

DesertNet International



DesertNet International Newsletter n. 1/2011

This quarterly electronic newsletter is intended to inform the scientific community about dryland-relevant research matters. The **deadline** for receipt of material for the next issue is **15.06.2011**. Please send your contributions (1000 characters max, including spaces) to czanolla@uniss.it

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1. DesertNet at UNCCD CST S-2 and CRIC9

UNCCD committees meetings in Bonn

The second special session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST S-2) and the ninth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC9) were held back-to-back in Bonn (Germany) from 16 to 25 Feb 2011. Both sessions allowed to identify the main issues in preparation of the forthcoming COP 10 (Conference of the Parties) to be held in Changwon City, Republic of Korea, Oct. 10 to 21. Among the various points discussed the followings can be highlighted.

During the meeting of the **Committee for Science and Technology (CST-S2)** and using the conclusions of the assessment of the 1st UNCCD Scientific Conference, a long list of recommendations has been established to ensure the success of the 2nd conference on “Economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas”. The main attention was about neutrality, geographical balance and a timely involvement of all stakeholders to make sure that the results of the conference can be translated into guidance for action. The theme of the 2nd Scientific Conference has recently retained strong attention as it is at the center of several initiatives: the E-DLDD of Germany, the research seminar of CSFD in June 2011 and a session of the forthcoming DNI conference in July 2011.



On the issue of the **UNCCD becoming an authority** on the DLDD themes, the recommendation is to launch an e-forum to collect opinions of parties on the various options including using the existing intergovernmental panels: IPCC and especially the newly established **IPBES**, meant to serve all conventions, soils being clearly included in the ‘Ecosystem Services’(ES). DNI has been pioneering when establishing such an **e-forum** in 2010 on how to organize international interdisciplinary scientific advice on DLDD, notably its results have been presented during an event parallel to the CST-S2 (see below). Similarly a **survey** about the needs in terms of knowledge management will be launched by the Convention’s Secretariat after the CST.

Dr Baron Orr (consultant of the University of Arizona) made an interesting presentation on the **indicators** recommended to measure the **impact** of the actions of the countries on their land: is it “desertifying” or recovering, improving? The issue of the “Refinement of the Set of Impact Indicators for Strategic Objectives 1, 2 and 3” (using the secretariat’s terminology) is a long story of the Convention, but it seems to come closer to concrete results and guidelines, in particular in terms of usable data and technical advice from regional resource centers. (<http://www.unccd.int/php/document2.php?ref=ICCD/CST%28S-2%29/INF.1>)

To fine tune the terminology and methods and to improve the whole array of indicators to be used for national reporting, here also the **e-forum** established during the first phase will be continued and expanded to gather the maximum of opinions. Affected countries have been invited to volunteer into testing the methods already recommended, particularly to monitor land cover and population poverty levels.

Remark: while referring to the **Driving forces-Pressures-States-Impacts-Responses** framework (DPSIR), some of the recommended indicators may appear too basic from a researcher’s point of view; we should however keep in mind that they are part of a “minimum set” usable by all countries including the less advanced and/or equipped ones. After establishing such primary basis, refinement is possible and even highly desirable. This is where we as scientists are expected to contribute.

The ninth session of **the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 9)** was generally not attended by scientists but by decision makers and officials in charge of policies. Questions about measuring the performance of the policies implemented, in particular through the new reporting system have been addressed. Ways to use the reports, to improve and simplify them and to include best practices and financial flows have attracted the majority of discussions. A call for the corresponding necessary support has been voiced by most of the less developed countries, which are the more severely affected.

A specific “**open dialogue**” session was organized with Civil Society Organizations (**CSOs**). Although their role is considered critical, the degree of involvement is limited by the Convention’s functioning: only 18 organizations could be invited, but they represented a wide range of networks. Particularly GTD, representing a panel of French NGOs, stressed the need for the UNCCD to have quantified objectives to measure what investments should be made and what

have been made; links with the other Rio Conventions, and a campaign for civil society actors to be more active in the field.

Among the various parallel events (“**side events**”) at least two can be remarked:

- The one organized by DNI & UNU-INWEH on the results of its own e-forum entitled “Providing Inter-Disciplinary Scientific Advice to the UNCCD: A View from the Scientific Community”.

http://www.european-desertnet.eu/docs/Official_Report_on_Outcomes_of_the_e_forum_Side_Event-20110303-FINAL.pdf



Side Event on the e.forum and the status of IPBES held during CST S-2 in Bonn, Germany on 17. Feb. 2011

- Whereas the GEF gathered a ministerial consultation on the Great Green Wall and Lake Chad, the European commission organized a side event to discuss the objectives and means in a less formal context. At this occasion the newly issued briefs and report of CSFD on the subject were widely distributed: http://www.csf-desertification.org/pdf_csf/GMV/fiche-A4-GMV-eng.pdf

Finally it should be noted that the **DNI booth** in the hall has attracted a good audience, with posters and a good quantity of its leaflets (both designed in Sassari and Hamburg and printed in Toulouse!).

