Towards a Land Degradation Neutral World

A Sustainable Development Priority

15 LIFE ON LAND

Sustainable Development Goal, Target 15.3:

By 2030, combat desertification, and restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world.

UNEP

UNCCD
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Land resources are degrading at an alarming pace, affecting sustainable development. Target 15.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) sets out a new global ambition: to achieve a Land Degradation Neutral World by the year 2030.

What is land degradation neutrality?
Land degradation neutrality aims to maintain and increase the amount of healthy and productive land resources, in line with national development priorities.

Land degradation neutrality is a flexible target that can be implemented at local, regional or national scales. It recognizes the sovereignty of nations to manage the trade-offs and to capitalize on the synergies between biological and economic productivity.

Benefits of land degradation neutrality
Target 15.3 responds to a serious and immediate challenge:

> ***How to sustainably produce food, fuel and fiber to meet future demand without further depleting our finite land resources?***

Using a landscape approach, investments in land rehabilitation can advance the achievement of other SDGs, such as poverty eradication, food and water security, biodiversity protection, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

For example, restoring only 12% of degraded agricultural land could boost smallholders' incomes by USD 35-40 billion per year and help feed an additional 200 million people annually within 15 years. It could also increase resilience to drought and water scarcity, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 2 $GtCO_2$-e per year.

Achieving land degradation neutrality
Sustainable land management practices, such as agro-forestry and conservation agriculture, can reduce the yield gaps and enhance the resilience of our working landscapes while preventing further land degradation.

Sustainable land management and ecosystem restoration activities together form a **landscape approach,** which manages the land, water and forest resources as one integrated system to meet an area's food security needs, ensure a continued flow of ecosystem services and promote inclusive, green growth.

Land condition is determined by the daily practices of people at local level. Involving the communities and tapping into their local initiatives is crucial to achieving the land degradation neutrality target.

Monitoring progress towards land degradation neutrality

The first objective of the land degradation neutrality target is to inspire local communities and authorities at regional and national level to assess their current land resource use and planning. This would allow them to establish suitable baselines for monitoring progress, evaluating trade-offs and prioritizing action on the ground at the appropriate scale.

Progress towards the land degradation neutrality target can be monitored and communicated in terms of increased productivity, vegetative cover, biodiversity and ecosystem services, and the resulting socio-economic benefits.

Within the process to develop the SDG indicator framework, a global indicator could be developed on ***"Trends in Land Degradation"*** to complement other relevant indicators at the local and national levels.

When taken together, these indicators can be integrated in a monitoring and evaluation framework that allows countries to measure progress towards the land degradation neutrality target at different scales and according to their national priorities.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE BENEFITS LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN TANZANIA

In Tanzania, the rebirth of the traditional Ngitili management system led to the restoration of approximately 500,000 hectares of woodland between 1986 and 2001. The integration of sustainable land management and restoration activities benefited over 800 villages, providing an economic value of $14 per month per person – almost double the average level of rural consumption in Tanzania.

For more info:
http://sapiens.revues.org/1542

OUR LAND IS IN OUR HANDS

Land resources are degrading at an alarming pace, affecting sustainable development everywhere.

EVERY YEAR WE LOSE:

24 billion
tonnes of fertile soil

15 billion trees
roughly 1.7 million trees every hour

40 billion USD
as a consequence of land degradation

UNSUSTAINABLE PRACTICES	SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES
• monocultures	• agroforestry
• chemical agriculture	• no till and cover crops
• overgrazing	• sustainable extensive pastoralism
• single-sector planning: not looking beyond farm gates	• inter-sectoral and landscape-level planning: looking beyond farm gates

APPLYING THE LANDSCAPE APPROACH

Managing the land, water and forest resources as one integrated system to meet an area's food security needs, ensure a continued flow of ecosystem services and promote inclusive, green growth.

SOLUTIONS:

Sustainable
land management

Ecosystem
restoration

Mobilizing
finance and providing other incentives

Monitoring
status and trends

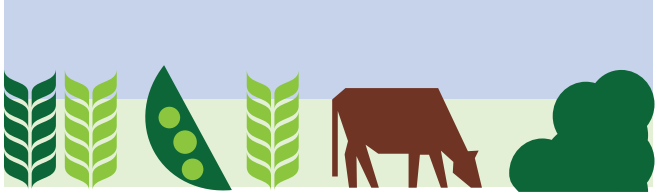
Financing land degradation neutrality
The successes of community-based and labour-intensive projects around the world show that sustainable land management and restoration activities can be implemented at a relatively low cost with multiple benefits.

For example, **it can take as little as USD 20 per year to rehabilitate and sustainably manage one hectare of farmland in Africa** using traditional agro-forestry, water conservation and livestock management practices.

Land degradation neutrality efforts could be supported by multilateral funding sources targeting specific actions. This financial support, primarily for building technical and institutional capacity on the ground could come from development banks, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and other sources. Public-private partnerships also have an important role to play.

Call to action
Countries' commitment to land degradation neutrality is an opportunity to transform regulatory frameworks and the system of fiscal incentives and disincentives. It can foster an 'integrated landscape management' approach to land governance and promote sustainable land management and restoration activities on the ground.

Bilateral aid and private sector investments will be critical for scaling up sustainable land management practices as part of a land degradation neutrality approach to sustainable food production. For example, **micro-credit schemes** supported by mobile technologies can deliver financing directly to communities that sustainably manage and restore their land resources.



BRINGING LAND BACK TO LIFE IN ETHIOPIA

The internationally-funded Sustainable Land Management Programme has helped Ethiopia to make 180,000 hectares of degraded land productively usable through practices, such as terracing, crop rotation systems, improvement of pastureland and permanent green cover. These measures have benefited more than 194,000 households and contribute to increased productivity in the affected areas. They also enhance the resilience of small-scale agriculture to the impacts of climate change and related stressors.

For more info:
https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/18912.html

In the long term, a land degradation neutrality target could engage communities, businesses and civil society in creating certification schemes for sustainable land management and ecosystem restoration.

The Economics of Land Degradation initiative estimates that the adoption of sustainable land management policies and practices could deliver up to USD 1.4 trillion in increased crop production worldwide. The returns on investment from ecosystem restoration are also high - 50% for tropical forests, 20% for other forests, 42% for shrublands, and 79% for grasslands over a 40 year time period. With the global population expected to hit 9.5 billion by 2050, cultivating these benefits is essential.

For more information: www.unccd.int
www.unep.org

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THE CHANGWON INITIATIVE