. The winners were selected by a jury of experts in sustainable land management, including Professor Joachim von Braun, Director, Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, Dennis Garrity, former Director General of the World Agroforestry Centre, Uriel Safriel from the Jacob Blaustein Institute for Desert Research in Israel and Mary Seely from the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia.

"We are recognising organisations that have applied innovative techniques with large-scale impacts and potential for replicability globally as well as nationally," said Dennis Garrity on behalf of the jury. "Each of these initiatives has engaged thousands of rural people and works at the community level, motivating smallholder farming households to actively engage as stewards of the soil."

1st prize:
USD 40,000

Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), India

Land restoration and establishing community governance mechanisms are the key to the Foundation's success. It has brought sustainable land management to over 200,000 hectares of community property rangelands.

2nd prize:
USD 30,000

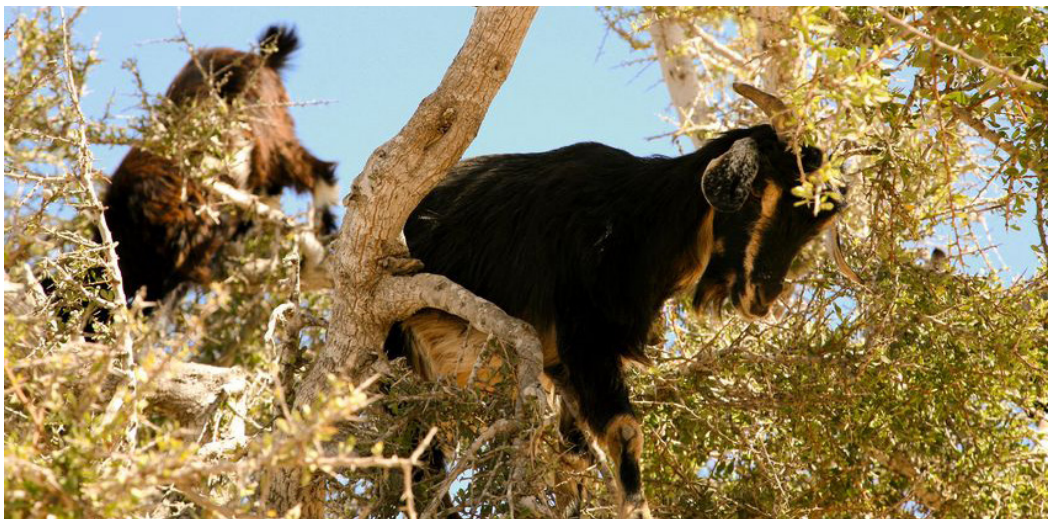
Consejo Civil Mexicano para la Silvicultura Sostenible (CCMSS)

Teaching smallholder farmers sustainable agriculture and forestry management techniques helps to safeguard the ecosystem of the Amanalco Valle Bravo Basin in central Mexico, which provides vital water and forest resources to millions of people.

2nd prize:
USD 30,000

World Vision Australia, working in West Africa

Through Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration, World Vision Australia has promoted the cultivation of buried root systems (underground forests) in degraded landscapes in West Africa in order to restore the land's productivity.



From the UNCCD Secretariat

World Day to Combat Desertification 2013

On 17 June, people around the world celebrated World Day to Combat Desertification. This year's slogan was "Don't let our future dry up". It called for everyone to take action to promote preparedness and resilience to water scarcity, desertification and drought.

Check out messages from various leaders of international organisations, events around the world and background information.

- World Day Website
- Tweets on World Day

UNCCD Photo Contest

UNCCD is holding its third photography contest in the lead up to the 11th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD (COP11) in September 2013. The contest is organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, Namibia, and ENTICO Corporation. Applications can be submitted until 26 July 2013.

- More about the UNCCD Photo Contest 2013

Video

ELD film: The Value of Soil

The ELD initiative produced a short information film on the importance of the economics of land degradation. The film depicts the value of productive land in provision of ecosystem services and goes on to show the current rapid depletion of this valuable non-renewable resource, which costs us dearly.

- Watch the video here

Websites

OSLO – Offering Sustainable Land-use Options

The OSLO Consortium aims to demonstrate the economic value of ecosystems and to generate socio-economically viable land use options. This global partnership of leading research and academic institutions, UN agencies and international organisations aims to promote responsible land use.

- OSLO Website

French Scientific Committee on Desertification (CSFD)

The French Scientific Committee on Desertification (CSFD) has launched the English version of its website. It contains news, publications and thematic dossiers, which review scientific knowledge on dryland issues, implications and challenges of desertification.

- CSFD Website

About the UNCCD

Developed as a result of the Rio Summit, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is a unique instrument that has brought attention to the land degradation affecting some of the most vulnerable people and ecosystems in the world. The UNCCD has 195 Parties (194 countries plus the European Union) and is one of the three Rio Conventions, along with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The UNCCD is increasingly recognised as an instrument that can make an important contribution to the achievement of sustainable development and poverty reduction.

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