For further and more complete reading on CST S2 and CRIC9 two main sources of information are available:

- the dedicated pages on the UNCCD website <http://www.unccd.int/cop/cric9/menu.php>
- the report of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (Earth Negotiations Bulletin) <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04230e.html>

Information contributed by: Richard Escadafal, DNI bureau member, CSFD chair

2. DesertNet Updates on the establishment of DNI Working Groups

A proposal for setting up a new working group on “Soil Salinization” was submitted to the DNI Steering Committee and Advisory Board. Hereunder the description of the tasks and products of the working group are provided. DNI as well as non-DNI members interested in any of them, are invited to join by contacting directly the WG leader.

Five working groups were officially established at the end of 2010 and have already started their work: “Economics”, “Environmental Management”, “Livestock”, “Modelling” and “Science/Policy Interface” (see DNI newsletter 4/2010).

Documents of the working groups will be put online at www.desertnet-international.org

Information contributed by: DNI Bureau

Working Group on SOIL SALINIZATION

Title of the Working Group / Task Force	Soil Salinization
Name of the leader(s)	Jorge Batlle-Sales (e-mail: jorge.batlle@uv.es)
Institute(s)	Universidad de Valencia. Spain.
Theme (max. 300 words)	<p>Soil salinization is one of the more subtle and progressive causes of soil degradation, menacing some of the most productive fields under irrigated agriculture. Also it is an increasing environmental concern for those areas in which climate change scenarios predict aridity increase.</p> <p>In natural environments, former under the action of external geodynamic processes (inland local accumulation of soluble components from rock weathering in endorreic areas, as well as in coastal ecosystems) the Salinity is a natural inherent condition of many ecosystems contributing to global biodiversity, supporting halophytes and other specialized organisms.</p> <p>Researchers who work with issues of natural soil salinization as well as those dealing with secondary salinization are invited to join the WG.</p> <p>Some of the topics of interest include the formation of salt-affected soils and their environmental significance, the temporal and spatial variability of the salinity, the halophytic vegetation and its potential use, the chemistry, physics, biology, modeling, management, improvement of salt-affected soils and problems related to salinity management, drainage, reuse of saline discharge waters.</p>
Target group(s) and institution(s)	Researchers in Universities and Institutes
Members of the Groups (DNI as well as non-DNI members)	Invitation to all DNI members and non-DNI members
Communication structure (electronically, physical meeting(s))	Electronically (email, website) Workshops
Funding concept	Open
Products (publications, presentations, ...)	e-forum Specialized publications

3. Information relevant to DesertNet members**Special issue of Land Degradation and Development Journal now online!**

The special Issue of Land Degradation and Development Journal on the UNCCD First Scientific Conference, "Understanding Land Degradation Trends", is now formally published in the **Wiley Online Library**. All articles are free to download. See: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ldr.v22.2/issuetoc>

We would like to thank all members of DesertNet International, who contributed to the articles in this issue.

Information contributed by: Mariam Akhtar-Schuster (DNI Chair)

CST report on the Assessment of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference

The Revised draft report of the Committee on Science and Technology on its second special session, held in Bonn from 16 to 18 February 2011 is available at

<http://www.unccd.int/cop/cric9/docs/adopted%20revised%20draft%20CST%20report%2018feb16h.pdf>

This report gives an assessment of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference and the preparation of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.

Information contributed by: DNI Bureau

Invitation to review the white paper on the refinement of the set of impact indicators

We are invited to review a white paper for the refinement of the UNCCD set of impact indicators. This is a formative and iterative process that needs your comments to be incorporated in the final version of the white paper. Deadline to participate: **30 April 2011**. Please go to <http://eforum.unccd.int> and register for the e-consultation.

For more information, contact: Sara Minelli. Associate Expert. Knowledge Management, Science and Technology Unit. (UNCCD)

Information contributed by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Brd Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

UNCCD Knowledge Needs Assessment

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is undertaking a Knowledge Needs Assessment which aims at identifying the current state of tools and practices, and appropriate options for knowledge management and sharing pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought. This assessment will inform the design and conception of a Knowledge Management System that will, among others, provide a framework and a tool for the brokering of scientific and technical information. This system is expected to offer an organized pathway to scientific and technical information, to further support UNCCD implementation and to contribute to awareness raising and synergies between UNCCD stakeholders.

The needs assessment intends to collect knowledge assets and knowledge needs of participants, and will identify potential priority initiatives for knowledge networking, knowledge content development, and technologies for knowledge management.

The survey will be released shortly and forwarded to all DeserNet network members. The UNCCD is welcoming input and participation from DeserNet network members! Stay tuned for more information. Credits and contact: KMST@unccd.int

17 June 2011. World Day to Combat Desertification.

Mr. Gnacadja stated, "If each of us makes the commitment and ensures that just one tree is planted in a degraded part of the drylands and that the tree survives through the year, we could have well over two billion trees in the drylands by the end of the year. That is a tree for every inhabitant. ...let us go forth and forest the drylands to keep them working for present and future generations." **Forest keep drylands working.**

Information contributed by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Brd Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

Europe has launched the UN Decade of Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020)

The European launch of the UN Decade for deserts and the Fight against Desertification, running from 2010 to 2011, was hosted in London on 16 Dec. 2010. The event, also attended by the UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja, gathered geographers, scientists, development experts and policy makers to discuss the challenges and opportunities of drylands under threat from climate change and land degradation.

Information contributed by: J. L. Rubio, CSIC-CIDE, Universidad de Valencia, Spain

4. Researchers Updates

Arid lands women face increasing gender inequity



South Niger - A woman and her children walking to the Maradi market to sell wood
(© 2009 AFP);

In spite of many international resolutions and some proactive policies, the fate of women in drylands is worsening or at best not improving. Such is the key outcome of the FAO report «*Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: Differentiated pathways out of poverty*» (2010). The situation of women has always been critical in areas threatened by desertification, while they could bring unique solutions to reverse the phenomena at stake. The report underlines that women need access to education, training, credit, markets, technical assistance and labor protection. They also need equal, secure access to land and other assets. Last but not least, they need – and can bring - ‘social capital’, including the ability to participate equally with men in farmers’ organizations, especially in areas endangered by soil degradation and subsequent hunger. It

appears that the so-called ‘3F’ (fuel, food, finance) crises has had a hampering impact on the expected gender inequities reduction.

More information: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/49806/icode/>

Information contributed by: Gerard Begni, CNES, France (Head, Science/Policy WG)

Sino-EU Panel on Land and Soil

Recognizing the interdependences between land resources and socio-economic systems in Europe and China, the leaderships of the European Commission and the Chinese Academy of Sciences launched a joint initiative to establish a formalized platform to discuss major issues of mutual interest in the land and soil domain. The Sino-EU Panel on Land and Soil (SEPLS) has been established in Ispra, Italy to serve this need. Leading soil scientist and land system researchers of China and the EU formed the Panel, which has the following mandate: “*The Sino-EU Panel on Land and Soil is a scientific body with a goal to provide decision makers in Europe and China with a clear scientific view on the current state of land and soil resources and potential environmental and socio-economic consequences of their future utilization patterns.*”

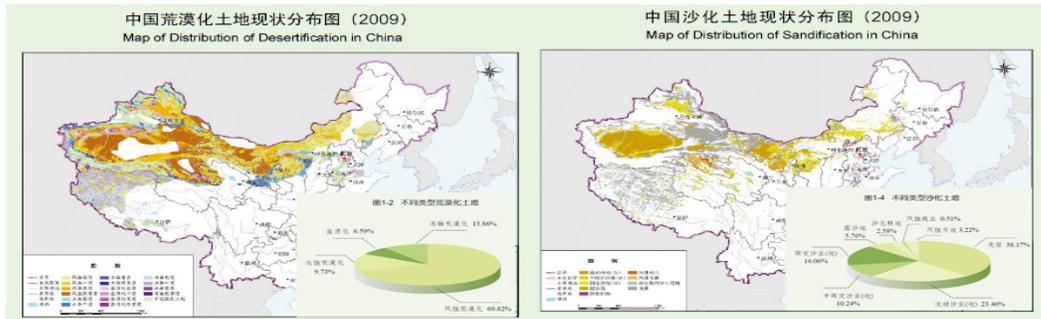
Functions of the SEPLS include: 1) Evaluation and reporting scientific results for policy support ; 2) Proposal of priority issues for research; 3) Policy evaluation and advice, and 4) Awareness rising

More information: <http://eusoils.jrc.ec.europa.eu/InternationalCooperation/sepls/>

Information contributed by: Gergely Tóth,, EC Joint Research Centre, ISPRA, Italy.

Thematic Workshop on Combating Desertification Measures held in March in Beijing, China

The Thematic Workshop on Combating Desertification Measures and Annual Meeting of Sino-German Desertification Combating North China Project were held in March 15 to 17 in Beijing, China. Fifteen presentations on progresses, benefits, best practices and desertification control management experiences were shared among local experts, managers and scientists. Dr. Wang Fei shared the research experience on soil erosion in the Loess Plateau on behalf the Chinese partner of EU FP6 Project DESIRE (Desertification mitigation and remediation of land - a global approach for local solutions).



According to Bulletin of Status Quo of Desertification and Sandification in China (State Forestry Administration, China, Jan 2011), the desertified and sandified areas in China amount to 2.62 (about 27.3% of land area of China) and 1.73 million km² respectively in 2009 (Maps and Figures above). The Chinese government has paid great attention to control it in the last decade.

More information on the DESIRE project: <http://www.forestry.gov.cn/portal/main/s/139/content-468573.html>.

Information contributed by: Wang Fei, Associate Professor, Institute of Soil and Water Conservation, CAS and MWR and Institute of Soil and Water Conservation, Northwest A&F University, China

Towards a regional Arab water resource information system.



Above: For over five years, East Syria faces an extreme dryness endangering cultivated lands in East Syria and threatening food security. © Sandra BESSON.

Water resources are scarce in the Mediterranean Arab countries, making them vulnerable to desertification. Climate change is expected to worsen the situation. So, sharing information about resources is a key issue. A regional workshop about a regional water resource information system took place in Damascus, Syria, Dec. 20 & 21, 2010. EMWIS (Euro Mediterranean Water Information System) in cooperation with Adasa Sistemas (Spain) presented the EU experience in that domain and the Spanish SIA example, recommending approaches to set up water resource information systems and guidelines for interoperability with the WISE European system. A special session was dedicated to designing and implementing Syrian water resource information systems.

More information: http://www.emwis.net/thematicdirs/eflash/flash86_fr

Information contributed by: Gerard Begni, CNES, France (Head, Science/Policy WG)

Land purchases. Problem or solution?

According to the FAO reports (2011), arable land per capita in the world decreased from around 0.38 ha in the 1970's to 0.23 ha in 2000 and predicted 0.15 ha in 2050. Soil is a scarce natural resource. Foreign lands are seen as an opportunity for market. Worldwide, 115 million acres of land are leased to foreign investors, and the bulk of that is in Africa where land is often cheap, and informal land-use laws have allowed some governments to sell vast tracts farmed by local people in the past, the World Bank estimates.

In the last five years, African countries leased the most land; this is a small sampling: **Democratic Republic of Congo:** 2.8 million hectares to grow oil palm for biofuels; **Mozambique:** Nearly 101,000 ha to produce biofuels. **Tanzania:** Nearly 0.5 million ha for food production; more than 44,000 ha for biofuels made from sweet sorghum. **Sudan:** 0.7 million ha to grow wheat; nearly 0.4 million ha to grow corn and alfalfa. **Ethiopia:** more than 12,900 ha to produce biofuels. (Source: International Food Policy Research Institute).

The land rush creates both risks and opportunities. What is the local impact of this land grabbing? There is little evidence that foreign land investment is creating many local jobs. A 10,000-hectare maize plantation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, created only 0.01 job per hectare, the World Bank found.

Other issues remain unanswered like the land degradation due to overexploitation or the quantities of water required for proper irrigation of certain crops. More research is needed to determine whether benefits or disadvantages can be found in the medium or long term.

More information: <http://www.future-agricultures.org/index.php>

Information contributed by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Brd Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

Invitation to discuss the effects of the historic crossbreeding of camels to produce the vigorous Pashtun camel in drylands of the Greater Middle East

Statues and paintings of the Bactrian or Bakhdi camel in the ruins of Persepolis (now Iran) and in the excavated areas of the Gandhara civilization (now Pakistan and Afghanistan) indicate that the Bactrian or Bakhdi camel was domesticated in the historic town of Bakhdi (historic country of Bakhtaria) in Zoroastrian times, some 2200 years ago. We believe that the Bakhdi camel was used domestically first in the Suleiman Range (winter settlement of the Pashtuns in Pakistan and Afghanistan). The Dromedary camel, which was domesticated about 3200 years ago in the area now known as Yemen, was only introduced to the Greater Middle East at a later stage, and is linked to the emerging Arab influence. The Bactrian and the Dromedary camel were crossed to produce a vigorous camel for heavy duty in areas affected by droughts. This crossbred camel is still known as Maya (Pashto language) in Afghanistan and Pakistan and characteristically always has one hump. As leader of the DNI Working Group on 'Indigenous Livestock Breeds and Indigenous Knowledge' I would like to invite colleagues to discuss the necessity of maintaining farm animal genetic resources (FAnGR) in drylands.

Information contributed by: Dr Abdul Raziq Kakar (e-mail: raziq2007@gmail.com)

Biodiversity loss: UN has endorsed IPBES.

Desertification and biodiversity losses are closely linked. In UN wording, this suggests that UNCCD and UNCBD should be bridged. Scientists involved in one Convention should be aware of major facts related to the other one.

So, it is important to know that the United Nations 65th General Assembly has agreed to establish the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on 21st December 2010.

Scientific knowledge on the links between biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being has increased significantly since the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was completed. IPBES is an international science-policy platform, which ambitions to enable this knowledge to be translated into specific policy action at appropriate levels, and to provide a scientifically sound, uniform and consistent framework for tackling changes to biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Some enthusiastic colleagues already call it "the IPCC of the UNCBD".

Key Source: *Secretariat of the DIVERSITAS programme.*

More information:

Press release: <http://unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=653&ArticleID=6872&l=en>

About CBD: <http://www.cbd.int/>

About IPBES: <http://www.ipbes.net>

About DIVERSITAS: <http://www.diversitas-international.org/>

Information contributed by: Gerard Begni, CNES/CSFD, France

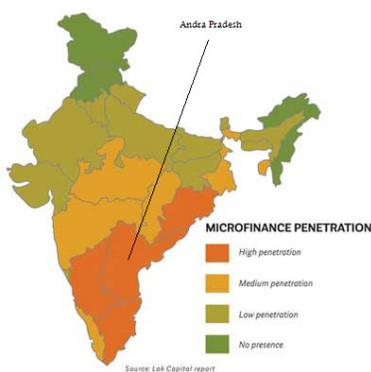
Water Scarcity and Droughts in Europe

On 21 March 2011, the European Commission published the "Third Follow up Report to the Communication on water scarcity and droughts in the European Union". In the run up to a major water policy review in 2012, the report presents the water management measures introduced by Member States to tackle water scarcity and droughts and highlights the areas in which further action will be needed in the future.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/quantity/eu_action.htm

Information contributed by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Brd Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

India: Is microfinance actually endangered today?



On Dec. 2010, SKS Microfinance, India's biggest lender to the poor, has been in the spotlight following villagers' suicides in Andhra Pradesh State. Authorities have reacted by ordering a crackdown on microfinancers.

Microfinance pioneer Muhammad Yunus (*Bangladesh, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for having developed and implemented the microfinance concept*) told: "A lot of people are misusing and abusing the [microfinance] concept and use it as vehicle to make money. And SKS is a big example in this regard". Worldwide supportive famous economists argued that this market segment had been endangered not for structural reasons, but by the Government overreaction. Lack of microfinance refunding has always been very low. Moreover, only 11% of debts in that State are linked to microfinance.

Microfinance relies both on a social and legal contract, generates social capital and encourages poor people lacking access to banking systems to create and develop micro-firms via small loans, insurance, money transfer, etc. Heavy state control proved counterproductive. Some 800 billion persons use it, a large majority of whom living in drylands. Microfinance is for them simply a matter of life and a unique chance to combat the degradation of their lands. Any extension of the crisis will endanger the poorest among the poor.

Key source: various newspapers (India, USA, UK, France) and dedicated websites.

Key books: Servet, J-M. (2006) – *Banquiers aux pieds nus: la microfinance. Odile Jacob, juillet 2006.*

Yunus, M. Jolis A. (1997), *Vers un monde sans pauvreté*, Ed. J.-C. Lattès.

Yunus, M. (2003), *Banker to the Poor*, New-York, *Public Affairs*.

Yunus, M. (2008), *A World Without Poverty*, New-York, *Public Affairs*

Yunus, M. Weber K. (2010) *Building Social Business*, New-York, *Public Affairs*

More information: General microfinance portal: <http://www.microfinancegateway.org/p/site/m/>

Francophone microfinance portal: www.lamicrofinance.org/

Situation in Andhra Pradesh: <http://indiamicofinance.com/andhra-pradesh-mfi-ordinance-2010.html>

Information contributed by: Gerard Begni, CNES, France (Head, Science/Policy WG)

Ecuador: Government & GM encourages better using microfinance in combating land degradation

Microfinance is a key tool for rural and urban poor. Its management independence is crucial (as shown in the paper about microfinance “crisis” in India), but a better synergy with national development objectives, plans and budgets would be beneficial. Better using it for sustainable land management (SLM) and agricultural production has to be strengthened. Ecuador decided to make steps ahead with the support of the UNCCD Global Mechanism (GM) by defining broader development processes for enhanced sustainable agricultural production directly linked with national priorities and budget lines. A SLM-CC (Climate Change adaptation) Microfinance Strategy was developed, and a dedicated credit line has now been established. To date USD 80 million have been leveraged from the national budget into around 150 local micro-financing institutions. A wider GM objective is to draw lessons from the Ecuador pioneering initiative to widespread better optimized microfinance management practices for smallholder agricultural producers, targeting food security and economic development.

Key source: GM Newsletter, January 2011,

More information: http://news.global-mechanism.org/archive.php?p=110986870_254023

More information: See paper above (Is microfinance actually endangered today?)

Information contributed by: Gerard. Begni, CNES, France (Head, Science/Policy WG)

South Sudan needs growing food assistance but can recover food autonomy.



January 13, 2001. According to the FAO & WFP, food shortages are worsening in South Sudan. The expected cereal deficit is estimated to 340,000 tons. The number of people who will need immediate food assistance is estimated to 1.4 million over 9.2 between March seeding and August harvest. Food stocks are very low and could reach zero in a context of increased anthropogenic pressure over soils following refugees return.

However, local authorities consider that national efforts backed to international assistance could stop degradation and bring back food autonomy within some ten years. (Image © FAO)

More information: <http://www.thehungersite.com/clickToGive/th/article/FAO-WFP-predict-food-deficit-potential-for-South-Sudan345>

Information contributed by: Gerard Begni, CNES, France (Head, Science/Policy WG)

5. Important upcoming events

List of links to next meetings regarding desertification, water conservation and land degradation.

2011		
5-7 April	GEF Asia Expanded Constituency Workshop (ECW) http://www.thegef.org/gef/node/4057	Da Lat City, VietNam
10-15 Apr	34th International Symposium on Remote Sensing of Environment http://isrse34.org/	Sydney, Australia
27-29 Apr	GEF South America Expanded Constituency Workshop (ECW) http://www.thegef.org/gef/node/4084	Cartagena, Colombia
15-20 May	5th IIPT African Conference: Meeting the Challenges of Climate Change to Tourism in Africa and the Developing World http://iipt.org	Lusaka, Zambia
16-19 May	6th Annual International Symposium on Environment http://www.atiner.gr/environment.htm	Athens, Greece
22-26 May	World Environmental and Water Resources Congress http://content.asce.org/conferences/ewri2011/index.html	California, US
23-25 May	6 th International Conference on Sustainable Water Resources Management http://www.wessex.ac.uk/11-conferences/waterresourcesmanagement-2011.html	California, US
1 - 3 June	4th EARSel Workshop on Land Use and Land Cover http://www.earsel.org/SIG/LULC/workshops.php	Prague, Czech Republic
11-Jun	Land Day 4 http://climate-l.iisd.org/events/land-day-4/	Bonn, Germany
12-16 Jun	2011 International Joint Meeting of the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation & Africa Section of the Society for Conservation Biology http://www.atbc-scbafrica2011.org/home/	Arusha, Tanzania
13-14 Jun	Exploring the Forest-Poverty Link: New Research Findings http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/pen/UEA-science-workshop	Norwich, UK
14-15 Jun	Enhancing Green & Sustainable Transport for Africa and Middle East http://www.irfnet.ch/eventdetail.php?catid=1&id=351&title=Enhancing%20Green%20&%20Sustainable%20Transport%20for%20Africa	Cairo, Egypt
22-23 Jun	1st International Conference on Food and Environment - The Quest for a Sustainable Future http://www.wessex.ac.uk/11-conferences/foodandenvironment-2011.html	New Forest, UK
30 Jun- 2 Jul	Environmental Justice, Restoration and Sustainability in Africa http://www.cep.unt.edu/africa/index.htm	Lagos State, Nigeria
11-12 Jul	Simposio Conservación de Suelos y Aguas http://www.snscs2011.uchile.cl	Santiago, Chile
31 Jul – 4 Aug	Blueprint for Sustainable, Ecologically-based Watershed Management in China: A Workshop on Lessons Learned Globally http://watershedmanagement.dnr.cornell.edu/	Beijing, China
7-10 Sept	XXXXth Annual Meeting of the European Society for New Methods in Agricultural Research (ESNA) on “Advanced methods for a sustainable agriculture”. http://agronomie.administrativ.ucv.ro/aam http://cis01.central.ucv.ro/analele_universitatii/agricultura/	Craiova, Romania
11-14 Sep	The 19th International Conference on Environmental Indicators	Haifa, Israel

	http://isei2011.technion.ac.il/	
20 Sept	UNGA High-Level Event on Desertification http://www.unccd.int/media/newsflash/newsflash_001_2011.php	New York, US
5-7 Oct	Development on the margin / Tropentag 2011 http://www.tropentag.de	Bonn (Germany)
10-21 Oct	UNCCD COP 10. The tenth session of the Conference of the Parties http://www.unccd.int/cop/cop10/menu.php	Changwon City, Republic of Korea.
2012		
26-29 Mar	Planet under pressure – New knowledge towards solutions http://www.planetunderpressure2012.net/	London, UK
16-20 Apr	XIX Congreso Latinoamericano y XXIII Congreso Argentino de la Ciencia del Suelo http://www.congresodesuelos.org.ar/site/info-general/bienvenida-2	Mar del Plata, Argentina
14-17 May	Second International Conference on Human Impacts on Soil Quality Attributes in Arid and Semiarid Regions http://hisqa.iut.ac.ir/	Isfahan, Iran
4-6 Jun	Earthsummit 2012 Stakeholder Forum Un Conference on Sustainable Development http://www.earthsummit2012.org/	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Information contributed by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Brd Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

6th World Water Forum: “Contribute to food security by optimal use of water”



Water scarcity – and hence water use optimization and equity - is one of the major issues to be addressed when fighting against desertification.

The FAO and the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) are now coordinating the preparation of the 6th World Water Forum, to be held in Marseille in March 2012. The theme will be “Contribute to food security by optimal use of water”.

It has been conceived as the Forum of “solutions”. Twelve “Thematic Priorities” will be addressed. Under each a series of “targets” the identified issues should be translated into concrete and achievable objectives at all levels. For each “target”, workable “solutions” will be proposed at the World Water Forum, and some of them demonstrated in the village of solutions of the forum.

More information: http://www.fao.org/nr/water/topics_wwf6.html; <http://www.worldwaterforum6.org/>

Information contributed by: Gerard Begni, CNES, France (Head, Science/Policy WG)

Announcement of WOCAT Share Fair and 15th Annual WOCAT Workshop and Steering Meeting in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia, 21-27 June 2011

We are pleased to announce the WOCAT Share Fair 15th Annual WOCAT Workshop and Steering Meeting in Kyrgyzstan. Since 1996, WOCAT has organized International Annual Workshops and Steering Committee Meetings (known as WWSM) with the goal (a) to bring together the main collaborating and funding institutions and the core collaborators, (b) to assess the progress and exchange experiences, (c) to further develop the programme and (d) to plan for the future including budgetary consequences. The workshop will start with a WOCAT Share Fair which gives the opportunity to bring together main donors and institutions active in Central Asia and beyond the region to join efforts to identify the way forward in promoting SLM to address global concerns like water scarcity and adaptation and mitigation to climate

change, and to mainstream the use of WOCAT tools and methodologies into ongoing and new programmes, projects and initiatives. The WOCAT WWSM will consequently focus on these issues in more detail with a special focus on i) climate change adaptation and mitigation, ii) pasture / grazing land management, and iii) new WOCAT modules. Please check the WOCAT website www.wocat.net or contact the WOCAT secretariat wocat@giub.unibe.ch for further information.

Information contributed by WOCAT (World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies): www.wocat.net

6. Publications and Special Issues

1. Herrick, Jeffrey E; Lessard, Veronica C; Spaeth, Kenneth E; Shaver, Patrick L; Dayton, Robert S; Pyke, David A; Jolley, Leonard; Goebel, J Jeffery (2010): National ecosystem assessments supported by scientific and local knowledge. In: *Front Ecol Environ* 2010; 8(8): 403-408, doi: 10.1890/100017.
2. Mahyou H., Karrou M., Mimouni J., Mrabet R., El Mourid M.. 2010: Drought risk assessment in pasture arid Morocco through remote sensing. In: *African Journal of Environmental Science and Technology* Vol. 4(12), pp. 845-852, December 2010. Available online at <http://www.academicjournals.org/AJEST>
3. Sheffield J., Wood E.F.. 2011. Drought. Past Problems and future scenarios. Earthscan (publisher), 192 pp.

World Bank launches e-Atlas of Global Development

The World Bank has launched an e-Atlas of Global Development which was developed in collaboration with HarperCollins. It is freely available online and has an interactive tool, which maps and graphs more than 175 indicators from the World Bank's development database. Dryland relevant issues such as poverty, food production, population growth, climate change, international trade, and foreign direct investment are covered. The e-atlas can be found at <http://www.app.collinsindicate.com/worldbankatlas-global/en>

For more information visit: <http://data.worldbank.org/e-atlas-of-global-development-released>

Information provided by: DNI Bureau

Announcement: Sustainable Land Management in Practice: Guidelines and Best Practices for Sub-Saharan Africa

Publisher: TerrAfrica, Coordination: FAO. The WOCAT (World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies) secretariat was mandated by TerrAfrica to produce guidelines for best sustainable land management (SLM) practices of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The goal of the guidelines is to identify, analyze and disseminate promising SLM practices based on solid scientific background, experiences and representative case studies, in particular those practices with short paybacks and profitability and/or other factors likely to drive adoption. The report, which is illustrated with 47 case studies from 18 countries, is intended as a practical guide for investment and operation design, rather than a comprehensive academic or scientific overview.

A flyer and the guidelines can be downloaded on <https://www.cde.unibe.ch/>

Information contributed by WOCAT (World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies): www.wocat.net

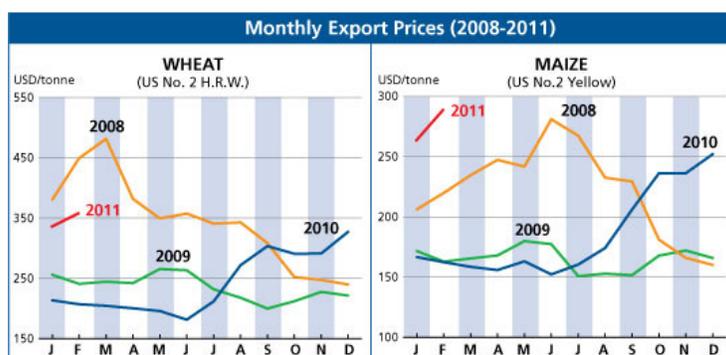
7. Other Information

Figures released by FAO strongly evoke a second food price crisis.

FAO declared on 3 March 2011 that global food prices increased for the 8th consecutive month in February. A tightening of the global cereal supply and demand balance is expected. In the face of a growing demand and a decline in world cereal production in 2010, global cereal stocks are falling sharply and international cereal prices have increased sharply with export prices of major grains up at least 70 % from February last year. Unexpected oil price spikes could further exacerbate the situation in food markets, as it happened during the so-called '3F' (Fuel – Food – Finance) crisis in 2008.

The FAO Food Price Index averaged the highest record in real and nominal terms since 1990. In particular, the Cereal Price Index (which includes prices of main food staples such as wheat, rice and maize) rose to its highest level since July 2008. The latest FAO estimate for the world cereal production in 2010 is still slightly below 2009. The forecast for world cereal utilization in 2010/11 has been revised up, reflecting larger use of maize for ethanol production in the United States and statistical adjustments to China's historical supply and demand balance for maize (please see second figure hereunder). Winter wheat production has been rather good in the Northern hemisphere.

This newly developing crisis is a dramatic event for poor people in drylands who are usually net importers of commodities due to low yield, soil degradation, lack of property rights and of saving facilities.



Evolution of the FAO food Price Index from 1990 to nowadays. The upper diagram evidences the 2008 crisis and obviously the present development of a new crisis. (NB: The real price is the nominal price index deflated by the World Bank Manufactures Unit value Index -MUV). The second diagram is a zoom on export price wheat and maize, which exhibits a stronger increase © FAO.

Key source: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/51913/icode/>

More information: http://www.fao.org/giews/english/gfpm/GFPM_03_2011.pdf

Information contributed by: Gerard Begni, CNES, France (Head, Science/Policy WG)

IAI Training Institute on Land Use Change

The announcement (English and Spanish) of the upcoming Analysis and Water and Food Security in the La Plata Basin Region (April 06-15, 2011 – Asuncion, Paraguay) is available at the IAI website (www.iai.int).

Information contributed by: Christopher Martius, DNI Steering Committee

Lecture on Future of Food and Farming

The Lecture on *Future of Food and Farming* was held by Professor Sir John Beddington (Government Chief Scientific Adviser, UK) on 10 March 2011 and is now available online: http://www.africacollege.leeds.ac.uk/lectures/Prof_Sir_J_Beddington/player.html

Information contributed by: DNI Bureau

African Union Research Grants

The research proposals should focus on: (a) Post-harvest and Agriculture, (b) Renewable and Sustainable Energy, and (c) Water and Sanitation in Africa. Open Call for Proposal 2011: Deadline 3rd May 2011.

More information: <http://www.africahrst.org/stict/rgp/call2011.aspx>

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